THE NORTON ANTHOLOGY OF WORLD MASTERPIECES

Fifth Continental Edition

Patricia Acevedo.

The Norton Anthology of World Masterpieces

FIFTH CONTINENTAL EDITION

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of World Masterpieces

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The Norton Anthology of World Masterpieces

FIFTH CONTINENTAL EDITION

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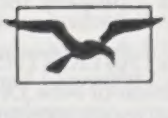

W · W · NORTON & COMPANY · *New York* · *London*

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

The Norton anthology of world masterpieces.

Fifth continental edition.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Literature—Translations into English.
2. English literature—Translations from foreign languages. I. Mack, Maynard, 1909–

PN6019.M2 1987 808.8 86-5360

ISBN 0-393-95486-2

2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

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Preface To The Fifth Edition

The Continental Edition of *The Norton Anthology of World Masterpieces* is a selection of Western literature containing (with one exception) only works written originally in the ancient and modern foreign languages. The literatures represented include Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Icelandic, Irish, Norse, French, Italian, German, Spanish, Russian, Norwegian, and Nigerian. And the selections stretch in time from Homer and the Old Testament writers to such contemporaries of our own as Marguerite Duras and Gabriel García Márquez.

Like the current Fifth Edition of the larger version of *The Norton Anthology of World Masterpieces*, this Fifth Continental Edition is a new book throughout. Each selection has been carefully reconsidered for its contribution to an understanding of the author and period from which it comes, and for its representativeness of the ever-broadening cultural tradition which in these latter years of the twentieth century we all share.

Introductions and notes have been extensively revised—in many cases entirely rewritten—to take advantage of the best critical scholarship of the 1980s and to guarantee their clarity and usefulness for student readers. To the same end, introductions to individual selections now appear as headnotes, placed immediately before the work to which they refer, and all suggested lists of supplementary reading have been annotated to help students find their way about. The anthology as a whole has been redesigned and reset to produce a single volume rich in content but easy for student and teacher to handle and read.

In shaping that content, we have been generously assisted by the recommendations of a very large number of our users. On their advice some selections have been dropped, others changed, many added. To our Greek section, for instance, we have added by popular request those few poems of Sappho which are genuine—translated, that is to say, from Greek texts that have come down to us complete or all but complete, rather than, as is often the case with Sappho in English, fabricated by the translator from a few surviving words. On similar grounds, we have replaced our brief selections from Ovid's *Amores* in the Roman section with larger selections from his *Metamorphoses*, focusing especially on his accounts of the creation of the world and of the resistless principle of change that pervades all things terrestrial, including the human body, mind, and soul. "What we have been, / What we now are, we shall not be tomorrow." No Roman work has had a larger

influence on later European literatures than these portions of Ovid's greatest poem.

Our section on the Middle Ages we have quite transformed. *The Story of Deirdre* from early Irish literature, *The Song of the Seeress* from the Elder Edda of the Norsemen, and *Thorstein the Staff-Struck* from the Icelandic sagas, taken together with the Frankish *Song of Roland*, make possible a variety of excursions into the heroic-age literature of several great peoples (as well as backward looks toward Homer) which remind us poignantly how little the experiences that move us most have changed. We are further happy to have been able to add to this section the fascinating narrative poem *Eliduc* by Marie de France, so far as is known the earliest of French women poets. Any reader who wishes to explore the range of attitudes taken by men and women toward love will find in *Eliduc*, *The Story of Deirdre*, the "Testament" of Francois Villon, and the three stories we have chosen from Boccaccio's *Decameron* (not forgetting the three we have added to our Renaissance offerings from the *Heptameron* of Marguerite de Navarre) a rich supply of instructive contrasts and comparisons.

Additions of similar importance appear throughout the book. One of which we are pardonably proud is *The Reply (La Respuesta)* of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, a Mexican nun who in 1691, in response to a covert put-down by her bishop, hammered out with delicious irony the most compelling defense of the rights of women to learn, teach, write, and publish to be found in any language prior to a manifesto by Mary Wollstonecraft in 1792. Though a document—and a powerful document—Sister Juana's *Reply* earns its place in this anthology as a work of forensic art.

Other additions deserving special note are Samuel Beckett's *Endgame*, rarely permitted to appear in an anthology; Marguerite Duras' *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, one of the most haunting film scripts ever written; and Wole Soyinka's wonderfully funny yet touching comedy, *The Lion and the Jewel*. Collectively and singly these works open on a troubled landscape that we recognize as distinctively our own. *Endgame*, as has been suggested in our introduction, describes among other things what it is like to live in a universe emptied of meaning—save for whatever meanings, trifling, murderous, or grand, we human beings impose on it. *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, with or without the splendid motion picture produced from it, makes a superb text for close classroom examination, appealing as powerfully to our visual imaginations as to our moral sense. *The Lion and the Jewel*, by one of the most gifted of today's African writers, is the exception mentioned in our opening paragraph above: Soyinka, who is bilingual, wrote his play in English. Yet it is so rooted in the instincts and permeated by the ritualistic character of his native Nigerian culture, and at the same time so unforgettable a rendering of the forces tugging almost unbearably in our time at the hearts and minds of the Third World's peoples, that we have ventured to include it. Though written in English, it is far from being a British or American work.

Teachers or students who turn to the table of contents in this Fifth Continental Edition will find further improvements that we believe will please them. Improvements in the quality of the translations as new translations have appeared or become available to us from such eminences as W. H. Auden, John Ciardi, Robert Fagles, Robert Fitzgerald, John Fowles, and

many more. Improvements also in the representation of European romanticism, with poems by Heine, Hugo, and Leopardi now included along with prose by Rousseau, Chateaubriand, and Pushkin, in addition of course to Goethe's *Faust*. Improvements likewise in the representation of later figures and our contemporaries. Rilke, Lorca, Akhmatova, and Solzhenitsyn have been restored to these pages, and Borges ("The Garden of Forking Paths"), Robbe-Grillet ("The Secret Room"), and García Márquez ("Death Constant beyond Love") have been added. Needless to say, in making these additions and improvements, we have not scanted the earlier great modern innovators like Proust, Kafka, and Mann, in fiction, without whom the course of the later twentieth-century novel is unintelligible, and Büchner, Ibsen, Chekhov, Pirandello, Brecht, and now Soyinka in the drama. As Dryden once said of Chaucer, here is "God's plenty."

It becomes a particular pleasure to welcome to our group with this edition Patricia Meyer Spacks, professor of English at Yale University and currently chairman of its department, and to re-welcome Sarah Lawall, professor of comparative literature at the Amherst campus of the University of Massachusetts. Users of this volume whose special interests draw them to works of the Enlightenment and Romanticism, or to those of our own century, will readily understand our pride in their company.

THE EDITORS

The Norton Anthology
World Masterp

FIFTH CONTINENTAL EDITION

Masterpieces of the Ancient World

This section represents, not the ancient world as a whole, but the most significant area and period of ancient man's development. The area is the Mediterranean basin, and the period the twelve hundred years from, roughly, 800 B.C. to A.D. 400. In this place and time ancient man laid the intellectual and religious foundations of the modern Western outlook.

The literature of the ancient world, which, whether or not we are acquainted with it, is still the background of our institutions, attitudes, and thought, was written in three languages—Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. The peoples who spoke these languages created their civilizations independently in place and time, but the development of the Mediterranean area into one economic and political unit brought them into contact with one another and produced a fusion of their typical attitudes that is the basis of all subsequent Western thought. This process of independent development, interaction, and final fusion is represented in the arrangement of this section: In the last part of it the three separate lines converge, and they finally meet in the figure of St. Augustine, who had the intellectual honesty and curiosity of the Greek at his best, the social seriousness and sense of order of the Roman, and the Hebrew's feeling of man's inadequacy and God's omnipotent justice.

THE ANCIENT WORLD

Though Rome at the height of her power was to extend her rule northward through France as far as Britain and eastward to the Euphrates, the ancient world was centered on the Mediterranean Sea—"We live around the sea," said the Greek philosopher Socrates, "like frogs around a pond." Climate and basic crops were (and still are) similar over most of the area: a dry hot summer and a comparatively mild winter, more favorable to sheep and goats than cattle, to vine and olive rather than cereal crops. Though metal was mined and worked, what we know as heavy industry did not exist; coal and oil were not exploited for energy, and the war galleys were propelled by sail and human oarsmen, the armies moved on foot. All the advanced civilizations of the ancient world depended for their existence on a slave class to do their heavy work, on the land, in the mines, and in the house; this institution, widely varied in its forms—peasants tied to the land as in Egypt, bought slaves as in Greece and Rome, or men enslaved for debt as in Greece and Israel—lasted until the end of the ancient world, to be gradually replaced in

Europe by the feudal system with a peasantry technically free but in practice working the land for the benefit of an overlord.

Civilization began, not on the shores of the Mediterranean, but east and south of that sea: in Babylon and Egypt. Ancient civilization was based on agriculture and it flourished first in regions where the soil gave rich rewards: in the valley of the Nile, where annual floods left large tracts of land moist and fertile under the Egyptian sun and in the valleys of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, which flowed through the "Fertile Crescent," the land now known as Iraq and Iran. Great cities—Thebes and Memphis in Egypt, Babylon and Nineveh in the Fertile Crescent—came into being as centers for the complicated administration of the irrigated fields; supported by the surplus the land produced, they became centers also for government, religion, and culture. Civilization begins with cities; the word itself is derived from a Latin word which means "citizen." As far back as 3000 B.C. the pharaohs of Egypt began to build their splendid temples and gigantic pyramids, as well as to record their political acts and religious beliefs in hieroglyphic script; the Sumerians, Babylonians, and Assyrians began to build the palaces and temples of Babylon, as well as to record their laws in cuneiform script on clay tablets.

These civilizations were already immemorially old when Israel, Greece and, later, Rome became conscious of their national character and destiny, yet it was to the younger nations that the future belonged. Babylon, Nineveh, and Egypt as the centuries went by were all but lost to the memory of mankind; the pyramids and the Sphinx remained but it was not until the nineteenth century A.D. that the hieroglyphic writing of the Egyptians and the cuneiform records of Babylon and Nineveh were deciphered and their contents read again after a lapse of thousands of years. The cultural history of the ancient world came to medieval Europe in the languages not of Babylon and Egypt but in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin.

THE HEBREWS

There was, of course, contact between the old civilizations and the new. The Hebrews, in fact, early in their history, spent some years as government slaves in Egypt before their Exodus, their migration, under the leadership of Moses, through the Sinai desert to Palestine. This new home of the Hebrews was of no particular strategic importance, and their record is not that of an imperial people. In their period of independence, from their beginnings as a pastoral tribe to their high point as a kingdom with a splendid capital in Jerusalem, they accomplished little of note in the political or military spheres; their later history was a bitter and unsuccessful struggle for freedom against a series of foreign masters—Babylonian, Greek, and Roman.

After the period of expansion and prosperity under the great kings, David and Solomon (1005–925 B.C.), the kingdom fell apart again into warring factions, which called in outside powers; the melancholy end of a long period of internal and external struggle was the destruction of the cities and the deportation of the population to Babylon (586 B.C.). This period of exile (it ended in 539 when Cyrus, the Persian conqueror of Babylon, released the Hebrews from bondage) was a formative period for Hebrew religious thought, which was enriched and refined by the teachings of the prophet Ezekiel and

the unknown prophet known as the Second Isaiah (pp. 16, 62). The return to Palestine was crowned by the rebuilding of the Temple and the creation of the canonical version of the Pentateuch or Torah, the first five books of the Old Testament; the religious legacy of the Hebrew people was now codified for future generations. But the independent state of Israel was not destined to last long. By 300 B.C. the Macedonian successors of Alexander the Great had encroached on its borders and prerogatives; in spite of a heroic resistance, the territory eventually became part of a Hellenistic Greek-speaking kingdom and, finally, was absorbed by the Roman Empire. A desperate revolt against Rome was crushed in A.D. 70 by the emperor Titus (on the arch of Titus in Rome a relief shows the legionaries carrying the menorah, the seven-branched candlestick, in Titus' triumph); a second revolt, against the emperor Hadrian (A.D. 131–134) resulted in the final extermination or removal from Palestine of the Hebrew people. Henceforward, they were the people of the *diaspora*, the "scattering": religious communities in the great cities of the ancient world maintaining local cohesion and universal religious solidarity but stateless, as they were to be all through the centuries until the re-creation, in our time, of the state of Israel.

The political history of the ancient Hebrews ended in a series of disasters; in the field of the arts they left behind them no painting or sculpture and little or no secular literature—no drama, for example, no epic poetry. What they did leave us is a religious literature, written down probably between the eighth and second centuries B.C., which is informed by an attitude different from that of any other nation of the ancient world. It is founded on the idea of one God, the creator of all things, all-powerful and just—a conception of the divine essence and the government of the universe so simple that to us, who have inherited it, it seems obvious. But in its time it was so revolutionary that it made the Hebrews a nation apart, sometimes laughed at, sometimes feared, but always alien.

THE GREEKS

The origin of the peoples who eventually produced the great literature of the eighth to the fourth centuries B.C. is still a mystery. The language they spoke clearly belongs to the great Indo-European family (which includes the Germanic, Celtic, Italic, and Sanskrit language groups) but many of the ancient Greek words and place names have terminations which are definitely not Indo-European—the word for sea *(thalassa)*, for example. The Greeks of historic times were presumably a blend of the native tribes and the Indo-European invaders, en route from the European landmass.

In the last hundred years archaeology has given us a clearer picture than our forefathers had of the level of civilization in early Greece. The second millennium B.C. saw a brilliant culture, called Minoan after the mythical king Minos, flourishing on the large island of Crete, and the citadel of Mycenae and the palace at Pylos show that mainland Greece, in that same period, had centers of wealth and power unsuspected before the excavators discovered the gold masks of the buried kings and the clay tablets covered with strange signs. The decipherment of these signs (published in 1953) revealed that the language of these Myceneans was an early form of Greek. It must have been the memory of these rich kingdoms that inspired Homer's vision

of "Mycenae rich in gold" and the splendid armed hosts that assembled for the attack on Troy.

It was a blurred memory (Homer does not remember the writing, for example, nor the detailed bureaucratic accounting recorded on the tablets) and this is easy to understand: some time in the last century of the millennium the great palaces were destroyed by fire; with them disappeared not only the arts and skills which had created Mycenean wealth but even the system of writing. For the next few hundred poverty-stricken years the Greeks were illiterate and so no written evidence survives for what, in view of our ignorance about so many aspects of it, we call the Dark Age of Greece.

One thing we do know about it: it produced a body of oral epic poetry which was the raw material Homer shaped into the two great poems, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. These Homeric poems, which seem from internal evidence to date from the eighth century B.C. (which is incidentally, or perhaps not incidentally, the century in which the Greeks learned how to write again), played in the subsequent development of Greek civilization the same role that the Old Testament writings had played in Palestine: they became the basis of an education and therefore of a whole culture. Not only did the great characters of the epic serve as models of conduct for later generations of Greeks, but the figures of the Olympian gods retained, in the prayers, poems, and sculpture of the succeeding centuries, the shapes and attributes set down by Homer. The difference between the Greek and the Hebrew hero, between Achilles and Joseph, for example, is remarkable, but the difference between "the God of Abraham and of Isaac" and the Olympians who interfere capriciously in the lives of Hector and Achilles is an unbridgeable chasm. The two conceptions of the power that governs the universe are irreconcilable; and in fact the struggle between them ended, not in synthesis, but in the complete victory of the one and the disappearance of the other. The Greek conception of the nature of the gods and of their relation to man is so alien to us that it is difficult for the modern reader to take it seriously. The Hebrew basis of European Christianity has made it almost impossible for us to imagine a god who can be feared and laughed at, blamed and admired, and still sincerely worshiped. Yet all these are proper attitudes toward the gods on Olympus; they are all implicit in Homer's poems.

The Hebrew conception of God is clearly an expression of an emphasis on those aspects of the universe which imply a harmonious order. The elements of disorder in the universe are, in the story of Creation, blamed on man, and in all Hebrew literature the evidences of disorder are something the writer tries to reconcile with an *a priori* assumption of an all-powerful, just God; he never tampers with the fundamental datum. Just as clearly, the Greeks conceived their gods as an expression of the disorder of the world in which they lived; the Olympian gods, like the natural forces of sea and sky, follow their own will even to the extreme of conflict with each other, and always with a sublime disregard for the human beings who may be affected by the results of their actions. It is true that they are all subjects of a single more powerful god, Zeus, but his authority over them is based only on superior strength; though he cannot be openly resisted, he can be temporarily deceived by his fellow Olympians. And Zeus, although by virtue of his superior power his will is finally accomplished in the matter of Achilles'

wrath, knows limits to his power too; he cannot save the life of his son the Lycian hero Sarpedon. Behind Zeus stands the mysterious power of Fate, to which even he must bow.

Such gods as these, representing as they do the blind forces of the universe which man cannot control, are not thought of as connected with morality. Morality is a human creation, and though the gods may approve of it, they are not bound by it. And violent as they are, they cannot feel the ultimate consequence of violence; death is a human fear, just as the courage to face it is a human quality. There is a double standard, one for gods, one for men, and the inevitable consequence is that our real admiration and sympathy is directed not toward the gods but toward the men. With Hector, and even with Achilles at his worst, we can sympathize; but the gods, though they may excite terror or laughter, can never have our sympathy; we could as easily sympathize with the blizzard or the force of gravity. Homer imposed on Greek literature the anthropocentric emphasis which is its distinguishing mark and its great contribution to the Western mind; though the gods are ever-present characters in the incidents of his poem, his true concern, first and last, is with men and women.

THE CITY-STATES OF GREECE

The stories told in the Homeric poems are set in the age of the Trojan War, which archaeologists (those, that is, who believe that it happened at all) date to the twelfth century B.C. Though the poems do perhaps preserve some faded memories of the Mycenaean age, there is no doubt that the poems as we have them are the creation of later centuries, the tenth to the eighth B.C., the so-called Dark Age which succeeded the collapse (or destruction) of Mycenaean civilization. This was the time of the final settlement of the Greek peoples, an age of invasion and migration, which saw the foundation and growth of many small independent cities. The geography of the Greek peninsula and its scattered islands encouraged this fragmentation: the Greek cities never lost sight of their common Hellenic heritage but it was not enough to unite them except in the face of unmistakable and overwhelming danger, and even then only partially and for a short time. They differed from each other in custom, political constitution, and even dialect: their relations with each other were those of rivals and fierce competitors.

In these cities, constantly at war with each other in the pursuit of more productive land for growing populations, the kings of Homeric society gave way to aristocratic oligarchies, which maintained a strangle hold on the land and the economy of which it was the base. An important safety valve was colonization; in the eighth and seventh centuries B.C. landless men founded new cities (always near the sea and generally owing little or no allegiance to the home base) all over the Mediterranean coast—in Spain, southern France (Marseilles, Nice, and Antibes were all Greek cities), in South Italy (Naples), Sicily (Syracuse), North Africa (Cyrene), all along the coast of Asia Minor (Smyrna, Miletus), and even on the Black Sea as far as Russian Crimea. Many of these new outposts of Greek civilization experienced a faster economic and cultural development than the older cities of the mainland. It was in the cities founded on the Asian coast that the Greeks adapted to their own language the Phoenician system of writing (adding signs for the vowels

to create the first efficient alphabet); its first use was probably for commercial records and transactions, but as literacy became a general condition all over the Greek world in the course of the seventh century B.C. treaties and political decrees were inscribed on stone and literary works written on rolls of paper made from the Egyptian papyrus plant.

ATHENS AND SPARTA

By the beginning of the fifth century B.C. the two most prominent city-states were Athens and Sparta; these two cities led the combined Greek resistance to the Persian invasion of Europe in the years 490 to 479 B.C. The defeat of the solid Persian power by the divided and insignificant Greek cities surprised the world and inspired in Greece, and particularly in Athens, a confidence that knew no bounds.

Athens was at this time a democracy, the first in Western history. It was a direct, not a representative, democracy, for the number of free citizens was small enough to permit the exercise of power by a meeting of the citizens as a body in assembly. Athens' power lay in the fleet with which she had played her decisive part in the struggle against Persia, and with this fleet she rapidly became the leader of a naval alliance which included most of the islands of the Aegean Sea and many Greek cities on the coast of Asia Minor. Sparta, on the other hand, was a totalitarian state, rigidly conservative in government and policy, in which the individual citizen was reared and trained by the state for the state's business, war. The Spartan land army was consequently superior to any other in Greece, and the Spartans controlled, by direct rule or by alliance, the majority of the city-states of the Peloponnese.

These two cities, allies for the war of liberation against Persia, became enemies when the external danger was eliminated. The middle years of the fifth century were disturbed by indecisive hostilities between them and haunted by the probability of full-scale war to come; as the years went by this war came to be accepted as "inevitable" by both sides, and in 431 B.C. it began. It was to end in 404 B.C. with the total defeat of Athens.

Before the beginning of this disastrous war Athenian democracy provided its citizens with a cultural and political environment that was without precedent in the ancient world. The institutions of Athens encouraged the maximum development of the individual's capacities and at the same time inspired the maximum devotion to the interests of the community. It was a moment in history of delicate and precarious balance between the freedom of the individual and the demands of the state. Its uniqueness was emphasized by the complete lack of balance in Sparta, where the necessities of the state annihilated the individual as a creative and independent being. It was the proud boast of the Athenians that without sacrificing the cultural amenities of civilized life they could yet when called upon surpass in policy and war their adversary, whose citizen body was an army in constant training. The Athenians were, in this respect as in others, a nation of amateurs. "The individual Athenian," said Pericles in the speech that is at once the panegyric of Athenian democracy and its epitaph, "in his own person seems to have the power of adapting himself to the most varied forms of action with the utmost versatility and grace." But the freedom of the individual did not, in Athens' great days, produce anarchy. "While we are . . . unconstrained

in our private intercourse," Pericles had observed earlier in his speech, "a spirit of reverence pervades our public acts."

This balance of individual freedom and communal unity was not destined to outlast the century. It went down, with Athens, in the war. Under the mounting pressure of the long conflict, the Athenians lost the "spirit of reverence" that Pericles saw as the stabilizing factor in Athenian democracy. They subordinated all considerations to the immediate interest of the city and surpassed their enemy in the logical ferocity of their actions; they finally fell victims to leaders who carried the process one step further and subordinated all considerations to their own private interest. The war years saw the decay of that freedom in unity which is celebrated in Pericles' speech; by the end of the fifth century Athens was divided internally as well as defeated externally. The individual citizen no longer thought of himself and Athens as one and the same; the balance was gone forever.

One of the solvents of traditional values was an intellectual revolution which was taking place in the advanced Athenian democracy of the last half of the fifth century, a critical evaluation of accepted ideas in every sphere of thought and action. It stemmed from innovations in education. Democratic institutions had created a demand for an education that would prepare men for public life, especially by training them in the art of public speaking. The demand was met by the appearance of the professional teacher, the Sophist, as he was called, who taught, for a handsome fee, not only the techniques of public speaking but also the subjects which gave a man something to talk about—government, ethics, literary criticism, even astronomy. The curriculum of the Sophists, in fact, marks the first appearance in European civilization of the liberal education, just as they themselves were the first professors.

The Sophists were great teachers, but like most teachers they had little or no control over the results of their teaching. Their methods placed an inevitable emphasis on effective presentation of a point of view, to the detriment, and if necessary the exclusion, of anything which might make it less convincing. They produced a generation that had been trained to see both sides of any question and to argue the weaker side as effectively as the stronger, the false as effectively as the true; to argue inferentially from probability in the absence of concrete evidence; to appeal to the audience's sense of its own advantage rather than to accepted moral standards; and to justify individual defiance of general prejudice and even of law by the distinction between "nature" and "convention." These methods dominated the thinking of the Athenians of the last half of the century. The emphasis on the technique of effective presentation of both sides of any case encouraged a relativistic point of view and finally produced a cynical mood which denied the existence of any absolute standards. The canon of probability (which implies an appeal to human reason as the supreme authority) became a critical weapon for an attack on myth and on traditional conceptions of the gods; it had its constructive side, too, for it was the base for historical reconstruction of the unrecorded past and of the theoretical outline of the stages in mankind's progress from savagery to civilization. The rhetorical appeal to the self-interest of the audience, to expediency, became the method of the political leaders of the wartime democracy and the fundamental doctrine of new theories of power-politics: these theories served as cynical justification for the increas-

ing severity of the measures Athens took to terrorize her rebellious subjects. The distinction between "nature" and "convention" is the source of the doctrine of the superman, who breaks free of the conventional restraints of society and acts according to the law of his own "nature." The new spirit in Athens has magnificent achievements to its credit, but it undermined old solid moral convictions. At its roots was a supreme confidence in the human intelligence and a secular view of man's position in the universe that is best expressed in the statement of Protagoras, the most famous of the Sophists: "Man is the measure of all things."

THE DECLINE OF THE CITY-STATE

In the last half of the fifth century the whole traditional basis of individual conduct, the unity and cohesion of the city-state, was undermined, gradually at first by the critical approach of the Sophists and their pupils, and then rapidly, as the war accelerated the process of moral disintegration. "In peace and prosperity," says Thucydides, "both states and individuals are actuated by higher motives . . . but war, which takes away the comfortable provision of daily life, is a hard master, and tends to assimilate men's characters to their conditions." The war brought to Athens the rule of the new politicians who, schooled in the doctrine of the new power-politics, initiated savage reprisals against Athens' rebellious subject-allies and launched the city on an expansionist course which ended in disaster in Sicily (411 B.C.). Seven years later Athens, her last fleet gone, surrendered to the Spartans. A pro-Spartan antidemocratic regime, the Thirty Tyrants, was installed, but soon overthrown; Athens became a democracy again but the confidence and unity of Athens' great age were gone forever. Community and individual were no longer one, and the individual, cast on his own resources for guidance, found only conflicting attitudes which he could not refer to any absolute standards. The mood of postwar Athens oscillated between a fanatic, unthinking reassertion of traditional values and a weary cynicism which wanted only to be left alone. The only thing common to the two extremes was a distrust of intelligence.

In the disillusioned gloom of the years of defeat the Athenians began to feel more and more exasperation with a voice they had been listening to for many years, the voice of Socrates, a stonemason who for most of his adult life had made it his business to discuss with his fellow citizens the great issues of which the Athenians were now so weary—the nature of justice, of truth, of piety. Unlike the Sophists, he did not lecture nor did he charge a fee; his method was dialectic, the search for truth by a process of questions and answers, and his dedication to his mission had kept him poor. But the initial results of his discussions were often infuriatingly like the results of sophistic teaching. By questions and answers he succeeded in exposing the illogicality of his opponent's position, but Socrates did not often provide a substitute for the erroneous belief he had destroyed. Yet it is clear that he did believe in absolute standards, and what is more, he believed they could be discovered by a process of logical inquiry and supported by logical proof. His ethics rested on an intellectual basis. The resentment against him, which came to a head in 399 B.C., is partly explained by the fact that he satisfied neither extreme of the postwar mood. He questioned the old standards in order to

establish new, and he refused to let the Athenians live in peace, for he preached that it was every man's duty to think his way through to the truth. In this last respect he was the prophet of the new age; for him the city and the accepted code were no substitute for the task of self-examination which each individual must set himself and carry through to a conclusion. The characteristic statement of the old Athens was public, in the assembly or the theater; Socrates proclaimed the right and duty of each individual to work out his own salvation and made clear his distrust of public life: "he who will fight for the right . . . must have a private station and not a public one."

The Athenians sentenced him to death on a charge of impiety; they hoped, no doubt, that he would go into exile to escape execution but he remained, as he put it himself, at his post, and they were forced to have the sentence carried out. If they thought they were finished with him, they were sadly mistaken. In the next century Athens became the center for a large group of philosophical schools, all of them claiming to develop and interpret the ideas of Socrates.

The century that followed his death saw the exhaustion of the Greek city-states in constant internecine warfare. Politically and economically bankrupt, they fell under the power of the kingdom of Macedon, in the north, whose king, Philip, combined a ferocious energy with a cynicism which enabled him to take full advantage of the corrupt governments of the city-states. Greek liberty ended at the battle of Chaeronea in 338 B.C., and Philip's son Alexander inherited a powerful army and the political control of all Greece. He led his Macedonian and Greek armies against Persia, and in a few brilliant campaigns became master of an empire which extended into Egypt in the south and to the borders of India in the east. He died at Babylon in 323 B.C., and his empire broke up into a number of independent kingdoms ruled by his generals; but the results of his fantastic achievements were more durable than might have been expected. Into the newly conquered territories came thousands of Greeks who wished to escape from the political futility and economic crisis of the homeland. Wherever they went they took with them their language, their culture, and their typical buildings, the gymnasium and the theater. At Alexandria in Egypt, for example, a Greek library was formed to preserve the texts of Greek literature for the scholars who edited them, a school of Greek poetry flourished, Greek mathematicians and geographers made new advances in science. The Middle East became, as far as the cities were concerned, a Greek-speaking area; and when, some two or three centuries later, the first accounts of Jesus' life and teaching were written down, they were written in Greek, the language on which the cultural homogeneity of the whole area was based.

ROME

When Alexander died at Babylon in 323 B.C., the Italian city of Rome, situated on the Tiber in the western coastal plain, was engaged in a struggle for the control of central Italy. Less than a hundred years later (269 B.C.) Rome, in control of the whole Italian peninsula, was drawn into a hundred-year war against the Phoenician city of Carthage, on the North African coast, from which she emerged mistress of the western Mediterranean. At the end of the first century B.C., in spite of a series of civil wars fought with savage

vindictiveness and on a continental scale, Rome was the capital of an empire which stretched from the Straits of Gibraltar to the frontiers of Palestine. This empire gave peace and orderly government to the Mediterranean area for the next two centuries, and for two centuries after that maintained a desperate but losing battle against the invading savage tribes moving in from the north and east. When it finally went down, it left behind it the ideal of the world-state, an ideal which was to be reconstituted as a reality by the medieval church, which ruled from the same center, Rome, and with a spiritual authority as great as the secular authority it replaced.

The achievements of the Romans, not only their conquests but also their success in consolidating the conquests and organizing the conquered, are best understood in the light of the Roman character. Unlike the Greek, the Roman was above all a practical man. He might have no aptitude for pure mathematics, but he could build an aqueduct to last two thousand years; he was not notable as a political theorist, but he organized a complicated yet stable federation which held Italy loyal to him in the presence of invading armies. He was conservative to the core; his strongest authority was *mos maiorum*, the custom of his predecessors; a monument of this conservatism, the great body of Roman law, is one of his greatest contributions to Western civilization. The quality he most admired was *gravitas*, seriousness of attitude and purpose, and his highest words of commendation were "manliness," "industry," "discipline." Pericles, in his funeral speech, praised the Athenian for his adaptability, versatility, and grace; this would have seemed strange praise to a Roman, whose idea of personal and civic virtue was different. "By her ancient custom and her men the Roman state stands," says Ennius the Roman poet, in a line which by its metrical heaviness emphasizes the stability implied in the key word "stands": *moribus antiquis res* stat *Romana virisque.*

Greek history begins, not with a king, a battle, or the founding of a city, but with an epic poem; the literary achievement preceded the political by many centuries. The Romans, on the other hand, had conquered half the world before they began to write. The stimulus to the creation of Latin literature was the Greek literature which the Romans discovered when, in the second century B.C., they assumed political responsibility for Greece and the Near East. Latin literature began with a translation of the *Odyssey*, made by a Greek prisoner of war, and with the exception of satire, until Latin literature became Christian, the model was always Greek. The Latin writer (especially the poet) borrowed wholesale from his Greek original, not furtively, but openly and proudly, as a tribute to the master from whom he had learned. But this frank acknowledgment of indebtedness should not blind us to the fact that Latin literature is original, and sometimes profoundly so. This is true above all of Virgil, who chose as his theme the coming of the Trojan prince Aeneas to Italy, where he was to found a city from which, in the fullness of time, would come "the Latin race, . . . and the walls of lofty Rome."

When Virgil was born in 70 B.C. the Roman republic, which had conquered and now governed the Mediterranean world, had barely recovered from one civil war and was drifting inexorably toward another. The institutions of the city-state proved inadequate for world government. The civil conflict which

had disrupted the republic for more than a hundred years ended finally in the establishment of a powerful executive. Although the Senate, which had been the controlling body of the republic, retained an impressive share of the power, the new arrangement developed inevitably toward autocracy, the rule of the executive, the emperor, as he was called once the system was stabilized. The first of the long line of Roman emperors who gave stable government to the Roman world during the first two centuries A.D. was Octavius, known generally by his title, Augustus. He had made his way cautiously through the intrigues and bloodshed that followed the murder of his uncle Julius Caesar in 44 B.C., until by 31 B.C., he controlled the western half of the empire. In that year he fought a decisive battle with the ruler of the eastern half of the empire, Mark Antony, who was supported by Cleopatra, queen of Egypt. Octavius' victory at Actium united the empire under one authority and ushered in an age of peace and reconstruction.

For the next two hundred years the successors of Augustus, the Roman emperors, ruled the ancient world with only occasional disturbances, most of them confined to Rome, where emperors who flagrantly abused their immense power—Nero, for example—were overthrown by force. The second half of this period was described by Gibbon, the great historian of imperial Rome, as the period "in the history of the world during which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous." The years A.D. 96–180, those of the "five good emperors," were in fact remarkable: this was the longest period of peace that has ever been enjoyed by the inhabitants of the area (which included Britain, France, all southern Europe, the Middle East, and the whole of North Africa). Trade and agriculture flourished and the cities, with their public baths, theaters, and libraries, offered all the amenities of civilized life. Yet there was apparent, especially in the literature of the second century, a spiritual emptiness; Petronius's *Satyricon* paints a sardonic portrait of the vulgar display and intellectual poverty of the newly rich who can think only in terms of money and possessions. The old religion offered no comfort to those who looked beyond mere material ends; it had been too closely knit into the fabric of the independent city-state and was inadequate for a time in which men were citizens of the world. New religions arose or were imported from the East, universal religions which made their appeal to all nations and classes: the worship of the Egyptian goddess Isis, of the Persian god Mithras, who offered bliss in the life to come, and of the Hebrew prophet Jesus Christ, crucified in Jerusalem and risen from the dead. This was the religion which, working underground, often suppressed (there was a persecution of the Christians under Nero in the first century, another under the last of the "good emperors" Marcus Aurelius in the second), finally triumphed and became the official and later the exclusive religion of the Roman world. As the empire in the third and fourth centuries disintegrated under the never-ending invasions by barbarian tribes from the north, the Church, with its center and spiritual head in Rome, converted the new inhabitants and so made possible the preservation of much of that Latin and Greek literature which was to serve the European Middle Ages and, later, the Renaissance, as a model and a basis for their own great achievements in the arts and letters.

H. M. Orlinsky, *Ancient Israel*, 2nd ed. (1960) is a short but clearly written

outline of the history of Israel up to the return from Babylonian exile. J. B. Bury, *A History of Greece*, 4th ed., revised by Russell Merggs (1975), a well-written, illustrated history of Greece to the death of Alexander the Great, deals with intellectual and cultural matters as well as with war and politics. A perceptive analysis of classical Greek culture is C. M. Bowra, *The Greek Experience* (1957). Michael Grant, *History of Rome* (1978), presents a well-illustrated, eminently readable survey.

THE OLD TESTAMENT

THE CREATION—THE FALL

The religious attitudes of the Hebrews appear in the story that they told of the creation of the world and of man. This creation is the work of one God, who is omnipotent and omniscient, and who creates a perfect and harmonious order. The disorder which we see all around us, physical and moral, is not God's creation but Adam's; it is the consequence of man's disobedience. The story not only reconciles the undeniable existence of evil and disorder in the world with the conception of God's infinite justice, it also attributes to man himself an independence of God, free will, which in this case he had used for evil. The Hebrew God is not limited in His power by other deities, who oppose His will (as in the Greek stories of Zeus and his undisciplined family); His power over inanimate nature is infinite; in all the range of His creation there is only one being able to resist Him—man.

Since God is all-powerful, even this resistance on Adam's part is in some mysterious way a manifestation of God's will; how this can be is not explained by the story, and we are left with the mystery that still eludes us, the coexistence of God's prescient power and man's unrestricted free will.

The story of the Fall of Man ends with a situation in which Adam has earned for himself and his descendants a short life of sorrow relieved only by death. It was the achievement of later Hebrew teachers to carry the story on and develop a concept of a God who is as merciful as He is just, who watches tenderly over the destinies of the creatures who have rebelled against Him, and brings about the possibility of atonement and full reconciliation.

Adam's son Cain is the first man to shed human blood, but though God drives him out to be a wanderer on the face of the earth, He does not kill him, and the brand on Cain's forehead, while it marks him as a murderer, also protects his life—no man is to touch him. Later when the descendants of Adam grow so wicked that God is sorry He has created the human race, He decides to destroy it by sending a universal flood. But He spares one man, Noah, with his family, to beget a new human race, on which God pins His hopes. His rainbow in the sky reminds men of His promise that He will never again let loose the waters. But men do not learn their lesson: they start to build a tower high enough to reach to Heaven, and God is afraid that if they succeed they will then recognize no limit to their ambitions. Yet He does not destroy them; He merely frustrates their purpose by depriving them of their common language.

And yet Man must eventually atone for Adam's act; human guilt must be wiped out by sacrifice. The development of this idea was extended over centuries of thought and suffering. For the Christians, it reached its culmination in the figure of Christ, the Son of God, who as a man pays the full measure due in human suffering and human death. But the idea of the one who suffers for all had long been a major theme in Hebrew religious literature. Not only did there emerge slowly a concept of the Hebrews as a chosen nation that suffers for the rest, but individual figures of Hebrew history and imagination embodied this theme in the form of the story of the suffer-

ing servant whose suffering brings relief to his fellow men and ultimate glory to himself. This is the idea behind the story of Joseph.

JOSEPH

Joseph, his father's favorite son, has a sense of his own great destiny, confirmed by his dreams, which represent him as the first of all his race. He is indeed to be the first, but to become so he must also be the last. He is sold into slavery by his brothers; the savior is rejected by those whom he is to save, as the Hebrews were rejected by their neighbors and as they rejected their own prophets.

With the loss of his liberty, Joseph's trials have only begun. In Egypt after making a new and successful life for himself, he is thrown into prison on a false accusation. He interprets the dream of Pharaoh's butler, who promises, if his interpretation is correct, to secure his release; the butler is restored to freedom and royal favor, but, as is the way of the world, forgets his promise and leaves his comforter in jail. Joseph stays in prison two more years but finally obtains his freedom and becomes Pharaoh's most trusted adviser. When his brothers come from starving Palestine and bow down before him asking for help, he saves them; not only does he give them grain but he also provides a home for his people in Egypt. "I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt," he says to them when he reveals his identity. "God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance."

One of the essential points of this story, and the whole conception of the suffering servant, is the distinction which it emphasizes between an external, secular standard of good and a spiritual, religious standard. In the eyes of the average person, prosperity and righteousness are connected, if not identified; and the sufferer is felt to be one whose misfortune must be explained as a punishment for his wickedness. This feeling is strong in ancient (especially in Greek) literature, but we should not be unduly complacent about our superiority to the ancients in this respect, for the attitude is still with us. It is in fact a basic assumption of the competitive society—the view, seldom expressed but strongly rooted, that the plight of the unfortunate is the result of their own laziness, the wealth of the rich the reward of superior virtue.

The writer of the Joseph story sees in the unfortunate sufferer the savior who is the instrument of God's will; it is because of what he suffers that the sun and the moon and the eleven stars will bow down to Joseph. Yet the story does not emphasize the sufferings of Joseph; he is pictured rather as the man of action who through native ability and divine protection turns the injuries done him into advantages. We are not made to feel the torment in his soul; when he weeps it is because of the memory of what he had suffered and his yearning for his youngest brother, and he is in full control of the situation. And his reward in the things of this world is great. Not only does he reveal himself as the savior of his nation, but he becomes rich and powerful beyond his brothers' dreams, and in a great kingdom. The spiritual and secular standards are at the end of the story combined; Joseph's suffering is neatly balanced by his worldly reward.

JOB

Later Hebrew writers developed a sadder and profounder view. The greatest literary masterpiece of the Old Testament, the Book of Job, is also concerned

with the inadequacy of worldly standards of happiness and righteousness, but the suffering of Job is so overwhelming and so magnificently expressed, that even with our knowledge of its purpose and its meaning it seems excessive. Joseph suffered slavery, exile, and imprisonment, but turned them all to account; Job loses his family and wealth in a series of calamities, which strike one on the other like hammer blows, and is then plagued with a loathsome disease. Unlike Joseph, he is old; he cannot adapt himself and rise above adverse circumstances, and he no longer wishes to live. Except for one thing. He wishes to understand the reason for his suffering.

For his friends the explanation is simple. With the blindness of men who know no standards other than those of this world, they are sure that Job's misfortune must be the result of some wickedness on his part. But Job is confident in his righteousness; his torture is as much mental as physical; he cannot reconcile the fact of his innocence with the calamities that have come upon him with all the decisive suddenness of the hand of God.

The full explanation is never given to him, but it is given to the reader in the two opening chapters of the book. This prologue to the dramatic section of the work gives us the knowledge which is hidden from the participants in the ensuing dialogue; the writer uses the method characteristic of Greek tragedy—irony, the deeper understanding of the dramatic spoken word which is based on the superior knowledge of the audience. The prologue explains God's motive in allowing Job to suffer. It is an important one: God intends to use Job as a demonstration to His skeptical subordinate, Satan, of the fact that a human being can retain faith in God's justice in the face of the greatest imaginable suffering. This motive, which Job does not know and which is never revealed to him, gives to the dialogue between Job and his friends its suspense and its importance; God has rested His case, that humanity is capable of keeping faith in divine justice, against all appearances to the contrary, on this one man.

The arguments of Job's friends are based on the worldly equation, success = virtue. They attempt to undermine Job's faith, not in God, but in himself. ". . . who ever perished, being innocent?" asks Eliphaz, "or where were the righteous cut off?" Job's misfortune is a proof that he must have sinned; all he has to do is to admit his guilt and ask God for pardon, which he will surely receive. He refuses to accept this easy way out, and we know that he is right. In fact, we know from the prologue that he has been selected for misfortune not because he has sinned, but precisely because of his outstanding virtue. "There is none like him in the earth," God says, "a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil." What Job must do is to persevere not only in his faith in God's justice but also in the conviction of his own innocence. He must believe the illogical, accept a paradox. His friends are offering him an easy way out, one which seems to be the way of humility and submission. But it is a false way. And God finally tells them so. "The Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath."

Job's confidence in his own righteousness is not pride, but intellectual honesty. He sees that the problem is much harder than his friends imagine; to let them persuade him of his own guilt would lighten his mental burden by answering the question which tortures him, but his intelligence will not let

him yield. Like Oedipus, he refuses to stop short of the truth; he even uses the same words: "let me alone, that I may speak, and let come on me what will." He finally expresses his understanding and acceptance of the paradox involved in the combination of his suffering with his innocence, but he does so with a human independence and dignity. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him." He sums up his case with a detailed account of the righteousness of his ways, and it is clear that this account is addressed not only to his three friends but also to God. "My desire is, that the Almighty would answer me," he says. His friends are silenced by the majesty and firmness of his statement, they "ceased to answer Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes," but God is moved to reply.

The magnificent poetry of that reply, the voice out of the whirlwind, still does not give Job the full explanation, God's motive in putting him to the torture. It is a triumphant proclamation of God's power and also of His justice, and it silences Job, who accepts it as a sufficient answer. That God does not reveal the key to the riddle even to the man who has victoriously stood the test and vindicated His faith in humanity is perhaps the most significant point in the poem. It suggests that there is not and never will be an explanation of human suffering that man's intelligence can comprehend. The sufferer must, like Job, cling to his faith in himself and in God; he must accept the inexplicable fact that his own undeserved suffering is the working of God's justice.

THE PROPHETS

In the last days of Israel's independence, before conquerors overran the land and transported the population to captivity in the East (an exile mourned in Psalm 137—"By the rivers of Babylon . . ."), a series of prophets reproved the children of Israel for their transgressions and foretold the wrath to come, the end of the kingdom of Israel, and, beyond that, the overthrow of the neighboring kingdoms. The prophet was a man who believed himself to be the spokesman of God, the messenger of a terrifying vision. The horror of the vision of destruction was often too heavy a load for the human mind, and the disbelief and mockery of his hearers tipped the precarious balance so that what might have been merely a strange urgency came often close to madness. The vision of things to come was expressed in magnificent but disconnected images which to the workaday mind of the man in the street seemed only to confirm the suspicion that the prophet was deranged. Amos, Nahum, Jeremiah, and many others poured out their charged and clotted imagery of catastrophe to an unbelieving people.

The prophets were not always messengers of doom; it is in the words of an unnamed prophet (whose writings are included in the Book of Isaiah) that the theme of the one who suffers for others finds its most profound and moving expression. In the earlier versions the sufferer has it all made up to him in the end: Job, like Joseph, has his reward. Job's suffering is greater than Joseph's and it is clear that the writer of the Book of Job shows, alike in the speeches and in the ironic framework of the whole, a profounder understanding of the nature and meaning of suffering than the narrator of the story of Joseph, but like Joseph, Job lives to see the end of his troubles and

has his material reward. "The Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. . . . After this lived Job an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, even four generations."

But in the Song of the Suffering Servant there is no recompense in this life: the suffering ends in death. In this deeper vision there is no reconciliation between the standards of this world and the standards of the higher authority behind the suffering. The one who is to save Israel and the world is not well favored like Joseph: "he hath no form nor comeliness." Nor is he, like Job, "the greatest of all the men of the east"; he is "despised and rejected of men." He suffers for his fellow men: "the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." His suffering knows no limit but death; he is oppressed and afflicted, imprisoned and executed. "He was cut off out of the land of the living" and "he made his grave with the wicked."

The circumstances described here are familiar from other cultures than the Hebrew; they are found in the primitive ritual of many peoples, and ceremonial relics of them still existed in civilized fifth-century Athens. In certain primitive societies, to rid the group of guilt a scapegoat was chosen, who was declared responsible for the misdeeds of all, and who was then mocked, beaten, driven out of the community, and killed. The scapegoat was hated and despised as the embodiment of the guilt of the whole community; his death was the most ignominious imaginable. The memory of some such primitive ritual is unmistakable in the Hebrew song; but its meaning has been utterly changed. It is precisely in the figure of the hated and suffering scapegoat that the Hebrew prophet sees the savior of mankind—an innocent sufferer, "he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth"—and he sees this without visible confirmation; there is no recognition by the brothers, no vindication by a voice out of the whirlwind. It is the highest expression of the Hebrew vision at its saddest and most profound, this portrayal of the savior who comes not in pomp and power but in suffering and meekness, who dies rejected and despised, and who atones for human sin and makes "intercession for the transgressors."

The student will find good background in *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, edited by R. R. Ackroyd and C. F. Evans, vol. I (1970). R. H. Rowley, *The Growth of the Old Testament* (1950), concentrates on the Old Testament; the New Testament is explored historically in M. S. Enslin, *Christian Beginnings* (1938), and C. K. Barrett, *The New Testament Background: Selected Documents* (1956).

The Old Testament[1]

Genesis 1–3. [The Creation—The Fall]

1. In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

1. The text of these selections is that of the King James, or Authorized, Version.

And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.

And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters,[2] and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day.

And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good. And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the third day.

And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the fourth day. And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth. And the evening and the morning were the fifth day.

And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and everything that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good.

2. The firmament is the sky, which seen from below has the appearance of a ceiling; the waters above it are those which come down in the form of rain.

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so. And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

2. Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.

These are generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created,[3] in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, and every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew: for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground. But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground. And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads. The name of the first is Pison: that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; and the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium and the onyx stone. And the

3. This is the beginning of a different account of the Creation, which does not agree in all respects with the first.

name of the second river is Gihon: the same is it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia. And the name of the third river is Hiddekel: that is it which goeth toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river is Euphrates. And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him. And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

3. Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden. And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy

voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the Lord God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat. And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shall thou eat all the days of thy life: and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living. Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them.

And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever: therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

Genesis 4. [The First Murder]

4. And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord. And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest

well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shall rule over him.[4] And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.

And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper? And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground. And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand; When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth. And Cain said unto the Lord, My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me. And the Lord said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the Lord set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him.

Genesis 6–9. [The Flood]

6. . . . And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God. And Noah begat three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Make thee an ark of gopher wood;[5] rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch. And this is the fashion which thou shalt make it of: The length of

4. An obscure sentence. It seems to mean something like: "It (i.e., sin) shall be eager for you, but you must master it." 5. Cypress.

the ark shall be three hundred cubits,[6] the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits. A window[7] shalt thou make to the ark, and in a cubit shall thou finish it above; and the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof; with lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it. And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die. But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee. And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark, to keep them alive with thee; they shall be male and female. Of fowls after their kind, and of cattle after their kind, of every creeping thing of the earth after his kind, two of every sort shall come unto thee, to keep them alive. And take thou unto thee of all food that is eaten, and thou shalt gather it to thee; and it shall be for food for thee, and for them. Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he.

7. . . . And Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters was upon the earth. And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark, because of the waters of the flood. Of clean beasts, and of beasts that are not clean, and of fowls, and of everything that creepeth upon the earth, There went in two and two unto Noah into the ark, the male and the female, as God had commanded Noah. And it came to pass after seven days, that the waters of the flood were upon the earth. In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights. In the selfsame day entered Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, into the ark; They, and every beast after his kind, and all the cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind, and every fowl after his kind, every bird of every sort. And they went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh, wherein is the breath of life. And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him, and the Lord shut him in. And the flood was forty days upon the earth; and the waters increased, and bare up the ark, and it was lift up above the earth. And the waters prevailed, and were increased greatly upon the earth; and the ark went upon the face of the waters. And the waters prevailed

6. A Hebrew measure of length, about one and a half feet. 7. The text is obscure; it may refer to a skylight in the roof.

exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered. Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered. And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man: All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died. And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth, and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark. And the waters prevailed upon the earth an hundred and fifty days.

8. And God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark: and God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters assuaged; The fountains also of the deep and the windows of heaven were stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained; And the waters returned from off the earth continually: and after the end of the hundred and fifty days the waters were abated. And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat. And the waters decreased continually until the tenth month: in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, were the tops of the mountains seen.

And it came to pass at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made: And he sent forth a raven, which went forth to and fro, until the waters were dried up from off the earth. Also he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground; But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark, for the waters were on the face of the whole earth: then he put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark. And he stayed yet another seven days; and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark; And the dove came in to him in the evening; and, lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf plucked off: so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth. And he stayed yet other seven days; and sent forth the dove; which returned not again unto him any more.

And it came to pass in the six hundredth and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried up from off the earth: and Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and, behold, the face of the ground was dry. And in the second month, on the seven and twentieth day of the month, was the earth dried.

And God spake unto Noah, saying, Go forth of the ark, thou, and

thy wife, and thy sons, and thy sons' wives with thee. Bring forth with thee every living thing that is with thee, of all flesh, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth; that they may breed abundantly in the earth, and be fruitful, and multiply upon the earth. And Noah went forth, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him: Every beast, every creeping thing, and every fowl, and whatsoever creepeth upon the earth, after their kinds, went forth out of the ark. And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the Lord smelled a sweet savour; and the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.

9. And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered. Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things. But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat.[8] And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of God made he man. And you, be ye fruitful, and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply therein.

And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; And with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth. And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth. And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall

8. This sentence refers to the dietary laws: blood was drained from the slaughtered animal.

be seen in the cloud: And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant, which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth.

Genesis 11. [The Origin of Languages]

11. And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they[9] journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar;[1] and they dwelt there. And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them throughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime[2] had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower,[3] whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel;[4] because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

Genesis 37–46. [The Story of Joseph]

37. . . . Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report.[5] Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours. And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.

And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and

9. The human race. 1. In Mesopotamia. 2. Bitumen. 3. This story is based on the Babylonian practice of building temples in the form of terraced pyramids (ziggurats). 4. Babylon. 5. Joseph reported their misdeeds. *Father:* Israel.

they hated him yet the more. And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed: for, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf. And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words.

And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me. And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth? And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying.

And his brethren went to feed their father's flock in Shechem. And Israel said unto Joseph, Do not thy brethren feed the flock in Shechem? come, and I will send thee unto them. And he said to him, Here am I. And he said to him, Go, I pray thee, see whether it be well with thy brethren, and well with the flocks; and bring me word again. So he sent him out of the vale of Hebron, and he came to Shechem.

And a certain man found him, and, behold, he was wandering in the field: and the man asked him, saying, What seekest thou? And he said, I seek my brethren: tell me, I pray thee, where they feed their flocks. And the man said, They are departed hence; for I heard them say, Let us go to Dothan. And Joseph went after his brethren, and found them in Dothan. And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him. And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh. Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams. And Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands; and said, Let us not kill him. And Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him; that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again.

And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stripped Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colours that was on him; and they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it. And they sat down to eat bread: and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmeelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt. And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit is it if we slay our brother,

and conceal his blood? Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh. And his brethren were content. Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen;[6] and they[7] drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty pieces of silver: and they[8] brought Joseph into Egypt.

And Reuben returned unto the pit; and, behold, Joseph was not in the pit; and he rent his clothes. And he returned unto his brethren, and said, The child is not; and I, whither shall I go? And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood; and they sent the coat of many colours, and they brought it to their father; and said, This have we found: know now whether it be thy son's coat or no. And he knew it, and said, It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces. And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days. And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him. . . .

39. And Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmeelites, which had brought him down thither. And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all he did to prosper in his hand. And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand. And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field. And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favoured.

And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me. But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand; there is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened

6. The confusion in this passage may be due to the fact that the version we have is a composite of two different versions. 7. The brothers. 8. The Ishmeelites.

not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her. And it came to pass about this time, that Joseph went into the house to do his business; and there was none of the men of the house there within. And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled and got him out. And it came to pass, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and was fled forth, that she called unto the men of her house, and spoke unto them, saying, See, he hath brought in an Hebrew unto us to mock us; he came in unto me to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice: and it came to pass, when he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled, and got him out. And she laid up his garment by her, until his lord came home. And she spake unto him according to these words, saying, The Hebrew servant, which thou hast brought unto us, came in unto me to mock me: and it came to pass, as I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled out. And it came to pass, when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spake unto him, saying, After this manner did thy servant to me; that his wrath was kindled. And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison.

But the Lord was with Joseph, and showed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it. The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the Lord was with him, and that which he did, the Lord made it to prosper.

40. And it came to pass after these things that the butler of the king of Egypt and his baker had offended their lord the king of Egypt. And Pharaoh was wroth against two of his officers, against the chief of the butlers, and against the chief of the bakers. And he put them in ward in the house of the captain of the guard, into the prison, the place where Joseph was bound. And the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he served them: and they continued a season in ward.

And they dreamed a dream both of them, each man his dream in one night, each man according to the interpretation of his dream, the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt, which were bound in the prison. And Joseph came in unto them in the morning, and looked upon them, and, behold, they were sad. And he asked Pharaoh's officers that were with him in the ward of his lord's house, saying, Wherefore look ye so sadly to day? And they said unto him, We have dreamed a dream, and there is no interpreter of it. And

Joseph said unto them, Do not interpretations belong to God? tell me them, I pray you. And the chief butler told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, In my dream, behold, a vine was before me; and in the vine were three branches: and it was as though it budded, and her blossoms shot forth; and the clusters thereof brought forth ripe grapes: and Pharaoh's cup was in my hand: and I took the grapes, and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and I gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand. And Joseph said unto him, This is the interpretation of it: the three branches are three days: yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thine head, and restore thee unto thy place: and thou shalt deliver Pharaoh's cup into his hand, after the former manner when thou wast his butler. But think on me when it shall be well with thee, and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house: for indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews: and here also have I done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon. When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good, he said unto Joseph, I also was in my dream, and, behold, I had three white baskets on my head: and in the uppermost basket there was of all manner of bakemeats for Pharaoh; and the birds did eat them out of the basket upon my head. And Joseph answered and said, This is the interpretation thereof: the three baskets are three days: yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thy head from off thee, and shall hang thee on a tree; and the birds shall eat thy flesh from off thee.

And it came to pass the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast unto all his servants: and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his servants. And he restored the chief butler unto his butlership again; and he gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand. But he hanged the chief baker: as Joseph had interpreted to them. Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgat him.

41. And it came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed: and, behold, he stood by the river. And, behold, there came up out of the river seven well favoured kine[9] and fatfleshed; and they fed in a meadow. And, behold, seven other kine came up after them out of the river, ill favoured and leanfleshed; and stood by the other kine upon the brink of the river. And the ill favoured and leanfleshed kine did eat up the seven well favoured and fat kine. So Pharaoh awoke. And he slept and dreamed the second time: and, behold, seven ears of corn came up upon one stalk, rank[1] and good. And, behold, seven thin ears and blasted with the east wind sprung up after them. And the seven thin ears devoured the seven rank and

9. Cattle. 1. Fat.

full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and, behold, it was a dream. And it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled; and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all the wise men thereof: and Pharaoh told them his dream; but there was none that could interpret them unto Pharaoh.

Then spake the chief butler unto Pharaoh, saying, I do remember my faults this day: Pharaoh was wroth with his servants, and put me in ward in the captain of the guard's house, both me and the chief baker: and we dreamed a dream in one night, I and he; we dreamed each man according to the interpretation of his dream. And there was there with us a young man, an Hebrew, servant to the captain of the guard; and we told him, and he interpreted to us our dreams; to each man according to his dream he did interpret. And it came to pass, as he interpreted to us, so it was; me he restored unto mine office, and him he hanged.

Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon: and he shaved himself, and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it: and I have heard say of thee that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it. And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, In my dream, behold, I stood upon the bank of the river; and, behold, there came up out of the river seven kine, fatfleshed and well favoured; and they fed in a meadow; and, behold, seven other kine came up after them, poor and very ill favoured and leanfleshed, such as I never saw in all the land of Egypt for badness: and the lean and the ill favoured kine did eat up the first seven fat kine; and when they had eaten them up, it could not be known that they had eaten them; but they were still ill favoured, as at the beginning. So I awoke. And I saw in my dream, and, behold, seven ears came up in one stalk, full and good: and, behold, seven ears, withered, thin, and blasted with the east wind, sprung up after them: and the thin ears devoured the seven good ears: and I told this unto the magicians; but there was none that could declare it to me.

And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, The dream of Pharaoh is one: God hath shewed Pharaoh what he is about to do. The seven good kine are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years: the dream is one. And the seven thin and ill favoured kine that came up after them are seven years; and the seven empty ears blasted with the east wind shall be seven years of famine. This is the thing which I have spoken unto Pharaoh: what God is about to do he sheweth unto Pharaoh. Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt: and there shall arise after them seven years of famine; and all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt;

and the famine shall consume the land; and the plenty shall not be known in the land by reason of that famine following; for it shall be very grievous. And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass. Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land[2] of Egypt in the seven plenteous years. And let them gather all the food of those good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities. And that food shall be for store to the land against the seven years of famine, which shall be in the land of Egypt; that the land perish not through the famine.

And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants. And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is? And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art: thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; and he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphnath-paaneah; and he gave him to wife Asenath the daughter of Poti-pherah priest of On. And Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt.

And Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt. And in the seven plenteous years the earth brought forth by handfuls. And he gathered up all the food of the seven years, which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities: the food of the field, which was round about every city, laid he up in the same. And Joseph gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left numbering; for it was without number. And unto Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, which Asenath the daughter of Poti-pherah priest of On bare unto him. And Joseph called the name of the first born Manasseh:[3] For God, said he, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house. And the name of the second called he

2. I.e., of the crop. 3. Meaning "causing to forget."

Ephraim:[4] For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.

And the seven years of plenteousness, that was in the land of Egypt, were ended. And the seven years of dearth began to come, according as Joseph had said: and the dearth was in all lands; but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread: and Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do. And the famine was over all the face of the earth. And Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold unto the Egyptians; and the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt. And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn; because that the famine was so sore in all lands.

42. Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said unto his sons, Why do ye look one upon another? And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live, and not die.

And Joseph's ten brethren went down to buy corn in Egypt. But Benjamin, Joseph's brother, Jacob sent not with his brethren; for he said, Lest peradventure mischief befall him. And the sons of Israel came to buy corn among those that came: for the famine was in the land of Canaan. And Joseph was the governor over the land, and he it was that sold to all the people of the land: and Joseph's brethren came, and bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth. And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, but made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly unto them; and he said unto them, Whence come ye? And they said, From the land of Canaan to buy food. And Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him. And Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed of them, and said unto them, Ye are spies; to see the nakedness of the land ye are come. And they said unto him, Nay, my lord, but to buy food are thy servants come. We are all one man's sons; we are true men, thy servants are no spies. And he said unto them, Nay, but to see the nakedness of the land ye are come. And they said, Thy servants are twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and, behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not. And Joseph said unto them, That is it that I spake unto you, saying, Ye are spies: Hereby ye shall be proved: By the life of Pharaoh ye shall not go forth hence, except your youngest brother come hither. Send one of you, and let him fetch your brother, and ye shall be kept in prison, that your words may be proved, whether there be any truth in you: or else by the life of Pharaoh surely ye are spies. And he put them all together into ward three days. And Joseph

4. Meaning "fruitfulness."

said unto them the third day, This do, and live; for I fear God: if ye be true men, let one of your brethren be bound in the house of your prison: go ye, carry corn for the famine of your houses: but bring your youngest brother unto me; so shall your words be verified, and ye shall not die. And they did so.

And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us. And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? therefore, behold, also his blood is required. And they knew not that Joseph understood them; for he spake unto them by an interpreter. And he turned himself about from them, and wept; and returned to them again, and communed with them, and took from them Simeon, and bound him before their eyes.

Then Joseph commanded to fill their sacks with corn, and to restore every man's money into his sack, and to give them provision for the way: and thus did he unto them. And they laded their asses with the corn, and departed thence. And as one of them opened his sack to give his ass provender in the inn, he espied his money; for, behold, it was in his sack's mouth. And he said unto his brethren, My money is restored; and, lo, it is even in my sack: and their heart failed them, and they were afraid, saying one to another, What is this that God hath done unto us?

And they came unto Jacob their father unto the land of Canaan, and told him all that befell unto them; saying, The man, who is lord of the land, spake roughly to us, and took us for spies of the country. And we said unto him, We are true men; we are no spies: we be twelve brethren, sons of our father; one is not, and the youngest is this day with our father in the land of Canaan. And the man, the lord of the country, said unto us, Hereby shall I know that ye are true men; leave one of your brethren here with me, and take food for the famine of your households, and be gone: and bring your youngest brother unto me: then shall I know that ye are no spies, but that ye are true men: so will I deliver you your brother, and ye shall traffick in the land.

And it came to pass as they emptied their sacks, that, behold, every man's bundle of money was in his sack: and when both they and their father saw the bundles of money, they were afraid. And Jacob their father said unto them, Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me.

And Reuben spake unto his father, saying, Slay my two sons, if I bring him not to thee: deliver him into my hand, and I will bring him to thee again. And he said, My son shall not go down with you;

for his brother is dead, and he is left alone: if mischief befall him by the way in the which ye go, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.

43. And the famine was sore in the land. And it came to pass, when they had eaten up the corn which they had brought out of Egypt, their father said unto them, Go again, buy us a little food. And Judah spake unto him, saying, The man did solemnly protest unto us, saying, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you. If thou wilt send our brother with us, we will go down and buy thee food: but if thou wilt not send him, we will not go down: for the man said unto us, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you. And Israel said, Wherefore dealt ye so ill with me, as to tell the man whether ye had yet a brother? And they said, The man asked us straitly of our state, and of our kindred, saying, Is your father yet alive? have ye another brother? and we told him according to the tenor of these words: could we certainly know that he would say, Bring your brother down? And Judah said unto Israel his father, Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go; that we may live, and not die, both we, and thou, and also our little ones. I will be surety for him; of my hand shalt thou require him: if I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me bear the blame for ever: for except we had lingered, surely now we had returned this second time. And their father Israel said unto them, If it must be so now, do this; take of the best fruits in the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present, a little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds: and take double money in your hand: and the money that was brought again in the mouth of your sacks, carry it again in your hand; peradventure it was an oversight: take also your brother, and arise, go again unto the man: and God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin. If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.

And the men took that present, and they took double money in their hand, and Benjamin; and rose up, and went down to Egypt, and stood before Joseph. And when Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the ruler of his house, Bring these men home, and slay,[5] and make ready; for these men shall dine with me at noon. And the man did as Joseph bade; and the man brought the men into Joseph's house. And the men were afraid, because they were brought into Joseph's house; and they said, Because of the money that was returned in our sacks at the first time are we brought in; that he may seek occasion against us, and fall upon us, and take us for bondmen, and

5. Kill an animal for meat.

our asses. And they came near to the steward of Joseph's house, and they communed with him at the door of the house, and said, O sir, we came indeed down at the first time to buy food; and it came to pass, when we came to the inn, that we opened our sacks, and behold, every man's money was in the mouth of his sack, our money in full weight: and we have brought it again in our hand. And other money have we brought down in our hands to buy food: we cannot tell who put our money in our sacks. And he said, Peace be to you, fear not: your God, and the God of your father, hath given you treasure in your sacks: I had your money. And he brought Simeon out unto them. And the man brought the men into Joseph's house, and gave them water, and they washed their feet; and he gave their asses provender. And they made ready the present against Joseph came at noon: for they heard that they should eat bread there.

And when Joseph came home, they brought him the present which was in their hand into the house, and bowed themselves to him to the earth. And he asked them of their welfare, and said, Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spoke? Is he yet alive? And they answered, Thy servant our father is in good health, he is yet alive. And they bowed down their heads, and made obeisance. And he lifted up his eyes, and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, Is this your younger brother, of whom ye spoke unto me? And he said, God be gracious unto thee, my son. And Joseph made haste; for his bowels did yearn upon his brother: and he sought where to weep; and he entered into his chamber, and wept there. And he washed his face, and went out, and refrained himself and said, Set on bread. And they set on for him by himself, and for them by themselves, and for the Egyptians, which did eat with him, by themselves: because the Egyptians might not eat bread with the Hebrews; for that is an abomination unto the Egyptians. And they sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright, and the youngest according to his youth: and the men marvelled one at another. And he took and sent messes[6] unto them from before him: but Benjamin's mess was five times so much as any of theirs. And they drank, and were merry with him.

44. And he commanded the steward of his house, saying, Fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put every man's money in his sack's mouth. And put my cup, the silver cup, in the sack's mouth of the youngest, and his corn money. And he did according to the word that Joseph had spoken. As soon as the morning was light, the men were sent away, they and their asses. And when they were gone out of the city, and not yet far off, Joseph

6. Portions.

said unto his steward, Up, follow after the men; and when thou dost overtake them, say unto them, Wherefore have ye rewarded evil for good? Is not this it in which my lord drinketh, and whereby indeed he divineth?[7] ye have done evil in so doing.

And he overtook them, and he spake unto them these same words. And they said unto him, Wherefore saith my lord these words? God forbid that thy servants should do according to this thing: behold, the money, which we found in our sacks' mouths, we brought again unto thee out of the land of Canaan: how then should we steal out of thy lord's house silver or gold? With whomsoever of thy servants it be found, both let him die, and we also will be my lord's bondmen. And he said, Now also let it be according unto your words: he with whom it is found shall be my servant; and ye shall be blameless. Then they speedily took down every man his sack to the ground, and opened every man his sack. And he searched, and began at the eldest, and left at the youngest: and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack. Then they rent their clothes, and laded every man his ass, and returned to the city.

And Judah and his brethren came to Joseph's house; for he was yet there: and they fell before him on the ground. And Joseph said unto them, What deed is this that ye have done? wot ye not that such a man as I can certainly divine? And Judah said, What shall we say unto my lord? what shall we speak? or how shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants: behold, we are my lord's servants, both we, and he also with whom the cup is found. And he said, God forbid that I should do so: but the man in whose hand the cup is found, he shall be my servant; and as for you, get you up in peace unto your father.

Then Judah came near unto him, and said, Oh my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not thine anger burn against thy servant: for thou art even as Pharaoh. My lord asked his servants, saying, Have ye a father, or a brother? And we said unto my lord, We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one; and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother, and his father loveth him. And thou saidst unto thy servants, Bring him down unto me, that I may set mine eyes upon him. And we said unto my lord, The lad cannot leave his father: for if he should leave his father, his father would die. And thou saidst unto thy servants, Except your youngest brother come down with you, ye shall see my face no more. And it came to pass when we came up unto thy servant my father, we told him the words of my lord. And our father said, Go again, and buy us a little food. And we said, We cannot go down: if our youngest brother be with us,

7. Joseph's servant is to claim that this is the cup Joseph uses for clairvoyance: the diviner stared into a cup of water and foretold the future.

then will we go down: for we may not see the man's face, except our youngest brother be with us. And thy servant my father said unto us, Ye know that my wife bare me two sons; and the one went out from me, and I said, Surely he is torn in pieces; and I saw him not since: and if ye take this also from me, and mischief befall him, ye shall bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. Now therefore when I come to thy servant my father, and the lad be not with us; seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life; it shall come to pass, when he seeth that the lad is not with us, that he will die: and thy servants shall bring down the gray hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to the grave. For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame to my father for ever. Now therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren. For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me? lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father.

45. Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard. And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence. And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt. Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not: and thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all thou hast: and there will I nourish thee; for yet there are five years of famine; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty. And, behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you. And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen; and

ye shall haste and bring down my father hither. And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck. Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him.

And the fame thereof was heard in Pharaoh's house, saying, Joseph's brethren are come: and it pleased Pharaoh well, and his servants. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Say unto thy brethren, This do ye; lade your beasts, and go, get you unto the land of Canaan; and take your father and your households, and come unto me: and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land. Now thou art commanded, this do ye; take you wagons out of the land of Egypt for your little ones, and for your wives, and bring your father, and come. Also regard not your stuff; for the good of all the land of Egypt is yours. And the children of Israel did so: and Joseph gave them wagons, according to the commandment of Pharaoh, and gave them provision for the way. To all of them he gave each man changes of raiment; but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver, and five changes of raiment. And to his father he sent after this manner; ten asses laden with the good things of Egypt, and ten she-asses laden with corn and bread and meat for his father by the way. So he sent his brethren away, and they departed: and he said unto them, See that ye fall not out by the way.

And they went up out of Egypt, and came into the land of Canaan unto Jacob their father, and told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not. And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived. And Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die.

46. And Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beer-sheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac. And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here am I. And he said, I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes. And Jacob rose up from Beer-sheba: and the sons of Israel carried Jacob their father, and their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to carry him. And they took their cattle, and their goods, which they had gotten in the land of Canaan, and came into Egypt, Jacob, and all his seed with him: his sons, and his sons' sons with him, his daughters, and his sons' daughters, and all his seed brought he with him into Egypt.

Job[8]

1. There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job, and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil. And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters. His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east. And his sons went and feasted in their houses, every one his day;[9] and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them. And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.

Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them. And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord.

And there was a day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: and there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them: and the Sabeans fell upon them, and took them away; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The Chaldeans made out three bands,[1] and fell upon the camels, and have carried them away, yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. While he was yet speaking, there

8. Chapters 1–14, 29–31, 38–42. 9. In rotation at each son's house. 1. Split up into three groups.

came also another, and said, Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: and, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

Then Job arose and rent his mantle,[2] and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, and said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.

2. Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the Lord. And the Lord said unto Satan, From whence comest thou? And Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause. And Satan answered the Lord, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face. And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life.

So went Satan forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown. And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal; and he sat down among the ashes.

Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die. But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips.

Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that was come upon him, they came every one from his own place; Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite: for they had made an appointment together to come to mourn with him and to comfort him. And when they lifted up their eyes afar off, and knew him not, they lifted up their voice, and wept; and they rent every one his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven. So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great.

2. Tore his cloak.

3. After this opened Job his mouth, and cursed his day. And Job spake, and said, Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived. Let that day be darkness; let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it. Let darkness and the shadow of death stain it; let a cloud dwell upon it; let the blackness of the day terrify it. As for that night, let darkness seize upon it; let it not be joined unto the days of the year, let it not come into the number of the months. Lo, let that night be solitary, let no joyful voice come therein. Let them curse it that curse the day,[3] who are ready to raise up their mourning. Let the stars of the twilight thereof be dark; let it look for light, but have none; neither let it see the dawning of the day: because it shut not up the doors of my mother's womb, nor hid sorrow from mine eyes. Why died I not from the womb? Why did I not give up the ghost when I came out of the belly? Why did the knees prevent[4] me? or why the breasts that I should suck? For now should I have lain still and been quiet, I should have slept: then had I been at rest, with kings and counsellors of the earth, which built desolate places for themselves; or with princes that had gold, who filled their houses with silver: or as an hidden untimely birth I had not been; as infants which never saw light. There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest. There the prisoners rest together; they hear not the voice of the oppressor. The small and great are there; and the servant is free from his master. Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul; which long for death, but it cometh not; and dig for it more than for hid treasures; which rejoice exceedingly, and are glad, when they can find the grave? Why is light given to a man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in? For my sighing cometh before I eat, and my roarings are poured out like the waters. For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me. I was not in safety, neither had I rest, neither was I quiet; yet trouble came.

4. Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said, If we assay to commune with thee, wilt thou be grieved? But who can withhold himself from speaking? Behold, thou hast instructed many, and thou hast strengthened the weak hands. Thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees. But now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest; it toucheth thee, and thou art troubled. Is not this thy fear, thy confidence, thy hope, and the uprightness of thy ways?[5] Remember, I pray thee, who ever per-

3. Sorcerers, magicians. A more literal translation of the next clause would read, "who are ready to rouse up leviathan," a dragon that was thought to produce darkness. 4. Receive. 5. A more literal translation of this sentence would read, "Is not thy fear of God thy confidence, and thy hope the uprightness of thy ways?"

ished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off? Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same. By the blast of God they perish, and by the breath of his nostrils are they consumed. The roaring of the lion, and the voice of the fierce lion, and the teeth of the young lions, are broken. The old lion perisheth for lack of prey, and the stout lion's whelps are scattered abroad. Now a thing was secretly brought to me, and mine ear received a little thereof. In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men, fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake. Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up: It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof: an image was before mine eyes, there was silence, and I heard a voice, saying, Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his maker? Behold, he put no trust in his servants; and his angels he charged with folly: How much less in them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth? They are destroyed from morning to evening: they perish for ever without any regarding it. Doth not their excellency which is in them go away? They die, even without wisdom.

5. Call now, if there be any that will answer thee; and to which of the saints wilt thou turn? For wrath killeth the foolish man, and envy slayeth the silly one. I have seen the foolish taking root: but suddenly I cursed his habitation. His children are far from safety, and they are crushed in the gate, neither is there any to deliver them. Whose harvest the hungry eateth up, and taketh it even out of the thorns, and the robber swalloweth up their substance. Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground; yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward. I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause: which doeth great things and unsearchable; marvellous things without number: who giveth rain upon the earth, and sendeth waters upon the fields: to set up on high those that be low; that those which mourn may be exalted to safety. He disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise. He taketh the wise in their own craftiness: and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong. They meet with darkness in the daytime, and grope in the noonday as in the night. But he saveth the poor from the sword, from their mouth, and from the hand of the mighty. So the poor hath hope, and iniquity stoppeth her mouth. Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty: for he maketh sore, and bindeth up: he woundeth, and his hands make whole. He shall deliver thee in six troubles: yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee. In famine he shall redeem thee from death: and in war from the power of the

sword. Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue: neither shalt thou be afraid of destruction when it cometh. At destruction and famine thou shalt laugh: neither shalt thou be afraid of the beasts of the earth. For thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field: and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee. And thou shalt know that thy tabernacle[6] shall be in peace; and thou shalt visit thy habitation, and shalt not sin. Thou shalt know also that thy seed shall be great, and thine offspring as the grass of the earth. Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season. Lo this, we have searched it, so it is; hear it, and know thou it for thy good.

6. But Job answered and said, Oh that my grief were thoroughly weighed, and my calamity laid in the balances together! For now it would be heavier than the sand of the sea: therefore my words are swallowed up.[7] For the arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit: the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me. Doth the wild ass bray when he hath grass? or loweth the ox over his fodder?[8] Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt? or is there any taste in the white of an egg? The things that my soul refused to touch are as my sorrowful meat.[9] Oh that I might have my request; and that God would grant me the thing that I long for! Even that it would please God to destroy me; that he would let loose his hand, and cut me off! Then should I yet have comfort; yea, I would harden myself in sorrow: let him not spare; for I have not concealed[1] the words of the Holy One. What is my strength, that I should hope? and what is mine end, that I should prolong my life? Is my strength the strength of stones? or is my flesh of brass? Is not my help in me? and is wisdom driven quite from me?[2] To him that is afflicted pity should be shewed from his friend; but he forsaketh the fear of the Almighty. My brethren have dealt deceitfully as a brook, and as the stream of brooks they pass away; which are blackish by reason of the ice, and wherein the snow is hid: what time they wax warm, they vanish: when it is hot, they are consumed out of their place. The paths of their way are turned aside; they go to nothing, and perish. The troops of Tema looked, the companies of Sheba waited for them. They were confounded because they had hoped;[3] they came thither, and were ashamed. For now ye are nothing; ye see my casting down, and are afraid. Did I say, Bring

6. Tent. 7. A more literal translation of this clause would read, "therefore have my words been rash." Job recognizes the exaggeration of his first outburst. 8. Animals do not complain without reason; therefore when a rational man complains, he must have some justification for it. 9. More literally, "My soul refuseth to touch them, they are as loathsome meat to me." He is referring to the statements of his friends. 1. More literally, "denied." 2. More literally, "Is not my help within me gone, and is not wisdom driven quite away from me." 3. The caravans reached the springs they had counted on and found them dry.

unto me? or, Give a reward for me of your substance? or, Deliver me from the enemy's hand? or, Redeem me from the hand of the mighty? Teach me, and I will hold my tongue: and cause me to understand wherein I have erred. How forcible are right words! But what doth your arguing reprove? Do ye imagine to reprove words, and the speeches of one that is desperate, which are as wind? Yea, ye overwhelm the fatherless, and ye dig a pit for your friend. Now therefore be content, look upon me; for it is evident unto you if I lie. Return, I pray you, let it not be iniquity; yea, return again, my righteousness is in it. Is there iniquity in my tongue? Cannot my taste discern perverse things?

7. Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth? Are not his days also like the days of an hireling? As a servant earnestly desireth the shadow,[4] and as an hireling looketh for the reward of his work: so am I made to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed to me. When I lie down, I say, When shall I arise, and the night be gone? and I am full of tossings to and fro unto the dawning of the day. My flesh is clothed with worms and clods of dust; my skin is broken, and become loathsome. My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and are spent without hope. O remember that my life is wind: mine eye shall no more see good. The eye of him that hath seen me shall see me no more: thine eyes are upon me, and I am not. As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away: so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more. He shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him any more. Therefore I will not refrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul. Am I a sea, or a whale, that thou settest a watch over me?[5] When I say, My bed shall comfort me, my couch shall ease my complaint; then thou scarest me with dreams, and terrifiest me through visions: so that my soul chooseth strangling, and death rather than my life. I loathe it; I would not live alway: let me alone; for my days are vanity. What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him? and that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him? and that thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment? How long wilt thou not depart from me, nor let me alone till I swallow down my spittle?[6] I have sinned; what shall I do unto thee, O thou preserver[7] of men? Why hast thou set me as a mark against thee, so that I am a burden to myself? And why dost thou not pardon my transgression, and take away mine iniquity? For now shall I sleep in the dust; and thou shalt seek me in the morning, but I shall not be.

4. Evening, the end of the working day. 5. Job, now addressing God directly, compares his situation with that of the sea monster whom a god fought against in the Babylonian myth. He reproves God for exerting His power against anything as small as himself. 6. Even for a moment. 7. More literally, "watcher."

8. Then answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said, How long wilt thou speak these things? and how long shall the words of thy mouth be like a strong wind? Doth God pervert judgment? or doth the Almighty pervert justice? If thy children have sinned against him, and he have cast them away for their transgression; if thou wouldest seek unto God betimes, and make thy supplication to the Almighty; if thou wert pure and upright; surely now he would awake for thee, and make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous. Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase. For enquire, I pray thee, of the former age, and prepare thy self to the search of their fathers: (For we are but of yesterday, and know nothing, because our days upon earth are a shadow:) shall not they teach thee, and tell thee, and utter words out of their heart? Can the rush grow up without mire?[8] Can the flag grow without water? Whilst it is yet in his greenness, and not cut down, it withereth before any other herb. So are the paths of all that forget God; and the hypocrite's hope shall perish: whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be a spider's web. He shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand: he shall hold it fast, but it shall not endure. He is green before the sun, and his branch shooteth forth in his garden. His roots are wrapped about the heap, and seeth the place of stones. If he destroy him from his place, then it shall deny him, saying, I have not seen thee. Behold, this is the joy of his way, and out of the earth shall others grow. Behold, God will not cast away a perfect man, neither will he help the evil doers: till he fill thy mouth with laughing, and thy lips with rejoicing. They that hate thee shall be clothed with shame; and the dwelling place of the wicked shall come to nought.

9. Then Job answered and said, I know it is of a truth: but how should man be just with God? If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand.[9] He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered? Which removeth the mountains, and they know not: which overturneth them in his anger. Which shaketh the earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof tremble. Which commandeth the sun, and it riseth not; and sealeth up the stars. Which alone spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea. Which maketh Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades, and the chambers of the south. Which doeth great things past finding out; yea, and wonders without number. Lo, he goeth by me, and I see him not: he passeth on also, but I perceive him not. Behold, he taketh away, who can hinder him? Who will say unto him, What doest thou? If God will not withdraw his anger, the proud helpers do stoop under him. How

8. The papyrus which grows rapidly when the Nile is high, but withers at once when the waters go down. 9. One of a thousand questions.

much less shall I answer him, and choose out my words to reason with him? Whom, though I were righteous, yet would I not answer, but I would make supplication to my judge. If I had called, and he had answered me; yet would I not believe that he had hearkened unto my voice. For he breaketh me with a tempest, and multiplieth my wounds without cause. He will not suffer me to take my breath, but filleth me with bitterness. If I speak of strength, lo, he is strong: and if of judgment, who shall set me a time to plead? If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse. Though I were perfect, yet would I not know my soul: I would despise my life. This is one thing, therefore I said it, He destroyeth the perfect and the wicked. If the scourge slay suddenly, he will laugh at the trial of the innocent. The earth is given into the hand of the wicked: he covereth the faces of the judges thereof; if not, where, and who is he? Now my days are swifter than a post:[1] they flee away, they see no good. They are passed away as the swift ships: as the eagle that hasteth to the prey. If I say, I will forget my complaint, I will leave off my heaviness, and comfort myself: I am afraid of all my sorrows, I know that thou wilt not hold me innocent. If I be wicked, why then labour I in vain? If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean; yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes abhor me. For he is not a man, as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment. Neither is there any daysman[2] betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both. Let him take his rod away from me, and let not his fear terrify me: then would I speak, and not fear him; but it is not so with me.

10. My soul is weary of my life; I will leave my complaint upon[3] myself; I will speak in the bitterness of my soul. I will say unto God, Do not condemn me; shew me wherefore thou contendest with me. Is it good unto thee that thou shouldest oppress, that thou shouldest despise the work of thine hands, and shine upon the counsel of the wicked? Hath thou eyes of flesh? or seest thou as man seeth? Are thy days as the days of man? Are thy years as man's days,[4] that thou enquirest after mine iniquity, and searchest after my sin? Thou knowest that I am not wicked; and there is none that can deliver out of thine hand. Thine hands have made me and fashioned me together round about; yet thou dost destroy me. Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast made me as the clay; and wilt thou bring me into dust again? Hast thou not poured me out as milk and curdled me like cheese? Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh, and hast fenced me with bones and sinews. Thou hast granted me life and favour,

1. Courier. 2. Arbitrator. 3. On behalf of. *Leave*: Give free course to. 4. Is your time, like man's, short, so that you have to judge hastily?

and thy visitation hath preserved my spirit. And these things hast thou hid in thine heart: I know that this is with thee.[5] If I sin, then thou markest me, and thou wilt not acquit me from mine iniquity. If I be wicked, woe unto me; and if I be righteous, yet will I not lift up my head. I am full of confusion; therefore see thou mine affliction; for it increaseth. Thou huntest me as a fierce lion: and again thou shewest thyself marvellous upon me. Thou renewest thy witnesses against me,[6] and increasest thine indignation upon me; changes and war are against me. Wherefore then hast thou brought me forth out of the womb? Oh that I had given up the ghost, and no eye had seen me! I should have been as though I had not been; I should have been carried from the womb to the grave. Are not my days few? Cease then, and let me alone, that I may take comfort a little before I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness and the shadow of death: a land of darkness, as darkness itself; and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness.

11. Then answered Zophar the Naamathite, and said, Should not the multitude of words be answered? And should a man full of talk be justified? Should thy lies make men hold their peace? And when thou mockest, shall no man make thee ashamed? For thou hast said, My doctrine is pure, and I am clean in thine eyes. But oh that God would speak, and open his lips against thee; and that he would shew thee the secrets of wisdom, that they are double to that which is! Know therefore that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth. Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? Deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea. If he cut off, and shut up, or gather together,[7] then who can hinder him? For he knoweth vain men: he seeth wickedness also; will he not then consider it? For vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass's colt. If thou prepare thine heart, and stretch out thine hands toward him; if iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles. For then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot; yea, thou shalt be stedfast, and shalt not fear: because thou shalt forget thy misery, and remember it as waters that pass away: and thine age shall be clearer than the noonday; thou shalt shine forth, thou shalt be as the morning. And thou shalt be secure, because there is hope; yea, thou shalt dig about thee,[8] and

5. The meaning is: "My destruction *(this)* is your purpose." Job accuses God of planning his destruction while showing favor to him. 6. His afflictions, which prove (to his friends) his guilt. 7. For judgment. 8. Search. The master inspects his property before retiring.

thou shalt take thy rest in safety. Also thou shalt lie down, and none shall make thee afraid; yea, many shall make suit unto thee. But the eyes of the wicked shall fail, and they shall not escape, and their hope shall be as the giving up of the ghost.

12. And Job answered and said, No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you. But I have understanding as well as you; I am not inferior to you: yea, who knoweth not such things as these? I am as one mocked of his neighbour, who calleth upon God, and he answered him: the just upright man is laughed to scorn. He that is ready to slip with his feet is as a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease. The tabernacles of robbers prosper, and they that provoke God are secure; into whose hand God bringeth abundantly. But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee: and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this? In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind. Doth not the ear try words? and the mouth taste his meat? With the ancient is wisdom; and in length of days understanding. With him is wisdom and strength, he hath counsel and understanding. Behold, he breaketh down, and it cannot be built again: he shutteth up a man, and there can be no opening. Behold, he withholdeth the waters, and they dry up: also he sendeth them out, and they overturn the earth. With him is strength and wisdom: the deceived and the deceiver are his. He leadeth counsellors away spoiled, and maketh the judges fools. He looseth the bond of kings, and girdeth their loins with a girdle. He leadeth princes away spoiled, and overthroweth the mighty. He removeth away the speech of the trusty, and taketh away the understanding of the aged. He poureth contempt upon princes, and weakeneth the strength of the mighty. He discovereth deep things out of darkness, and bringeth out to light the shadow of death. He increaseth the nations, and destroyeth them: he enlargeth the nations, and straiteneth them again.[9] He taketh away the heart of the chief of the people of the earth, and causeth them to wander in a wilderness where there is no way. They grope in the dark without light, and he maketh them to stagger like a drunken man.

13. Lo, mine eye hath seen all this, mine ear hath heard and understood it. What ye know, the same do I know also: I am not inferior unto you. Surely I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to reason with God. But ye are forgers of lies, ye are all physicians

9. Contracts their boundaries.

of no value. O that ye would altogether hold your peace! and it should be your wisdom. Hear now my reasoning, and hearken to the pleadings of my lips. Will ye speak wickedly for God? and talk deceitfully for him? Will ye accept[1] his person? Will ye contend for God? Is it good that he should search you out? or as one man mocketh another, do ye so mock him? He will surely reprove you, if ye do secretly accept persons.[2] Shall not his excellency make you afraid? and his dread fall upon you? Your remembrances[3] are like unto ashes, your bodies to bodies of clay. Hold your peace, let me alone, that I may speak, and let come on me what will. Wherefore do I take my flesh in my teeth,[4] and put my life in mine hand? Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him. He also shall be my salvation: for an hypocrite shall not come before him. Hear diligently my speech, and my declaration with your ears. Behold now, I have ordered my cause; I know that I shall be justified. Who is he that will plead with me?[5] for now, if I hold my tongue, I shall give up the ghost. Only do not two things unto me: then will I not hide myself from thee.[6] Withdraw thine hand far from me: and let not thy dread make me afraid. Then call thou, and I will answer: or let me speak, and answer thou me. How many are mine iniquities and sins? Make me to know my transgression and my sin. Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and holdest me for thine enemy? Wilt thou break a leaf driven to and fro? and wilt thou pursue the dry stubble? For thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth. Thou puttest my feet also in the stocks, and lookest narrowly unto all my paths; thou settest a print upon the heels of my feet. And he, as a rotten thing, consumeth, as a garment that is moth eaten.

14. Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not. And dost thou open thine eyes upon such an one, and bringest me into judgment with thee? Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one. Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass; turn from him, that he may rest, till he shall accomplish, as an hireling, his day. For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground; yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant. But man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the

1. Respect. 2. This phrase seems to mean something like, "back the winning side for personal reasons." 3. Memorable sayings. 4. Like a wild beast at bay, defending its life with its teeth. 5. Accuse me. 6. He now addresses himself directly to God.

ghost, and where is he? As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up: so man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep. O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me! If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change[7] come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to[8] the work of thine hands. For now thou numberest my steps: dost thou not watch over my sin? My transgression is sealed up in a bag, and thou sewest up mine iniquity. And surely the mountain falling cometh to nought, and the rock is removed out of his place. The waters wear the stones: thou washest away the things which grow out of the dust of the earth; and thou destroyest the hope of man. Thou prevailest for ever against him, and he passeth; thou changest his countenance, and sendest him away. His sons come to honour, and he knoweth it not; and they are brought low, but he perceiveth it not of them. But his flesh upon him shall have pain, and his soul within him shall mourn.

29. Moreover Job continued his parable, and said, Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; when his candle shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness; as I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle; when the Almighty was yet with me, when my children were about me; when I washed my steps with butter and the rock poured me out rivers of oil; when I went out to the gate[9] through the city, when I prepared my seat in the street! The young men saw me, and hid themselves: and the aged arose, and stood up. The princes refrained talking, and laid their hand on their mouth. The nobles held their peace, and their tongue cleaved to the roof of their mouth. When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me: because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness, and it clothed me: my judgment was as a robe and a diadem. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor: and the cause which I knew not I searched out. And I brake the jaws of the wicked, and plucked the spoil out of his teeth. Then I said, I shall die in my nest, and I shall multiply my days as the sand. My root was spread out by the waters, and the dew lay all night upon my branch. My glory was fresh in me, and my bow was renewed in my

7. Release. 8. For. 9. The town meeting place and law court was just inside the gate.

hand. Unto me men gave ear, and waited, and kept silence at my counsel. After my words they spake not again; and my speech dropped upon them. And they waited for me as for the rain; and they opened their mouth wide as for the latter rain. If I laughed on them, they believed it not; and the light of my countenance they cast not down. I chose out their way, and sat chief, and dwelt as a king in the army, as one that comforteth the mourners.

30. But now they that are younger than I have me in derision, whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock. Yea, whereto might the strength of their hands profit me,[1] in whom old age was perished? For want and famine they were solitary; fleeing into the wilderness in former time desolate and waste. Who cut up mallows by the bushes, and juniper roots for their meat. They were driven forth from among men, (they cried after them as after a thief;) to dwell in the cliffs of the valleys, in caves of the earth, and in the rocks. Among the bushes they brayed; under the nettles they were gathered together. They were children of fools, yea, children of base men: they were viler than the earth. And now am I their song, yea, I am their byword. They abhor me, they flee far from me, and spare not to spit in my face. Because he hath loosed my cord, and afflicted me, they have also let loose the bridle before me. Upon my right hand rise the youth; they push away my feet, and they raise up against me the ways of their destruction. They mar my path, they set forward my calamity, they have no helper. They came upon me as a wide breaking in of waters: in the desolation they rolled themselves upon me. Terrors are turned upon me: they pursue my soul as the wind: and my welfare passeth away as a cloud. And now my soul is poured out upon[2] me; the days of affliction have taken hold upon me. My bones are pierced in me in the night season: and my sinews take no rest. By the great force of my disease is my garment changed: it bindeth me about as the collar of my coat. He hath cast me into the mire, and I am become like dust and ashes. I cry unto thee, and thou dost not hear me: I stand up, and thou regardest me not. Thou art become cruel to me: with thy strong hand thou opposest thyself against me. Thou liftest me up to the wind; thou causest me to ride upon it, and dissolvest my substance. For I know that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living. Howbeit he will not stretch out his hand to the grave, though they cry in his destruction. Did not I weep for him that was in trouble? Was not my soul grieved for the poor? When I looked for good, then evil came unto me: and when I waited for light, there came darkness. My bowels boiled, and rested not: the days of affliction

1. They were too old to work. 2. Within.

prevented me. I went mourning without the sun: I stood up, and I cried in the congregation. I am a brother to dragons, and a companion to owls. My skin is black upon me, and my bones are burned with heat. My harp also is turned to mourning, and my organ[3] into the voice of them that weep.

31. I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid? For what portion of God is there from above? and what inheritance of the Almighty from on high? Is not destruction to the wicked? and a strange punishment to the workers of iniquity? Doth not he see my ways, and count all my steps? If I have walked with vanity, or if my foot hath hasted to deceit; let me be weighed in an even balance, that God may know mine integrity. If my step hath turned out of the way, and mine heart walked after mine eyes, and if any blot hath cleaved to mine hands; then let me sow, and let another eat; yea, let my offspring be rooted out. If mine heart have been deceived by a woman, or if I have laid wait at my neighbour's door; then let my wife grind unto another, and let others bow down upon her. For this is an heinous crime; yea, it is an iniquity to be punished by the judges. For it is a fire that consumeth to destruction, and would root out all mine increase.

If I did despise the cause of my manservant or of my maidservant, when they contended with me; what then shall I do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him? Did not he that made me in the womb make him? and did not one fashion us in the womb? If I have withheld the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail; or have eaten my morsel myself alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof; (For from my youth he was brought up with me, as with a father, and I have guided her from my mother's womb;) if I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering; if his loins have not blessed me, and if he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep; if I have lifted up my hand against the fatherless, when I saw my help in the gate:[4] then let mine arm fall from my shoulder blade, and mine arm be broken from the bone. For destruction from God was a terror to me, and by reason of his highness I could not endure. If I have made gold my hope, or have said to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence; if I rejoiced because my wealth was great, and because mine hand had gotten much; if I beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness; and my heart hath been secretly enticed, or my mouth hath kissed my hand:[5] this also were an iniquity to be punished by the judge: for I should have denied the God that is above.

3. Pipe. 4. The gate is the court; the clause means, "when I had influence in the court."
5. Idolatrous acts of worship of the sun and moon.

If I rejoiced at the destruction of him that hated me, or lifted up myself when evil found him: neither have I suffered my mouth to sin by wishing a curse to his soul. If the men of my tabernacle said not, Oh that we had of his flesh! We cannot be satisfied. The stranger did not lodge in the street: but I opened my doors to the traveller. If I covered my transgressions as Adam, by hiding mine iniquity in my bosom: did I fear a great multitude, or did the contempt of families terrify me, that I kept silence, and went not out of the door? Oh that one would hear me! Behold, my desire is, that the Almighty would answer me, and that mine adversary had written a book. Surely I would take it upon my shoulder, and bind it as a crown to me. I would declare unto him the number of my steps; as a prince would I go near unto him. If my land cry against me, or that the furrows likewise thereof complain; if I have eaten the fruits thereof without money, or have caused the owners thereof to lose their life: let thistles grow instead of wheat, and cockle instead of barley. The words of Job are ended.

38. Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof; when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? Or who shut up the sea with doors, when it brake forth, as if it had issued out of the womb? When I made the cloud the garment thereof, and thick darkness a swaddlingband for it, and brake up for it my decreed place,[6] and set bars and doors, and said, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed? Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days; and caused the dayspring[7] to know his place; that it might take hold of the ends of the earth, that the wicked might be shaken out of it? It is turned as clay to the seal;[8] and they[9] stand as a garment. And from the wicked their light is withholden, and the high arm shall be broken. Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? or hast thou walked in the search of the depth? Have the gates of death been opened unto thee? or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death? Hast thou perceived the breadth of the earth? Declare if thou knowest it all. Where is the way where light dwelleth? And as for darkness, where is the place thereof, that thou shouldest take it to the bound thereof, and that thou shouldest know the paths to

6. The broken coastline. 7. Dawn. 8. More literally, "changed as clay under the seal."
9. All things. God is describing the moment of the creation of the universe.

the house thereof? Knowest thou it, because thou wast then born? or because the number of thy days is great? Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow? or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail, which I have reserved against the time of trouble, against the day of battle and war? By what way is the light parted, which scattereth the east wind upon the earth? Who hath divided a watercourse for the overflowing of waters, or a way for the lightning of thunder; to cause it to rain on the earth, where no man is; on the wilderness, wherein there is no man; to satisfy the desolate and waste ground; and to cause the bud of the tender herb to spring forth? Hath the rain a father? or who hath begotten the drops of dew? Out of whose womb came the ice? And the hoary frost of heaven, who hath gendered it? The waters are hid as with a stone, and the face of the deep is frozen. Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth[1] in his season? or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons? Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? Canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth? Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds, that abundance of waters may cover thee? Canst thou send lightnings, that they may go, and say unto thee, Here we are? Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts? or who hath given understanding to the heart? Who can number the clouds in wisdom? or who can stay the bottles of heaven, when the dust groweth into hardness, and the clods cleave fast together? Wilt thou hunt the prey for the lion? or fill the appetite of the young lion, when they couch in their dens, and abide in the covert to lie in wait? Who provideth for the raven his food? when his young ones cry unto God, they wander for lack of meat.

39. Knowest thou the time when the wild goats of the rock bring forth? or canst thou mark when the hinds do calve? Canst thou number the months that they fulfil? or knowest thou the time when they bring forth? They bow themselves, they bring forth their young ones, they cast out their sorrows. Their young ones are in good liking, they grow up with corn; they go forth, and return not unto them. Who hath sent out the wild ass free? or who hath loosed the bands of the wild ass? Whose house I have made the wilderness, and the barren land his dwellings. He scorneth the multitude of the city, neither regardeth he the crying of the driver. The range of the mountains is his pasture, and he searcheth after every green thing. Will the unicorn[2] be willing to serve thee, or abide by thy crib? Canst thou bind the unicorn with his band in the furrow? or will he harrow the valleys after thee? Wilt thou trust him, because his strength is great? or wilt thou leave thy labour to him? Wilt thou believe him, that he will

1. Meaning disputed; it may be a name for the signs of the zodiac, or for some particular constellation. 2. The Hebrew has "wild ox."

bring home thy seed, and gather it into thy barn? Gavest thou the goodly wings unto the peacocks? or wings and feathers unto the ostrich? Which leaveth her eggs in the earth, and warmeth them in dust, and forgetteth that the foot may crush them, or that the wild beast may break them. She is hardened against her young ones, as though they were not hers: her labour is in vain without fear;[3] because God hath deprived her of wisdom, neither hath he imparted to her understanding. What time she lifteth up herself on high, she scorneth the horse and his rider. Hast thou given the horse strength? Hast thou clothed his neck with thunder? Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper? The glory of his nostrils is terrible. He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength: he goeth on to meet the armed men. He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted; neither turneth he back from the sword. The quiver rattleth against him, the glittering spear and the shield. He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage: neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet. He saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha; and he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting. Doth the hawk fly by thy wisdom, and stretch her wings toward the south? Doth the eagle mount up at thy command, and make her nest on high? She dwelleth and abideth on the rock, upon the crag of the rock, and the strong place. From thence she seeketh the prey, and her eyes behold afar off. Her young ones also suck up blood: and where the slain are, there is she.

40. Moreover the Lord answered Job, and said, Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? He that reproveth God, let him answer it.

Then Job answered the Lord, and said, Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken; but I will not answer: yea, twice; but I will proceed no further.

Then answered the Lord unto Job out of the whirlwind, and said, Gird up thy loins now like a man: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. Wilt thou also disannul my judgment? Wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous? Hast thou an arm like God: or canst thou thunder with a voice like him? Deck thyself now with majesty and excellency; and array thyself with glory and beauty. Cast abroad the rage of thy wrath: and behold every one that is proud, and abase him. Look on every one that is proud, and bring him low; and tread down the wicked in their place. Hide them in the dust together; and bind their faces in secret. Then will I also confess unto thee that thine own right hand can save thee.

Behold now behemoth,[4] which I made with thee; he eateth grass

3. Though her labor is in vain, she is without fear.
4. Generally identified with the hippopotamus.

as an ox. Lo now, his strength is in his loins, and his force is in the navel of his belly. He moveth his tail like a cedar: the sinews of his stone[5] are wrapped together. His bones are as strong pieces of brass; his bones are like bars of iron. He is the chief of the ways of God: he that made him can make his sword to approach unto him. Surely the mountains bring him forth food, where all the beasts of the field play. He lieth under the shady trees, in the covert of the reed, and fens. The shady trees cover him with their shadow; the willows of the brook compass him about. Behold, he drinketh up a river, and hasteth not: he trusteth that he can draw up Jordan into his mouth. He taketh it with his eyes:[6] his nose pierceth through snares.

41. Canst thou draw out leviathan[7] with an hook? or his tongue with a cord which thou lettest down? Canst thou put an hook into his nose? or bore his jaw through with a thorn? Will he make many supplications unto thee? will he speak soft words unto thee? Will he make a covenant with thee? wilt thou take him for a servant for ever? Wilt thou play with him as with a bird? or wilt thou bind him for thy maidens? Shall the companions make a banquet of him? Shall they part him among the merchants? Canst thou fill his skin with barbed irons? or his head with fish spears? Lay thine hand upon him, remember the battle, do no more. Behold, the hope of him is in vain: shall not one be cast down even at the sight of him? None is so fierce that dare stir him up: who then is able to stand before me? Who hath prevented[8] me, that I should repay him? Whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine. I will not conceal his parts, nor his power, nor his comely proportion. Who can discover the face of his garment?[9] or who can come to him with his double bridle? Who can open the doors of his face? His teeth are terrible round about. His scales are his pride, shut up together as with a close seal. One is so near to another, that no air can come between them. They are joined one to another, they stick together, that they cannot be sundered. By his neesings[1] a light doth shine, and his eyes are like the eyelids of the morning. Out of his mouth go burning lamps, and sparks of fire leap out. Out of his nostrils goeth smoke, as out of a seething pot or caldron. His breath kindleth coals, and a flame goeth out of his mouth. In his neck remaineth strength, and sorrow is turned into joy before him. The flakes of his flesh are joined together: they are firm in themselves; they cannot be moved. His heart is as firm as a stone; yea, as hard as a piece of the nether millstone. When he raiseth up himself, the mighty are afraid: by reason of breakings they purify themselves.[2] The sword of him that layeth at him cannot hold:

5. More literally, "thighs." 6. Obscure in the original; probably, "None can attack him in the eyes." 7. Here probably the crocodile. 8. Given anything to me first. 9. His scales. *Discover*: strip off. 1. His breath (compare, "sneeze"). The vapor exhaled by the crocodile appears luminous in the sunlight. 2. A corrupt text. The clause probably should read, "in consternation they are beside themselves."

the spear, the dart, nor the habergeon. He esteemeth iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood. The arrow cannot make him flee: sling-stones are turned with him into stubble. Darts are counted as stubble: he laugheth at the shaking of a spear. Sharp stones are under him: he spreadeth sharp pointed things upon the mire. He maketh the deep to boil like a pot: he maketh the sea like a pot of ointment. He maketh a path to shine after him; one would think the deep to be hoary.[3] Upon earth there is not his like, who is made without fear. He beholdeth all high things: he is a king over all the children of pride.

42. Then Job answered the Lord, and said, I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee. Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? Therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

And it was so, that after the Lord had spoken these words unto Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath. Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of me the thing which is right, like my servant Job. So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went, and did according as the Lord commanded them: the Lord also accepted Job. And the Lord turned the captivity[4] of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house: and they bemoaned him, and comforted him over all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him: every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one an earring of gold. So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses. He had also seven sons and three daughters. And he called the name of the first, Jemima; and the name of the second, Kezia; and the name of the third, Kerenhappuch. And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job:

3. White (with foam). 4. Put an end to the suffering.

and their father gave them inheritance among their brethren. After this lived Job an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, even four generations. So Job died, being old and full of days.

Psalm 8

1. O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens.
2. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.
3. When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;
4. What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?
5. For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.
6. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet:
7. All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field;
8. The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.
9. O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!

Psalm 19

1. The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.
2. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.
3. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.
4. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun,
5. Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.
6. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.
7. The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.
8. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.
9. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.

10. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

11. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.

12. Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults.

13. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.

14. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer.

Psalm 23

1. The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

2. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

3. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

4. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

5. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

6. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

Psalm 104

1. Bless the Lord, O my soul. O Lord my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty.

2. Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment: who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain:

3. Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters: who maketh the clouds his chariot: who walketh upon the wings of the wind:

4. Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire:

5. Who laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed for ever.

6. Thou coveredst it with the deep as with a garment: the waters stood above the mountains.

7. At thy rebuke they fled; at the voice of thy thunder they hasted away.

8. They go up by the mountains; they go down by the valleys unto the place which thou hast founded for them.

9. Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over; that they turn not again to cover the earth.

10. He sendeth the springs into the valleys, which run among the hills.

11. They give drink to every beast of the field: the wild asses quench their thirst.

12. By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation, which sing among the branches.

13. He watereth the hills from his chambers: the earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works.

14. He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth;

15. And wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart.

16. The trees of the Lord are full of sap; the cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted;

17. Where the birds make their nests: as for the stork, the fir trees are her house.

18. The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats; and the rocks for the conies.

19. He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down.

20. Thou makest darkness, and it is night: wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth.

21. The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God.

22. The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens.

23. Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening.

24. O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches.

25. So is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts.

26. There go the ships: there is that leviathan, whom thou hast made to play therein.

27. These wait all upon thee; that thou mayest give them their meat in due season.

28. That thou givest them they gather: thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good.

29. Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust.

30. Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth.

31. The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever: the Lord shall rejoice in his works.

32. He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth: he toucheth the hills, and they smoke.

33. I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being.

34. My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord.

35. Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more. Bless thou the Lord, O my soul. Praise ye the Lord.

Psalm 137

1. By the rivers of Babylon,[5] there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.

2. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.

3. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion.

4. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?

5. If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.

6. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.

7. Remember, O Lord, the children of Edom[6] in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof.

8. O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us.

9. Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones.

Isaiah 52–53. [The Song of the Suffering Servant]

52:13. Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.

14. As many were astonied at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men:

15. So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider.

5. On the river Euphrates. Jerusalem was captured and sacked by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. The Jews were taken away into captivity in Babylon. 6. The Edomites helped the Babylonians to capture Jerusalem.

53:1. Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?

2. For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.

3. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

4. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

5. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

6. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

7. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

8. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

9. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich[7] in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

10. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.

11. He shall see the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

12. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

7. Some editors emend the Hebrew to give the meaning, "evildoers."

HOMER

Greek literature begins with two masterpieces, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, which cannot be accurately dated (the conjectural dates range over three centuries), and which are attributed to a poet, Homer, about whom nothing is known except his name. The Greeks believed that he was blind, perhaps because the bard Demodokos in the *Odyssey* was blind (see p. 183) and seven different cities put forward claims to be his birthplace. They are all in what the Greeks called Ionia, the Western coast of Asia Minor, which was heavily settled by Greek colonists. It does seem likely that he came from this area: the *Iliad* contains several accurate descriptions of natural features of the Ionian landscape and, on the other hand, his grasp of the geography of mainland, especially western, Greece is unsure. But even this is a guess, and all the other stories the Greeks told about him are obvious inventions.

The two great epics which have made his name supreme among poets may have been fixed in something like their present form before the art of writing was in general use in Greece; it is certain that they were intended not for reading but for oral recitation. The earliest stages of their composition date from long before the beginnings of Greek literacy—the late eighth century B.C.: the poems exhibit the unmistakable characteristics of oral composition.

The oral poet had at his disposal not reading and writing, but a vast and intricate system of metrical formulas—phrases which would fit in at different places in the line—and a repertoire of standard scenes (the arming of the warrior, the battle of two champions) as well as the known outline of the story. Of course he could and did invent new phrases and scenes as he recited—but his base was the immense poetic reserve created by many generations of singers before him. When he told again for his hearers the old story of Achilles and his wrath, he was recreating a traditional story which had been recited, with differences, additions, and improvements, by a long line of predecessors: the poem was not, in the modern sense, his creation, still less an expression of his personality. Consequently there is no trace of his identity to be found in it: the poet remains as hidden behind the action and speech of his characters as if he were a dramatist.

The poems as we have them, however, are unlike most of the oral literature we know from other times and places. The poetic organization of each of the two epics, the subtle interrelationship of the parts which creates their structural and emotional unity, suggests that they owe their present form to the shaping hand of a single poet, the architect who selected from the enormous wealth of the oral tradition and fused what he took with original material to create, perhaps with the aid of the new medium of writing, the two magnificently ordered poems known as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

THE ILIAD

Of these two the *Iliad* is perhaps the earlier. Its subject is war; its characters are men in battle and women whose fate depends on the outcome. The war is fought by the Achaeans* against the Trojans for the recovery of Helen,

*The transcription of Greek names is, unfortunately, a game with no rules. It used to be the convention that Greek names would be spelled according to the form they were given in Latin

the wife of the Achaean chieftain Menelaus; the combatants are heroes who in their chariots engage in individual duels before the supporting lines of infantry and archers. This romantic war aim and the outmoded military technique suggest to the modern reader a comparison with chivalrous engagements between medieval knights—a vision of individual prowess in combat which the nostalgia of our mechanized age contrasts sentimentally with the mass slaughter of modern war. But there is no sentimentality in Homer's description of battle. "Patroclus went up to him and drove a spear into his right jaw; he thus hooked him by the teeth and the spear pulled him over the rim of his car. As one who sits at the end of some jutting rock and draws a strong fish out of the sea with a hook and line—even so with his spear did he pull Thestor all gaping from his chariot; he threw him down on his face and he died while falling." This is meticulously accurate; there is no attempt to suppress the ugliness of Thestor's death. The bare, careful description creates the true nightmare quality of battle, in which men perform monstrous actions with the same matter-of-fact efficiency they display in their normal occupations; and the simile reproduces the grotesque appearance of violent death—the simple spear thrust takes away Thestor's dignity as a human being even before it takes his life. He is gaping, like a fish on the hook.

The simile does something else too. The comparison of Patroclus to an angler emphasizes another aspect of battle, its excitement. Homer's lines here combine two contrary emotions, the human revulsion from the horror of violent death and the human attraction to the excitement of violent action. This passage is typical of the poem as a whole. Everywhere in it we are conscious of these two poles, of war's ugly brutality and its "terrible beauty." The poet accepts violence as a basic factor in human life, and accepts it without sentimentality; for it is equally sentimental to pretend that war is not ugly and to pretend that it does not have its beauty. Three thousand years have not changed the human condition in this respect; we are still both lovers and victims of the will to violence, and as long as we are, Homer will be read as its greatest interpreter.

The *Iliad* describes the events of a few weeks in the ten-year siege of Troy. The particular subject of the poem, as its first line announces, is the anger of Achilles, the bravest of the Achaean chieftains encamped outside the city. Achilles is a man who lives by and for violence, who is creative and alive only in violent action. He knows that he will be killed if he stays before Troy, but rather than decay, as he would decay, in peace, he accepts that certainty. His inadequacy for peace is shown by the fact that even in war the violence of his temper makes him a man apart and alone. His anger cuts him off from his commander and his fellow princes; to spite them he withdraws from the fighting, the only context in which his life has any meaning. He is brought back into it at last by the death of his one real friend, Patroclus; the consequences of his wrath and withdrawal fall heavily on the Achaeans, but most heavily on himself.

(and as they appear in our selections from Virgil and Ovid): Achaeans, Achilles. Recently it has become fashionable to stay closer to the Greek—Akhaians, Akhilleus; this is the system followed by Fitzgerald for the *Odyssey*. Lattimore in our selections from the *Iliad* chooses something in between: Achaians, Achilleus. For the introduction it seems best to use the Latin forms which have been standard in English verse and prose for many centuries.

The great champion of the Trojans, Hector, fights bravely, but reluctantly; war, for him, is a necessary evil, and he thinks nostalgically of the peaceful past, though he has little hope of peace to come. His pre-eminence in peace is emphasized by the tenderness of his relations with his wife and child and also by his kindness to Helen, the cause of the war which he knows in his heart will bring his city to destruction. We see Hector always against the background of the patterns of civilized life—the rich city with its temples and palaces, the continuity of the family. Achilles' background is the discord of the armed camp on the shore, his loneliness, and his certainty of early death. The duel between these two men is the inevitable crisis of the poem, and just as inevitable is Hector's defeat and death. For against Achilles in his native element of violence nothing can stand.

At the climactic moment of Hector's death, as everywhere in the poem, Homer's firm control of his material preserves the balance in which our contrary emotions are held; pity for Hector does not entirely rob us of sympathy for Achilles. His brutal words to the dying Hector and the insults he inflicts on his corpse are the mark of the savage, but we are never allowed to forget that this inflexible hatred is the expression of his love for Patroclus. And the final book of the poem shows us an Achilles whose iron heart is moved at last; he is touched by the sight of Hector's father clasping in suppliance the terrible hands that have killed so many of his sons. He remembers that he has a father, and that he will never see him again; Achilles and Priam, the slayer and the father of the slain, weep together:

> . . . and the two remembered, as Priam sat huddled
> at the feet of Achilleus and wept close for manslaughtering Hektor
> and Achilleus wept now for his own father, now again
> for Patroklos. The sound of their mourning moved in the house.

Achilles gives Hector's body to Priam for honorable burial. His anger has run its full course and been appeased; it has brought death, first to the Achaeans and then to the Trojans, to Patroclus and to Hector, and so to Achilles himself, for his death is fated to come "soon after Hector's." The violence to which he is dedicated will finally destroy him too.

This tragic action is the center of the poem, but it is surrounded by scenes which remind us that the organized destruction of war, though an integral part of human life, is only a part of it. Except for Achilles, whose worship of violence falters only in the final moment of pity for his enemy's father and his own, the yearning for peace and its creative possibilities is never far below the surface. This is most poignantly expressed by the scenes which take place in Troy, especially the farewell between Hector and Andromache; but it is made clear that the Achaeans too are conscious of what they have sacrificed. Early in the poem, when Agamemnon, the Achaean commander, tests the morale of his troops by suggesting that the war be abandoned, they rush for the ships so eagerly and with such heartfelt relief that their commanders are hard put to it to stop them. These two poles of the human condition, war and peace, with their corresponding aspects of human nature, the destructive and the creative, are implicit in every situation and statement of the poem, and they are put before us, in symbolic form, in the shield which the god Hephaestus makes for Achilles. Its emblem is an image

of human life as a whole. Here are two cities, one at peace and one at war. In one a marriage is celebrated and a quarrel settled by process of law; the other is besieged by a hostile army and fights for its existence. Scenes of violence—peaceful shepherds slaughtered in an ambush, Death dragging away a corpse by its foot—are balanced by scenes of plowing, harvesting, work in the vineyard and on the pasture, a green on which youths and maidens dance. And around the outermost rim of the shield runs "the might of the Ocean stream," a river which is at once the frontier of the known and the imagined world and the barrier between the quick and the dead. The shield of Achilles is the total background for the tragic violence of the central figures; it provides a frame which gives the wrath of Achilles and the death of Hector their just proportion and true significance.

THE ODYSSEY

The other Homeric epic, the *Odyssey*, is concerned with the peace which followed the war, and in particular with the return of the heroes who survived. Its subject is the long drawn out return of one of the heroes, Odysseus of Ithaca, who had come farther than most (all the way from western Greece) and who was destined to spend ten years wandering in unknown seas before he returned to his rocky kingdom. When Odysseus' wanderings began, Achilles had already received, at the hands of Apollo, the death which he had chosen, and which was the only appropriate end for his fatal and magnificent violence. Odysseus chose life, and his outstanding quality is a probing and versatile intelligence, which, combined with long experience, keeps him safe and alive through the trials and dangers of twenty years of war and seafaring. To stay alive he has to do things that Achilles would never have done, and use an ingenuity and experience that Achilles did not possess; but his life is just as much a struggle. Troy has fallen, but "there is no discharge in the war." The way back is as perilous as the ten-year siege.

The opening lines of the poem state the theme:

> Sing in me, Muse, and through me tell the story
> of that man skilled in all ways of contending
> the wanderer, harried for years on end,
> after he plundered the stronghold
> on the proud height of Troy.
> He saw the townlands
> and learned the minds of many distant men,
> and weathered many bitter nights and days
> in his deep heart at sea, while he fought only
> to save his life. . . .

In this world it is a struggle even to stay alive, and it is a struggle for which Odysseus is naturally endowed. But his objective is not life at any price. Where honor demands, he can be soberly courageous in the face of death (as on Circe's island, where he goes alone and against his mate's advice to save his sailors), and he can even be led into foolhardiness by his insatiable curiosity (as in the expedition to see the island of the Cyclopes). Much as he clings to life, it must be life with honor; what he is trying to preserve is not

just existence but a worldwide reputation. His name has become a byword for successful courage and intelligence, and he must not betray it. When he reveals his identity at the palace of the Phaeacians, he speaks of his fame in an objective manner, as if it were something apart from himself.

> I am Laertes' son, Odysseus.
> Men hold me
> formidable for guile in peace and war:
> this fame has gone abroad to the sky's rim.

This is not boasting, but a calm recognition of the qualities and achievements for which he stands, and to which he must be true.

Ironically enough, to be true to his reputation, he is often forced to conceal his name. In the Cyclopes' cave, he calls himself "Nobody," in order to assure his escape, and it is clear how hard he finds this denial of his reputation when, out of the cave and on board ship, he insists on telling Polyphemus his name. Not only does this reassertion of his identity bring himself, his ship, and his crew back within reach of Polyphemus' arm, but it also enables the blinded giant to call down on his enemy the wrath of his father Poseidon, who, from this point on, musters the full might of the sea against Odysseus' return. Warned by the consequences of this boastful revelation of his name, he conceals his identity even from the hospitable Phaeacians, until his emotional reaction to the singer's tale of Troy gives him away. And when he finally returns home, to a palace full of violent suitors for his wife's hand who think that he is dead and who have presumed so far that they will kill him if they now find out that he is alive, he has to become Nobody again; he disguises himself as an old dirty beggar, to flatter and fawn on his enemies for bread in his own house.

The trials of the voyage home are not just physical obstacles to his return, they are also temptations. Odysseus is tempted, time after time, to forget his identity, to secede from the life of struggle and constant vigilance for which his name stands. The lotus flower which makes a man forget home and family is the most obvious form of temptation; it occurs early in the voyage and is easily resisted. But he is offered more attractive bait. Circe gives him a life of ease and self-indulgence on an enchanted island; his resistance has by this time been lowered, and he stays a full year before his sailors remonstrate with him and remind him of his home. At the Phaeacian palace where he tells the story of his voyages, he is offered the love of a young princess, Nausicaa, and her hand in marriage by her father Alkinoös—a new life in a richer kingdom than his rocky Ithaca. The Sirens tempt him to live in the memory of the glorious past. "Come here, famous Odysseus," they sing, "great glory of the Achaeans, and hear our song. . . . For we know all that at broad Troy the Argives and the Trojans suffered by the will of the gods." If he had not been bound to the mast, he would have gone to hear and join the dead men whose bones rot on the Sirens' island. Calypso, the goddess with whom he spent seven years, longing all the time to escape, offers him the greatest temptation of all, immortality. If he will stay as her husband, he will live forever, a life of ease and tranquility, like that of the gods. Odysseus refuses this too; he prefers the human condition, with all its struggle, its

disappointments, and its inevitable end. And the end, death, is an ever-present temptation. It is always near him; at the slightest slackening of effort, the smallest failure of intelligence, the first weakness of will, death will bring him release from his trials. But he hangs on tenaciously, and, toward the end of his ordeals, he is sent living to the world of the dead to see for himself what death means. It is dark and comfortless; Homer's land of the dead is the most frightening picture of the afterlife in European literature. Odysseus talks to the dead and any illusion he had about death as repose is shattered when he comforts the shade of Achilles with talk of his everlasting glory and hears him reply.

> Let me hear no smooth talk
> of death from you, Odysseus, light
> of councils.
> Better, I say, to break sod as a farm
> hand
> for some poor country man, on iron
> rations,
> than lord it over all the exhausted
> dead.

When he hears these words Odysseus does not yet understand their full significance (that he, the living man, will taste the depths of degradation, not as a serf, but as a despised beggar, mocked and manhandled in his own palace), but he is prepared now to face everything that may be necessary, to push on without another look behind.

In this scene Homer brings his two great prototypes face to face, and poses the tragic fury of Achilles against the mature intelligence of Odysseus. There can be little doubt where his sympathy lies. Against the dark background of Achilles' regret for life lost the figure of Odysseus shines more warmly: a man dedicated to life, accepting its limitations and making full use of its possibilities, a man who is destined to endure to the end and be saved. He finds in the end the home and the peace he fought for, his wife faithful, a son worthy of his name ready to succeed him, and the knowledge that the death which must come at last will be gentle.

> Then a seaborne death
> soft as this hand of mist will come
> upon you
> when you are wearied out with rich
> old age,
> your country folk in blessed peace
> around you.

A very short but thoughtful discussion of the basic themes of the two poems is found in J. Griffin, *Homer* (1980). Richmond Lattimore, *The Iliad of Homer* (1951), provides in the introduction the best available short analysis of Homeric poetry. H. W. Clarke, *The Art of the Odyssey* (1967), a literary analysis of the poem, explores the pattern of its unity.

The Iliad[1]

Book I

[THE QUARREL OF ACHILLEUS AND AGAMEMNON]

Sing, goddess,[2] the anger of Peleus' son Achilleus
and its devastation, which put pains thousandfold upon the
Achaians,[3]
hurled in their multitudes to the house of Hades strong souls
of heroes, but gave their bodies to be the delicate feasting
of dogs, of all birds, and the will of Zeus was accomplished
since that time when first there stood in division of conflict
Atreus' son[4] the lord of men and brilliant Achilleus.

What god was it then set them together in bitter collision?
Zeus' son and Leto's, Apollo, who in anger at the king drove
the foul pestilence along the host, and the people perished,
since Atreus' son had dishonoured Chryses,[5] priest of Apollo,
when he came beside the fast ships of the Achaians to ransom
back his daughter, carrying gifts beyond count and holding
in his hands wound on a staff of gold the ribbons of Apollo
who strikes from afar, and supplicated all the Achaians,
but above all Atreus' two sons,[6] the marshals of the people:
'Sons of Atreus and you other strong-greaved[7] Achaians,
to you may the gods grant who have their homes on Olympos
Priam's city[8] to be plundered and a fair homecoming thereafter,
but may you give me back my own daughter and take the ransom,
giving honour to Zeus' son who strikes from afar, Apollo.'

Then all the rest of the Achaians cried out in favour
that the priest be respected and the shining ransom be taken;
yet this pleased not the heart of Atreus' son Agamemnon,
but harshly he drove him away with a strong order upon him:
'Never let me find you again, old sir, near our hollow
ships, neither lingering now nor coming again hereafter,
for fear your staff and the god's ribbons help you no longer.
The girl I will not give back; sooner will old age come upon her
in my own house, in Argos, far from her own land, going
up and down by the loom and being in my bed as my companion.
So go now, do not make me angry; so you will be safer.'

So he spoke, and the old man in terror obeyed him
and went silently away beside the murmuring sea beach.

1. Translated by Richmond Lattimore. 2. The Muse, inspiration for epic poetry. 3. The Greeks. Homer also calls them Danaans and Argives. 4. Agamemnon, the commander of the Greek army. 5. His daughter is called Chryseis, and the place where he lives, Chryse. 6. Agamemnon and his brother Menelaos. 7. The greave is a piece of armor which fits over the leg below the knee. 8. Priam was king of Troy. *Olympos:* The mountain in northern Greece which was supposed to be the home of the gods.

Over and over the old man prayed as he walked in solitude
to King Apollo, whom Leto of the lovely hair bore: 'Hear me,
lord of the silver bow who set your power about Chryse
and Killa the sacrosanct, who are lord in strength over Tenedos,[9]
Smintheus,[1] if ever it pleased your heart that I built your temple,
if ever it pleased you that I burned all the rich thigh pieces
of bulls, of goats, then bring to pass this wish I pray for:
let your arrows make the Danaans[2] pay for my tears shed.'

So he spoke in prayer, and Phoibos Apollo heard him,
and strode down along the pinnacles of Olympos, angered
in his heart, carrying across his shoulders the bow and the hooded
quiver; and shafts clashed on the shoulders of the god walking
angrily. He came as night comes down and knelt then
apart and opposite the ships and let go an arrow.
Terrible was the clash that rose from the bow of silver.
First he went after the mules and the circling hounds, then let go
a tearing arrow against the men themselves and struck them.
The corpse fires burned everywhere and did not stop burning.

Nine days up and down the host ranged the god's arrows,
but on the tenth Achilleus called the people to assembly;
a thing put into his mind by the goddess of the white arms, Hera,[3]
who had pity upon the Danaans when she saw them dying.
Now when they were all assembled in one place together,
Achilleus of the swift feet stood up among them and spoke forth:
'Son of Atreus, I believe now that straggling backwards
we must make our way home if we can even escape death,
if fighting now must crush the Achaians and the plague likewise.
No, come, let us ask some holy man, some prophet,
even an interpreter of dreams, since a dream also
comes from Zeus, who can tell why Phoibos Apollo is so angry,
if for the sake of some vow, some hecatomb[4] he blames us,
if given the fragrant smoke of lambs, of he goats, somehow
he can be made willing to beat the bane aside from us.'

He spoke thus and sat down again, and among them stood up
Kalchas, Thestor's son, far the best of the bird interpreters,
who knew all things that were, the things to come and the things
past,
who guided into the land of Ilion[5] the ships of the Achaians
through that seercraft of his own that Phoibos Apollo gave him.
He in kind intention toward all stood forth and addressed them:

9. An island off the Trojan coast. *Chryse and Killa*: cities near Troy. 1. A cult name of Apollo, probably a reference to his role as the destroyer of field mice. The Greek *sminthos* means "mouse." 2. Greeks. 3. Sister and wife of Zeus, the father of the gods; she was hostile to the Trojans. 4. Strictly, the word denotes a sacrifice of a hundred animals, but it is often used to refer to smaller offerings. 5. Troy.

'You have bidden me, Achilleus beloved of Zeus, to explain to
you this anger of Apollo the lord who strikes from afar. Then
I will speak; yet make me a promise and swear before me
readily by word and work of your hands to defend me,
since I believe I shall make a man angry who holds great kingship
over the men of Argos, and all the Achaians obey him.
For a king when he is angry with a man beneath him is too strong,
and suppose even for the day itself he swallow down his anger,
he still keeps bitterness that remains until its fulfilment
deep in his chest. Speak forth then, tell me if you will protect me.'

Then in answer again spoke Achilleus of the swift feet:
'Speak, interpreting whatever you know, and fear nothing.
In the name of Apollo beloved of Zeus to whom you, Kalchas,
make your prayers when you interpret the gods' will to the Danaans,
no man so long as I am alive above earth and see daylight
shall lay the weight of his hands on you beside the hollow ships,
not one of all the Danaans, even if you mean Agamemnon,
who now claims to be far the greatest of all the Achaians.'

At this the blameless seer took courage again and spoke forth:
'No, it is not for the sake of some vow or hecatomb he blames us,
but for the sake of his priest whom Agamemnon dishonoured
and would not give him back his daughter nor accept the ransom.
Therefore the archer sent griefs against us and will send them
still, nor sooner thrust back the shameful plague from the Danaans
until we give the glancing-eyed girl back to her father
without price, without ransom, and lead also a blessed hecatomb
to Chryse; thus we might propitiate and persuade him.'

He spoke thus and sat down again, and among them stood up
Atreus' son the hero wide-ruling Agamemnon
raging, the heart within filled black to the brim with anger
from beneath, but his two eyes showed like fire in their blazing.
First of all he eyed Kalchas bitterly and spoke to him:
'Seer of evil: never yet have you told me a good thing.
Always the evil things are dear to your heart to prophesy,
but nothing excellent have you said nor ever accomplished.
Now once more you make divination to the Danaans, argue
forth your reason why he who strikes from afar afflicts them,
because I for the sake of the girl Chryseis would not take the shining
ransom; and indeed I wish greatly to have her
in my own house; since I like her better than Klytaimnestra
my own wife, for in truth she is no way inferior,
neither in build nor stature nor wit, nor in accomplishment.
Still I am willing to give her back, if such is the best way.
I myself desire that my people be safe, not perish.
Find me then some prize that shall be my own, lest I only

among the Argives go without, since that were unfitting;
you are all witnesses to this thing, that my prize goes elsewhere.'
Then in answer again spoke brilliant swift-footed Achilleus:
'Son of Atreus, most lordly, greediest for gain of all men,
how shall the great-hearted Achaians give you a prize now?
There is no great store of things lying about I know of.
But what we took from the cities by storm has been distributed;
it is unbecoming for the people to call back things once given.
No, for the present give the girl back to the god; we Achaians
thrice and four times over will repay you, if ever Zeus gives
into our hands the strong-walled citadel of Troy to be plundered.
Then in answer again spoke powerful Agamemnon:
'Not that way, good fighter though you be, godlike Achilleus,
strive to cheat, for you will not deceive, you will not persuade me.
What do you want? To keep your own prize and have me sit here
lacking one? Are you ordering me to give this girl back?
Either the great-hearted Achaians shall give me a new prize
chosen according to my desire to atone for the girl lost,
or else if they will not give me one I myself shall take her,
your own prize, or that of Aias, or that of Odysseus,[6]
going myself in person; and he whom I visit will be bitter.
Still, these are things we shall deliberate again hereafter.
come, now, we must haul a black ship down to the bright sea,
and assemble rowers enough for it, and put on board it
the hecatomb, and the girl herself, Chryseis of the fair cheeks,
and let there be one responsible man in charge of her,
either Aias or Idomeneus or brilliant Odysseus,
or you yourself, son of Peleus, most terrifying of all men,
to reconcile by accomplishing sacrifice the archer.'
Then looking darkly at him Achilleus of the swift feet spoke:
'O wrapped in shamelessness, with your mind forever on profit,
how shall any one of the Achaians readily obey you
either to go on a journey or to fight men strongly in battle?
I for my part did not come here for the sake of the Trojan
spearmen to fight against them, since to me they have done nothing.
Never yet have they driven away my cattle or my horses,
never in Phthia[7] where the soil is rich and men grow great did they
spoil my harvest, since indeed there is much that lies between us,
the shadowy mountains and the echoing sea; but for your sake,
o great shamelessness, we followed, to do you favour,
you with the dog's eyes, to win your honour and Menelaos'[8]
from the Trojans. You forget all this or else you care nothing.

6. The most subtle and crafty of the Greeks. *Aias*: Ajax, the bravest of the Greeks after Achilleus.
7. Achilleus' home in northern Greece. 8. The aim of the expedition was to recapture Helen, the wife of Menelaos, who had run off to Troy with Priam's son Paris.

And now my prize you threaten in person to strip from me,
for whom I laboured much, the gift of the sons of the Achaians.
Never, when the Achaians sack some well-founded citadel
of the Trojans, do I have a prize that is equal to your prize.
Always the greater part of the painful fighting is the work of
my hands; but when the time comes to distribute the booty
yours is far the greater reward, and I with some small thing
yet dear to me go back to my ships when I am weary with fighting.
Now I am returning to Phthia, since it is much better
to go home again with my curved ships, and I am minded no longer
to stay here dishonoured and pile up your wealth and your luxury.'
Then answered him in turn the lord of men Agamemnon:
'Run away by all means if your heart drives you. I will not
entreat you to stay here for my sake. There are others with me
who will do me honour, and above all Zeus of the counsels.
To me you are the most hateful of all the kings whom the gods love.
Forever quarrelling is dear to your heart, and wars and battles;
and if you are very strong indeed, that is a god's gift.
Go home then with your own ships and your own companions,
be king over the Myrmidons.[9] I care nothing about you.
I take no account of your anger. But here is my threat to you.
Even as Phoibos Apollo is taking away my Chryseis.
I shall convey her back in my own ship, with my own
followers; but I shall take the fair-cheeked Briseis,
your prize, I myself going to your shelter, that you may learn well
how much greater I am than you, and another man may shrink back
from likening himself to me and contending against me.'
So he spoke. And the anger came on Peleus' son, and within
his shaggy breast the heart was divided two ways, pondering
whether to draw from beside his thigh the sharp sword driving
away all those who stood between and kill the son of Atreus,
or else to check the spleen within and keep down his anger.
Now as he weighed in mind and spirit these two courses
and was drawing from its scabbard the great sword, Athene[1] descended
from the sky. For Hera the goddess of the white arms sent her,
who loved both men equally in her heart and cared for them.
The goddess standing behind Peleus' son caught him by the fair hair,
appearing to him only, for no man of the others saw her.
Achilleus in amazement turned about, and straightway
knew Pallas Athene and the terrible eyes shining.

9. The name of Achilleus' people. 1. A goddess, daughter of Zeus, a patron of human ingenuity and resourcefulness, whether exemplified by handicrafts, such as spinning, or by skill in human relations, such as her favorite among the Greeks, Odysseus, possessed. She supported the Greek side in the war.

He uttered winged words and addressed her: 'Why have you come now,
o child of Zeus of the aegis,[2] once more? Is it that you may see
the outrageousness of the son of Atreus Agamemnon?
Yet will I tell you this thing, and I think it shall be accomplished.
By such acts of arrogance he may even lose his own life.'
Then in answer the goddess grey-eyed Athene spoke to him:
'I have come down to stay your anger—but will you obey me?—
from the sky; and the goddess of the white arms Hera sent me,
who loves both of you equally in her heart and cares for you.
Come then, do not take your sword in your hand, keep clear of fighting,
though indeed with words you may abuse him, and it will be that way.
And this also will I tell you and it will be a thing accomplished.
Some day three times over such shining gifts shall be given you
by reason of this outrage. Hold your hand then, and obey us.'
Then in answer again spoke Achilleus of the swift feet:
'Goddess, it is necessary that I obey the word of you two,
angry though I am in my heart. So it will be better.
If any man obeys the gods, they listen to him also.'
He spoke, and laid his heavy hand on the silver sword hilt
and thrust the great blade back into the scabbard nor disobeyed
the word of Athene. And she went back again to Olympos
to the house of Zeus of the aegis with the other divinities.
But Peleus' son once again in words of derision
spoke to Atreides,[3] and did not yet let go of his anger:
'You wine sack, with a dog's eyes, with a deer's heart. Never
once have you taken courage in your heart to arm with your people
for battle, or go into ambuscade with the best of the Achaians.
No, for in such things you see death. Far better to your mind
is it, all along the widespread host of the Achaians
to take away the gifts of any man who speaks up against you.
King who feed on your people, since you rule nonentities;
otherwise, son of Atreus, this were your last outrage.
But I will tell you this and swear a great oath upon it:
in the name of this sceptre, which never again will bear leaf nor branch, now that it has left behind the cut stump in the mountains,
nor shall it ever blossom again, since the bronze blade stripped
bark and leafage, and now at last the sons of the Achaians
carry it in their hands in state when they administer
the justice of Zeus. And this shall be a great oath before you:

2. A terrible shield with which Zeus (or any other god to whom it was entrusted) stirred up storms or threw panic into human beings. 3. Son of Atreus, i.e., Agamemnon.

some day longing for Achilleus will come to the sons of the Achaians,
all of them. Then stricken at heart though you be, you will be able
to do nothing, when in their numbers before man-slaughtering Hektor[4]
they drop and die. And then you will eat out the heart within you
in sorrow, that you did no honour to the best of the Achaians.'
Thus spoke Peleus' son and dashed to the ground the sceptre
studded with golden nails, and sat down again. But Atreides
raged still on the other side, and between them Nestor
the fair-spoken rose up, the lucid speaker of Pylos,[5]
from whose lips the streams of words ran sweeter than honey.
In his time two generations of mortal men had perished,
those who had grown up with him and they who had been born to
these in sacred Pylos, and he was king in the third age.
He in kind intention toward both stood forth and addressed them:
'Oh, for shame. Great sorrow comes on the land of Achaia.
Now might Priam and the sons of Priam in truth be happy,
and all the rest of the Trojans be visited in their hearts with gladness,
were they to hear all this wherein you two are quarrelling,
you, who surpass all Danaans in council, in fighting.
Yet be persuaded. Both of you are younger than I am.
Yes, and in my time I have dealt with better men than
you are, and never once did they disregard me. Never
yet have I seen nor shall see again such men as these were,
men like Peirithoös, and Dryas, shepherd of the people,
Kaincus and Exadios, godlike Polyphemos,
or Theseus,[6] Aigeus' son, in the likeness of the immortals.
These were the strongest generation of earth-born mortals,
the strongest, and they fought against the strongest, the beast men
living within the mountains, and terribly they destroyed them.
I was of the company of these men, coming from Pylos,
a long way from a distant land, since they had summoned me.
And I fought single-handed, yet against such men no one
of the mortals now alive upon earth could do battle. And also
these listened to the counsels I have and heeded my bidding.
Do you also obey, since to be persuaded is better.
You, great man that you are, yet do not take the girl away
but let her be, a prize as the sons of the Achaians gave her first. Nor,
son of Peleus, think to match your strength with
the king, since never equal with the rest is the portion of honour
of the sceptred king to whom Zeus gives magnificence. Even

4. Son of Priam; the foremost warrior of the Trojans. 5. On the western shore of the Peloponnese. 6. Names of heroes of an older generation.

though you are the stronger man, and the mother who bore you[7]
was immortal,
yet is this man greater who is lord over more than you rule.
Son of Atreus, give up your anger; even I entreat you
to give over your bitterness against Achilleus, he who
stands as a great bulwark of battle over all the Achaians.
Then in answer again spoke powerful Agamemnon:
'Yes, old sir, all this you have said is fair and orderly.
Yet here is a man who wishes to be above all others,
who wishes to hold power over all, and to be lord of
all, and give them their orders, yet I think one will not obey him.
And if the everlasting gods have made him a spearman,
yet they have not given him the right to speak abusively.'
Then looking at him darkly brilliant Achilleus answered him:
'So must I be called of no account and a coward
if I must carry out every order you may happen to give me.
Tell other men to do these things, but give me no more
commands, since I for my part have no intention to obey you.
And put away in your thoughts this other thing I tell you.
With my hands I will not fight for the girl's sake, neither
with you nor any other man, since you take her away who gave her.
But of all the other things that are mine beside my fast black
ship, you shall take nothing away against my pleasure.
Come, then, only try it, that these others may see also;
instantly your own black blood will stain my spearpoint.'
So these two after battling in words of contention
stood up, and broke the assembly beside the ships of the Achaians.
Peleus' son went back to his balanced ships and his shelter
with Patroklos, Menoitios' son, and his own companions.
But the son of Atreus drew a fast ship down to the water
and allotted into it twenty rowers and put on board it
the hecatomb for the god and Chryseis of the fair cheeks
leading her by the hand. And in charge went crafty Odysseus.
These then putting out went over the ways of the water
while Atreus' son told his people to wash off their defilement.
And they washed it away and threw the washings into the salt sea.
Then they accomplished perfect hecatombs to Apollo,
of bulls and goats along the beach of the barren salt sea.
The savour of the burning swept in circles to the bright sky.
Thus these were busy about the army. But Agamemnon
did not give up his anger and the first threat he made to Achilleus,

7. Achilleus' mother was Thetis, a sea nymph. She was married to a mortal, Peleus (Achilleus' father), but later left humankind and went to live with her father, Nereus, in the depths of the Aegean Sea.

but to Talthybios he gave his orders and Eurybates
who were heralds and hard-working henchmen to him: 'Go now
to the shelter of Peleus' son Achilleus, to bring back
Briseis of the fair cheeks leading her by the hand. And if he
will not give her, I must come in person to take her
with many men behind me, and it will be the worse for him.'

He spoke and sent them forth with this strong order upon them.
They went against their will beside the beach of the barren
salt sea, and came to the shelters and the ships of the Myrmidons.
The man himself they found beside his shelter and his black ship
sitting. And Achilleus took no joy at all when he saw them.
These two terrified and in awe of the king stood waiting
quietly, and did not speak a word at all nor question him.
But he knew the whole matter in his own heart, and spoke first:
'Welcome, heralds, messengers of Zeus and of mortals.
Draw near. You are not to blame in my sight but Agamemnon
who sent the two of you here for the sake of the girl Briseis.
Go then, illustrious Patroklos, and bring the girl forth
and give her to these to be taken away. Yet let them be witnesses
in the sight of the blessed gods, in the sight of mortal
men, and of this cruel king, if ever hereafter
there shall be need of me to beat back the shameful destruction
from the rest. For surely in ruinous heart he makes sacrifice
and has not wit enough to look behind and before him
that the Achaians fighting beside their ships shall not perish.'

So he spoke, and Patroklos obeyed his beloved companion.
He led forth from the hut Briseis of the fair cheeks and gave her
to be taken away; and they walked back beside the ships of the Achaians,
and the woman all unwilling went with them still. But Achilleus
weeping went and sat in sorrow apart from his companions
beside the beach of the grey sea looking out on the infinite water.
Many times stretching forth his hands he called on his mother:
'Since, my mother, you bore me to be a man with a short life,
therefore Zeus of the loud thunder on Olympos should grant me
honour at least. But now he has given me not even a little.
Now the son of Atreus, powerful Agamemnon,
has dishonoured me, since he has taken away my prize and keeps it.'

So he spoke in tears and the lady his mother heard him
as she sat in the depths of the sea at the side of her aged father,
and lightly she emerged like a mist from the grey water.
She came and sat beside him as he wept, and stroked him
with her hand and called him by name and spoke to him: 'Why then,
child, do you lament? What sorrow has come to your heart now?

Tell me, do not hide it in your mind, and thus we shall both know.'
Sighing heavily Achilleus of the swift feet answered her:
'You know; since you know why must I tell you all this?
We went against Thebe, the sacred city of Eëtion,[8]
and the city we sacked, and carried everything back to this place,
and the sons of the Achaians made a fair distribution
and for Atreus' son they chose out Chryseis of the fair cheeks.
Then Chryses, priest of him who strikes from afar, Apollo,
came beside the fast ships of the bronze-armoured Achaians to ransom
back his daughter, carrying gifts beyond count and holding
in his hands wound on a staff of gold the ribbons of Apollo
who strikes from afar, and supplicated all the Achaians,
but above all Atreus' two sons, the marshals of the people.
Then all the rest of the Achaians cried out in favour
that the priest be respected and the shining ransom be taken;
yet this pleased not the heart of Atreus' son Agamemnon,
but harshly he sent him away with a strong order upon him.
The old man went back again in anger, but Apollo
listened to his prayer, since he was very dear to him, and let go
the wicked arrow against the Argives. And now the people
were dying one after another while the god's shafts ranged
everywhere along the wide host of the Achaians, till the seer
knowing well the truth interpreted the designs of the archer.
It was I first of all urged then the god's appeasement;
and the anger took hold of Atreus' son, and in speed standing
he uttered his threat against me, and now it is a thing accomplished.
For the girl the glancing-eyed Achaians are taking to Chryse
in a fast ship, also carrying to the king[9] presents. But even
now the heralds went away from my shelter leading
Briseus' daughter, whom the sons of the Achaians gave me.
You then, if you have power to, protect your own son, going
to Olympos and supplicating Zeus, if ever before now
either by word you comforted Zeus' heart or by action.
Since it is many times in my father's halls I have heard you
making claims, when you said you only among the immortals
beat aside shameful destruction from Kronos' son the dark-misted,[1]
that time when all the other Olympians sought to bind him,
Hera and Poseidon[2] and Pallas Athene. Then you,
goddess, went and set him free from his shackles, summoning
in speed the creature of the hundred hands to tall Olympos,

8. King of the Kilikians, and father of Hektor's wife Andromache. *Thebe* was the Kilikian capital city. 9. Apollo. 1. Zeus is the god of the sky, who brings rain and sunshine. 2. Brother of Zeus; god of the sea.

that creature the gods name Briareus,[3] but all men
Aigaios' son, but he is far greater in strength than his father.
He rejoicing in the glory of it sat down by Kronion,[4]
and the rest of the blessed gods were frightened and gave up binding him.
Sit beside him and take his knees and remind him of these things
now, if perhaps he might be willing to help the Trojans,
and pin the Achaians back against the ships and the water,
dying, so that thus they may all have profit of their own king,
that Atreus' son wide-ruling Agamemnon may recognize
his madness, that he did no honour to the best of the Achaians.'
Thetis answered him then letting the tears fall: 'Ah me,
my child. Your birth was bitterness. Why did I raise you?
If only you could sit by your ship untroubled, not weeping,
since indeed your lifetime is to be short, of no length.
Now it has befallen that your life must be brief and bitter
beyond all men's. To a bad destiny I bore you in my chambers.
But I will go to cloud-dark Olympos and ask this
thing of Zeus who delights in the thunder. Perhaps he will do it.
Do you therefore continuing to sit by your swift ships
be angry at the Achaians and stay away from all fighting.
For Zeus went to the blameless Aithiopians at the Ocean[5]
yesterday to feast, and the rest of the gods went with him.
On the twelfth day he will be coming back to Olympos,
and then I will go for your sake to the house of Zeus, bronze-founded,
and take him by the knees and I think I can persuade him.'
So speaking she went away from that place and left him
sorrowing in his heart for the sake of the fair-girdled woman
whom they were taking by force against his will. But Odysseus
meanwhile drew near to Chryse conveying the sacred hecatomb.
These when they were inside the many-hollowed harbour
took down and gathered together the sails and stowed them in the black ship,
let down mast by the forestays, and settled it into the mast crutch
easily, and rowed her in with oars to the mooring.
They threw over the anchor stones and made fast the stern cables
and themselves stepped out on to the break of the sea beach,
and led forth the hecatomb to the archer Apollo,
and Chryseis herself stepped forth from the sea-going vessel.
Odysseus of the many designs guided her to the altar
and left her in her father's arms and spoke a word to him:
'Chryses, I was sent here by the lord of men Agamemnon

3. A giant, son of Poseidon. 4. Zeus. 5. The river which was believed to encircle the whole world. The Ethiopians were thought to live at the extreme edges of the world.

to lead back your daughter and accomplish a sacred hecatomb
to Apollo on behalf of the Danaans, that we may propitiate
the lord who has heaped unhappiness and tears on the Argives.'
He spoke, and left her in his arms. And he received gladly
his beloved child. And the men arranged the sacred hecatomb
for the god in orderly fashion around the strong-founded altar.
Next they washed their hands and took up the scattering barley.
Standing among them with lifted arms Chryses prayed in a great voice:
'Hear me, lord of the silver bow, who set your power about
Chryse and Killa the sacrosanct, who are lord in strength over
Tenedos; if once before you listened to my prayers,
and did me honour and smote strongly the host of the Achaians,
so one more time bring to pass the wish that I pray for.
Beat aside at last the shameful plague from the Danaans.'
So he spoke in prayer, and Phoibos Apollo heard him.
And when all had made prayer and flung down the scattering barley
first they drew back the victims' heads and slaughtered them and skinned them,
and cut away the meat from the thighs and wrapped them in fat,
making a double fold, and laid shreds of flesh upon them.
The old man burned these on a cleft stick and poured the gleaming
wine over, while the young men with forks in their hands stood about him.
But when they had burned the thigh pieces and tasted the vitals,
they cut all the remainder into pieces and spitted them
and roasted all carefully and took off the pieces.
Then after they had finished the work and got the feast ready
they feasted, nor was any man's hunger denied a fair portion.
But when they had put away their desire for eating and drinking,
the young men filled the mixing bowls with pure wine, passing
a portion to all, when they had offered drink in the goblets.
All day long they propitiated the god with singing,
chanting a splendid hymn to Apollo, these young Achaians,
singing to the one who works from afar, who listened in gladness.
Afterwards when the sun went down and darkness came onward
they lay down and slept beside the ship's stern cables.
But when the young Dawn showed again with her rosy fingers,
they put forth to sea toward the wide camp of the Achaians.
And Apollo who works from afar sent them a favouring stern wind.
They set up the mast again and spread on it the white sails,
and the wind blew into the middle of the sail, and at the cutwater
a blue wave rose and sang strongly as the ship went onward.
She ran swiftly cutting across the swell her pathway.

But when they had come back to the wide camp of the Achaians
they hauled the black ship up on the mainland, high up
on the sand, and underneath her they fixed the long props.
Afterwards they scattered to their own ships and their shelters.
But that other still sat in anger beside his swift ships,
Peleus' son divinely born, Achilleus of the swift feet.
Never now would he go to assemblies where men win glory,
never more into battle, but continued to waste his heart out
sitting there, though he longed always for the clamour and fighting.
But when the twelfth dawn after this day appeared, the gods who
live forever came back to Olympos all in a body
and Zeus led them; nor did Thetis forget the entreaties
of her son, but she emerged from the sea's waves early
in the morning and went up to the tall sky and Olympos.
She found Kronos' broad-browed son apart from the others
sitting upon the highest peak of rugged Olympos.
She came and sat beside him with her left hand embracing
his knees, but took him underneath the chin with her right hand[6]
and spoke in supplication to lord Zeus son of Kronos:
'Father Zeus, if ever before in word or action
I did you favour among the immortals, now grant what I ask for.
Now give honour to my son short-lived beyond all other
mortals. Since even now the lord of men Agamemnon
dishonours him, who has taken away his prize and keeps it.
Zeus of the counsels, lord of Olympos, now do him honour.
So long put strength into the Trojans, until the Achaians
give my son his rights, and his honour is increased among them.'
She spoke thus. But Zeus who gathers the clouds made no answer
but sat in silence a long time. And Thetis, as she had taken
his knees, clung fast to them and urged once more her question:
'Bend your head and promise me to accomplish this thing,
or else refuse it, you have nothing to fear, that I may know
by how much I am the most dishonoured of all gods.'
Deeply disturbed Zeus who gathers the clouds answered her:
'This is a disastrous matter when you set me in conflict
with Hera, and she troubles me with recriminations.
Since even as things are, forever among the immortals
she is at me and speaks of how I help the Trojans in battle.
Even so, go back again now, go away, for fear she
see us. I will look to these things that they be accomplished.
See then, I will bend my head that you may believe me.
For this among the immortal gods is the mightiest witness

6. The posture of the suppliant, who by this physical pressure emphasized his desperation and the urgency of the request. Zeus was above all other gods the protector of suppliants.

I can give, and nothing I do shall be vain nor revocable
nor a thing unfulfilled when I bend my head in assent to it.'
He spoke, the son of Kronos, and nodded his head with the dark brows,
and the immortally anointed hair of the great god
swept from his divine head, and all Olympos was shaken.
So these two who had made their plans separated, and Thetis
leapt down again from shining Olympos into the sea's depth,
but Zeus went back to his own house, and all the gods rose up
from their chairs to greet the coming of their father, not one had courage
to keep his place as the father advanced, but stood up to greet him.
Thus he took his place on the throne; yet Hera was not
ignorant, having seen how he had been plotting counsels
with Thetis the silver-footed, the daughter of the sea's ancient,[7]
and at once she spoke revilingly to Zeus son of Kronos:
'Treacherous one, what god has been plotting counsels with you?
Always it is dear to your heart in my absence to think of
secret things and decide upon them. Never have you patience
frankly to speak forth to me the thing that you purpose.'
Then to her the father of gods and men made answer:
'Hera, do not go on hoping that you will hear all my
thoughts, since these will be too hard for you, though you are my wife.
Any thought that it is right for you to listen to, no one
neither man nor any immortal shall hear it before you.
But anything that apart from the rest of the gods I wish to
plan, do not always question each detail nor probe me.'
Then the goddess the ox-eyed lady Hera answered:
'Majesty, son of Kronos, what sort of thing have you spoken?
Truly too much in time past I have not questioned nor probed you,
but you are entirely free to think out whatever pleases you.
Now, though, I am terribly afraid you were won over
by Thetis the silver-footed, the daughter of the sea's ancient.
For early in the morning she sat beside you and took your
knees, and I think you bowed your head in assent to do honour
to Achilleus, and to destroy many beside the ships of the Achaians.'
Then in return Zeus who gathers the clouds made answer:
'Dear lady, I never escape you, you are always full of suspicion.
Yet thus you can accomplish nothing surely, but be more
distant from my heart than ever, and it will be the worse for you.
If what you say is true, then that is the way I wish it.

7. Nereus.

But go then, sit down in silence, and do as I tell you,
for fear all the gods, as many as are on Olympos, can do nothing
if I come close and lay my unconquerable hands upon you.'
He spoke, and the goddess the ox-eyed lady Hera was frightened
and went and sat down in silence wrenching her heart to obedience,
and all the Uranian[8] gods in the house of Zeus were troubled.
Hephaistos[9] the renowned smith rose up to speak among them,
to bring comfort to his beloved mother, Hera of the white arms:
'This will be a disastrous matter and not endurable
if you two are to quarrel thus for the sake of mortals
and bring brawling among the gods. There will be no pleasure
in the stately feast at all, since vile things will be uppermost.
And I entreat my mother, though she herself understands it,
to be ingratiating toward our father Zeus, that no longer
our father may scold her and break up the quiet of our feasting.
For if the Olympian who handles the lightning should be
minded to hurl us out of our places, he is far too strong for any.
Do you therefore approach him again with words made gentle,
and at once the Olympian will be gracious again to us.'
He spoke, and springing to his feet put a two-handled goblet
into his mother's hands and spoke again to her once more:
'Have patience, my mother, and endure it, though you be saddened,
for fear that, dear as you are, I see you before my own eyes
struck down, and then sorry though I be I shall not be able
to do anything. It is too hard to fight against the Olympian.
There was a time once before now I was minded to help you,
and he caught me by the foot and threw me from the magic thresh-
old,
and all day long I dropped helpless, and about sunset
I landed in Lemnos, and there was not much life left in me.
After that fall it was the Sintian men[1] who took care of me.'
He spoke, and the goddess of the white arms Hera smiled at him,
and smiling she accepted the goblet out of her son's hand.
Thereafter beginning from the left he poured drinks for the other
gods, dipping up from the mixing bowl the sweet nectar.[2]
But among the blessed immortals uncontrollable laughter
went up as they saw Hephaistos bustling about the palace.
Thus thereafter the whole day long until the sun went under
they feasted, nor was anyone's hunger denied a fair portion,
nor denied the beautifully wrought lyre in the hands of Apollo
nor the antiphonal sweet sound of the Muses singing.[3]

8. The Greek word *uranos* means "sky," "heaven." 9. The patron god of craftsmen, especially workers in metal. 1. The ancient inhabitants of Lemnos, an island in the Aegean Sea. 2. The drink of the gods. 3. The nine Muses were goddesses of the arts, and the source of artistic inspiration.

Afterwards when the light of the flaming sun went under
they went away each one to sleep in his home where
for each one the far-renowned strong-handed Hephaistos
had built a house by means of his craftsmanship and cunning.
Zeus the Olympian and lord of the lightning went to
his own bed, where always he lay when sweet sleep came on him
Going up to the bed he slept and Hera of the gold throne beside
him.

[The Greeks, in spite of Achilleus' withdrawal, continued to fight. They did not suffer immoderately from Achilleus' absence; on the contrary, they pressed the Trojans so hard that Hektor, the Trojan leader, after rallying his men, returned to the city to urge the Trojans to offer special prayers and sacrifices to the gods.]

Book VI

[THE MEETING OF HEKTOR AND ANDROMACHE]

. . . Now as Hektor had come to the Skaian gates[4] and the oak
tree,
all the wives of the Trojans and their daughters came running about
him
to ask after their sons, after their brothers and neighbours,
their husbands; and he told them to pray to the immortals,
all, in turn; but there were sorrows in store for many.
Now he entered the wonderfully built palace of Priam.
This was fashioned with smooth-stone cloister walks, and within it
were embodied fifty sleeping chambers of smoothed stone
built so as to connect with each other; and within these slept
each beside his own wedded wife, the sons of Priam.
In the same inner court on the opposite side, to face these,
lay the twelve close smooth-stone sleeping chambers of his daughters
built so as to connect with each other; and within these slept,
each by his own modest wife, the lords of the daughters of Priam.
There there came to meet Hektor his bountiful mother[5]
with Laodike, the loveliest looking of all her daughters.
She clung to his hand and called him by name and spoke to him:
'Why then,
child, have you come here and left behind the bold battle?
Surely it is these accursed sons of the Achaians who wear you
out, as they fight close to the city, and the spirit stirred you
to return, and from the peak of the citadel lift your hands, praying

4. One of the entrances to Troy. 5. Hekabe (Hecuba).

to Zeus. But stay while I bring you honey-sweet wine, to pour out
a libation to father Zeus and the other immortals
first, and afterwards if you will drink yourself, be strengthened.
In a tired man, wine will bring back his strength to its bigness,
in a man tired as you are tired, defending your neighbours.'
Tall Hektor of the shining helm spoke to her answering:
'My honoured mother, lift not to me the kindly sweet wine,
for fear you stagger my strength and make me forget my courage;
and with hands unwashed I would take shame to pour the glittering
wine to Zeus; there is no means for a man to pray to the dark-misted
son of Kronos, with blood and muck all spattered upon him.
But go yourself to the temple of the spoiler Athene,
assembling the ladies of honour, and with things to be sacrificed,
and take a robe, which seems to you the largest and loveliest
in the great house, and that which is far your dearest possession.
Lay this along the knees of Athene the lovely haired. Also
promise to dedicate within the shrine twelve heifers,
yearlings, never broken, if only she will have pity
on the town of Troy, and the Trojan wives, and their innocent children,
if she will hold back from sacred Ilion the son of Tydeus,[6]
that wild spear-fighter, the strong one who drives men to thoughts of terror.
So go yourself to the temple of the spoiler Athene,
while I go in search of Paris,[7] to call him, if he will listen
to anything I tell him. How I wish at this moment the earth might
open beneath him. The Olympian let him live, a great sorrow
to the Trojans, and high-hearted Priam, and all of his children.
If only I could see him gone down to the house of the Death God,
then I could say my heart had forgotten its joyless affliction.'
So he spoke, and she going into the great house called out
to her handmaidens, who assembled throughout the city the high-born
women; while she descended into the fragrant store-chamber.
There lay the elaborately wrought robes the work of Sidonian
women, whom Alexandros[8] himself, the godlike, had brought home
from the land of Sidon, crossing the wide sea, on that journey
when he brought back also gloriously descended Helen.
Hekabe lifted out one and took it as gift to Athene,
that which was the loveliest in design and the largest,

6. Diomedes, one of the Greek champions, who has just distinguished himself in the fighting. 7. Hektor's brother. His seduction and abduction of Helen, the wife of Menelaos, is the cause of the war. 8. Another name for Paris. *Sidonian:* Sidon was a Phoenician city on the coast of what is now Lebanon.

and shone like a star. It lay beneath the others. She went on her way, and a throng of noble women hastened about her.

When these had come to Athene's temple on the peak of the citadel,
Theano of the fair cheeks opened the door for them, daughter of Kisseus, and wife of Antenor, breaker of horses,
she whom the Trojans had established to be Athene's priestess.
With a wailing cry all lifted up their hands to Athene,
and Theano of the fair cheeks taking up the robe laid it along the knees of Athene the lovely haired, and praying she supplicated the daughter of powerful Zeus: 'O lady,
Athene, our city's defender, shining among goddesses:
break the spear of Diomedes, and grant that the man be hurled on his face in front of the Skaian gates; so may we instantly dedicate within your shrine twelve heifers,
yearlings, never broken, if only you will have pity
on the town of Troy, and the Trojan wives, and their innocent children.'

She spoke in prayer, but Pallas Athene turned her head from her.

So they made their prayer to the daughter of Zeus the powerful.
But Hektor went away to the house of Alexandros,
a splendid place he had built himself, with the men who at that time were the best men for craftsmanship in the generous Troad,[9]
who had made him a sleeping room and a hall and a courtyard near the houses of Hektor and Priam, on the peak of the citadel.
There entered Hektor beloved of Zeus, in his hand holding the eleven-cubit-long[1] spear, whose shaft was tipped with a shining bronze spearhead, and a ring of gold was hooped to hold it.
He found the man in his chamber busy with his splendid armour, the corselet and the shield, and turning in his hands the curved bow, while Helen of Argos was sitting among her attendant women directing the magnificent work done by her handmaidens.

But Hektor saw him, and in words of shame he rebuked him:[2]
'Strange man! It is not fair to keep in your heart this coldness.
The people are dying around the city and around the steep wall as they fight hard; and it is for you that this war with its clamour has flared up about our city. You yourself would fight with another whom you saw anywhere hanging back from the hateful encounter.
Up then, to keep our town from burning at once in the hot fire.'

Then in answer the godlike Alexandros spoke to him:

9. The soil of the Trojan plain (Troad) was fertile. 1. The Greek word translated as "cubit" means "the length of the forearm." 2. Paris, like Achilleus, was sulking at home. He had been worsted in a duel with Menelaos, but the goddess Aphrodite saved him from the consequences of his defeat and brought him to his house in Troy. Paris was hated by his countrymen as the cause of the war.

'Hektor, seeing you have scolded me rightly, not beyond measure,
therefore I will tell, and you in turn understand and listen.
It was not so much in coldness and bitter will toward the Trojans
that I sat in my room, but I wished to give myself over to sorrow.
But just now with soft words my wife was winning me over
and urging me into the fight, and that way seems to me also
the better one. Victory passes back and forth between men.
Come then, wait for me now while I put on my armour of battle,
or go, and I will follow, and I think I can overtake you.'

He spoke, but Hektor of the shining helm gave him no answer,
but Helen spoke to him in words of endearment: 'Brother
by marriage to me, who am a nasty bitch evil-intriguing,
how I wish that on that day when my mother first bore me
the foul whirlwind of the storm had caught me away and swept me
to the mountain, or into the wash of the sea deep-thundering
where the waves would have swept me away before all these things had happened.
Yet since the gods had brought it about that these vile things must be,
I wish I had been the wife of a better man than this is,
one who knew modesty and all things of shame that men say.
But this man's heart is no steadfast thing, nor yet will it be so
ever hereafter; for that I think he shall take the consequence.
But come now, come in and rest on this chair, my brother,
since it is on your heart beyond all that the hard work has fallen
for the sake of dishonoured me and the blind act of Alexandros,
us two, on whom Zeus set a vile destiny, so that hereafter
we shall be made into things of song for the men of the future.'

Then tall Hektor of the shining helm answered her: 'Do not, Helen,
make me sit with you, though you love me. You will not persuade me.
Already my heart within is hastening me to defend
the Trojans, who when I am away long greatly to have me.
Rather rouse this man, and let himself also be swift to action
so he may overtake me while I am still in the city.
For I am going first to my own house, so I can visit
my own people, my beloved wife and my son, who is little,
since I do not know if ever again I shall come back this way,
or whether the gods will strike me down at the hands of the Achaians.'

So speaking Hektor of the shining helm departed
and in speed made his way to his own well-established dwelling,
but failed to find in the house Andromache of the white arms;
for she, with the child, and followed by one fair-robed attendant,
had taken her place on the tower in lamentation, and tearful.

When he saw no sign of his perfect wife within the house, Hektor
stopped in his way on the threshold and spoke among the hand-
maidens:
'Come then, tell me truthfully as you may, handmaidens:
where has Andromache of the white arms gone? Is she
with any of the sisters of her lord or the wives of his brothers?
Or has she gone to the house of Athene, where all the other
lovely-haired women of Troy propitiate the grim goddess?'
Then in turn the hard-working housekeeper gave him an answer:
'Hektor, since you have urged me to tell you the truth, she is not
with any of the sisters of her lord or the wives of his brothers,
nor has she gone to the house of Athene, where all the other
lovely-haired women of Troy propitiate the grim goddess,
but she has gone to the great bastion of Ilion, because she heard that
the Trojans were losing, and great grew the strength of the Achaians.
Therefore she has gone in speed to the wall, like a woman
gone mad, and a nurse attending her carries the baby.'
So the housekeeper spoke, and Hektor hastened from his home
backward by the way he had come through the well-laid streets. So
as he had come to the gates on his way through the great city,
the Skaian gates, whereby he would issue into the plain, there
at last his own generous wife came running to meet him,
Andromache, the daughter of high-hearted Eëtion;
Eëtion, who had dwelt underneath wooded Plakos,
in Thebe below Plakos, lord over the Kilikian people.
It was his daughter who was given to Hektor of the bronze helm.
She came to him there, and beside her went an attendant carrying
the boy in the fold of her bosom, a little child, only a baby,
Hektor's son, the admired, beautiful as a star shining,
whom Hektor called Skamandrios, but all of the others
Astyanax[3]—lord of the city; since Hektor alone saved Ilion.
Hektor smiled in silence as he looked on his son, but she,
Andromache, stood close beside him, letting her tears fall,
and clung to his hand and called him by name and spoke to him:
'Dearest,
your own great strength will be your death, and you have no pity
on your little son, nor on me, ill-starred, who soon must be your
widow;
for presently the Achaians, gathering together,
will set upon you and kill you; and for me it would be far better
to sink into the earth when I have lost you, for there is no other
consolation for me after you have gone to your destiny—
only grief; since I have no father, no honoured mother.

3. The name does literally mean "lord of the city." *Skamandrios:* After the Trojan river Skamander.

It was brilliant Achilleus who slew my father, Eëtion,
when he stormed the strong-founded citadel of the Kilikians,
Thebe of the towering gates. He killed Eëtion
but did not strip his armour, for his heart respected the dead man,
but burned the body in all its elaborate war-gear
and piled a grave mound over it, and the nymphs of the mountains,
daughters of Zeus of the aegis, planted elm trees about it.
And they who were my seven brothers in the great house all went
upon a single day down into the house of the death god,
for swift-footed brilliant Achilleus slaughtered all of them
as they were tending their white sheep and their lumbering oxen;
and when he had led my mother, who was queen under wooded Plakos,
here, along with all his other possessions, Achilleus
released her again, accepting ransom beyond count, but Artemis[4]
of the showering arrows struck her down in the halls of her father.
Hektor, thus you are father to me, and my honoured mother,
you are my brother, and you it is who are my young husband.
Please take pity upon me then, stay here on the rampart,
that you may not leave your child an orphan, your wife a widow,
but draw your people up by the fig tree, there where the city
is openest to attack, and where the wall may be mounted.
Three times their bravest came that way, and fought there to storm it
about the two Aiantes and renowned Idomeneus,
about the two Atreidai[5] and the fighting son of Tydeus.
Either some man well skilled in prophetic arts had spoken,
or the very spirit within themselves had stirred them to the onslaught.'
Then tall Hektor of the shining helm answered her: 'All these
things are in my mind also, lady; yet I would feel deep shame
before the Trojans, and the Trojan women with trailing garments,
if like a coward I were to shrink aside from the fighting;
and the spirit will not let me, since I have learned to be valiant
and to fight always among the foremost ranks of the Trojans,
winning for my own self great glory, and for my father.
For I know this thing well in my heart, and my mind knows it:
there will come a day when sacred Ilion shall perish,
and Priam, and the people of Priam of the strong ash spear.
But it is not so much the pain to come of the Trojans
that troubles me, not even of Priam the king nor Hekabe,
not the thought of my brothers who in their numbers and valour
shall drop in the dust under the hands of men who hate them,

4. A virgin goddess, dispenser of natural and painless death to women. 5. The sons of Atreus. *Aiantes:* There were two Greek warriors called Aias (Ajax). *Idomeneus:* A hero from Crete.

as troubles me the thought of you, when some bronze-armoured
Achaian leads you off, taking away your day of liberty,
in tears; and in Argos you must work at the loom of another,
and carry water from the spring Messeis or Hypereia,[6]
all unwilling, but strong will be the necessity upon you;
and some day seeing you shedding tears a man will say of you:
"This is the wife of Hektor, who was ever the bravest fighter
of the Trojans, breakers of horses, in the days when they fought about Ilion."
So will one speak of you; and for you it will be yet a fresh grief,
to be widowed of such a man who could fight off the day of your slavery.
But may I be dead and the piled earth hide me under before I
hear you crying and know by this that they drag you captive.'

So speaking glorious Hektor held out his arms to his baby,
who shrank back to his fair-girdled nurse's bosom
screaming, and frightened at the aspect of his own father,
terrified as he saw the bronze and the crest with its horse-hair,
nodding dreadfully, as he thought, from the peak of the helmet.
Then his beloved father laughed out, and his honoured mother,
and at once glorious Hektor lifted from his head the helmet
and laid it in all its shining upon the ground. Then taking
up his dear son he tossed him about in his arms, and kissed him,
and lifted his voice in prayer to Zeus and the other immortals:
'Zeus, and you other immortals, grant that this boy, who is my son,
may be as I am, pre-eminent among the Trojans,
great in strength, as am I, and rule strongly over Ilion;
and some day let them say of him: "He is better by far than his father,"
as he comes in from the fighting; and let him kill his enemy
and bring home the blooded spoils, and delight the heart of his mother.'

So speaking he set his child again in the arms of his beloved
wife, who took him back again to her fragrant bosom
smiling in her tears; and her husband saw, and took pity upon her,
and stroked her with his hand, and called her by name and spoke to her:
'Poor Andromache! Why does your heart sorrow so much for me?
No man is going to hurl me to Hades, unless it is fated,
but as for fate, I think that no man yet has escaped it
once it has taken its first form, neither brave man nor coward.
Go therefore back to our house, and take up your own work,
the loom and the distaff, and see to it that your handmaidens

6. One in central, the other in northern, Greece.

ply their work also; but the men must see to the fighting,
all men who are the people of Ilion, but I beyond others.'
So glorious Hektor spoke and again took up the helmet
with its crest of horse-hair, while his beloved wife went home-
ward,
turning to look back on the way, letting the live tears fall.
And as she came in speed into the well-settled household
of Hektor the slayer of men, she found numbers of handmaidens
within, and her coming stirred all of them into lamentation.
So they mourned in his house over Hektor while he was living
still, for they thought he would never again come back from the
fighting
alive, escaping the Achaian hands and their violence.
But Paris in turn did not linger long in his high house,
but when he had put on his glorious armour with bronze elaborate
he ran in the confidence of his quick feet through the city.
As when some stalled horse who has been corn-fed at the manger
breaking free of his rope gallops over the plain in thunder
to his accustomed bathing place in a sweet-running river
and in the pride of his strength holds high his head, and the mane
floats
over his shoulders; sure of his glorious strength, the quick knees
carry him to the loved places and the pasture of horses;
so from uttermost Pergamos[7] came Paris, the son of
Priam, shining in all his armour of war as the sun shines,
laughing aloud, and his quick feet carried him; suddenly thereafter
he came on brilliant Hektor, his brother, where he yet lingered
before turning away from the place where he had talked with his
lady.
It was Alexandros the godlike who first spoke to him:
'Brother, I fear that I have held back your haste, by being
slow on the way, not coming in time, as you commanded me.'
Then tall Hektor of the shining helm spoke to him in answer:
'Strange man! There is no way that one, giving judgment in fairness,
could dishonour your work in battle, since you are a strong man.
But of your own accord you hang back, unwilling. And my heart
is grieved in its thought, when I hear shameful things spoken about
you
by the Trojans, who undergo hard fighting for your sake.
Let us go now; some day hereafter we will make all right
with the immortal gods in the sky, if Zeus ever grant it,
setting up to them in our houses the wine-bowl of liberty
after we have driven out of Troy the strong-greaved Achaians.'

7. The citadel of Troy.

[The Trojans rallied successfully and went over to the offensive. They drove the Greeks back to the light fortifications they had built around their beached ships. The Trojans lit their watchfires on the plain, ready to deliver the attack in the morning.]

Book VIII

[THE EVE OF BATTLE]

. . . So with hearts made high these sat night-long by the outworks
of battle, and their watchfires blazed numerous about them.
As when in the sky the stars about the moon's shining
are seen in all their glory, when the air has fallen to stillness,
and all the high places of the hills are clear, and the shoulders outjutting,
and the deep ravines, as endless bright air spills from the heavens
and all the stars are seen, to make glad the heart of the shepherd;
such in their numbers blazed the watchfires the Trojans were burning
between the waters of Xanthos[8] and the ships, before Ilion.
A thousand fires were burning there in the plain, and beside each
one sat fifty men in the flare of the blazing firelight.
And standing each beside his chariot, champing white barley
and oats, the horses waited for the dawn to mount to her high place.

Book IX

[THE EMBASSY TO ACHILLEUS]

So the Trojans held their night watches. Meanwhile immortal
Panic, companion of cold Terror, gripped the Achaians
as all their best were stricken with grief that passes endurance.
As two winds rise to shake the sea where the fish swarm, Boreas
and Zephyros, north wind and west, that blow from Thraceward,[9]
suddenly descending, and the darkened water is gathered
to crests, and far across the salt water scatters the seaweed;
so the heart in the breast of each Achaian was troubled.
And the son of Atreus, stricken at heart with the great sorrow,
went among his heralds the clear-spoken and told them
to summon calling by name each man into the assembly
but with no outcry, and he himself was at work with the foremost.
They took their seats in assembly, dispirited, and Agamemnon
stood up before them, shedding tears, like a spring dark-running
that down the face of a rock impassable drips its dim water.

8. One of the rivers of the Trojan plain. 9. Thrace was the region northwest of Troy.

So, groaning heavily, Agamemnon spoke to the Argives:
'Friends, who are leaders of the Argives and keep their counsel:
Zeus son of Krónos has caught me badly in bitter futility.
He is hard: who before this time promised me and consented
that I might sack strong-walled Ilion and sail homeward.
Now he has devised a vile deception and bids me go back
to Argos in dishonour having lost many of my people.
Such is the way it will be pleasing to Zeus, who is too strong,
who before now has broken the crests of many cities
and will break them again, since his power is beyond all others.
Come then, do as I say, let us all be won over; let us
run away with our ships to the beloved land of our fathers
since no longer now shall we capture Troy of the wide ways.'
So he spoke, and all of them stayed stricken to silence.
For some time the sons of the Achaians said nothing in sorrow;
but at long last Diomedes of the great war cry addressed them:
'Son of Atreus: I will be first to fight with your folly,
as is my right, lord, in this assembly; then do not be angered.
I was the first of the Danaans whose valour you slighted
and said I was unwarlike and without courage.[1] The young men
of the Argives know all these things, and the elders know it.
The son of devious-devising Kronos has given you
gifts in two ways: with the sceptre he gave you honour beyond all,
but he did not give you a heart, and of all power this is the greatest.
Sir, sir, can you really believe the sons of the Achaians
are so unwarlike and so weak of their hearts as you call them?
But if in truth your own heart is so set upon going,
go. The way is there, and next to the water are standing
your ships that came—so many of them!—with you from Mykenai,[2]
and yet the rest of the flowing-haired Achaians will stay here
until we have sacked the city of Troy; let even these also
run away with their ships to the beloved land of their fathers,
still we two, Sthenelos[3] and I, will fight till we witness
the end of Ilion; for it was with God that we made our way hither.'
So he spoke, and all the sons of the Achaians shouted
acclaim for the word of Diomedes, breaker of horses.
And now Nestor the horseman stood forth among them and spoke to them:
'Son of Tydeus,[4] beyond others you are strong in battle,
and in counsel also are noblest among all men of your own age.
Not one man of all the Achaians will belittle your words nor
speak against them. Yet you have not made complete your argument,

1. This happened during Agamemnon's review of his forces before the battle. 2. Mycenae, a city near Argos. 3. The companion of Diomedes. 4. Diomedes.

since you are a young man still and could even be my own son
and my youngest born of all; yet still you argue in wisdom
with the Argive kings, since all you have spoken was spoken fairly.
But let me speak, since I can call myself older than you are,
and go through the whole matter, since there is none who can dishonour
the thing I say, not even powerful Agamemnon.
Out of all brotherhood, outlawed, homeless shall be that man
who longs for all the horror of fighting among his own people.
But now let us give way to the darkness of night, and let us
make ready our evening meal; and let the guards severally
take their stations by the ditch we have dug outside the ramparts.[5]
This I would enjoin upon our young men; but thereafter
do you, son of Atreus, take command, since you are our kingliest.
Divide a feast among the princes; it befits you, it is not
unbecoming. Our shelters are filled with wine that the Achaian
ships carry day by day from Thrace across the wide water.
All hospitality is for you; you are lord over many.
When many assemble together follow him who advises
the best counsel, for in truth there is need for all the Achaians
of good close counsel, since now close to our ships the enemy
burn their numerous fires. What man could be cheered to see this?
Here is the night that will break our army, or else will preserve it.'

So he spoke, and they listened hard to him, and obeyed him,
and the sentries went forth rapidly in their armour, gathering
about Nestor's son Thrasymedes, shepherd of the people,
and about Askalaphos and Ialmenos, sons both of Ares,[6]
about Meriones and Aphareus and Deïpyros
and about the son of Kreion, Lykomedes the brilliant.
There were seven leaders of the sentinels, and with each one a hundred
fighting men followed gripping in their hands the long spears.
They took position in the space between the ditch and the rampart,
and there they kindled their fires and each made ready his supper.

But the son of Atreus led the assembled lords of the Achaians
to his own shelter, and set before them the feast in abundance.
They put their hands to the good things that lay ready before them.
But when they had put away their desire for eating and drinking,
the aged man began to weave his counsel before them
first, Nestor, whose advice had shown best before this.
He in kind intention toward all stood forth and addressed them:
'Son of Atreus, most lordly and king of men, Agamemnon,
with you I will end, with you I will make my beginning, since you

5. The Greeks are now besieged beside their ships; Zeus' promise to Thetis is being fulfilled.
6. God of war.

are lord over many people, and Zeus has given into your hand
the sceptre and rights of judgment, to be king over the people.
It is yours therefore to speak a word, yours also to listen,
and grant the right to another also, when his spirit stirs him
to speak for our good. All shall be yours when you lead the way. Still
I will speak in the way it seems best to my mind, and no one
shall have in his mind any thought that is better than this one
that I have in my mind either now or long before now
ever since that day, illustrious, when you went from the shelter of
angered Achilleus, taking by force the girl Briseis
against the will of the rest of us, since I for my part
urged you strongly not to, but you, giving way to your proud heart's
anger, dishonoured a great man, one whom the immortals
honour, since you have taken his prize and keep it. But let us
even now think how we can make this good and persuade him
with words of supplication and with the gifts of friendship.'

Then in turn the lord of men Agamemnon spoke to him:
'Aged sir, this was no lie when you spoke of my madness.
I was mad, I myself will not deny it. Worth many
fighters is that man whom Zeus in his heart loves, as now
he has honoured this man and beaten down the Achaian people.
But since I was mad, in the persuasion of my heart's evil,
I am willing to make all good, and give back gifts in abundance.
Before you all I will count off my gifts in their splendour:
seven unfired tripods; ten talents' weight of gold;[7] twenty
shining cauldrons; and twelve horses, strong, race-competitors
who have won prizes in the speed of their feet. That man would not be
poor in possessions, to whom were given all these have won me,
nor be unpossessed of dearly honoured gold, were he given
all the prizes these single-foot horses have won for me.
I will give him seven women of Lesbos,[8] the work of whose hands is
blameless, whom when he himself captured strong-founded Lesbos
I chose, and who in their beauty surpassed the races of women.
I will give him these, and with them shall go the one I took from him,
the daughter of Briseus. And to all this I will swear a great oath
that I never entered into her bed and never lay with her
as is natural for human people, between men and women.
All these gifts shall be his at once; but again, if hereafter
the gods grant that we storm and sack the great city of Priam,
let him go to his ship and load it deep as he pleases

7. An enormous sum; the talent was the largest measure of weight. *Unfired:* Unused, brand new. *Tripods:* Three footed kettles; such metal equipment was rare and highly valued. 8. A large island off the coast of what is now Turkey.

with gold and bronze, when we Achaians divide the war spoils,
and let him choose for himself twenty of the Trojan women
who are the loveliest of all after Helen of Argos.
And if we come back to Achaian Argos, pride of the tilled land,
he may be my son-in-law; I will honour him with Orestes
my growing son, who is brought up there in abundant luxury.
Since, as I have three daughters there in my strong-built castle,
Chrysothemis and Laodike and Iphianassa,
let him lead away the one of these that he likes, with no bride-price,
to the house of Peleus, and with the girl I will grant him as dowry
many gifts, such as no man ever gave with his daughter.
I will grant to him seven citadels, strongly settled:
Kardamyle, and Enope, and Hire of the grasses,
Pherai the sacrosanct, and Antheia deep in the meadows,
with Aipeia the lovely and Pedasos of the vineyards.
All these lie near the sea, at the bottom of sandy Pylos,
and men live among them rich in cattle and rich in sheepflocks,
who will honour him as if he were a god with gifts given
and fulfil his prospering decrees underneath his sceptre.
All this I will bring to pass for him, if he changes from his anger.
Let him give way. For Hades[9] gives not way, and is pitiless,
and therefore he among all the gods is most hateful to mortals.
And let him yield place to me, inasmuch as I am the kinglier
and inasmuch as I can call myself born the elder.'

Thereupon the Gerenian[1] horseman Nestor answered him:
'Son of Atreus, most lordly and king of men, Agamemnon,
none could scorn any longer these gifts you offer to Achilleus
the king. Come, let us choose and send some men, who in all speed
will go to the shelter of Achilleus, the son of Peleus;
or come, the men on whom my eye falls, let these take the duty.
First of all let Phoinix,[2] beloved of Zeus, be their leader,
and after him take Aias the great, and brilliant Odysseus,
and of the heralds let Odios and Eurybates go with them.
Bring also water for their hands, and bid them keep words of good omen,
so we may pray to Zeus, son of Kronos, if he will have pity.'

So he spoke, and the word he spoke was pleasing to all of them.
And the heralds brought water at once, and poured it over
their hands, and the young men filled the mixing-bowl with pure wine
and passed it to all, pouring first a libation in goblets.

9. The god who rules the underworld. 1. From Gerena, the city in southwestern Greece where Nestor was brought up. 2. He is especially suited for this embassy since he was tutor to the young Achilleus.

Then when they had poured out wine, and drunk as much as their hearts wished,
they set out from the shelter of Atreus' son, Agamemnon.
And the Gerenian horseman Nestor gave them much instruction,
looking eagerly at each, and most of all at Odysseus,
to try hard, so that they might win over the blameless Peleion.[3]
So these two walked along the strand of the sea deep-thundering
with many prayers to the holder and shaker of the earth, that they might readily persuade the great heart of Aiakides.[4]
Now they came beside the shelters and ships of the Myrmidons
and they found Achilleus delighting his heart in a lyre, clear-sounding,
splendid and carefully wrought, with a bridge of silver upon it,
which he won out of the spoils when he ruined Eëtion's city.
With this he was pleasuring his heart, and singing of men's fame,
as Patroklos was sitting over against him, alone, in silence,
watching Aiakides and the time he would leave off singing.
Now these two came forward, as brilliant Odysseus led them,
and stood in his presence. Achilleus rose to his feet in amazement
holding the lyre as it was, leaving the place where he was sitting.
In the same way Patroklos, when he saw the men come, stood up.
And in greeting Achilleus the swift of foot spoke to them:
'Welcome. You are my friends who have come, and greatly I need you,
who even to this my anger are dearest of all the Achaians.'
So brilliant Achilleus spoke, and guided them forward,
and caused them to sit down on couches with purple coverlets
and at once called over to Patroklos who was not far from him:
'Son of Menoitios, set up a mixing-bowl that is bigger,
and mix us stronger drink, and make ready a cup for each man,
since these who have come beneath my roof are the men that I love best.'
So he spoke, and Patroklos obeyed his beloved companion,
and tossed down a great chopping-block into the firelight,
and laid upon it the back of a sheep, and one of a fat goat,
with the chine of a fatted pig edged thick with lard, and for him
Automedon[5] held the meats, and brilliant Achilleus carved them,
and cut it well into pieces and spitted them, as meanwhile
Menoitios' son, man like a god, made the fire blaze greatly.
But when the fire had burned itself out, and the flames had died down,
he scattered the embers apart, and extended the spits across them

3. Son of Peleus, i.e., Achilleus. 4. Descendant of Aiakos (father of Peleus), i.e., Achilleus. *Holder and shaker*: Poseidon, who was believed to be responsible for earthquakes. 5. The charioteer of Achilleus.

lifting them to the andirons, and sprinkled the meats with divine salt.
Then when he had roasted all, and spread the food on the platters,
Patroklos took the bread and set it out on a table
in fair baskets, while Achilleus served the meats. Thereafter
he himself sat over against the godlike Odysseus
against the further wall, and told his companion, Patroklos,
to sacrifice to the gods; and he threw the firstlings[6] in the fire.
They put their hands to the good things that lay ready before them.
But when they had put aside their desire for eating and drinking,
Aias nodded to Phoinix, and brilliant Odysseus saw it,
and filled a cup with wine, and lifted it to Achilleus:
'Your health, Achilleus. You have no lack of your equal portion
either within the shelter of Atreus' son, Agamemnon,
nor here now in your own. We have good things in abundance
to feast on; here it is not the desirable feast we think of,
but a trouble all too great, beloved of Zeus, that we look on
and are afraid. There is doubt if we save our strong-benched ves-
sels
or if they will be destroyed, unless you put on your war strength.
The Trojans in their pride, with their far-renowned companions,
have set up an encampment close by the ships and the rampart,
and lit many fires along their army, and think no longer
of being held, but rather to drive in upon the black ships.
And Zeus, son of Kronos, lightens upon their right hand, showing
them
portents of good, while Hektor in the huge pride of his strength rages
irresistibly, reliant on Zeus, and gives way to no one
neither god nor man, but the strong fury has descended upon him.
He prays now that the divine Dawn will show most quickly,
since he threatens to shear the uttermost horns from the ship-sterns,
to light the ships themselves with ravening fire, and to cut down
the Achaians themselves as they stir from the smoke beside them.
All this I fear terribly in my heart, lest immortals
accomplish all these threats, and lest for us it be destiny
to die here in Troy, far away from horse-pasturing Argos.
Up, then! if you are minded, late though it be, to rescue
the afflicted sons of the Achaians from the Trojan onslaught.
It will be an affliction to you hereafter, there will be no remedy
found to heal the evil thing when it has been done. No, before-
hand
take thought to beat the evil day aside from the Danaans.
Dear friend, surely thus your father Peleus advised you
that day when he sent you away to Agamemnon from Phthia:

6. The portion of the meat reserved for the gods.

"My child, for the matter of strength, Athene and Hera will give it
if it be their will, but be it yours to hold fast in your bosom
the anger of the proud heart, for consideration is better.
Keep from the bad complication of quarrel, and all the more for this
the Argives will honour you, both their younger men and their elders." '
So the old man advised, but you have forgotten. Yet even now
stop, and give way from the anger that hurts the heart. Agamemnon
offers you worthy recompense if you change from your anger.
Come then, if you will, listen to me, while I count off for you
all the gifts in his shelter that Agamemnon has promised:
Seven unfired tripods; ten talents' weight of gold; twenty
shining cauldrons; and twelve horses, strong, race-competitors
who have won prize in the speed of their feet. That man would not be
poor in possessions, to whom were given all these have won him,
nor be unpossessed of dearly honoured gold, were he given
all the prizes Agamemnon's horses won in their speed for him.
He will give you seven women of Lesbos, the work of whose hands
is blameless, whom when you yourself captured strong-founded Lesbos
he chose, and who in their beauty surpassed the races of women.
He will give you these, and with them shall go the one he took from you,
the daughter of Briseus. And to all this he will swear a great oath
that he never entered into her bed and never lay with her
as is natural for human people, between men and women.
All these gifts shall be yours at once; but again, if hereafter
the gods grant that we storm and sack the great city of Priam,
you may go to your ship and load it deep as you please with
gold and bronze, when we Achaians divide the war spoils,
and you may choose for yourself twenty of the Trojan women,
who are the loveliest of all after Helen of Argos.
And if we come back to Achaian Argos, pride of the tilled land,
you could be his son-in-law; he would honour you with Orestes,
his growing son, who is brought up there in abundant luxury.
Since, as he has three daughters there in his strong-built castle,
Chrysothemis and Laodike and Iphianassa,
you may lead away the one of these that you like, with no bride-price,
to the house of Peleus; and with the girl he will grant you as dowry
many gifts, such as no man ever gave with his daughter.
He will grant you seven citadels, strongly settled:
Kardamyle and Enope and Hire of the grasses,

Pherai the sacrosanct, and Antheia deep in the meadows,
with Aipeia the lovely, and Pedasos of the vineyards.
All these lie near the sea, at the bottom of sandy Pylos,
and men live among them rich in cattle and rich in sheepflocks,
who will honour you as if you were a god with gifts given
and fulfil your prospering decrees underneath your sceptre.
All this he will bring to pass for you, if you change from your anger.
But if the son of Atreus is too much hated in your heart,
himself and his gifts, at least take pity on all the other
Achaians, who are afflicted along the host, and will honour you
as a god. You may win very great glory among them.
For now you might kill Hektor, since he would come very close to you
with the wicked fury upon him, since he thinks there is not his equal
among the rest of the Danaans the ships carried hither.'
Then in answer to him spoke Achilleus of the swift feet:
'Son of Laertes and seed of Zeus, resourceful Odysseus:
without consideration for you I must make my answer,
the way I think, and the way it will be accomplished, that you may not
come one after another, and sit by me, and speak softly.
For as I detest the doorways of Death, I detest that man, who
hides one thing in the depths of his heart, and speaks forth another.
But I will speak to you the way it seems best to me: neither
do I think the son of Atreus, Agamemnon, will persuade me,
nor the rest of the Danaans, since there was no gratitude given
for fighting incessantly forever against your enemies.
Fate is the same for the man who holds back, the same if he fights hard.
We are all held in a single honour, the brave with the weaklings.
A man dies still if he has done nothing, as one who has done much.
Nothing is won for me, now that my heart has gone through its afflictions
in forever setting my life on the hazard of battle.
For as to her unwinged young ones the mother bird brings back
morsels, wherever she can find them, but as for herself it is suffering,
such was I, as I lay through all the many nights unsleeping,
such as I wore through the bloody days of the fighting,
striving with warriors for the sake of these men's women.
But I say that I have stormed from my ships twelve cities
of men, and by land eleven more through the generous Troad.
From all these we took forth treasures, goodly and numerous,
and we would bring them back, and give them to Agamemnon,
Atreus' son; while he, waiting back beside the swift ships,
would take them, and distribute them little by little, and keep many.

All the other prizes of honour he gave the great men and the princes
are held fast by them, but from me alone of all the Achaians
he has taken and keeps the bride of my heart. Let him lie beside her
and be happy. Yet why must the Argives fight with the Trojans?
And why was it the son of Atreus assembled and led here
these people? Was it not for the sake of lovely-haired Helen?
Are the sons of Atreus alone among mortal men the ones
who love their wives? Since any who is a good man, and careful,
loves her who is his own and cares for her, even as I now
loved this one from my heart, though it was my spear that won her.
Now that he has deceived me and taken from my hands my prize of
honour,
let him try me no more. I know him well. He will not persuade me.
Let him take counsel with you, Odysseus, and the rest of the princes
how to fight the ravening fire away from his vessels.
Indeed, there has been much hard work done even without me;
he has built himself a wall and driven a ditch about it,
making it great and wide, and fixed the sharp stakes inside it.
Yet even so he cannot hold the strength of manslaughtering
Hektor; and yet when I was fighting among the Achaians
Hektor would not drive his attack beyond the wall's shelter
but would come forth only so far as the Skaian gates and the oak
tree.
There once he endured me alone, and barely escaped my onslaught.
But, now I am unwilling to fight against brilliant Hektor,
tomorrow, when I have sacrificed to Zeus and to all gods,
and loaded well my ships, and rowed out on to the salt water,
you will see, if you have a mind to it and if it concerns you,
my ships in the dawn at sea on the Hellespont where the fish swarm
and my men manning them with good will to row. If the glorious
shaker of the earth should grant us a favouring passage
on the third day thereafter we might raise generous Phthia.
I have many possessions there that I left behind when I came here
on this desperate venture, and from here there is more gold, and red
bronze,
and fair-girdled women, and grey iron I will take back;
all that was allotted to me. But my prize: he who gave it,
powerful Agamemnon, son of Atreus, has taken it back again
outrageously. Go back and proclaim to him all that I tell you,
openly, so other Achaians may turn against him in anger
if he hopes yet one more time to swindle some other Danaan,
wrapped as he is forever in shamelessness; yet he would not,
bold as a dog though he be, dare look in my face any longer.
I will join with him in no counsel, and in no action.
He cheated me and he did me hurt. Let him not beguile me

with words again. This is enough for him. Let him of his own will
be damned, since Zeus of the counsels has taken his wits away from
him.
I hate his gifts. I hold him light as the strip of a splinter.
Not if he gave me ten times as much, and twenty times over
as he possesses now, not if more should come to him from
elsewhere,
or give all that is brought in to Orchomenos,[7] all that is brought in
to Thebes of Egypt, where the greatest possessions lie up in the houses,
Thebes of the hundred gates, where through each of the gates two
hundred
fighting men come forth to war with horses and chariots;
not if he gave me gifts as many as the sand or the dust is,
not even so would Agamemnon have his way with my spirit
until he had made good to me all this heartrending insolence.
Nor will I marry a daughter of Atreus' son, Agamemnon,
not if she challenged Aphrodite the golden for loveliness,
not if she matched the work of her hands with grey-eyed Athene;
not even so will I marry her; let him pick some other Achaian,
one who is to his liking and is kinglier than I am.
For if the gods will keep me alive and I win homeward,
Peleus himself will presently arrange a wife for me.
There are many Achaian girls in the land of Hellas and Phthia,
daughters of great men who hold strong places in guard. And of these
any one that I please I might make my beloved lady.
And the great desire in my heart drives me rather in that place
to take a wedded wife in marriage, the bride of my fancy,
to enjoy with her the possessions won by aged Peleus. For not
worth the value of my life are all the possessions they fable
were won for Ilion, that strong-founded citadel, in the old days
when there was peace, before the coming of the sons of the Achai-
ans;
not all that the stone doorsill of the Archer holds fast within it,
of Phoibos Apollo in Pytho[8] of the rocks. Of possessions
cattle and fat sheep are things to be had for the lifting,
and tripods can be won, and the tawny high heads of horses,
but a man's life cannot come back again, it cannot be lifted
nor captured again by force, once it has crossed the teeth's barrier.
For my mother Thetis the goddess of the silver feet tells me
I carry two sorts of destiny toward the day of my death. Either,
if I stay here and fight beside the city of the Trojans,
my return home is gone, but my glory shall be everlasting;
but if I return home to the beloved land of my fathers,

7. Great city north of Athens. 8. Apollo's shrine at Delphi. The treasures consisted of offerings made to the god by grateful worshipers.

the excellence of my glory is gone, but there will be a long life
left for me, and my end in death will not come to me quickly.
And this would be my counsel to others also, to sail back
home again, since no longer shall you find any term set
on the sheer city of Ilion, since Zeus of the wide brows has strongly
held his own hand over it, and its people are made bold.

Do you go back therefore to the great men of the Achaians,
and take them this message, since such is the privilege of the princes:
that they think out in their minds some other scheme that is better,
which might rescue their ships, and the people of the Achaians
who man the hollow ships, since this plan will not work for them
which they thought of by reason of my anger. Let Phoinix
remain here with us and sleep here, so that tomorrow
he may come with us in our ships to the beloved land of our fathers,
if he will; but I will never use force to hold him.'

So he spoke, and all of them stayed stricken to silence
in amazement at his words. He had spoken to them very strongly.
But at long last Phoinix the aged horseman spoke out
in a stormburst of tears, and fearing for the ships of the Achaians:
'If it is going home, glorious Achilleus, you ponder
in your heart, and are utterly unwilling to drive the obliterating
fire from the fast ships, since anger has descended on your spirit,
how then shall I, dear child, be left in this place behind you
all alone? Peleus the aged horseman sent me forth with you
on that day when he sent you from Phthia to Agamemnon
a mere child, who knew nothing yet of the joining of battle
nor of debate where men are made pre-eminent. Therefore
he sent me along with you to teach you of all these matters,
to make you a speaker of words and one who accomplished in action.
Therefore apart from you, dear child, I would not be willing
to be left behind, not were the god in person to promise
he would scale away my old age and make me a young man blossoming
as I was that time when I first left Hellas, the land of fair women,
running from the hatred of Ormenos' son Amyntor,
my father; who hated me for the sake of a fair-haired mistress.
For he made love to her himself, and dishonoured his own wife,
my mother; who was forever taking my knees and entreating me
to lie with this mistress instead so that she would hate the old man.
I was persuaded and did it; and my father when he heard of it straightway
called down his curses, and invoked against me the dreaded furies[9]

9. A avenging spirits, particularly concerned with crimes committed by kinsmen against kinsmen.

that I might never have any son born of my seed to dandle
on my knees; and the divinities, Zeus of the underworld[1]
and Persephone the honoured goddess, accomplished his curses.
Then I took it into my mind to cut him down with the sharp bronze,
but some one of the immortals checked my anger, reminding me
of rumour among the people and men's maledictions repeated,
that I might not be called a parricide among the Achaians.
But now no more could the heart in my breast be ruled entirely
to range still among these halls when my father was angered.
Rather it was the many kinsmen and cousins about me
who held me closed in the house, with supplications repeated,
and slaughtered fat sheep in their numbers, and shambling horn-curved
cattle, and numerous swine with the fat abundant upon them
were singed and stretched out across the flame of Hephaistos,
and much wine was drunk that was stored in the jars of the old man.
Nine nights they slept nightlong in their places beside me,
and they kept up an interchange of watches, and the fire was never
put out; one below the gate of the strong-closed courtyard,
and one in the ante-chamber before the doors of the bedroom.
But when the tenth night had come to me in its darkness,
then I broke the close-compacted doors of the chamber
and got away, and overleapt the fence of the courtyard
lightly, unnoticed by the guarding men and the women servants.
Then I fled far away through the wide spaces of Hellas
and came as far as generous Phthia, mother of sheepflocks,
and to lord Peleus, who accepted me with a good will
and gave me his love, even as a father loves his own son
who is a single child brought up among many possessions.
He made me a rich man, and granted me many people,
and I lived, lord over the Dolopes, in remotest Phthia,
and, godlike Achilleus, I made you all that you are now,
and loved you out of my heart, for you would not go with another
out to any feast, nor taste any food in your own halls
until I had set you on my knees, and cut little pieces
from the meat, and given you all you wished, and held the wine for you.
And many times you soaked the shirt that was on my body
with wine you would spit up in the troublesomeness of your childhood.
So I have suffered much through you, and have had much trouble,
thinking always how the gods would not bring to birth any children
of my own; so that it was you, godlike Achilleus, I made

1. The god Hades. *Persephone*: Wife of Hades.

my own child, so that some day you might keep hard affliction from me.
Then, Achilleus, beat down your great anger. It is not
yours to have a pitiless heart. The very immortals
can be moved; their virtue and honour and strength are greater than ours are,
and yet with sacrifices and offerings for endearment,
with libations and with savour men turn back even the immortals
in supplication, when any man does wrong and transgresses.
For there are also the spirits of Prayer, the daughters of great Zeus,
and they are lame of their feet, and wrinkled, and cast their eyes sidelong,
who toil on their way left far behind by the spirit of Ruin:
but she, Ruin, is strong and sound on her feet, and therefore
far outruns all Prayers, and wins into every country
to force men astray; and the Prayers follow as healers after her.
If a man venerates these daughters of Zeus as they draw near,
such a man they bring great advantage, and hear his entreaty;
but if a man shall deny them, and stubbornly with a harsh word
refuse, they go to Zeus, son of Kronos, in supplication
that Ruin may overtake this man, that he be hurt, and punished.
So, Achilleus: grant, you also, that Zeus' daughters be given
their honour, which, lordly though they be, curbs the will of others.
Since, were he not bringing gifts and naming still more hereafter,
Atreus' son; were he to remain still swollen with rancour,
even I would not bid you throw your anger aside, nor
defend the Argives, though they needed you sorely. But see now,
he offers you much straightway, and has promised you more hereafter;
he has sent the best men to you to supplicate you, choosing them
out of the Achaian host, those who to yourself are the dearest
of all the Argives. Do not you make vain their argument
nor their footsteps, though before this one could not blame your anger.
Thus it was in the old days also, the deeds that we hear of
from the great men, when the swelling anger descended upon them.
The heroes would take gifts; they would listen, and be persuaded.
For I remember this action of old, it is not a new thing,
and how it went; you are all my friends, I will tell it among you.
The Kouretes and the steadfast Aitolians were fighting
and slaughtering one another about the city of Kalydon,[2]
the Aitolians in lovely Kalydon's defence, the Kouretes
furious to storm and sack it in war. For Artemis,

2. A city in northwest Greece. The Kouretes and Aitolians were the local tribes, once allied, now at odds.

she of the golden chair, had driven this evil upon them,
angered that Oineus[3] had not given the pride of the orchards
to her, first fruits; the rest of the gods were given due sacrifice,
but alone to this daughter of great Zeus he had given nothing.
He had forgotten, or had not thought, in his hard delusion,
and in wrath at his whole mighty line the Lady of Arrows
sent upon them the fierce wild boar with the shining teeth, who
after the way of his kind did much evil to the orchards of Oineus.
For he ripped up whole tall trees from the ground and scattered them headlong
roots and all, even to the very flowers of the orchard.
The son of Oineus killed this boar, Meleagros, assembling
together many hunting men out of numerous cities
with their hounds; since the boar might not have been killed by a few men,
so huge was he, and had put many men on the sad fire for burning.
But the goddess again made a great stir of anger and crying
battle, over the head of the boar and the bristling boar's hide,
between Kouretes and the high-hearted Aitolians. So long
as Meleagros lover of battle stayed in the fighting
it went the worse for the Kouretes, and they could not even
hold their ground outside the wall, though they were so many.
But when the anger came upon Meleagros, such anger
as wells in the hearts of others also, though their minds are careful,
he, in the wrath of his heart against his own mother, Althaia,
lay apart with his wedded bride, Kleopatra the lovely,
daughter of sweet-stepping Marpessa,[4] child of Euenos,
and Idas, who was the strongest of all men upon earth
in his time; for he even took up the bow to face the King's onset,
Phoibos Apollo, for the sake of the sweet-stepping maiden;
a girl her father and honoured mother had named in their palace
Alkyone, sea-bird, as a by-name, since for her sake
her mother with the sorrow-laden cry of a sea-bird
wept because far-reaching Phoibos Apollo had taken her;[5]
with this Kleopatra he lay mulling his heart-sore anger,
raging by reason of his mother's curses, which she called down
from the gods upon him, in deep grief for the death of her brother,[6]
and many times beating with her hands on the earth abundant
she called on Hades and on honoured Persephone, lying

3. King of Kalydon. 4. The story to which Homer alludes runs as follows: Idas, the famous archer, carried off and married Marpessa, daughter of Euenos. Apollo also had been her suitor, and he overtook Idas and carried off Marpessa. Idas defied Apollo to combat, but Zeus decided that the choice was up to Marpessa, who preferred Idas. They gave their daughter Kleopatra the nickname Alkyone (compare "halcyon"), the name of a sea-bird that is supposed to mourn for its mate, to commemorate the time when Marpessa, carried off by Apollo, mourned for Idas.
5. Marpessa. 6. In the course of the battles Meleagros had killed one of his mother's brothers.

at length along the ground, and the tears were wet on her bosom,
to give death to her son; and Erinys,[7] the mist-walking,
she of the heart without pity, heard her out of the dark places.
Presently there was thunder about the gates, and the sound rose
of towers under assault, and the Aitolian elders
supplicated him, sending their noblest priests of the immortals,
to come forth and defend them; they offered him a great gift:
wherever might lie the richest ground in lovely Kalydon,
there they told him to choose out a piece of land, an entirely
good one, of fifty acres, the half of it to be vineyard
and the half of it unworked ploughland of the plain to be furrowed.
And the aged horseman Oineus again and again entreated him,
and took his place at the threshold of the high-vaulted chamber
and shook against the bolted doors, pleading with his own son.
And again and again his honoured mother and his sisters
entreated him, but he only refused the more; then his own friends
who were the most honoured and dearest of all entreated him;
but even so they could not persuade the heart within him
until, as the chamber was under close assault, the Kouretes
were mounting along the towers and set fire to the great city.
And then at last his wife, the fair-girdled bride, supplicated
Meleagros, in tears, and rehearsed in their numbers before him
all the sorrows that come to men when their city is taken:
they kill the men, and the fire leaves the city in ashes,
and strangers lead the children away and the deep-girdled women.
And the heart, as he listened to all this evil, was stirred within him
and he rose, and went, and closed his body in shining armour.
So he gave way in his own heart, and drove back the day of evil
from the Aitolians; yet these no longer would make good
their many and gracious gifts; yet he drove back the evil from them.
Listen, then; do not have such a thought in your mind; let not
the spirit within you turn you that way, dear friend. It would be worse
to defend the ships after they are burning. No, with gifts promised
go forth. The Achaians will honour you as they would an immortal.
But if without gifts you go into the fighting where men perish,
your honour will no longer be as great, though you drive back the battle.'
Then in answer to him spoke Achilleus of the swift feet:
'Phoinix my father, aged, illustrious, such honour is a thing
I need not. I think I am honoured already in Zeus' ordinance

7. The personified spirit of vengeance, a Fury (compare "furies," Book IX, l. 454).

which will hold me here beside my curved ships as long as life's wind
stays in my breast, as long as my knees have their spring beneath me.
And put away in your thoughts this other thing I tell you.
Stop confusing my heart with lamentation and sorrow
for the favour of great Atreides. It does not become you
to love this man, for fear you turn hateful to me, who love you.
It should be your pride with me to hurt whoever shall hurt me.
Be king equally with me; take half of my honour.
These men will carry back the message; you stay here and sleep here
in a soft bed, and we shall decide tomorrow, as dawn shows,
whether to go back home again or else to remain here.'

He spoke, and, saying nothing, nodded with his brows to Patroklos
to make up a neat bed for Phoinix, so the others might presently
think of going home from his shelter. The son of Telamon,
Aias the godlike, saw it, and now spoke his word among them:
'Son of Laertes and seed of Zeus, resourceful Odysseus:
let us go. I think that nothing will be accomplished
by argument on this errand; it is best to go back quickly
and tell this story, though it is not good, to the Danaans
who sit there waiting for us to come back, seeing that Achilleus
has made savage the proud-hearted spirit within his body.
He is hard, and does not remember that friends' affection
wherein we honoured him by the ships, far beyond all others.
Pitiless. And yet a man takes from his brother's slayer
the blood price, or the price for a child who was killed, and the guilty
one, when he has largely repaid, stays still in the country,
and the injured man's heart is curbed, and his pride, and his anger
when he has taken the price; but the gods put in your breast a spirit
not to be placated, bad, for the sake of one single
girl. Yet now we offer you seven, surpassingly lovely,
and much beside these. Now make gracious the spirit within you.
Respect your own house; see, we are under the same roof with you,
from the multitude of the Danaans, we who desire beyond all
others to have your honour and love, out of all the Achaians.'

Then in answer to him spoke Achilleus of the swift feet:
'Son of Telamon, seed of Zeus, Aias, lord of the people:
all that you have said seems spoken after my own mind.
Yet still the heart in me swells up in anger, when I remember
the disgrace that he wrought upon me before the Argives,
the son of Atreus, as if I were some dishonoured vagabond.
Do you then go back to him, and take him this message:
that I shall not think again of the bloody fighting

until such time as the son of wise Priam, Hektor the brilliant,
comes all the way to the ships of the Myrmidons, and their shelters,
slaughtering the Argives, and shall darken with fire our vessels.
But around my own shelter, I think, and beside my black ship
Hektor will be held, though he be very hungry for battle.'

He spoke, and they taking each a two-handled cup poured out
a libation, then went back to their ships, and Odysseus led them.
Now Patroklos gave the maids and his followers orders
to make up without delay a neat bed for Phoinix.
And these obeyed him and made up the bed as he had commanded,
laying fleeces on it, and a blanket, and a sheet of fine linen.
There the old man lay down and waited for the divine Dawn.
But Achilleus slept in the inward corner of the strong-built shelter,
and a woman lay beside him, one he had taken from Lesbos,
Phorbas' daughter, Diomede of the fair colouring.
In the other corner Patroklos went to bed; with him also
was a girl, Iphis the fair-girdled, whom brilliant Achilleus
gave him, when he took sheer Skyros, Enyeus' citadel.

Now when these had come back to the shelters of Agamemnon,
the sons of the Achaians greeted them with their gold cups
uplifted, one after another, standing, and asked them questions.
And the first to question them was the lord of men, Agamemnon:
'Tell me, honoured Odysseus, great glory of the Achaians:
is he willing to fight the ravening fire away from our vessels,
or did he refuse, and does the anger still hold his proud heart?'

Then long-suffering great Odysseus spoke to him in answer:
'Son of Atreus, most lordly, king of men, Agamemnon.
That man will not quench his anger, but still more than ever
is filled with rage. He refuses you and refuses your presents.
He tells you yourself to take counsel among the Argives
how to save your ships, and the people of the Achaians.
And he himself has threatened that tomorrow as dawn shows
he will drag down his strong-benched, oarswept ships to the water.
He said it would be his counsel to others also, to sail back
home again, since no longer will you find any term set
on the sheer city of Ilion, since Zeus of the wide brows has strongly
held his own hand over it, and its people are made bold.
So he spoke. There are these to attest it who went there with me
also, Aias, and the two heralds, both men of good counsel.
But aged Phoinix stayed there for the night, as Achilleus urged
him,
so he might go home in the ships to the beloved land of his fathers
if Phoinix will; but he will never use force to persuade him.'

So he spoke, and all of them stayed stricken to silence
in amazement at his words. He had spoken to them very strongly.

For a long time the sons of the Achaians said nothing, in sorrow,
but at long last Diomedes of the great war cry spoke to them:
'Son of Atreus, most lordly and king of men, Agamemnon,
I wish you had not supplicated the blameless son of Peleus
with innumerable gifts offered. He is a proud man without this,
and now you have driven him far deeper into his pride. Rather
we shall pay him no more attention, whether he comes in with us
or stays away. He will fight again, whenever the time comes
that the heart in his body urges him to, and the god drives him.
Come then, do as I say, and let us all be won over.
Go to sleep, now that the inward heart is made happy
with food and drink, for these are the strength and courage within us.
But when the lovely dawn shows forth with rose fingers, Atreides,
rapidly form before our ships both people and horses
stirring them on, and yourself be ready to fight in the foremost.'
So he spoke, and all the kings gave him their approval,
acclaiming the word of Diomedes, breaker of horses.
Then they poured a libation, and each man went to his shelter,
where they went to their beds and took the blessing of slumber.

[After Achilleus' refusal, the situation of the Greeks worsened rapidly. Agamemnon, Diomedes, and Odysseus were all wounded. The Trojans breached the stockade and fought beside the ships. Patroklos tried to bring Achilleus to the aid of the Greeks, but the most he could obtain was permission for himself to fight, clad in Achilleus' armor, at the head of the Myrmidons. He turned the tide of battle and drove the Trojans back to their walls, only to fall himself through the direct intervention of Apollo. Hektor stripped Achilleus' armor from the body. A fierce fight for the body itself ended in partial success for the Greeks; they took Patroklos' body but had to retreat to their camp, with the Trojans at their heels.]

Book XVIII

[THE ARMING OF ACHILLEUS]

So these fought on in the likeness of blazing fire. Meanwhile,
Antilochos[8] came, a swift-footed messenger, to Achilleus,
and found him sitting in front of the steep-horned ships, thinking
over in his heart of things which had now been accomplished.
Disturbed, Achilleus spoke to the spirit in his own great heart:
'Ah me, how is it that once again the flowing-haired Achaians

8. A son of Nestor.

are driven out of the plain on their ships in fear and confusion?
May the gods not accomplish vile sorrows upon the heart in me
in the way my mother once made it clear to me, when she told me
how while I yet lived the bravest of all the Myrmidons
must leave the light of the sun beneath the hands of the Trojans.
Surely, then, the strong son of Menoitios[9] has perished.
Unhappy! and yet I told him, once he had beaten the fierce fire
off, to come back to the ships, not fight in strength against Hektor.'

Now as he was pondering this in his heart and his spirit,
meanwhile the son of stately Nestor was drawing near him
and wept warm tears, and gave Achilleus his sorrowful message:
'Ah me, son of valiant Peleus; you must hear from me
the ghastly message of a thing I wish never had happened.
Patroklos has fallen, and now they are fighting over his body
which is naked. Hektor of the shining helm has taken his armour.'

He spoke, and the black cloud of sorrow closed on Achilleus.
In both hands he caught up the grimy dust, and poured it
over his head and face, and fouled his handsome countenance,
and the black ashes were scattered over his immortal tunic.
And he himself, mightily in his might, in the dust lay
at length, and took and tore at his hair with his hands, and defiled
it.
And the handmaidens Achilleus and Patroklos had taken
captive, stricken at heart cried out aloud, and came running
out of doors about valiant Achilleus, and all of them
beat their breasts with their hands, and the limbs went slack in each
of them.
On the other side Antilochos mourned with him, letting the tears
fall,
and held the hands of Achilleus as he grieved in his proud heart,
fearing Achilleus might cut his throat with the iron. He cried out
terribly, aloud, and the lady his mother heard him
as she sat in the depths of the sea at the side of her aged father,
and she cried shrill in turn, and the goddesses gathered about her,
all who along the depth of the sea were daughters of Nereus.
For Glauke was there, Kymodoke and Thaleia,
Nesaie and Speio and Thoë, and ox-eyed Halia;
Kymothoë was there, Aktaia and Limnoreia,
Melite and Iaira, Amphithoë and Agauë,
Doto and Proto, Dynamene and Pherousa,
Dexamene and Amphinome and Kallianeira;
Doris and Panope and glorious Galateia,
Nemertes and Apseudes and Kallianassa;

9. Patroklos.

Klymene was there, Ianeira and Ianassa,
Maira and Oreithyia and lovely-haired Amatheia,
and the rest who along the depth of the sea were daughters of Nereus.
The silvery cave was filled with these, and together all of them
beat their breasts, and among them Thetis led out the threnody:
'Hear me, Nereids, my sisters; so you may all know
well all the sorrows that are in my heart, when you hear of them from me.
Ah me, my sorrow, the bitterness in this best of child-bearing,
since I gave birth to a son who was without fault and powerful,
conspicuous among heroes; and he shot up like a young tree,
and I nurtured him, like a tree grown in the pride of the orchard.
I sent him away with the curved ships into the land of Ilion
to fight with the Trojans; but I shall never again receive him
won home again to his country and into the house of Peleus.
Yet while I see him live and he looks on the sunlight, he has
sorrows, and though I go to him I can do nothing to help him.
Yet I shall go, to look on my dear son, and to listen
to the sorrow that has come to him as he stays back from the fighting.'
So she spoke, and left the cave, and the others together
went with her in tears, and about them the wave of the water
was broken. Now these, when they came to the generous Troad,
followed each other out on the sea-shore, where close together
the ships of the Myrmidons were hauled up about swift Achilleus.
There as he sighed heavily the lady his mother stood by him
and cried out shrill and aloud, and took her son's head in her arms, then
sorrowing for him she spoke to him in winged words: 'Why then,
child, do you lament? What sorrow has come to your heart now?
Speak out, do not hide it. These things are brought to accomplishment
through Zeus: in the way that you lifted your hands and prayed for,
that all the sons of the Achaians be pinned on their grounded vessels
by reason of your loss, and suffer things that are shameful.'
Then sighing heavily Achilleus of the swift feet answered her:
'My mother, all these things the Olympian[1] brought to accomplishment.
But what pleasure is this to me, since my dear companion has perished,
Patroklos, whom I loved beyond all other companions,

1. Zeus.

as well as my own life. I have lost him, and Hektor, who killed him,
has stripped away that gigantic armour, a wonder to look on
and splendid, which the gods gave Peleus, a glorious present,
on that day they drove you to the marriage bed of a mortal.
I wish you had gone on living then with the other goddesses
of the sea, and that Peleus had married some mortal woman.
As it is, there must be on your heart a numberless sorrow
for your son's death, since you can never again receive him
won home again to his country; since the spirit within does not drive me
to go on living and be among men, except on condition
that Hektor first be beaten down under my spear, lose his life
and pay the price for stripping Patroklos, the son of Menoitios.'
Then in turn Thetis spoke to him, letting the tears fall:
'Then I must lose you soon, my child, by what you are saying,
since it is decreed your death must come soon after Hektor's.'
Then deeply disturbed Achilleus of the swift feet answered her:
'I must die soon, then; since I was not to stand by my companion
when he was killed. And now, far away from the land of his fathers,
he has perished, and lacked my fighting strength to defend him.
Now, since I am not going back to the beloved land of my fathers,
since I was no light of safety to Patroklos, nor to my other
companions, who in their numbers went down before glorious Hektor,
but sit here beside my ships, a useless weight on the good land,
I, who am such as no other of the bronze-armoured Achaians
in battle, though there are others also better in council—
why, I wish that strife would vanish away from among gods and mortals,
and gall, which makes a man grow angry for all his great mind,
that gall of anger that swarms like smoke inside of a man's heart
and becomes a thing sweeter to him by far than the dripping of honey.
So it was here that the lord of men Agamemnon angered me.
Still, we will let all this be a thing of the past, and for all our
sorrow beat down by force the anger deeply within us.
Now I shall go, to overtake that killer of a dear life,
Hektor; then I will accept my own death, at whatever
time Zeus wishes to bring it about, and the other immortals.
For not even the strength of Herakles[2] fled away from destruction,
although he was dearest of all to lord Zeus, son of Kronos,
but his fate beat him under, and the wearisome anger of Hera.
So I likewise, if such is the fate which has been wrought for me,

2. Or Hercules, son of Zeus by a mortal woman; pursued by the jealousy of Hera, he was forced to undertake twelve great labors and finally died in agony from the effects of a poisoned garment.

shall lie still, when I am dead. Now I must win excellent glory,
and drive some one of the women of Troy, or some deep-girdled
Dardanian[3] woman, lifting up to her soft cheeks both hands
to wipe away the close bursts of tears in her lamentation,
and learn that I stayed too long out of the fighting. Do not
hold me back from the fight, though you love me. You will not
persuade me.'

In turn the goddess Thetis of the silver feet answered him:
'Yes, it is true, my child, this is no cowardly action,
to beat aside sudden death from your afflicted companions.
Yet, see now, your splendid armour, glaring and brazen,
is held among the Trojans, and Hektor of the shining helmet
wears it on his own shoulders, and glories in it. Yet I think
he will not glory for long, since his death stands very close to him.
Therefore do not yet go into the grind of the war god,
not before with your own eyes you see me come back to you.
For I am coming to you at dawn and as the sun rises
bringing splendid armour to you from the lord Hephaistos.'

So she spoke, and turned, and went away from her son,
and turning now to her sisters of the sea she spoke to them:
'Do you now go back into the wide fold of the water
to visit the ancient of the sea and the house of our father,
and tell him everything. I am going to tall Olympos
and to Hephaistos, the glorious smith, if he might be willing
to give me for my son renowned and radiant armour.'

She spoke, and they plunged back beneath the wave of the water,
while she the goddess Thetis of the silver feet went onward
to Olympos, to bring back to her son the glorious armour.

So her feet carried her to Olympos; meanwhile the Achaians
with inhuman clamour before the attack of manslaughtering Hektor
fled until they were making for their own ships and the Hellespont;
nor could the strong-greaved Achaians have dragged the body
of Patroklos, henchman of Achilleus, from under the missiles,
for once again the men and the horses came over upon him,
and Hektor, Priam's son, who fought like a flame in his fury.
Three times from behind glorious Hektor caught him
by the feet, trying to drag him, and called aloud on the Trojans.
Three times the two Aiantes with their battle-fury upon them
beat him from the corpse, but he, steady in the confidence of his
great strength,
kept making, now a rush into the crowd, or again at another time
stood fast, with his great cry, but gave not a bit of ground back-
ward.

3. Trojan.

And as herdsmen who dwell in the fields are not able to frighten
a tawny lion in his great hunger away from a carcass,
so the two Aiantes, marshals of men, were not able
to scare Hektor, Priam's son, away from the body.
And now he would have dragged it away and won glory forever
had not swift wind-footed Iris[4] come running from Olympos
with a message for Peleus' son to arm. She came secretly
from Zeus and the other gods, since it was Hera who sent her.
She came and stood close to him and addressed him in winged words:
'Rise up, son of Peleus, most terrifying of all men.
Defend Patroklos, for whose sake the terrible fighting
stands now in front of the ships. They are destroying each other;
the Achaians fight in defence over the fallen body
while the others, the Trojans, are rushing to drag the corpse off
to windy Ilion, and beyond all glorious Hektor
rages to haul it away, since the anger within him is urgent
to cut the head from the soft neck and set it on sharp stakes.
Up, then, lie here no longer; let shame come into your heart, lest
Patroklos become sport for the dogs of Troy to worry,
your shame, if the body goes from here with defilement upon it.'
  Then in turn Achilleus of the swift feet answered her:
'Divine Iris, what god sent you to me with a message?'
  Then in turn swift wind-footed Iris spoke to him:
'Hera sent me, the honoured wife of Zeus; but the son of
Kronos, who sits on high, does not know this, nor any other
immortal, of all those who dwell by the snows of Olympos.'
  Then in answer to her spoke Achilleus of the swift feet:
'How shall I go into the fighting? They have my armour.
And my beloved mother told me I must not be armoured,
not before with my own eyes I see her come back to me.
She promised she would bring magnificent arms from Hephaistos.
Nor do I know of another whose glorious armour I could wear
unless it were the great shield of Telamonian[5] Aias.
But he himself wears it, I think, and goes in the foremost
of the spear-fight over the body of fallen Patroklos.'
  Then in turn swift wind-footed Iris spoke to him:
'Yes, we also know well how they hold your glorious armour.
But go to the ditch, and show yourself as you are to the Trojans,
if perhaps the Trojans might be frightened, and give way
from their attack, and the fighting sons of the Achaians get wind
again after hard work. There is little breathing space in the fighting.'
  So speaking Iris of the swift feet went away from him;
but Achilleus, the beloved of Zeus, rose up, and Athene

4. Messenger of the gods, particularly of Hera. 5. The more famous of the two heroes called Aias (Ajax) was the son of Telamon.

swept about his powerful shoulders the fluttering aegis;
and she, the divine among goddesses, about his head circled
a golden cloud, and kindled from it a flame far-shining.
As when a flare goes up into the high air from a city
from an island far away, with enemies fighting about it
who all day long are in the hateful division of Ares[6]
fighting from their own city, but as the sun goes down signal
fires blaze out one after another, so that the glare goes
pulsing high for men of the neighbouring islands to see it,
in case they might come over in ships to beat off the enemy;
so from the head of Achilleus the blaze shot into the bright air.
He went from the wall and stood by the ditch, nor mixed with the other
Achaians, since he followed the close command of his mother.
There he stood, and shouted, and from her place Pallas Athene
gave cry, and drove an endless terror upon the Trojans.
As loud as comes the voice that is screamed out by a trumpet
by murderous attackers who beleaguer a city,
so then high and clear went up the voice of Aiakides.[7]
But the Trojans, when they heard the brazen voice of Aiakides,
the heart was shaken in all, and the very floating-maned horses
turned their chariots about, since their hearts saw the coming afflictions.
The charioteers were dumbfounded as they saw the unwearied dangerous
fire that played above the head of great-hearted Peleion
blazing, and kindled by the goddess grey-eyed Athene.
Three times across the ditch brilliant Achilleus gave his great cry,
and three times the Trojans and their renowned companions were routed.
There at that time twelve of the best men among them perished
upon their own chariots and spears. Meanwhile the Achaians
gladly pulled Patroklos out from under the missiles
and set him upon a litter, and his own companions about him
stood mourning, and along with them swift-footed Achilleus
went, letting fall warm tears as he saw his steadfast companion
lying there on a carried litter and torn with the sharp bronze,
the man he had sent off before with horses and chariot
into the fighting; who never again came home to be welcomed.
Now the lady Hera of the ox eyes drove the unwilling
weariless sun god to sink in the depth of the Ocean,
and the sun went down, and the brilliant Achaians gave over
their strong fighting, and the doubtful collision of battle.

6. The god of war. 7. Achilleus, grandson of Aiakos.

The Trojans on the other side moved from the strong encounter
in their turn, and unyoked their running horses from under the chariots,
and gathered into assembly before taking thought for their supper.
They stood on their feet in assembly, nor did any man have the patience
to sit down, but the terror was on them all, seeing that Achilleus
had appeared, after he had stayed so long from the difficult fighting.
First to speak among them was the careful Poulydamas,
Panthöos' son, who alone of them looked before and behind him.[8]
He was companion to Hektor, and born on the same night with him,
but he was better in words, the other with the spear far better.
He in kind intention toward all stood forth and addressed them:
'Now take careful thought, dear friends; for I myself urge you
to go back into the city and not wait for the divine dawn
in the plain beside the ships. We are too far from the wall now.
While this man was still angry with great Agamemnon,
for all that time the Achaians were easier men to fight with.
For I also used then to be one who was glad to sleep out
near their ships, and I hoped to capture the oarswept vessels.
But now I terribly dread the swift-footed son of Peleus.
So violent is the valour in him, he will not be willing
to stay here in the plain, where now Achaians and Trojans
from either side sunder between them the wrath of the war god.
With him, the fight will be for the sake of our city and women.
Let us go into the town; believe me; thus it will happen.
For this present, immortal night has stopped the swift-footed
son of Peleus, but if he catches us still in this place
tomorrow, and drives upon us in arms, a man will be well
aware of him, be glad to get back into sacred Ilion,
the man who escapes; there will be many Trojans the vultures
and dogs will feed on. But let such a word be out of my hearing!
If all of us will do as I say, though it hurts us to do it,
this night we will hold our strength in the market place, and the great walls
and the gateways, and the long, smooth-planed, close-joined gate timbers
that close to fit them shall defend our city. Then, early
in the morning, under dawn, we shall arm ourselves in our war gear
and take stations along the walls. The worse for him, if he endeavours
to come away from the ships and fight us here for our city.

8. He was a prophet; he knew the past and foresaw the future.

Back he must go to his ships again, when he wears out the strong necks
of his horses, driving them at a gallop everywhere by the city.
His valour will not give him leave to burst in upon us
nor sack our town. Sooner the circling dogs will feed on him.'
Then looking darkly at him Hektor of the shining helm spoke:
'Poulydamas, these things that you argue please me no longer
when you tell us to go back again and be cooped in our city.
Have you not all had your glut of being fenced in our outworks?
There was a time when mortal men would speak of the city
of Priam as a place with much gold and much bronze. But now
the lovely treasures that lay away in our houses have vanished,
and many possessions have been sold and gone into Phrygia
and into Maionia the lovely, when great Zeus was angry.
But now, when the son of devious-devising Kronos has given
me the winning of glory by the ships, to pin the Achaians
on the sea, why, fool, no longer show these thoughts to our people.
Not one of the Trojans will obey you. I shall not allow it.
Come, then, do as I say and let us all be persuaded.
Now, take your supper by positions along the encampment,
and do not forget your watch, and let every man be wakeful.
And if any Trojan is strongly concerned about his possessions,
let him gather them and give them to the people, to use them in common.
It is better for one of us to enjoy them than for the Achaians.
In the morning, under dawn, we shall arm ourselves in our war gear
and waken the bitter god of war by the hollow vessels.
If it is true that brilliant Achilleus is risen beside their
ships, then the worse for him if he tries it, since I for my part
will not run from him out of the sorrowful battle, but rather
stand fast, to see if he wins the great glory, or if I can win it.
The war god is impartial. Before now he has killed the killer.'
So spoke Hektor, and the Trojans thundered to hear him;
fools, since Pallas Athene had taken away the wits from them.
They gave their applause to Hektor in his counsel of evil,
but none to Poulydamas, who had spoken good sense before them.
They took their supper along the encampment. Meanwhile the Achaians
mourned all night in lamentation over Patroklos.
Peleus' son led the thronging chant of their lamentation,
and laid his manslaughtering hands over the chest of his dear friend
with outbursts of incessant grief. As some great bearded lion
when some man, a deer hunter, has stolen his cubs away from him
out of the close wood; the lion comes back too late, and is anguished,
and turns into many valleys quartering after the man's trail

on the chance of finding him, and taken with bitter anger;
so he, groaning heavily, spoke out to the Myrmidons:
'Ah me. It was an empty word I cast forth on that day
when in his halls I tried to comfort the hero Menoitios.
I told him I would bring back his son in glory to Opous[9]
with Ilion sacked, and bringing his share of war spoils allotted.
But Zeus does not bring to accomplishment all thoughts in men's minds.
Thus it is destiny for us both to stain the same soil
here in Troy; since I shall never come home, and my father,
Peleus the aged rider, will not welcome me in his great house,
nor Thetis my mother, but in this place the earth will receive me.
But seeing that it is I, Patroklos, who follow you underground,
I will not bury you till I bring to this place the armour
and the head of Hektor, since he was your great-hearted murderer.
Before your burning pyre I shall behead twelve glorious
children of the Trojans, for my anger over your slaying.
Until then, you shall lie where you are in front of my curved ships
and beside you women of Troy and deep-girdled Dardanian women
shall sorrow for you night and day and shed tears for you, those whom
you and I worked hard to capture by force and the long spear
in days when we were storming the rich cities of mortals.'
So speaking brilliant Achilleus gave orders to his companions
to set a great cauldron across the fire, so that with all speed
they could wash away the clotted blood from Patroklos.
They set up over the blaze of the fire a bath-water cauldron
and poured water into it and put logs underneath and kindled them.
The fire worked on the swell of the cauldron, and the water heated.
But when the water had come to a boil in the shining bronze, then
they washed the body and anointed it softly with olive oil
and stopped the gashes in his body with stored-up unguents
and laid him on a bed, and shrouded him in a thin sheet
from head to foot, and covered that over with a white mantle.
Then all night long, gathered about Achilleus of the swift feet,
the Myrmidons mourned for Patroklos and lamented over him.
But Zeus spoke to Hera, who was his wife and his sister:
'So you have acted, then, lady Hera of the ox eyes.
You have roused up Achilleus of the swift feet. It must be then
that the flowing-haired Achaians are born of your own generation.'
Then the goddess the ox-eyed lady Hera answered him:
'Majesty, son of Kronos, what sort of thing have you spoken?
Even one who is mortal will try to accomplish his purpose

9. Ancient city on the eastern coast of the Greek mainland and home of Menoitios, father of Patroklos.

for another, though he be a man and knows not such wisdom as we do.
As for me then, who claim I am highest of all the goddesses,
both ways, since I am eldest born and am called your consort,
yours, and you in turn are lord over all the immortals,
how could I not weave sorrows for the men of Troy, when I hate them?'
Now as these two were saying things like this to each other,
Thetis of the silver feet came to the house of Hephaistos,
imperishable, starry, and shining among the immortals,
built in bronze for himself by the god of the dragging footsteps.[1]
She found him sweating as he turned here and there to his bellows
busily, since he was working on twenty tripods
which were to stand against the wall of his strong-founded dwelling.
And he had set golden wheels underneath the base of each one
so that of their own motion they could wheel into the immortal gathering, and return to his house: a wonder to look at.
These were so far finished, but the elaborate ear handles
were not yet on. He was forging these, and beating the chains out.
As he was at work on this in his craftsmanship and his cunning
meanwhile the goddess Thetis the silver-footed drew near him.
Charis[2] of the shining veil saw her as she came forward,
she, the lovely goddess the renowned strong-armed one had married.
She came, and caught her hand and called her by name and spoke to her:
'Why is it, Thetis of the light robes, you have come to our house now?
We honour you and love you; but you have not come much before this.
But come in with me, so I may put entertainment before you.'
She spoke, and, shining among divinities, led the way forward
and made Thetis sit down in a chair that was wrought elaborately
and splendid with silver nails, and under it was a footstool.
She called to Hephaistos the renowned smith and spoke a word to him:
'Hephaistos, come this way; here is Thetis, who has need of you.'
Hearing her the renowned smith of the strong arms answered her:
'Then there is a goddess we honour and respect in our house.
She saved me when I suffered much at the time of my great fall
through the will of my own brazen-faced mother, who wanted
to hide me, for being lame. Then my soul would have taken much suffering
had not Eurynome and Thetis caught me and held me,

1. Hephaistos was lame. 2. Her name means "grace," "beauty."

Eurynome, daughter of Ocean, whose stream bends back in a circle.[3]
With them I worked nine years as a smith, and wrought many intricate
things; pins that bend back, curved clasps, cups, necklaces working
there in the hollow of the cave, and the stream of Ocean around us
went on forever with its foam and its murmur. No other
among the gods or among mortal men knew about us
except Eurynome and Thetis. They knew, since they saved me.
Now she has come into our house; so I must by all means
do everything to give recompense to lovely-haired Thetis
for my life. Therefore set out before her fair entertainment
while I am putting away my bellows and all my instruments.'
He spoke, and took the huge blower off from the block of the anvil
limping; and yet his shrunken legs moved lightly beneath him.
He set the bellows away from the fire, and gathered and put away
all the tools with which he worked in a silver strongbox.
Then with a sponge he wiped clean his forehead, and both hands,
and his massive neck and hairy chest, and put on a tunic,
and took up a heavy stick in his hand, and went to the doorway
limping. And in support of their master moved his attendants.
These are golden, and in appearance like living young women.
There is intelligence in their hearts, and there is speech in them
and strength, and from the immortal gods they have learned how to do things.
These stirred nimbly in support of their master, and moving
near to where Thetis sat in her shining chair, Hephaistos
caught her by the hand and called her by name and spoke a word to her:
'Why is it, Thetis of the light robes, you have come to our house now?
We honour you and love you; but you have not come much before this.
Speak forth what is in your mind. My heart is urgent to do it
if I can, and if it is a thing that can be accomplished.'
Then in turn Thetis answered him, letting the tears fall:
'Hephaistos, is there among all the goddesses on Olympos
one who in her heart has endured so many grim sorrows
as the griefs Zeus, son of Kronos, has given me beyond others?
Of all the other sisters of the sea he gave me to a mortal,
to Peleus, Aiakos' son, and I had to endure mortal marriage
though much against my will. And now he, broken by mournful
old age, lies away in his halls. Yet I have other troubles.

3. Since the river Ocean was supposed to surround the earth.

For since he has given me a son to bear and to raise up
conspicuous among heroes, and he shot up like a young tree,
I nurtured him, like a tree grown in the pride of the orchard.
I sent him away in the curved ships to the land of Ilion
to fight with the Trojans; but I shall never again receive him
won home again to his country and into the house of Peleus.
Yet while I see him live and he looks on the sunlight, he has
sorrows, and though I go to him I can do nothing to help him.
And the girl the sons of the Achaians chose out for his honour
powerful Agamemnon took her away again out of his hands.
For her his heart has been wasting in sorrow; but meanwhile the Trojans
pinned the Achaians against their grounded ships, and would not
let them win outside, and the elders of the Argives entreated
my son, and named the many glorious gifts they would give him.
But at that time he refused himself to fight the death from them;
nevertheless he put his own armour upon Patroklos
and sent him into the fighting, and gave many men to go with him.
All day they fought about the Skaian Gates, and on that day
they would have stormed the city, if only Phoibos Apollo
had not killed the fighting son of Menoitios there in the first ranks
after he had wrought much damage, and given the glory to Hektor.
Therefore now I come to your knees; so might you be willing
to give me for my short-lived son a shield and a helmet
and two beautiful greaves fitted with clasps for the ankles
and a corselet. What he had was lost with his steadfast companion
when the Trojans killed him. Now my son lies on the ground, heart sorrowing.'

Hearing her the renowned smith of the strong arms answered her:
'Do not fear. Let not these things be a thought in your mind.
And I wish that I could hide him away from death and its sorrow
at that time when his hard fate comes upon him, as surely
as there shall be fine armour for him, such as another
man out of many men shall wonder at, when he looks on it.'

So he spoke, and left her there, and went to his bellows.
He turned these toward the fire and gave them their orders for working.
And the bellows, all twenty of them, blew on the crucibles,
from all directions blasting forth wind to blow the flames high
now as he hurried to be at this place and now at another,
wherever Hephaistos might wish them to blow, and the work went forward.
He cast on the fire bronze which is weariless, and tin with it
and valuable gold, and silver, and thereafter set forth

upon its standard the great anvil, and gripped in one hand
the ponderous hammer, while in the other he grasped the pincers.
First of all he forged a shield that was huge and heavy,
elaborating it about, and threw around it a shining
triple rim that glittered, and the shield strap was cast of silver.
There were five folds composing the shield itself, and upon it
he elaborated many things in his skill and craftsmanship
He made the earth upon it, and the sky, and the sea's water,
and the tireless sun, and the moon waxing into her fullness,
and on it all the constellations that festoon the heavens,
the Pleiades and the Hyades and the strength of Orion
and the Bear,[4] whom men give also the name of the Wagon,
who turns about in a fixed place and looks at Orion
and she alone is never plunged in the wash of the Ocean.
On it he wrought in all their beauty two cities of mortal
men. And there were marriages in one, and festivals.
They were leading the brides along the city from their maiden chambers
under the flaring of torches, and the loud bride song was arising.
The young men followed the circles of the dance, and among them
the flutes and lyres kept up their clamour as in the meantime
the women standing each at the door of her court admired them.
The people were assembled in the market place, where a quarrel
had arisen, and two men were disputing over the blood price
for a man who had been killed. One man promised full restitution
in a public statement, but the other refused and would accept nothing.
Both then made for an arbitrator, to have a decision;
and people were speaking up on either side, to help both men.
But the heralds kept the people in hand, as meanwhile the elders
were in session on benches of polished stone in the sacred circle
and held in their hands the staves of the heralds who lift their voices.
The two men rushed before these, and took turns speaking their cases,
and between them lay on the ground two talents of gold, to be given
to that judge who in this case spoke the straightest opinion.
But around the other city were lying two forces of armed men
shining in their war gear. For one side counsel was divided
whether to storm and sack, or share between both sides the property
and all the possessions the lovely citadel held hard within it.
But the city's people were not giving way, and armed for an ambush.

4. The Big Dipper, which never descends below the horizon. It is a female bear (Ursa Major), hence "she" in l. 489. *Pleiades, Hyades, Orion:* All constellations; Orion was a giant hunter of Greek myth.

Their beloved wives and their little children stood on the rampart
to hold it, and with them the men with age upon them, but meanwhile
the others went out. And Ares led them, and Pallas Athene.
These were gold, both, and golden raiment upon them, and they were
beautiful and huge in their armour, being divinities,
and conspicuous from afar, but the people around them were smaller.
These, when they were come to the place that was set for their ambush,
in a river, where there was a watering place for all animals,
there they sat down in place shrouding themselves in the bright bronze.
But apart from these were sitting two men to watch for the rest of them.
and waiting until they could see the sheep and the shambling cattle,
who appeared presently, and two herdsmen went along with them
playing happily on pipes, and took no thought of the treachery.
Those others saw them, and made a rush, and quickly thereafter
cut off on both sides the herds of cattle and the beautiful
flocks of shining sheep, and killed the shepherds upon them.
But the other army, as soon as they heard the uproar arising
from the cattle, as they sat in their councils, suddenly mounted
behind their light-foot horses, and went after, and soon overtook them.
These stood their ground and fought a battle by the banks of the river,
and they were making casts at each other with their spears bronze-headed;
and Hate was there with Confusion among them, and Death the destructive;
she was holding a live man with a new wound, and another
one unhurt, and dragged a dead man by the feet through the carnage.
The clothing upon her shoulders showed strong red with the men's blood.
All closed together like living men and fought with each other
and dragged away from each other the corpses of those who had fallen.

He made upon it a soft field, the pride of the tilled land,
wide and triple-ploughed, with many ploughmen upon it
who wheeled their teams at the turn and drove them in either direction.
And as these making their turn would reach the end-strip of the field,
a man would come up to them at this point and hand them a flagon

of honey-sweet wine, and they would turn again to the furrows
in their haste to come again to the end-strip of the deep field.
The earth darkened behind them and looked like earth that has been ploughed
though it was gold. Such was the wonder of the shield's forging.
He made on it the precinct of a king, where the labourers
were reaping, with the sharp reaping hooks in their hands. Of the cut swathes
some fell along the lines of reaping, one after another,
while the sheaf-binders caught up others and tied them with bind-ropes.
There were three sheaf-binders who stood by, and behind them
were children picking up the cut swathes, and filled their arms with them
and carried and gave them always; and by them the king in silence
and holding his staff stood near the line of the reapers, happily.
And apart and under a tree the heralds made a feast ready
and trimmed a great ox they had slaughtered. Meanwhile the women
scattered, for the workmen to eat, abundant white barley.
He made on it a great vineyard heavy with clusters,
lovely and in gold, but the grapes upon it were darkened
and the vines themselves stood out through poles of silver. About them
he made a field-ditch of dark metal, and drove all around this
a fence of tin; and there was only one path to the vineyard,
and along it ran the grape-bearers for the vineyards' stripping.
Young girls and young men, in all their light-hearted innocence,
carried the kind, sweet fruit away in their woven baskets,
and in their midst a youth with a singing lyre played charmingly
upon it for them, and sang the beautiful song for Linos[5]
in a light voice, and they followed him, and with singing and whistling
and light dance-steps of their feet kept time to the music.
He made upon it a herd of horn-straight oxen. The cattle
were wrought of gold and of tin, and thronged in speed and with lowing
out of the dung of the farmyard to a pasturing place by a sounding
river, and beside the moving field of a reed bed.
The herdsmen were of gold who went along with the cattle,
four of them, and nine dogs shifting their feet followed them.
But among the foremost of the cattle two formidable lions
had caught hold of a bellowing bull, and he with loud lowings

5. An ancient folk song commemorating Linos, the favorite of Apollo.

was dragged away, as the dogs and the young men went in pursuit of him.
But the two lions, breaking open the hide of the great ox,
gulped the black blood and the inward guts, as meanwhile the herdsmen
were in the act of setting and urging the quick dogs on them.
But they, before they could get their teeth in, turned back from the lions,
but would come and take their stand very close, and bayed, and kept clear.
And the renowned smith of the strong arms made on it a meadow
large and in a lovely valley for the glimmering sheepflocks,
with dwelling places upon it, and covered shelters, and sheepfolds.
And the renowned smith of the strong arms made elaborate on it
a dancing floor, like that which once in the wide spaces of Knossos
Daidalos built for Ariadne[6] of the lovely tresses.
And there were young men on it and young girls, sought for their beauty
with gifts of oxen, dancing, and holding hands at the wrist. These
wore, the maidens long light robes, but the men wore tunics
of finespun work and shining softly, touched with olive oil.
And the girls wore fair garlands on their heads, while the young men
carried golden knives that hung from sword-belts of silver.
At whiles on their understanding feet they would run very lightly,
as when a potter crouching makes trial of his wheel, holding
it close in his hands, to see if it will run smooth. At another
time they would form rows, and run, rows crossing each other.
And around the lovely chorus of dancers stood a great multitude
happily watching, while among the dancers two acrobats
led the measures of song and dance revolving among them.
He made on it the great strength of the Ocean River
which ran around the uttermost rim of the shield's strong structure.
Then after he had wrought this shield, which was huge and heavy,
he wrought for him a corselet brighter than fire in its shining,
and wrought him a helmet, massive and fitting close to his temples,
lovely and intricate work, and laid a gold top-ridge along it,
and out of pliable tin wrought him leg-armour. Thereafter
when the renowned smith of the strong arms had finished the armour
he lifted it and laid it before the mother of Achilleus.

6. Daughter of Minos king of Crete. *Knosos:* In Crete, the site of the great "palace of Minos." *Daidalos:* The "fabulous artificer" who built the labyrinth and, with his son Icarus, escaped from Crete on wings.

And she like a hawk came sweeping down from the snows of Olympos
and carried with her the shining armour, the gift of Hephaistos.

Book XIX

[ACHILLEUS RETURNS TO THE BATTLE]

Now Dawn the yellow-robed arose from the river of Ocean
to carry her light to men and to immortals. And Thetis
came to the ships and carried with her the gifts of Hephaistos.
She found her beloved son lying in the arms of Patroklos
crying shrill, and his companions in their numbers about him
mourned. She, shining among divinities, stood there beside them.
She clung to her son's hand and called him by name and spoke to him:
'My child, now, though we grieve for him, we must let this man lie
dead, in the way he first was killed through the gods' designing.
Accept rather from me the glorious arms of Hephaistos,
so splendid, and such as no man has ever worn on his shoulders.'
The goddess spoke so, and set down the armour on the ground
before Achilleus, and all its elaboration clashed loudly.
Trembling took hold of all the Myrmidons. None had the courage
to look straight at it. They were afraid of it. Only Achilleus
looked, and as he looked the anger came harder upon him
and his eyes glittered terribly under his lids, like sunflare.
He was glad, holding in his hands the shining gifts of Hephaistos.
But when he had satisfied his heart with looking at the intricate
armour, he spoke to his mother and addressed her in winged words:
'My mother, the god has given me these weapons; they are such
as are the work of immortals. No mortal man could have made them.
Therefore now I shall arm myself in them. Yet I am sadly
afraid, during this time, for the warlike son of Menoitios
that flies might get into the wounds beaten by bronze in his body
and breed worms in them, and these make foul the body, seeing
that the life is killed in him, and that all his flesh may be rotted.'
In turn the goddess Thetis the silver-footed answered him:
'My child, no longer let these things be a care in your mind.
I shall endeavour to drive from him the swarming and fierce things,
those flies, which feed upon the bodies of men who have perished;
and although he lie here till a year has gone to fulfilment,
still his body shall be as it was, or firmer than ever.
Go then and summon into assembly the fighting Achaians,

and unsay your anger against Agamemnon, shepherd of the people,
and arm at once for the fighting, and put your war strength upon you.'
She spoke so, and drove the strength of great courage into him;
and meanwhile through the nostrils of Patroklos she distilled
ambrosia and red nectar, so that his flesh might not spoil.
But he, brilliant Achilleus, walked along by the sea-shore
crying his terrible cry, and stirred up the fighting Achaians.
And even those who before had stayed where the ships were assembled,
they who were helmsmen of the ships and handled the steering oar,
they who were stewards among the ships and dispensers of rations,
even these came then to assembly, since now Achilleus
had appeared, after staying so long from the sorrowful battle.
And there were two who came limping among them, henchmen of Ares
both, Tydeus' son the staunch in battle, and brilliant Odysseus,
leaning on spears, since they had the pain of their wounds yet upon them,
and came and took their seats in the front rank of these assembled.
And last of them came in the lord of men Agamemnon
with a wound on him, seeing that Koön, the son of Antenor,
had stabbed him with the bronze edge of the spear in the strong encounter.
But now, when all the Achaians were in one body together,
Achilleus of the swift feet stood up before them and spoke to them:
'Son of Atreus, was this after all the better way for
both, for you and me, that we, for all our hearts' sorrow,
quarrelled together for the sake of a girl in soul-perishing hatred?
I wish Artemis had killed her beside the ships with an arrow
on that day when I destroyed Lyrnessos and took her.
For thus not all these too many Achaians would have bitten
the dust, by enemy hands, when I was away in my anger.
This way was better for the Trojans and Hektor; yet I think
the Achaians will too long remember this quarrel between us.
Still, we will let all this be a thing of the past, though it hurts us,
and beat down by constraint the anger that rises inside us.
Now I am making an end of my anger. It does not become me
unrelentingly to rage on. Come, then! The more quickly
drive on the flowing-haired Achaians into the fighting,
so that I may go up against the Trojans, and find out
if they still wish to sleep out beside the ships. I think rather
they will be glad to rest where they are, whoever among them
gets away with his life from the fury of our spears' onset.'

He spoke, and the strong-greaved Achaians were pleasured to hear him
and how the great-hearted son of Peleus unsaid his anger.
Now among them spoke forth the lord of men Agamemnon
from the place where he was sitting, and did not stand up among them:
'Fighting men and friends, o Danaans, henchmen of Ares:
it is well to listen to the speaker, it is not becoming
to break in on him. This will be hard for him, though he be able.
How among the great murmur of people shall anyone listen
or speak either? A man, though he speak very clearly, is baffled.
I shall address the son of Peleus; yet all you other
Argives listen also, and give my word careful attention.
This is the word the Achaians have spoken often against me
and found fault with me in it, yet I am not responsible
but Zeus is, and Destiny, and Erinys the mist-walking
who in assembly caught my heart in the savage delusion
on that day I myself stripped from him the prize of Achilleus.
Yet what could I do? It is the god who accomplishes all things.
Delusion is the elder daughter of Zeus, the accursed
who deludes all; her feet are delicate and they step not
on the firm earth, but she walks the air above men's heads
and leads them astray. She has entangled others before me.
Yes, for once Zeus even was deluded, though men say
he is the highest one of gods and mortals. Yet Hera
who is female deluded even Zeus in her craftiness
on that day when in strong wall-circled Thebe Alkmene[7]
was at her time to bring forth the strength of Herakles. Therefore
Zeus spoke forth and made a vow before all the immortals:
"Hear me, all you gods and all you goddesses: hear me
while I speak forth what the heart within my breast urges.
This day Eileithyia[8] of women's child-pains shall bring forth
a man to the light who, among the men sprung of the generation
of my blood, shall be lord over all those dwelling about him."
Then in guileful intention the lady Hera said to him:
"You will be a liar, not put fulfilment on what you have spoken.
Come, then, lord of Olympos, and swear before me a strong oath
that he shall be lord over all those dwelling about him
who this day shall fall between the feet of a woman,[9]
that man who is born of the blood of your generation." So Hera
spoke. And Zeus was entirely unaware of her falsehood,
but swore a great oath, and therein lay all his deception.
But Hera in a flash of speed left the horn of Olympos

7. Mortal woman who, though married to Amphitryon, King of Thebes, was pregnant by Zeus.
8. The goddess who presided over human birth. 9. Be born.

and rapidly came to Argos of Achaia, where she knew
was the mighty wife of Sthenelos, descended of Perseus.[1]
And she was carrying a son, and this was the seventh month for her,
but she brought him sooner into the light, and made him premature,
and stayed the childbirth of Alkmene, and held back the birth pangs.
She went herself and spoke the message to Zeus, son of Kronos:
"Father Zeus of the shining bolt, I will tell you a message
for your heart. A great man is born, who will be lord over the Argives,
Eurystheus,[2] son of Sthenelos, of the seed of Perseus,
your generation. It is not unfit that he should rule over
the Argives." She spoke, and the sharp sorrow struck at his deep heart.
He caught by the shining hair of her head the goddess Delusion
in the anger of his heart, and swore a strong oath, that never
after this might Delusion, who deludes all, come back
to Olympos and the starry sky. So speaking, he whirled her
about in his hand and slung her out of the starry heaven,
and presently she came to men's establishments. But Zeus
would forever grieve over her each time that he saw his dear son
doing some shameful work of the tasks that Eurystheus set him.
So I in my time, when tall Hektor of the shining helm
was forever destroying the Argives against the sterns of their vessels,
could not forget Delusion, the way I was first deluded.
But since I was deluded and Zeus took my wits away from me,
I am willing to make all good and give back gifts in abundance.
Rise up, then, to the fighting and rouse the rest of the people.
Here am I, to give you all those gifts, as many
as brilliant Odysseus yesterday went to your shelter and promised.
Or if you will, hold back, though you lean hard into the battle,
while my followers take the gifts from my ship and bring them
to you, so you may see what I give to comfort your spirit.'

Then in answer to him spoke Achilleus of the swift feet:
'Son of Atreus, most lordly and king of men, Agamemnon,
the gifts are yours to give if you wish, and as it is proper,
or to keep with yourself. But now let us remember our joy in warcraft,
immediately, for it is not fitting to stay here and waste time
nor delay, since there is still a big work to be done.
So can a man see once more Achilleus among the front fighters
with the bronze spear wrecking the Trojan battalions. Therefore
let each of you remember this and fight his antagonist.'

Then in answer to him spoke resourceful Odysseus:

1. A son of Zeus. 2. He became king of Argos, and taskmaster of Hercules, who performed twelve great labors for him.

'Not that way, good fighter that you are, godlike Achilleus.
Do not drive the sons of the Achaians on Ilion when they are hungry,
to fight against the Trojans, since not short will be the time
of battle, once the massed formations of men have encountered
together, with the god inspiring fury in both sides.
Rather tell the men of Achaia here by their swift ships,
to take food and wine, since these make fighting fury and warcraft.
For a man will not have strength to fight his way forward all day
long until the sun goes down if he is starved for food. Even
though in his heart he be very passionate for the battle,
yet without his knowing it his limbs will go heavy, and hunger
and thirst will catch up with him and cumber his knees as he moves on.
But when a man has been well filled with wine and with eating
and then does battle all day long against the enemy,
why, then the heart inside him is full of cheer, nor do his limbs
get weary, until all are ready to give over the fighting.
Come then, tell your men to scatter and bid them get ready
a meal; and as for the gifts, let the lord of men Agamemnon
bring them to the middle of our assembly so all the Achaians
can see them before their eyes, so your own heart may be pleasured.
And let him stand up before the Argives and swear an oath to you
that he never entered into her bed and never lay with her[3]
as is natural for people, my lord, between men and women.
And by this let the spirit in your own heart be made gracious.
After that in his own shelter let him appease you
with a generous meal, so you will lack nothing of what is due you.
And you, son of Atreus, after this be more righteous to another
man. For there is no fault when even one who is a king
appeases a man, when the king was the first one to be angry.'

Then in turn the lord of men Agamemnon answered him:
'Hearing what you have said, son of Laertes, I am pleased with you.
Fairly have you gone through everything and explained it.
And all this I am willing to swear to, and my heart urges me,
and I will not be forsworn before the gods. Let Achilleus
stay here the while, though he lean very hard toward the work of the war god,
and remain the rest of you all here assembled, until the gifts come
back from my shelter and while we cut our oaths[4] of fidelity.
And for you yourself, Odysseus, I give you this errand, this order,
that you choose out excellent young men of all the Achaians

3. Briseis. 4. "Cut" refers to the killing of the animals sacrificed to seal the oath.

and bring the gifts back here from my ships, all that you promised
yesterday to Achilleus, and bring the women back also.
And in the wide host of the Achaians let Talthybios[5] make ready
a boar for me, and dedicate it to Zeus and Helios.'[6]
Then in answer to him spoke Achilleus of the swift feet:
'Son of Atreus, most lordly and king of men, Agamemnon,
at some other time rather you should busy yourself about these
things,
when there is some stopping point in the fighting, at some time
when there is not so much fury inside of my heart. But now
as things are they lie there torn whom the son of Priam
Hektor has beaten down, since Zeus was giving him glory,
and then you urge a man to eating. No, but I would now
drive forward the sons of the Achaians into the fighting
starving and unfed, and afterwards when the sun sets
make ready a great dinner, when we have paid off our defilement.
But before this, for me at least, neither drink nor food shall
go down my very throat, since my companion has perished
and lies inside my shelter torn about with the cutting
bronze, and turned against the forecourt while my companions
mourn about him. Food and drink mean nothing to my heart
but blood does, and slaughter, and the groaning of men in the hard
work.'
Then in answer to him spoke resourceful Odysseus:
'Son of Peleus, Achilleus, far greatest of the Achaians,
you are stronger than I am and greater by not a little
with the spear, yet I in turn might overpass you in wisdom
by far, since I was born before you and have learned more things.
Therefore let your heart endure to listen to my words.
When there is battle men have suddenly their fill of it
when the bronze scatters on the ground the straw in most numbers
and the harvest is most thin, when Zeus has poised his balance,
Zeus, who is administrator to men in their fighting.
There is no way the Achaians can mourn a dead man by denying
the belly. Too many fall day by day, one upon another,
and how could anyone find breathing space from his labour?
No, but we must harden our hearts and bury the man who
dies, when we have wept over him on the day, and all those
who are left about from the hateful work of war must remember
food and drink, so that afterwards all the more strongly
we may fight on forever relentless against our enemies
with the weariless bronze put on about our bodies. Let one not
wait longing for any other summons to stir on the people.

5. Agamemnon's herald. 6. The sun.

This summons now shall be an evil on anyone left behind
by the ships of the Argives. Therefore let us drive on together
and wake the bitter war god on the Trojans, breakers of horses.'
He spoke, and went away with the sons of glorious Nestor,
with Meges, the son of Phyleus, and Meriones, and Thoas,
and Lykomedes, the son of Kreion, and Melanippos. These went
on their way to the shelter of Atreus' son Agamemnon.
No sooner was the order given than the thing had been done.
They brought back seven tripods from the shelter, those Agamemnon
had promised, and twenty shining cauldrons, twelve horses. They brought back
immediately the seven women the work of whose hands was
blameless, and the eighth of them was Briseis of the fair cheeks.
Odysseus weighed out ten full talents of gold and led them
back, and the young men of the Achaians carried the other gifts.
They brought these into the midst of assembly, and Agamemnon
stood up, and Talthybios in voice like an immortal
stood beside the shepherd of the people with the boar in his hands.
Atreus' son laid hands upon his work-knife, and drew it
from where it hung ever beside the great sheath of his war sword,
and cut first hairs away from the boar, and lifting his hands up
to Zeus, prayed, while all the Argives stayed fast at their places
in silence and in order of station, and listened to their king.
He spoke before them in prayer gazing into the wide sky:
'Let Zeus first be my witness, highest of the gods and greatest,
and Earth, and Helios the Sun, and Furies, who underground
avenge dead men, when any man has sworn to a falsehood,
that I have never laid a hand on the girl Briseis
on pretext to go to bed with her, or for any other
reason, but she remained, not singled out, in my shelter.
If any of this is falsely sworn, may the gods give me many
griefs, all that they inflict on those who swear falsely before them.'
So he spoke, and with pitiless bronze he cut the boar's throat.
Talthybios whirled the body about, and threw it in the great reach
of the grey sea, to feed the fishes. Meanwhile Achilleus
stood up among the battle-fond Achaians, and spoke to them:
'Father Zeus, great are the delusions with which you visit men.
Without you, the son of Atreus could never have stirred so
the heart inside my breast, nor taken the girl away from me
against my will, and be in helplessness. No, but Zeus somehow
wished that death should befall great numbers of the Achaians.
Go now and take your dinner, so we may draw on the battle.
So he spoke, and suddenly broke up the assembly.
Now these scattered away each man to his own ship. Meanwhile

the great-hearted Myrmidons disposed of the presents.
They went on their way carrying them to the ship of godlike Achilleus,
and stowed the gifts in the shelters, and let the women be settled,
while proud henchmen drove the horses into Achilleus' horse-herd.
And now, in the likeness of golden Aphrodite, Briseis
when she saw Patroklos lying torn with sharp bronze, folding
him in her arms cried shrilly above him and with her hands tore
at her breasts and her soft throat and her beautiful forehead.
The woman like the immortals mourning for him spoke to him:
'Patroklos, far most pleasing to my heart in its sorrows,
I left you here alive when I went away from the shelter,
but now I come back, lord of the people, to find you have fallen.
So evil in my life takes over from evil forever.
The husband on whom my father and honoured mother bestowed me
I saw before my city lying torn with the sharp bronze,
and my three brothers, whom a single mother bore with me
and who were close to me, all went on one day to destruction.
And yet you would not let me, when swift Achilleus had cut down
my husband, and sacked the city of godlike Mynes, you would not
let me sorrow, but said you would make me godlike Achilleus'
wedded lawful wife, that you would take me back in the ships
to Phthia, and formalize my marriage among the Myrmidons.
Therefore I weep your death without ceasing. You were kind always.'
So she spoke, lamenting, and the women sorrowed around her
grieving openly for Patroklos, but for her own sorrows
each. But the lords of Achaia were gathered about Achilleus
beseeching him to eat, but he with a groan denied them:
'I beg of you, if any dear companion will listen
to me, stop urging me to satisfy the heart in me
with food and drink, since this strong sorrow has come upon me.
I will hold out till the sun goes down and endure, though it be hard.'
So he spoke, and caused the rest of the kings to scatter;
but the two sons of Atreus stayed with him, and brilliant Odysseus,
and Nestor, and Idomeneus, and the aged charioteer, Phoinix,
comforting him close in his sorrow, yet his heart would not
be comforted, till he went into the jaws of the bleeding battle.
Remembering Patroklos he sighed much for him, and spoke aloud:
'There was a time, ill fated, o dearest of all my companions,
when you yourself would set the desirable dinner before me
quickly and expertly, at the time the Achaians were urgent
to carry sorrowful war on the Trojans, breakers of horses.

But now you lie here torn before me, and my heart goes starved
for meat and drink, though they are here beside me, by reason
of longing for you. There is nothing worse than this I could suffer,
not even if I were to hear of the death of my father
who now, I think, in Phthia somewhere lets fall a soft tear
for bereavement of such a son, for me, who now in a strange land
make war upon the Trojans for the sake of accursed Helen;
or the death of my dear son, who is raised for my sake in Skyros[7]
now, if godlike Neoptolemos is still one of the living.
Before now the spirit inside my breast was hopeful
that I alone should die far away from horse-pasturing Argos
here in Troy; I hoped you would win back again to Phthia
so that in a fast black ship you could take my son back
from Skyros to Phthia, and show him all my possessions,
my property, my serving men, my great high-roofed house.
For by this time I think that Peleus must altogether
have perished, or still keeps a little scant life in sorrow
for the hatefulness of old age and because he waits ever from me
the evil message, for the day he hears I have been killed.'

So he spoke, mourning, and the elders lamented around him
remembering each those he had left behind in his own halls.
The son of Kronos took pity on them as he watched them mourning
and immediately spoke in winged words to Athene:
'My child, have you utterly abandoned the man of your choice?
Is there no longer deep concern in your heart for Achilleus?
Now he has sat down before the steep horned ships and is mourning
for his own beloved companion, while all the others
have gone to take their dinner, but he is fasting and unfed.
Go then to him and distil nectar inside his chest, and delicate
ambrosia, so the weakness of hunger will not come upon him.'

Speaking so, he stirred Athene, who was eager before this,
and she in the likeness of a wide-winged, thin-crying
hawk plummeted from the sky through the bright air. Now the Achaians
were arming at once along the encampment. She dropped the delicate
ambrosia and the nectar inside the breast of Achilleus
softly, so no sad weakness of hunger would come on his knees,
and she herself went back to the close house of her powerful
father, while they were scattering out away from the fast ships.
As when in their thickness the snowflakes of Zeus come fluttering
cold beneath the blast of the north wind born in the bright sky,
so now in their thickness the pride of the helms bright shining

7. An island in the North Aegean.

were carried out from the ships, and shields massive in the middle
and the corselets strongly hollowed and the ash spears were worn
forth.
The shining swept to the sky and all earth was laughing about them
under the glitter of bronze and beneath their feet stirred the thunder
of men, within whose midst brilliant Achilleus helmed him.
A clash went from the grinding of his teeth, and his eyes glowed
as if they were the stare of a fire, and the heart inside him
was entered with sorrow beyond endurance. Raging at the Trojans
he put on the gifts of the god, that Hephaistos wrought him with
much toil.
First he placed along his legs the fair greaves linked with
silver fastenings to hold the greaves at the ankles.
Afterward he girt on about his chest the corselet,
and across his shoulders slung the sword with the nails of silver,
a bronze sword, and caught up the great shield, huge and heavy
next, and from it the light glimmered far, as from the moon.
And as when from across water a light shines to mariners
from a blazing fire, when the fire is burning high in the mountains
in a desolate steading, as the mariners are carried unwilling
by storm winds over the fish-swarming sea, far away from their loved
ones;
so the light from the fair elaborate shield of Achilleus
shot into the high air. And lifting the helm he set it
massive upon his head, and the helmet crested with horse-hair
shone like a star, the golden fringes were shaken about it
which Hephaistos had driven close along the horn of the helmet.
And brilliant Achilleus tried himself in his armour, to see
if it fitted close, and how his glorious limbs ran within it,
and the armour became as wings and upheld the shepherd of the
people.
Next he pulled out from its standing place the spear of his father,
huge, heavy, thick, which no one else of all the Achaians
could handle, but Achilleus alone knew how to wield it,
the Pelian ash spear which Cheiron had brought to his father
from high on Pelion,[8] to be death for fighters in battle.
Automedon and Alkimos, in charge of the horses,
yoked them, and put the fair breast straps about them, and forced
the bits home
between their jaws, and pulled the reins back against the compacted
chariot seat, and one, Automedon, took up the shining
whip caught close in his hand and vaulted up to the chariot,
while behind him Achilleus helmed for battle took his stance
shining in all his armour like the sun when he crosses above us,

8. A heavily wooded mountain in central Greece. *Cheiron*: A centaur famous as a wise teacher.

and cried in a terrible voice on the horses of his father:
'Xanthos, Balios, Bay and Dapple, famed sons of Podarge,
take care to bring in another way your charioteer back
to the company of the Danaans, when we give over fighting,
not leave him to lie fallen there, as you did to Patroklos.'
Then from beneath the yoke the gleam-footed horse answered him,
Xanthos, and as he spoke bowed his head, so that all the mane
fell away from the pad and swept the ground by the cross-yoke;
the goddess of the white arms, Hera, had put a voice in him:
'We shall still keep you safe for this time, o hard Achilleus.
And yet the day of your death is near, but it is not we
who are to blame, but a great god and powerful Destiny.
For it was not because we were slow, because we were careless,
that the Trojans have taken the armour from the shoulders of Patroklos,
but it was that high god,[9] the child of lovely-haired Leto,
who killed him among the champions and gave the glory to Hektor.
But for us, we two could run with the blast of the west wind
who they say is the lightest of all things; yet still for you
there is destiny to be killed in force by a god and a mortal.'[1]
When he had spoken so the Furies stopped the voice in him,[2]
but deeply disturbed, Achilleus of the swift feet answered him:
'Xanthos, why do you prophesy my death? This is not for you.
I myself know well it is destined for me to die here
far from my beloved father and mother. But for all that
I will not stop till the Trojans have had enough of my fighting.'
He spoke, and shouting held on in the foremost his single-foot horses.

[Achilleus' return to the fighting brought terror to the Trojans, and turned the battle into a rout in which Achilleus killed every Trojan that crossed his path. As he pursued Agenor, Apollo tricked him by rescuing his intended victim (he spirited him away in a mist) and assumed Agenor's shape to lead Achilleus away from the walls of Troy. The Trojans took refuge in the city, all except Hektor.]

Book XXII

[THE DEATH OF HEKTOR]

So along the city the Trojans, who had run like fawns, dried
the sweat off from their bodies and drank and slaked their thirst, leaning

9. Apollo. 1. Achilleus will eventually fall by the hand of Paris as a result of the intervention of Apollo. 2. One of the functions of these goddesses was to ensure that all the creatures of the universe observed their proper limits.

along the magnificent battlements. Meanwhile the Achaians
sloping their shields across their shoulders came close to the rampart.
But his deadly fate held Hektor shackled, so that he stood fast
in front of Ilion and the Skaian gates. Now Phoibos
Apollo spoke aloud to Peleion: 'Why, son of Peleus,
do you keep after me in the speed of your feet, being mortal
while I am an immortal god? Even yet you have not
seen that I am a god, but strain after me in your fury.
Now hard fighting with the Trojans whom you stampeded means nothing
to you. They are crowded in the city, but you bent away here.
You will never kill me. I am not one who is fated.'
Deeply vexed Achilleus of the swift feet spoke to him:
'You have balked me, striker from afar, most malignant of all gods,
when you turned me here away from the rampart, else many Trojans
would have caught the soil in their teeth before they got back into Ilion.
Now you have robbed me of great glory, and rescued these people
lightly, since you have no retribution to fear hereafter.
Else I would punish you, if only the strength were in me.'
He spoke, and stalked away against the city, with high thoughts
in mind, and in tearing speed, like a racehorse with his chariot
who runs lightly as he pulls the chariot over the flat land.
Such was the action of Achilleus in feet and quick knees.
The aged Priam was the first of all whose eyes saw him
as he swept across the flat land in full shining, like that star
which comes on in the autumn and whose conspicuous brightness
far outshines the stars that are numbered in the night's darkening,
the star they give the name of Orion's Dog,[3] which is brightest
among the stars, and yet is wrought as a sign of evil
and brings on the great fever for unfortunate mortals.
Such was the flare of the bronze that girt his chest in his running.
The old man groaned aloud and with both hands high uplifted
beat his head, and groaned amain, and spoke supplicating
his beloved son, who there still in front of the gateway
stood fast in determined fury to fight with Achilleus.
The old man stretching his hands out called pitifully to him:
'Hektor, beloved child, do not wait the attack of this man
alone, away from the others. You might encounter your destiny
beaten down by Peleion, since he is far stronger than you are.
A hard man: I wish he were as beloved of the immortal
as loved by me. Soon he would lie dead, and the dogs and the vultures

3. Sirius, the "dog star," in the constellation *Canis Major*.

would eat him, and bitter sorrow so be taken from my heart.
He has made me desolate of my sons, who were brave and many.
He killed them, or sold them away among the far-lying islands.
Even now there are two sons, Lykaon and Polydoros,[4]
whom I cannot see among the Trojans pent up in the city,
sons Laothoé[5] a princess among women bore to me.
But if these are alive somewhere in the army, then I can
set them free for bronze and gold; it is there inside, since
Altes[6] the aged and renowned gave much with his daughter.
But if they are dead already and gone down to the house of Hades,
it is sorrow to our hearts, who bore them, myself and their mother,
but to the rest of the people a sorrow that will be fleeting
beside their sorrow for you, if you go down before Achilleus.
Come then inside the wall, my child, so that you can rescue
the Trojans and the women of Troy, neither win the high glory
for Peleus' son, and yourself be robbed of your very life. Oh, take
pity on me, the unfortunate still alive, still sentient
but ill-starred, whom the father, Kronos' son, on the threshold of old age
will blast with hard fate, after I have looked upon evils
and seen my sons destroyed and my daughters dragged away captive
and the chambers of marriage wrecked and the innocent children taken
and dashed to the ground in the hatefulness of war, and the wives
of my sons dragged off by the accursed hands of the Achaians.
And myself last of all, my dogs in front of my doorway
will rip me raw, after some man with stroke of the sharp bronze
spear, or with spearcast, has torn the life out of my body;
those dogs I raised in my halls to be at my table, to guard my
gates, who will lap my blood in the savagery of their anger
and then lie down in my courts. For a young man all is decorous
when he is cut down in battle and torn with the sharp bronze, and lies there
dead, and though dead still all that shows about him is beautiful;
but when an old man is dead and down, and the dogs mutilate
the grey head and the grey beard and the parts that are secret,
this, for all sad mortality, is the sight most pitiful.'

So the old man spoke, and in his hands seizing the grey hairs
tore them from his head, but could not move the spirit in Hektor.
And side by side with him his mother in tears was mourning
and laid the fold of her bosom bare and with one hand held out
a breast, and wept her tears for him and called to him in winged words:

4. Both already killed by Achilleus in the fighting outside the city. 5. Priam, in oriental style, has more than one wife. 6. Father of Laothoë.

'Hektor, my child, look upon these and obey, and take pity
on me, if ever I gave you the breast to quiet your sorrow.
Remember all these things, dear child, and from inside the wall
beat off this grim man. Do not go out as champion against him,
o hard one; for if he kills you I can no longer
mourn you on the death-bed, sweet branch, o child of my bearing,
nor can your generous wife mourn you, but a big way from us
beside the ships of the Argives the running dogs will feed on you.'
So these two in tears and with much supplication called out
to their dear son, but could not move the spirit in Hektor,
but he awaited Achilleus as he came on, gigantic.
But as a snake waits for a man by his hole, in the mountains,
glutted with evil poisons, and the fell venom has got inside him,
and coiled about the hole he stares malignant, so Hektor
would not give ground but kept unquenched the fury within him
and sloped his shining shield against the jut of the bastion.
Deeply troubled he spoke to his own great-hearted spirit:
'Ah me! If I go now inside the wall and the gateway,
Poulydamas will be first to put a reproach upon me
since he tried to make me lead the Trojans inside the city
on that accursed night when brilliant Achilleus rose up,
and I would not obey him, but that would have been far better.
Now, since by my own recklessness I have ruined my people,
I feel shame before the Trojans and the Trojan women with trailing
robes, that someone who is less of a man than I will say of me:
"Hektor believed in his own strength and ruined his people."
Thus they will speak; and as for me, it would be much better
at that time, to go against Achilleus, and slay him, and come back,
or else be killed by him in glory in front of the city.
Or if again I set down my shield massive in the middle
and my ponderous helm, and lean my spear up against the rampart
and go out as I am to meet Achilleus the blameless
and promise to give back Helen, and with her all her possessions,
all those things that once in the hollow ships Alexandros
brought back to Troy, and these were the beginning of the quarrel;
to give these to Atreus' sons to take away, and for the Achaians
also to divide up all that is hidden within the city,
and take an oath thereafter for the Trojans in conclave
not to hide anything away, but distribute all of it,
as much as the lovely citadel keeps guarded within it;
yet still, why does the heart within me debate on these things?
I might go up to him, and he take no pity upon me
nor respect my position, but kill me naked so, as if I were
a woman, once I stripped my armour from me. There is no

way any more from a tree or a rock to talk to him gently
whispering like a young man and a young girl, in the way
a young man and a young maiden whisper together.
Better to bring on the fight with him as soon as it may be.
We shall see to which one the Olympian grants the glory.'
So he pondered, waiting, but Achilleus was closing upon him
in the likeness of the lord of battles, the helm-shining warrior,
and shaking from above his shoulder the dangerous Pelian
ash spear, while the bronze that closed about him was shining
like the flare of blazing fire or the sun in its rising.
And the shivers took hold of Hektor when he saw him, and he could no longer
stand his ground there, but left the gates behind, and fled, frightened,
and Peleus' son went after him in the confidence of his quick feet.
As when a hawk in the mountains who moves lightest of things flying
makes his effortless swoop for a trembling dove, but she slips away
from beneath and flies and he shrill screaming close after her
plunges for her again and again, heart furious to take her;
so Achilleus went straight for him in fury, but Hektor
fled away under the Trojan wall and moved his knees rapidly.
They raced along by the watching point and the windy fig tree
always away from under the wall and along the wagon-way
and came to the two sweet-running well springs. There there are double
springs of water that jet up, the springs of whirling Skamandros.
One of these runs hot water and the steam on all sides
of it rises as if from a fire that was burning inside it.
But the other in the summer-time runs water that is like hail
or chill snow or ice that forms from water. Beside these
in this place, and close to them, are the washing-hollows
of stone, and magnificent, where the wives of the Trojans and their lovely
daughters washed the clothes to shining, in the old days
when there was peace, before the coming of the sons of the Achaians.
They ran beside these, one escaping, the other after him.
It was a great man who fled, but far better he who pursued him
rapidly, since here was no festal beast, no ox-hide
they strove for, for these are prizes that are given men for their running.
No, they ran for the life of Hektor, breaker of horses.
As when about the turnposts racing single-foot horses
run at full speed, when a great prize is laid up for their winning,
a tripod or a woman, in games for a man's funeral,

so these two swept whirling about the city of Priam
in the speed of their feet, while all the gods were looking upon them.
First to speak among them was the father of gods and mortals:
'Ah me, this is a man beloved whom now my eyes watch
being chased around the wall; my heart is mourning for Hektor
who has burned in my honour many thigh pieces of oxen
on the peaks of Ida[7] with all her folds, or again on the uttermost
part of the citadel, but now the brilliant Achilleus
drives him in speed of his feet around the city of Priam.
Come then, you immortals, take thought and take counsel, whether
to rescue this man or whether to make him, for all his valour,
go down under the hands of Achilleus, the son of Peleus.'

Then in answer the goddess grey-eyed Athene spoke to him:
'Father of the shining bolt, dark misted, what is this you said?
Do you wish to bring back a man who is mortal, one long since
doomed by his destiny, from ill-sounding death and release him?
Do it, then; but not all the rest of us gods shall approve you.'

Then Zeus the gatherer of the clouds spoke to her in answer:
'Tritogeneia,[8] dear daughter, do not lose heart; for I say this
not in outright anger, and my meaning toward you is kindly.
Act as your purpose would have you do, and hold back no longer.'

So he spoke, and stirred on Athene, who was eager before this,
and she went in a flash of speed down the pinnacles of Olympos.

But swift Achilleus kept unremittingly after Hektor,
chasing him, as a dog in the mountains who has flushed from his covert
a deer's fawn follows him through the folding ways and the valleys,
and though the fawn crouched down under a bush and be hidden
he keeps running and noses him out until he comes on him;
so Hektor could not lose himself from swift-footed Peleion.
If ever he made a dash right on for the gates of Dardanos
to get quickly under the strong-built bastions, endeavouring
that they from above with missiles thrown might somehow defend him,
each time Achilleus would get in front and force him to turn back
into the plain, and himself kept his flying course next the city.
As in a dream a man is not able to follow one who runs
from him, nor can the runner escape, nor the other pursue him,
so he could not run him down in his speed, nor the other get clear.
How then could Hektor have escaped the death spirits, had not
Apollo, for this last and uttermost time, stood by him
close, and driven strength into him, and made his knees light?

7. The great mountain range near Troy. 8. A title of Athene; its origin and meaning are unknown.

But brilliant Achilleus kept shaking his head at his own people
and would not let them throw their bitter projectiles at Hektor
for fear the thrower might win the glory, and himself come second.
But when for the fourth time they had come around to the well springs
then the Father balanced his golden scales, and in them
he set two fateful portions of death, which lays men prostrate,
one for Achilleus, and one for Hektor, breaker of horses,
and balanced it by the middle; and Hektor's death-day was heavier
and dragged downward toward death, and Phoibos Apollo forsook him.
But the goddess grey-eyed Athene came now to Peleion
and stood close beside him and addressed him in winged words:
'Beloved
of Zeus, shining Achilleus, I am hopeful now that you and I
will take back great glory to the ships of the Achaians, after
we have killed Hektor, for all his slakeless fury for battle.
Now there is no way for him to get clear away from us,
not though Apollo who strikes from afar should be willing to undergo
much, and wallow before our father Zeus of the aegis.
Stand you here then and get your wind again, while I go
to this man and persuade him to stand up to you in combat.'
So spoke Athene, and he was glad at heart, and obeyed her,
and stopped, and stood leaning on his bronze-barbed ash spear.
Meanwhile
Athene left him there, and caught up with brilliant Hektor,
and likened herself in form and weariless voice to Deïphobos.[9]
She came now and stood close to him and addressed him in winged words:
'Dear brother, indeed swift-footed Achilleus is using you roughly
and chasing you on swift feet around the city of Priam.
Come on, then; let us stand fast against him and beat him back from us.'
Then tall Hektor of the shining helm answered her: 'Deïphobos,
before now you were dearest to me by far of my brothers,
of all those who were sons of Priam and Hekabe, and now
I am minded all the more within my heart to honour you,
you who dared for my sake, when your eyes saw me, to come forth
from the fortifications, while the others stand fast inside them.'
Then in turn the goddess grey-eyed Athene answered him:
'My brother, it is true our father and the lady our mother, taking
my knees in turn, and my companions about me, entreated

9. One of Hektor's brothers.

that I stay within, such was the terror upon all of them.
But the heart within me was worn away by hard sorrow for you.
But now let us go straight on and fight hard, let there be no sparing
of our spears, so that we can find out whether Achilleus
will kill us both and carry our bloody war spoils back
to the hollow ships, or will himself go down under your spear.'
So Athene spoke and led him on by beguilement.
Now as the two in their advance were come close together,
first of the two to speak was tall helm-glittering Hektor:
'Son of Peleus, I will no longer run from you, as before this
I fled three times around the great city of Priam, and dared not
stand to your onfall. But now my spirit in turn has driven me
to stand and face you. I must take you now, or I must be taken.
Come then, shall we swear before the gods? For these are the highest
who shall be witnesses and watch over our agreements.
Brutal as you are I will not defile you, if Zeus grants
to me that I can wear you out, and take the life from you.
But after I have stripped your glorious armour, Achilleus,
I will give your corpse back to the Achaians. Do you do likewise.'
Then looking darkly at him swift-footed Achilleus answered:
'Hektor, argue me no arguments. I cannot forgive you.
As there are no trustworthy oaths between men and lions,
nor wolves and lambs have spirit that can be brought to agreement
but forever these hold feelings of hate for each other,
so there can be no love between you and me, nor shall there be
oaths between us, but one or the other must fall before then
to glut with his blood Ares the god who fights under the shield's guard.
Remember every valour of yours, for now the need comes
hardest upon you to be a spearman and a bold warrior.
There shall be no more escape for you, but Pallas Athene
will kill you soon by my spear. You will pay in a lump for all those
sorrows of my companions you killed in your spear's fury.'
So he spoke, and balanced the spear far shadowed, and threw it;
but glorious Hektor kept his eyes on him, and avoided it,
for he dropped, watchful, to his knee, and the bronze spear flew over his shoulder
and stuck in the ground, but Pallas Athene snatched it, and gave it
back to Achilleus, unseen by Hektor shepherd of the people.
But now Hektor spoke out to the blameless son of Peleus:
'You missed; and it was not, o Achilleus like the immortals,
from Zeus that you knew my destiny; but you thought so; or rather
you are someone clever in speech and spoke to swindle me,
to make me afraid of you and forget my valour and war strength.

You will not stick your spear in my back as I run away from you
but drive it into my chest as I storm straight in against you;
if the god gives you that; and now look out for my brazen
spear. I wish it might be taken full length in your body.
And indeed the war would be a lighter thing for the Trojans
if you were dead, seeing that you are their greatest affliction.'
So he spoke, and balanced the spear far shadowed, and threw it,
and struck the middle of Peleïdes' shield, nor missed it,
but the spear was driven far back from the shield, and Hektor was angered
because his swift weapon had been loosed from his hand in a vain cast.
He stood discouraged, and had no other ash spear; but lifting
his voice he called aloud on Deïphobos of the pale shield,
and asked him for a long spear, but Deïphobos was not near him.
And Hektor knew the truth inside his heart, and spoke aloud:
'No use. Here at last the gods have summoned me deathward.
I thought Deïphobos the hero was here close beside me,
but he is behind the wall and it was Athene cheating me,
and now evil death is close to me, and no longer far away,
and there is no way out. So it must long since have been pleasing
to Zeus, and Zeus' son who strikes from afar, this way; though before this
they defended me gladly. But now my death is upon me.
Let me at least not die without a struggle, inglorious,
but do some big thing first, that men to come shall know of it.'
So he spoke, and pulling out the sharp sword that was slung
at the hollow of his side, huge and heavy, and gathering
himself together, he made his swoop, like a high-flown eagle
who launches himself out of the murk of the clouds on the flat land
to catch away a tender lamb or a shivering hare; so
Hektor made his swoop, swinging his sharp sword, and Achilleus
charged, the heart within him loaded with savage fury.
In front of his chest the beautiful elaborate great shield
covered him, and with the glittering helm with four horns
he nodded; the lovely golden fringes were shaken about it
which Hephaistos had driven close along the horn of the helmet.
And as a star moves among stars in the night's darkening,
Hesper,[1] who is the fairest star who stands in the sky, such
was the shining from the pointed spear Achilleus was shaking
in his right hand with evil intention toward brilliant Hektor.
He was eyeing Hektor's splendid body, to see where it might best
give way, but all the rest of the skin was held in the armour,

1. The evening star.

brazen and splendid, he stripped when he cut down the strength of Patroklos;
yet showed where the collar-bones hold the neck from the shoulders,
the throat, where death of the soul comes most swiftly; in this place
brilliant Achilleus drove the spear as he came on in fury,
and clean through the soft part of the neck the spearpoint was driven.
Yet the ash spear heavy with bronze did not sever the windpipe,
so that Hektor could still make exchange of words spoken.
But he dropped in the dust, and brilliant Achilles vaunted above him:
'Hektor, surely you thought as you killed Patroklos you would be
safe, and since I was far away you thought nothing of me,
o fool, for an avenger was left, far greater than he was,
behind him and away by the hollow ships. And it was I;
and I have broken your strength; on you the dogs and the vultures
shall feed and foully rip you; the Achaians will bury Patroklos.'
In his weakness Hektor of the shining helm spoke to him:
'I entreat you, by your life, by your knees, by your parents,
do not let the dogs feed on me by the ships of the Achaians,
but take yourself the bronze and gold that are there in abundance,
those gifts that my father and the lady my mother will give you,
and give my body to be taken home again, so that the Trojans
and the wives of the Trojans may give me in death my rite of burning.'
But looking darkly at him swift-footed Achilleus answered:
'No more entreating of me, you dog, by knees or parents.
I wish only that my spirit and fury would drive me
to hack your meat away and eat it raw for the things that
you have done to me. So there is no one who can hold the dogs off
from your head, not if they bring here and set before me ten times
and twenty times the ransom, and promise more in addition,
not if Priam son of Dardanos should offer to weigh out
your bulk in gold; not even so shall the lady your mother
who herself bore you lay you on the death-bed and mourn you:
no, but the dogs and the birds will have you all for their feasting.'
Then, dying, Hektor of the shining helmet spoke to him:
'I know you well as I look upon you, I know that I could not
persuade you, since indeed in your breast is a heart of iron.
Be careful now; for I might be made into the gods' curse
upon you, on that day when Paris and Phoibos Apollo
destroy you in the Skaian gates, for all your valour.'
He spoke, and as he spoke the end of death closed in upon him,

and the soul fluttering free of the limbs went down into Death's house
mourning her destiny, leaving youth and manhood behind her.
Now though he was a dead man brilliant Achilleus spoke to him:
'Die: and I will take my own death at whatever time
Zeus and the rest of the immortals choose to accomplish it.'
He spoke, and pulled the brazen spear from the body, and laid it on one side, and stripped away from the shoulders the bloody armour. And the other sons of the Achaians came running about him,
and gazed upon the stature and on the imposing beauty
of Hektor; and none stood beside him who did not stab him;
and thus they would speak one to another, each looking at his neighbour:
'See now, Hektor is much softer to handle than he was
when he set the ships ablaze with the burning firebrand.'
So as they stood beside him they would speak, and stab him.
But now, when he had despoiled the body, swift-footed brilliant Achilleus stood among the Achaians and addressed them in winged words:
'Friends, who are leaders of the Argives and keep their counsel:
since the gods have granted me the killing of this man
who has done us much damage, such as not all the others together
have done, come, let us go in armour about the city
to see if we can find out what purpose is in the Trojans,
whether they will abandon their high city, now that this man
has fallen, or are minded to stay, though Hektor lives no longer.
Yet still, why does the heart within me debate on these things?
There is a dead man who lies by the ships, unwept, unburied:
Patroklos: and I will not forget him, never so long as
I remain among the living and my knees have their spring beneath me.
And though the dead forget the dead in the house of Hades,
even there I shall still remember my beloved companion.
But now, you young men of the Achaians, let us go back, singing
a victory song, to our hollow ships; and take this with us.
We have won ourselves enormous fame; we have killed the great Hektor
whom the Trojans glorified as if he were a god in their city.'
He spoke, and now thought of shameful treatment for glorious Hektor.
In both of his feet at the back he made holes by the tendons
in the space between ankle and heel, and drew thongs of ox-hide through them,

and fastened them to the chariot so as to let the head drag,
and mounted the chariot, and lifted the glorious armour inside it,
then whipped the horses to a run, and they winged their way unreluctant.
A cloud of dust rose where Hektor was dragged, his dark hair was falling
about him, and all that head that was once so handsome was tumbled
in the dust; since by this time Zeus had given him over
to his enemies, to be defiled in the land of his fathers.
So all his head was dragged in the dust; and now his mother
tore out her hair, and threw the shining veil far from her
and raised a great wail as she looked upon her son; and his father
beloved groaned pitifully, and all his people about him
were taken with wailing and lamentation all through the city.
It was most like what would have happened, if all lowering
Ilion had been burning top to bottom in fire.
His people could scarcely keep the old man in his impatience
from storming out of the Dardanian gates; he implored them all,
and wallowed in the muck before them calling each man
and naming him by his name: 'Give way, dear friends,
and let me alone though you care for me, leave me to go out
from the city and make my way to the ships of the Achaians.
I must be suppliant to this man, who is harsh and violent,
and he might have respect for my age and take pity upon it
since I am old, and his father also is old, as I am,
Peleus, who begot and reared him to be an affliction
on the Trojans. He has given us most sorrow, beyond all others,
such is the number of my flowering sons he has cut down.
But for all of these I mourn not so much, in spite of my sorrow,
as for one, Hektor, and the sharp grief for him will carry me downward
into Death's house. I wish he had died in my arms, for that way
we two, I myself and his mother who bore him unhappy,
might so have glutted ourselves with weeping for him and mourning.'
So he spoke, in tears, and beside him mourned the citizens.
But for the women of Troy Hekabe led out the thronging
chant of sorrow: 'Child, I am wretched. What shall my life be
in my sorrows, now you are dead, who by day and in the night
were my glory in the town, and to all of the Trojans
and the women of Troy a blessing throughout their city. They adored you
as if you were a god, since in truth you were their high honour
while you lived. Now death and fate have closed in upon you.'

So she spoke in tears but the wife of Hektor had not yet
heard: for no sure messenger had come to her and told her
how her husband had held his ground there outside the gates;
but she was weaving a web in the inner room of the high house,
a red folding robe, and inworking elaborate figures.
She called out through the house to her lovely-haired handmaidens
to set a great cauldron over the fire, so that there would be
hot water for Hektor's bath as he came back out of the fighting;
poor innocent, nor knew how, far from waters for bathing,
Pallas Athene had cut him down at the hands of Achilleus.
She heard from the great bastion the noise of mourning and sorrow.
Her limbs spun, and the shuttle dropped from her hand to the ground.
Then
she called aloud to her lovely-haired handmaidens: 'Come here.
Two of you come with me, so I can see what has happened.
I heard the voice of Hektor's honoured mother; within me
my own heart rising beats in my mouth, my limbs under me
are frozen. Surely some evil is near for the children of Priam.
May what I say come never close to my ear; yet dreadfully
I fear that great Achilleus might have cut off bold Hektor
alone, away from the city, and be driving him into the flat land,
might put an end to that bitter pride of courage, that always
was on him, since he would never stay back where the men were in
numbers
but break far out in front, and give way in his fury to no man.'
So she spoke, and ran out of the house like a raving woman
with pulsing heart, and her two handmaidens went along with her.
But when she came to the bastion and where the men were gathered
she stopped, staring, on the wall; and she saw him
being dragged in front of the city, and the running horses
dragged him at random toward the hollow ships of the Achaians.
The darkness of night misted over the eyes of Andromache.
She fell backward, and gasped the life breath from her, and far off
threw from her head the shining gear that ordered her headdress,
the diadem and the cap, and the holding-band woven together,
and the circlet, which Aphrodite the golden once had given her
on that day when Hektor of the shining helmet led her forth
from the house of Eëtion, and gave numberless gifts to win her.
And about her stood thronging her husband's sisters and the wives of
his brothers
and these, in her despair for death, held her up among them.
But she, when she breathed again and the life was gathered back into
her,
lifted her voice among the women of Troy in mourning:
'Hektor, I grieve for you. You and I were born to a single
destiny, you in Troy in the house of Priam, and I

in Thebe, underneath the timbered mountain of Plakos
in the house of Eëtion, who cared for me when I was little,
ill-fated he, I ill-starred. I wish he had never begotten me.
Now you go down to the house of Death in the secret places
of the earth, and left me here behind in the sorrow of mourning,
a widow in your house, and the boy is only a baby
who was born to you and me, the unfortunate. You cannot help him,
Hektor, any more, since you are dead. Nor can he help you.
Though he escape the attack of the Achaians with all its sorrows,
yet all his days for your sake there will be hard work for him
and sorrows, for others will take his lands away from him. The day
of bereavement leaves a child with no agemates to befriend him.
He bows his head before every man, his cheeks are bewept, he
goes, needy, a boy among his father's companions,
and tugs at this man by the mantle, that man by the tunic,
and they pity him, and one gives him a tiny drink from a goblet,
enough to moisten his lips, not enough to moisten his palate.
But one whose parents are living beats him out of the banquet
hitting him with his fists and in words also abuses him:
"Get out, you! Your father is not dining among us."
And the boy goes away in tears to his widowed mother,
Astyanax, who in days before on the knees of his father
would eat only the marrow or the flesh of sheep that was fattest.
And when sleep would come upon him and he was done with his playing,
he would go to sleep in a bed, in the arms of his nurse, in a soft
bed, with his heart given all its fill of luxury.
Now, with his dear father gone, he has much to suffer:
he, whom the Trojans have called Astyanax, lord of the city,
since it was you alone who defended the gates and the long walls.
But now, beside the curving ships, far away from your parents,
the writhing worms will feed, when the dogs have had enough of you,
on your naked corpse, though in your house there is clothing laid up
that is fine-textured and pleasant, wrought by the hands of women.
But all of these I will burn up in the fire's blazing,
no use to you, since you will never be laid away in them;
but in your honour, from the men of Troy and the Trojan women.'
So she spoke, in tears; and the women joined in her mourning.

[Achilleus buried Patroklos, and the Greeks celebrated the dead hero's fame with athletic games, for which Achilleus gave the prizes.]

Book XXIV

[ACHILLEUS AND PRIAM]

And the games broke up, and the people scattered to go away, each man
to his fast-running ship, and the rest of them took thought of their dinner
and of sweet sleep and its enjoyment; only Achilleus
wept still as he remembered his beloved companion, nor did sleep
who subdues all come over him, but he tossed from one side to the other
in longing for Patroklos, for his manhood and his great strength
and all the action he had seen to the end with him, and the hardships
he had suffered; the wars of men; hard crossing of the big waters.
Remembering all these things he let fall the swelling tears, lying
sometimes along his side, sometimes on his back, and now again
prone on his face; then he would stand upright, and pace turning
in distraction along the beach of the sea, nor did dawn rising
escape him as she brightened across the sea and the beaches.
Then, when he had yoked running horses under the chariot
he would fasten Hektor behind the chariot, so as to drag him,
and draw him three times around the tomb of Menoitios' fallen
son, then rest again in his shelter, and throw down the dead man
and leave him to lie sprawled on his face in the dust. But Apollo
had pity on him, though he was only a dead man, and guarded
the body from all ugliness, and hid all of it under the golden
aegis, so that it might not be torn when Achilleus dragged it.
  So Achilleus in his standing fury outraged great Hektor.
The blessed gods as they looked upon him were filled with compassion
and kept urging clear-sighted Argeïphontes[2] to steal the body.
There this was pleasing to all the others, but never to Hera
nor Poseidon, nor the girl of the grey eyes,[3] who kept still
their hatred for sacred Ilion as in the beginning,
and for Priam and his people, because of the delusion of Paris[4]
who insulted the goddesses when they came to him in his courtyard
and favoured her who supplied the lust that led to disaster.
But now, as it was the twelfth dawn after the death of Hektor,
Phoibos Apollo spoke his word out among the immortals:
'You are hard, you gods, and destructive. Now did not Hektor

2. A title of Hermes (its meaning is disputed). Hermes was the messenger of Zeus, and was also renowned for his trickery and thieving. 3. Athene. 4. He was appointed judge in a contest of beauty between Aphrodite, Hera, and Athene. All three goddesses offered bribes, but Aphrodite's promise to give him Helen proved the most attractive.

burn thigh pieces of oxen and unblemished goats in your honour?
Now you cannot bring yourselves to save him, though he is only
a corpse, for his wife to look upon, his child and his mother
and Priam his father, and his people, who presently thereafter
would burn his body in the fire and give him his rites of burial.
No, you gods; your desire is to help this cursed Achilleus
within whose breast there are no feelings of justice, nor can
his mind be bent, but his purposes are fierce, like a lion
who when he has given way to his own great strength and his haughty
spirit, goes among the flocks of men, to devour them.
So Achilleus has destroyed pity, and there is not in him
any shame; which does much harm to men but profits them also.
For a man must some day lose one who was even closer
than this; a brother from the same womb, or a son. And yet
he weeps for him, and sorrows for him, and then it is over,
for the Destinies put in mortal men the heart of endurance.
But this man, now he has torn the heart of life from great Hektor,
ties him to his horses and drags him around his beloved companion's
tomb; and nothing is gained thereby for his good, or his honour.
Great as he is, let him take care not to make us angry;
for see, he does dishonour to the dumb earth in his fury.'

Then bitterly Hera of the white arms answered him, saying:
'What you have said could be true, lord of the silver bow, only
if you give Hektor such pride of place as you give to Achilleus.
But Hektor was mortal, and suckled at the breast of a woman,
while Achilleus is the child of a goddess, one whom I myself
nourished and brought up and gave her as bride to her husband
Peleus, one dear to the hearts of the immortals, for you all
went, you gods, to the wedding; and you too feasted among them
and held your lyre, o friend of the evil, faithless forever.'

In turn Zeus who gathers the clouds spoke to her in answer:
'Hera, be not utterly angry with the gods, for there shall not
be the same pride of place given both. Yet Hektor also
was loved by the gods, best of all the mortals in Ilion.
I loved him too. He never failed of gifts to my liking.
Never yet has my altar gone without fair sacrifice,
the smoke and the savour of it, since that is our portion of honour.
The stealing of him we will dismiss, for it is not possible
to take bold Hektor secretly from Achilleus, since always
his mother is near him night and day; but it would be better if one
of the gods would summon Thetis here to my presence
so that I can say a close word to her, and see that Achilleus
is given gifts by Priam and gives back the body of Hektor.'

He spoke, and Iris storm-footed sprang away with the message,
and at a point between Samos and Imbros[5] of the high cliffs
plunged in the dark water, and the sea crashed moaning about her.
She plummeted to sea floor like a lead weight which, mounted
along the horn of an ox[6] who ranges the fields, goes downward
and takes death with it to the raw-ravening fish. She found Thetis
inside the hollow of her cave, and gathered about her
sat the rest of the sea goddesses, and she in their midst
was mourning the death of her blameless son, who so soon was destined
to die in Troy of the rich soil, far from the land of his fathers.
Iris the swift-foot came close beside her and spoke to her:
'Rise, Thetis. Zeus whose purposes are infinite calls you.'
In turn Thetis the goddess, the silver-footed, answered her:
'What does he, the great god, want with me? I feel shamefast
to mingle with the immortals, and my heart is confused with sorrows.
But I will go. No word shall be in vain, if he says it.'
So she spoke, and shining among the divinities took up
her black veil, and there is no darker garment. She went
on her way, and in front of her rapid wind-footed Iris
guided her, and the wave of the water opened about them.
They stepped out on the dry land and swept to the sky. There they found
the son of Kronos of the wide brows, and gathered about him
sat all the rest of the gods, the blessed, who live forever.
She sat down beside Zeus father, and Athene made a place for her.
Hera put into her hand a beautiful golden goblet
and spoke to her to comfort her, and Thetis accepting drank from it.
The father of gods and men began the discourse among them:
'You have come to Olympos, divine Thetis, for all your sorrow,
with an unforgotten grief in your heart. I myself know this.
But even so I will tell you why I summoned you hither.
For nine days there has risen a quarrel among the immortals
over the body of Hektor, and Achilleus, stormer of cities.
They keep urging clear-sighted Argeïphontes to steal the body,
but I still put upon Achilleus the honour that he has, guarding
your reverence and your love for me into time afterwards. Go then
in all speed to the encampment and give to your son this message:
tell him that the gods frown upon him, that beyond all other
immortals I myself am angered that in his heart's madness
he holds Hektor beside the curved ships and did not give him

5. Two islands in the north Aegean. 6. A lure for big fish.

back. Perhaps in fear of me he will give back Hektor.
Then I will send Iris to Priam of the great heart, with an order
to ransom his dear son, going down to the ships of the Achaians
and bringing gifts to Achilleus which might soften his anger.'
He spoke and the goddess silver-foot Thetis did not disobey him
but descended in a flash of speed from the peaks of Olympos
and made her way to the shelter of her son, and there found him
in close lamentation, and his beloved companions about him
were busy at their work and made ready the morning meal, and there
stood a great fleecy sheep being sacrificed in the shelter.
His honoured mother came close to him and sat down beside him,
and stroked him with her hand and called him by name and spoke to him:
'My child, how long will you go on eating your heart out in sorrow
and lamentation, and remember neither your food nor going
to bed? It is a good thing even to lie with a woman
in love. For you will not be with me long, but already
death and powerful destiny stand closely above you.
But listen hard to me, for I come from Zeus with a message.
He says that the gods frown upon you, that beyond all other
immortals he himself is angered that in your heart's madness
you hold Hektor beside the curved ships and did not redeem him.
Come, then, give him up and accept ransom for the body.'
Then in turn Achilleus of the swift feet answered her:
'So be it. He can bring the ransom and take off the body,
if the Olympian himself so urgently bids it.'
So, where the ships were drawn together, the son and his mother
conversed at long length in winged words. But the son of Kronos
stirred Iris to go down to sacred Ilion, saying:
'Go forth, Iris the swift, leaving your place on Olympos,
and go to Priam of the great heart within Ilion, tell him
to ransom his dear son, going down to the ships of the Achaians
and bringing gifts to Achilleus which might soften his anger:
alone, let no other man of the Trojans go with him, but only
let one elder herald attend him, one who can manage
the mules and the easily running wagon, so he can carry
the dead man, whom great Achilleus slew, back to the city.
Let death not be a thought in his heart, let him have no fear;
such an escort shall I send to guide him, Argeïphontes
who shall lead him until he brings him to Achilleus. And after
he has brought him inside the shelter of Achilleus, neither
will the man himself kill him, but will hold back all the others,
for he is no witless man nor unwatchful, nor is he wicked,
but will in all kindness spare one who comes to him as a suppliant.'

He spoke, and storm-footed Iris swept away with the message
and came to the house of Priam. There she found outcry and mourning.
The sons sitting around their father inside the courtyard
made their clothes sodden with their tears, and among them the old man
sat veiled, beaten into his mantle. Dung lay thick
on the head and neck of the aged man, for he had been rolling
in it, he had gathered and smeared it on with his hands. And his daughters
all up and down the house and the wives of his sons were mourning
as they remembered all those men in their numbers and valour
who lay dead, their lives perished at the hands of the Argives.
The messenger of Zeus stood beside Priam and spoke to him
in a small voice, and yet the shivers took hold of his body:
'Take heart, Priam, son of Dardanos, do not be frightened.
I come to you not eyeing you with evil intention
but with the purpose of good toward you. I am a messenger
of Zeus, who far away cares much for you and is pitiful.
The Olympian orders you to ransom Hektor the brilliant,
to bring gifts to Achilleus which may soften his anger:
alone, let no other man of the Trojans go with you, but only
let one elder herald attend you, one who can manage
the mules and the easily running wagon, so he can carry
the dead man, whom great Achilleus slew, back to the city.
Let death not be a thought in your heart, you need have no fear,
such an escort shall go with you to guide you, Argeïphontes
who will lead you till he brings you to Achilleus. And after
he has brought you inside the shelter of Achilleus, neither
will the man himself kill you but will hold back all the others;
for he is no witless man nor unwatchful, nor is he wicked
but will in all kindness spare one who comes to him as a suppliant.'
So Iris the swift-footed spoke and went away from him.
Thereupon he ordered his sons to make ready the easily rolling
mule wagon, and to fasten upon it the carrying basket.
He himself went into the storeroom, which was fragrant
and of cedar, and high-ceilinged, with many bright treasures inside it.
He called out to Hekabe his wife, and said to her:
'Dear wife, a messenger came to me from Zeus on Olympos,
that I must go to the ships of the Achaians and ransom my dear son,
bringing gifts to Achilleus which may soften his anger.
Come then, tell me. What does it seem best to your own mind

for me to do? My heart, my strength are terribly urgent
that I go there to the ships within the wide army of the Achaians.'
So he spoke, and his wife cried out aloud, and answered him:
'Ah me, where has that wisdom gone for which you were famous
in time before, among outlanders and those you rule over?
How can you wish to go alone to the ships of the Achaians
before the eyes of a man who has slaughtered in such numbers
such brave sons of yours? The heart in you is iron. For if
he has within his grasp and lays eyes upon you, that man
who is savage and not to be trusted will not take pity upon you
nor have respect for your rights. Let us sit apart in our palace
now, and weep for Hektor, and the way at the first strong Destiny
spun with his life line when he was born, when I gave birth to him,
that the dogs with their shifting feet should feed on him, far from his parents,
gone down before a stronger man; I wish I could set teeth
in the middle of his liver and eat it. That would be vengeance
for what he did to my son; for he slew him when he was no coward
but standing before the men of Troy and the deep-girdled women
of Troy, with no thought in his mind of flight or withdrawal.'
In turn the aged Priam, the godlike, answered her saying:
'Do not hold me back when I would be going, neither yourself be
a bird of bad omen in my palace. You will not persuade me.
If it had been some other who ordered me, one of the mortals,
one of those who are soothsayers, or priests, or diviners,
I might have called it a lie and we might rather have rejected it.
But now, for I myself heard the god and looked straight upon her,
I am going, and this word shall not be in vain. If it is my destiny
to die there by the ships of the bronze-armoured Achaians,
then I wish that. Achilleus can slay me at once, with my own son
caught in my arms, once I have my fill of mourning above him.'
He spoke, and lifted back the fair covering of his clothes-chest
and from inside took out twelve robes surpassingly lovely
and twelve mantles to be worn single, as many blankets,
as many great white cloaks, also the same number of tunics.
He weighed and carried out ten full talents of gold, and brought forth
two shining tripods, and four cauldrons, and brought out a goblet
of surpassing loveliness that the men of Thrace had given him
when he went to them with a message, but now the old man spared not
even this in his halls, so much was it his heart's desire
to ransom back his beloved son. But he drove off the Trojans
all from his cloister walks, scolding them with words of revilement:

'Get out, you failures, you disgraces. Have you not also
mourning of your own at home that you come to me with your sorrows?
Is it not enough that Zeus, son of Kronos, has given me sorrow
in losing the best of my sons? You also shall be aware of this
since you will be all the easier for the Achaians to slaughter
now he is dead. But, for myself, before my eyes look
upon this city as it is destroyed and its people are slaughtered,
my wish is to go sooner down to the house of the death god.'
He spoke, and went after the men with a stick, and they fled outside
before the fury of the old man. He was scolding his children
and cursing Helenos, and Paris, Agathon the brilliant,
Pammon and Antiphonos, Polites of the great war cry,
Deïphobos and Hippothoös and proud Dios. There were nine
sons to whom now the old man gave orders and spoke to them roughly:
'Make haste, wicked children, my disgraces. I wish all of you
had been killed beside the running ships in the place of Hektor.
Ah me, for my evil destiny. I have had the noblest
of sons in Troy, but I say not one of them is left to me,
Mestor like a god and Troilos whose delight was in horses,
and Hektor, who was a god among men, for he did not seem like
one who was child of a mortal man, but of a god. All these
Ares has killed, and all that are left me are the disgraces,
the liars and the dancers, champions of the chorus, the plunderers
of their own people in their land of lambs and kids. Well then,
will you not get my wagon ready and be quick about it,
and put all these things on it, so we can get on with our journey?'
So he spoke, and they in terror at the old man's scolding
hauled out the easily running wagon for mules, a fine thing
new-fabricated, and fastened the carrying basket upon it.
They took away from its peg the mule yoke made of boxwood
with its massive knob, well fitted with guiding rings, and brought forth
the yoke lashing (together with the yoke itself) of nine cubits
and snugged it well into place upon the smooth-polished wagonpole
at the foot of the beam, then slipped the ring over the peg, and lashed it
with three turns on either side to the knob, and afterwards
fastened it all in order and secured it under a hooked guard.
Then they carried out and piled into the smooth-polished mule wagon
all the unnumbered spoils to be given for the head of Hektor,
then yoked the powerful-footed mules who pulled in the harness

and whom the Mysians[7] gave once as glorious presents to Priam;
but for Priam they led under the yoke those horses the old man
himself had kept, and cared for them at his polished manger.
Now in the high house the yoking was done for the herald
and Priam, men both with close counsels in their minds. And now
came
Hekabe with sorrowful heart and stood close beside them
carrying in her right hand the kind, sweet wine in a golden
goblet, so that before they went they might pour a drink-offering.
She stood in front of the horses, called Priam by name and spoke to
him:
'Here, pour a libation to Zeus father, and pray you may come back
home again from those who hate you, since it seems the spirit
within you drives you upon the ships, though I would not have it.
Make your prayer then to the dark-misted, the son of Kronos
on Ida, who looks out on all the Troad, and ask him
for a bird of omen, a rapid messenger, which to his own mind
is dearest of all birds and his strength is the biggest, one seen
on the right, so that once your eyes have rested upon him
you can trust in him and go to the ships of the fast-mounted
Danaans.
But if Zeus of the wide brows will not grant you his own messenger,
then I, for one, would never urge you on nor advise you
to go to the Argive ships, for all your passion to do it.'
Then in answer to her again spoke Priam the godlike:
'My lady, I will not disregard this wherein you urge me.
It is well to lift hands to Zeus and ask if he will have mercy.'
The old man spoke, and told the housekeeper who attended them
to pour unstained water over his hands. She standing beside them
and serving them held the washing-bowl in her hands, and a pitcher.
He washed his hands and took the cup from his wife. He stood
up
in the middle of the enclosure, and prayed, and poured the wine out
looking up into the sky, and gave utterance and spoke, saying:
'Father Zeus, watching over us from Ida, most high, most honoured:
grant that I come to Achilleus for love and pity; but send me
a bird of omen, a rapid messenger which to your own mind
is dearest of all birds and his strength is biggest, one seen
on the right, so that once my eyes have rested upon him
I may trust in him and go to the ships of the fast-mounted Danaans.'
So he spoke in prayer, and Zeus of the counsels heard him.
Straightway he sent down the most lordly of birds, an eagle,

7. A people of central Asia Minor.

the dark one, the marauder, called as well the black eagle.
And as big as is the build of the door to a towering chamber
in the house of a rich man, strongly fitted with bars, of such size
was the spread of his wings on either side. He swept through the city
appearing on the right hand, and the people looking upon him
were uplifted and the hearts made glad in the breasts of all of them.
Now in urgent haste the old man mounted into his chariot
and drove out though the forecourt and the thundering close. Before him
the mules hauled the wagon on its four wheels, Idaios
the sober-minded driving them, and behind him the horses
came on as the old man laid the lash upon them and urged them
rapidly through the town, and all his kinsmen were following
much lamenting, as if he went to his death. When the two men
had gone down through the city, and out, and come to the flat land,
the rest of them turned back to go to Ilion, the sons
and the sons-in-law. And Zeus of the wide brows failed not to notice
the two as they showed in the plain. He saw the old man and took pity
upon him, and spoke directly to his beloved son, Hermes:
'Hermes, for to you beyond all other gods it is dearest
to be man's companion, and you listen to whom you will, go now
on your way, and so guide Priam inside the hollow ships
of the Achaians, that no man shall see him, none be aware of him,
of the other Danaans, till he has come to the son of Peleus.'
He spoke, nor disobeyed him the courier, Argeïphontes.
Immediately he bound upon his feet the fair sandals
golden and immortal, that carried him over the water
as over the dry land of the main abreast of the wind's blast.
He caught up the staff, with which he mazes the eyes of those mortals
whose eyes he would maze, or wakes again the sleepers. Holding
this in his hands, strong Argeïphontes winged his way onward
until he came suddenly to Troy and the Hellespont, and there
walked on, and there took the likeness of a young man, a noble,
with beard new grown, which is the most graceful time of young manhood.
Now when the two had driven past the great tomb of Ilos[8]
they stayed their mules and horses to water them in the river,
for by this time darkness had descended on the land; and the herald
made out Hermes, who was coming toward them at a short distance.
He lifted his voice and spoke aloud to Priam: 'Take thought,

8. The tomb of Priam's grandfather, a landmark on the Trojan plain.

son of Dardanos. Here is work for a mind that is careful.
I see a man; I think he will presently tear us to pieces.
Come then, let us run away with our horses, or if not, then
clasp his knees and entreat him to have mercy upon us.'
So he spoke, and the old man's mind was confused, he was badly
frightened, and the hairs stood up all over his gnarled body
and he stood staring, but the kindly god himself coming closer
took the old man's hand, and spoke to him and asked him a question:
'Where, my father, are you thus guiding your mules and horses
through the immortal night while other mortals are sleeping?
Have you no fear of the Achaians whose mind is fury,
who hate you, who are your enemies, and are near? For if one
of these were to see you, how you are conveying so many
treasures through the swift black night, what then could you think
of?
You are not young yourself, and he who attends you is aged
for beating off any man who might pick a quarrel with you.
But I will do you no harm myself, I will even keep off
another who would. You seem to me like a beloved father.'
In answer to him again spoke aged Priam the godlike:
'Yes, in truth, dear child, all this is much as you tell me;
yet still there is some god who has held his hand above me,
who sent such a wayfarer as you to meet me, an omen
of good, for such you are by your form, your admired beauty
and the wisdom in your mind. Your parents are fortunate in you.'
Then in turn answered him the courier Argeïphontes:
'Yes, old sir, all this that you said is fair and orderly.
But come, tell me this thing and recite it to me accurately.
Can it be you convey these treasures in all their numbers and beauty
to outland men, so that they can be still kept safe for you?
Or are all of you by now abandoning sacred Ilion
in fear, such a one was he who died, the best man among you,
your son; who was never wanting when you fought against the
Achaians.'
In answer to him again spoke aged Priam the godlike:
'But who are you, o best of men, and who are your parents?
Since you spoke of my ill-starred son's death, and with honour.'
Then in turn answered him the courier Argeïphontes:
'You try me out, aged sir. You ask me of glorious Hektor
whom many a time my eyes have seen in the fighting where men
win
glory, as also on that time when he drove back the Argives
on their ships and kept killing them with the stroke of the sharp
bronze,
and we stood by and wondered at him; for then Achilleus

would not let us fight by reason of his anger at Agamemnon.
For I am Achilleus' henchman, and the same strong-wrought vessel
brought us here; and I am a Myrmidon, and my father
is Polyktor; a man of substance, but aged, as you are.
He has six sons beside, and I am the seventh, and I shook
lots with the others, and it was my lot to come on this venture.
But now I have come to the plain away from the ships, for at day-break
the glancing-eyed Achaians will do battle around the city.
They chafe from sitting here too long, nor have the Achaians'
kings the strength to hold them back as they break for the fighting.'
In answer to him again spoke aged Priam the godlike:
'If then you are henchman to Peleïd Achilleus,
come, tell me the entire truth, and whether my son lies
still beside the ships, or whether by now he has been hewn
limb from limb and thrown before the dogs by Achilleus.'
Then in turn answered him the courier Argeïphontes:
'Aged sir, neither have any dogs eaten him, nor have
the birds, but he lies yet beside the ship of Achilleus
at the shelters, and as he was; now here is the twelfth dawn
he has lain there, nor does his flesh decay, nor do worms feed
on him, they who devour men who have fallen in battle.
It is true, Achilleus drags him at random around his beloved
companion's tomb, as dawn on dawn appears, yet he cannot
mutilate him; you yourself can see when you go there
how fresh with dew he lies, and the blood is all washed from him,
nor is there any corruption, and all the wounds have been closed up
where he was struck, since many drove the bronze in his body.
So it is that the blessed immortals care for your son, though
he is nothing but a dead man; because in their hearts they loved him.'
He spoke, and the old man was made joyful and answered him, saying:
'My child, surely it is good to give the immortals
their due gifts; because my own son, if ever I had one,
never forgot in his halls the gods who live on Olympos.
Therefore they remembered him even in death's stage. Come, then,
accept at my hands this beautiful drinking-cup, and give me
protection for my body, and with the gods' grace be my escort
until I make my way to the shelter of the son of Peleus.'
In turn answered him the courier Argeïphontes:
'You try me out, aged sir, for I am young, but you will not
persuade me, telling me to accept your gifts when Achilleus
does not know. I fear him at heart and have too much reverence

to rob him. Such a thing might be to my sorrow hereafter.
But I would be your escort and take good care of you, even
till I came to glorious Argos in a fast ship or following
on foot, and none would fight you because he despised your escort.'
The kind god spoke, and sprang up behind the horses and into
the chariot, and rapidly caught in his hands the lash and the guide reins.
and breathed great strength into the mules and horses. Now after
they had got to the fortifications about the ships, and the ditch, there
were sentries, who had just begun to make ready their dinner,
but about these the courier Argeïphontes drifted
sleep, on all, and quickly opened the gate, and shoved back
the door-bars, and brought in Priam and the glorious gifts on the wagon.
But when they had got to the shelter of Peleus' son: a towering
shelter the Myrmidons had built for their king, hewing
the timbers of pine, and they made a roof of thatch above it
shaggy with grass that they had gathered out of the meadows;
and around it made a great courtyard for their king, with hedgepoles
set close together; the gate was secured by a single door-piece
of pine, and three Achaians could ram it home in its socket
and three could pull back and open the huge door-bar; three other
Achaians, that is, but Achilleus all by himself could close it.
At this time Hermes, the kind god, opened the gate for the old man
and brought in the glorious gifts for Peleus' son, the swift-footed,
and dismounted to the ground from behind the horses, and spoke forth:
'Aged sir, I who came to you am a god immortal,
Hermes. My father sent me down to guide and go with you.
But now I am going back again, and I will not go in
before the eyes of Achilleus, for it would make others angry
for an immortal god so to face mortal men with favour.
But go you in yourself and clasp the knees of Peleion
and entreat him in the name of his father, the name of his mother
of the lovely hair, and his child, and so move the spirit within him.'
So Hermes spoke, and went away to the height of Olympos,
but Priam vaulted down to the ground from behind the horses
and left Idaios where he was, for he stayed behind, holding
in hand the horses and mules. The old man made straight for the dwelling
where Achilleus the beloved of Zeus was sitting. He found him
inside, and his companions were sitting apart, as two only
Automedon the hero and Alkimos, scion of Ares,
were busy beside him. He had just now got through with his dinner,

with eating and drinking, and the table still stood by. Tall Priam
came in unseen by the other men and stood close beside him
and caught the knees of Achilleus in his arms, and kissed the hands
that were dangerous and manslaughtering and had killed so many
of his sons. As when dense disaster closes on one who has murdered
a man in his own land, and he comes to the country of others,
to a man of substance, and wonder seizes on those who behold him,
so Achilleus wondered as he looked on Priam, a godlike
man, and the rest of them wondered also, and looked at each other.
But now Priam spoke to him in the words of a suppliant:
'Achilleus like the gods, remember your father, one who
is of years like mine, and on the door-sill of sorrowful old age.
And they who dwell nearby encompass him and afflict him,
nor is there any to defend him against the wrath, the destruction.
Yet surely he, when he hears of you and that you are still living,
is gladdened within his heart and all his days he is hopeful
that he will see his beloved son come home from the Troad.
But for me, my destiny was evil. I have had the noblest
of sons in Troy, but I say not one of them is left to me.
Fifty were my sons, when the sons of the Achaians came here.
Nineteen were born to me from the womb of a single mother,
and other women bore the rest in my palace; and of these
violent Ares broke the strength in the knees of most of them,
but one was left me who guarded my city and people, that one
you killed a few days since as he fought in defence of his country,
Hektor; for whose sake I come now to the ships of the Achaians
to win him back from you, and I bring you gifts beyond number.
Honour then the gods, Achilleus, and take pity upon me
remembering your father, yet I am still more pitiful;
I have gone through what no other mortal on earth has gone through;
I put my lips to the hands of the man who has killed my children.'
So he spoke, and stirred in the other a passion of grieving
for his own father. He took the old man's hand and pushed him
gently away, and the two remembered, as Priam sat huddled
at the feet of Achilleus and wept close for manslaughtering Hektor
and Achilleus wept now for his own father, now again
for Patroklos. The sound of their mourning moved in the house.
Then
when great Achilleus had taken full satisfaction in sorrow
and the passion for it had gone from his mind and body, thereafter
he rose from his chair, and took the old man by the hand, and set him

on his feet again, in pity for the grey head and the grey beard,
and spoke to him and addressed him in winged words: 'Ah, unlucky,
surely you have had much evil to endure in your spirit.
How could you dare to come alone to the ships of the Achaians
and before my eyes, when I am one who have killed in such numbers
such brave sons of yours? The heart in you is iron. Come, then,
and sit down upon this chair, and you and I will even let
our sorrows lie still in the heart for all our grieving. There is not
any advantage to be won from grim lamentation.
Such is the way the gods spun life for unfortunate mortals,
that we live in unhappiness, but the gods themselves have no sorrows.
There are two urns that stand on the door-sill of Zeus. They are unlike
for the gifts they bestow: an urn of evils, an urn of blessings.
If Zeus who delights in thunder mingles these and bestows them
on man, he shifts, and moves now in evil, again in good fortune,
But when Zeus bestows from the urn of sorrows, he makes a failure
of man, and the evil hunger drives him over the shining
earth, and he wanders respected neither of gods nor mortals.
Such were the shining gifts given by the gods to Peleus
from his birth, who outshone all men beside for his riches
and pride of possession, and was lord over the Myrmidons. Thereto
the gods bestowed an immortal wife on him, who was mortal.
But even on him the god piled evil also. There was not
any generation of strong sons born to him in his great house
but a single all-untimely child he had, and I give him
no care as he grows old, since far from the land of my fathers
I sit here in Troy, and bring nothing but sorrow to you and your children.
And you, old sir, we are told you prospered once; for as much as
Lesbos, Makar's hold,[9] confines to the north above it
and Phrygia from the north confines, and enormous Hellespont,
of these, old sir, you were lord once in your wealth and your children.
But now the Uranian gods brought us, an affliction upon you,
forever there is fighting about your city, and men killed.
But bear up, nor mourn endlessly in your heart, for there is not
anything to be gained from grief for your son; you will never
bring him back; sooner you must go through yet another sorrow.'
In answer to him again spoke aged Priam the godlike:
'Do not, beloved of Zeus, make me sit on a chair while Hektor

9. Makar was the legendary first king of Lesbos, a large and fertile island off the coast of Asia Minor.

lies yet forlorn among the shelters; rather with all speed
give him back, so my eyes may behold him, and accept the ransom
we bring you, which is great. You may have joy of it, and go back
to the land of your own fathers, since once you have permitted me
to go on living myself and continue to look on the sunlight.'
Then looking darkly at him spoke swift-footed Achilleus:
'No longer stir me up, old sir. I myself am minded
to give Hektor back to you. A messenger came to me from Zeus,
my mother, she who bore me, the daughter of the sea's ancient.
I know you, Priam, in my heart, and it does not escape me
that some god led you to the running ships of the Achaians.
For no mortal would dare come to our encampment, not even
one strong in youth. He could not get by the pickets, he could not
lightly unbar the bolt that secures our gateway. Therefore
you must not further make my spirit move in my sorrows,
for fear, old sir, I might not let you alone in my shelter,
suppliant as you are; and be guilty before the god's orders.'
He spoke, and the old man was frightened and did as he told him.
The son of Peleus bounded to the door of the house like a lion,
nor went alone, but the two henchmen followed attending,
the hero Automedon and Alkimos, those whom Achilleus
honoured beyond all companions after Patroklos dead. These two
now set free from under the yoke the mules and the horses,
and led inside the herald, the old king's crier, and gave him
a chair to sit in, then from the smooth-polished mule wagon
lifted out the innumerable spoils for the head of Hektor,
but left inside it two great cloaks and a finespun tunic
to shroud the corpse in when they carried him home. Then Achilleus
called out to his serving-maids to wash the body and anoint it
all over; but take it first aside, since otherwise Priam
might see his son and in the heart's sorrow not hold in his anger
at the sight, and the deep heart in Achilleus be shaken to anger;
that he might not kill Priam and be guilty before the god's orders.
Then when the serving-maids had washed the corpse and anointed it
with olive oil, they threw a fair great cloak and a tunic
about him, and Achilleus himself lifted him and laid him
on a litter, and his friends helped him lift it to the smooth-polished
mule wagon. He groaned then, and called by name on his beloved companion:
'Be not angry with me, Patroklos, if you discover,
though you be in the house of Hades, that I give back great Hektor

to his loved father, for the ransom he gave me was not unworthy.
I will give you your share of the spoils, as much as is fitting.'
So spoke great Achilleus and went back into the shelter
and sat down on the elaborate couch from which he had risen,
against the inward wall, and now spoke his word to Priam:
'Your son is given back to you, aged sir, as you asked it.
He lies on a bier. When dawn shows you yourself shall see him
as you take him away. Now you and I must remember our supper.
For even Niobe,[1] she of the lovely tresses, remembered
to eat, whose twelve children were destroyed in her palace,
six daughters, and six sons in the pride of their youth, whom Apollo
killed with arrows from his silver bow, being angered
with Niobe, and shaft-showering Artemis killed the daughters;
because Niobe likened herself to Leto[2] of the fair colouring
and said Leto had borne only two, she herself had borne many;
but the two, though they were only two, destroyed all those others.
Nine days long they lay in their blood, nor was there anyone
to bury them, for the son of Kronos made stones out of
the people; but on the tenth day the Uranian gods buried them.
But she remembered to eat when she was worn out with weeping.
And now somewhere among the rocks, in the lonely mountains,
in Sipylos,[3] where they say is the resting place of the goddesses
who are nymphs, and dance beside the waters of Acheloios,
there, stone still,[4] she broods on the sorrows that the gods gave her.
Come then, we also, aged magnificent sir, must remember
to eat, and afterwards you may take your beloved son back
to Ilion, and mourn for him; and he will be much lamented.'
So spoke fleet Achilleus and sprang to his feet and slaughtered
a gleaming sheep, and his friends skinned it and butchered it fairly,
and cut up the meat expertly into small pieces, and spitted them,
and roasted all carefully and took off the pieces.
Automedon took the bread and set it out on the table
in fair baskets, while Achilleus served the meats. And thereon
they put their hands to the good things that lay ready before them.
But when they had put aside their desire for eating and drinking,
Priam, son of Dardanos, gazed upon Achilleus, wondering
at his size and beauty, for he seemed like an outright vision
of gods. Achilleus in turn gazed on Dardanian Priam
and wondered, as he saw his brave looks and listened to him talking.
But when they had taken their fill of gazing one on the other,
first of the two to speak was the aged man, Priam the godlike:

1. Wife of Amphion, one of the two founders of the great Greek city of Thebes. 2. Mother of Apollo and Artemis. 3. A mountain in Asia Minor. The legend is thought to have had its origin in a rock face which resembled a weeping woman, like Niobe, who wept inconsolably for the loss of her children. 4. She was changed into a rock. *Acheloios:* The river near Mount Sipylos in Asia Minor.

'Give me, beloved of Zeus, a place to sleep presently, so that
we may even go to bed and take the pleasure of sweet sleep.
For my eyes have not closed underneath my lids since that time
when my son lost his life beneath your hands, but always
I have been grieving and brooding over my numberless sorrows
and wallowed in the muck about my courtyard's enclosure.
Now I have tasted food again and have let the gleaming
wine go down my throat. Before, I had tasted nothing.'
He spoke, and Achilleus ordered his serving-maids and companions
to make a bed in the porch's shelter and to lay upon it
fine underbedding of purple, and spread blankets above it
and fleecy robes to be an over-all covering. The maid-servants
went forth from the main house, and in their hands held torches,
and set to work, and presently had two beds made. Achilleus
of the swift feet now looked at Priam and said, sarcastic:
'Sleep outside, aged sir and good friend, for fear some Achaian
might come in here on a matter of counsel, since they keep coming
and sitting by me and making plans; as they are supposed to.
But if one of these come through the fleeting black night should notice you,
he would go straight and tell Agamemnon, shepherd of the people,
and there would be delay in the ransoming of the body.
But come, tell me this and count off for me exactly
how many days you intend for the burial of great Hektor.
Tell me, so I myself shall stay still and hold back the people.'
In answer to him again spoke aged Priam the godlike:
'If you are willing that we accomplish a complete funeral
for great Hektor, this, Achilleus, is what you could do and give
me pleasure. For you know surely how we are penned in our city,
and wood is far to bring in from the hills, and the Trojans are frightened
badly. Nine days we would keep him in our palace and mourn him,
and bury him on the tenth day, and the people feast by him,
and on the eleventh day we would make the grave-barrow for him,
and on the twelfth day fight again; if so we must do.'
Then in turn swift-footed brilliant Achilleus answered him:
'Then all this, aged Priam, shall be done as you ask it.
I will hold off our attack for as much time as you bid me.'
So he spoke, and took the aged king by the right hand
at the wrist, so that his heart might have no fear. Then these two,
Priam and the herald who were both men of close counsel,
slept in the place outside the house, in the porch's shelter;
but Achilleus slept in the inward corner of the strong-built shelter,

and at his side lay Briseis of the fair colouring.
Now the rest of the gods and men who were lords of chariots
slept nightlong, with the easy bondage of slumber upon them,
only sleep had not caught Hermes the kind god, who pondered
now in his heart the problem of how to escort King Priam
from the ships and not be seen by the devoted gate-wardens.
He stood above his head and spoke a word to him, saying:
'Aged sir, you can have no thought of evil from the way
you sleep still among your enemies now Achilleus has left you
unharmed. You have ransomed now your dear son and given much
for him.
But the sons you left behind would give three times as much ransom
for you, who are alive, were Atreus' son Agamemnon
to recognize you, and all the other Achaians learn of you.'
He spoke, and the old man was afraid, and wakened his herald,
and lightly Hermes harnessed for them the mules and the horses
and himself drove them through the encampment. And no man
knew of them.
But when they came to the crossing-place of the fair-running river,
of whirling Xanthos, a stream whose father was Zeus the immortal,
there Hermes left them and went away to the height of Olympos,
and dawn, she of the yellow robe, scattered over all earth,
and they drove their horses on to the city with lamentation
and clamour, while the mules drew the body. Nor was any other
aware of them at the first, no man, no fair-girdled woman,
only Kassandra, a girl like Aphrodite the golden,
who had gone up to the height of the Pergamos. She saw
her dear father standing in the chariot, his herald and crier
with him. She saw Hektor drawn by the mules on a litter.
She cried out then in sorrow and spoke to the entire city:
'Come, men of Troy and Trojan women; look upon Hektor
if ever before you were joyful when you saw him come back liv-
ing
from battle; for he was a great joy to his city, and all his people.'
She spoke, and there was no man left there in all the city
nor woman, but all were held in sorrow passing endurance.
They met Priam beside the gates as he brought the dead in.
First among them were Hektor's wife and his honoured mother
who tore their hair, and ran up beside the smooth-rolling wagon,
and touched his head. And the multitude, wailing, stood there about
them.
And now and there in front of the gates they would have lamented
all day till the sun went down and let fall their tears for Hektor,
except that the old man spoke from the chariot to his people:
'Give me way to get through with my mules; then afterwards

you may sate yourselves with mourning, when I have him inside the palace.'
So he spoke, and they stood apart and made way for the wagon.
And when they had brought him inside the renowned house, they laid him
then on a carved bed, and seated beside him the singers
who were to lead the melody in the dirge, and the singers
chanted the song of sorrow, and the women were mourning beside them.
Andromache of the white arms led the lamentation
of the women, and held in her arms the head of manslaughtering Hektor:
'My husband, you were lost young from life, and have left me
a widow in your house, and the boy is only a baby
who was born to you and me, the unhappy. I think he will never
come of age, for before then head to heel this city
will be sacked, for you, its defender, are gone, you who guarded
the city, and the grave wives, and the innocent children,
wives who before long must go away in the hollow ships,
and among them I shall also go, and you, my child, follow
where I go, and there do much hard work that is unworthy
of you, drudgery for a hard master; or else some Achaian
will take you by hand and hurl you from the tower[5] into horrible
death, in anger because Hektor once killed his brother,
or his father, or his son; there were so many Achaians
whose teeth bit the vast earth, beaten down by the hands of Hektor.
Your father was no merciful man in the horror of battle.
Therefore your people are grieving for you all through their city,
Hektor, and you left for your parents mourning and sorrow
beyond words, but for me passing all others is left the bitterness
and the pain, for you did not die in bed, and stretch your arms to me,
nor tell me some last intimate word that I could remember
always, all the nights and days of my weeping for you.'
So she spoke in tears, and the women were mourning about her.
Now Hekabe led out the thronging chant of their sorrow:
'Hektor, of all my sons the dearest by far to my spirit;
while you still lived for me you were dear to the gods, and even
in the stage of death they cared about you still. There were others
of my sons whom at times swift-footed Achilleus captured,
and he would sell them as slaves far across the unresting salt water
into Samos, and Imbros, and Lemnos in the gloom of the mists.

5. After the fall of Troy Astyanax was, in fact, hurled from the walls.

You,
when he had taken your life with the thin edge of the bronze sword,
he dragged again and again around his beloved companion's
tomb, Patroklos', whom you killed, but even so did not
bring him back to life. Now you lie in the palace, handsome
and fresh with dew, in the likeness of one whom he of the silver
bow, Apollo, has attacked and killed with his gentle arrows.'
So she spoke, in tears, and wakened the endless mourning.
Third and last Helen led the song of sorrow among them:
'Hektor, of all my lord's brothers dearest by far to my spirit:
my husband is Alexandros, like an immortal, who brought me
here to Troy; and I should have died before I came with him;
and here now is the twentieth year upon me since I came
from the place where I was, forsaking the land of my fathers. In this
time
I have never heard a harsh saying from you, nor an insult.
No, but when another, one of my lord's brothers or sisters, a fair-
robed
wife of some brother, would say a harsh word to me in the palace,
or my lord's mother—but his father was gentle always, a father
indeed—then you would speak and put them off and restrain them
by your own gentleness of heart and your gentle words. Therefore
I mourn for you in sorrow of heart and mourn myself also
and my ill luck. There was no other in all the wide Troad
who was kind to me, and my friend; all others shrank when they saw
me.'
So she spoke in tears, and the vast populace grieved with her.
Now Priam the aged king spoke forth his word to his people:
'Now, men of Troy, bring timber into the city, and let not
your hearts fear a close ambush of the Argives. Achilleus
promised me, as he sent me on my way from the black ships,
that none should do us injury until the twelfth dawn comes.'
He spoke, and they harnessed to the wagons their mules and their
oxen
and presently were gathered in front of the city. Nine days
they spent bringing in an endless supply of timber. But when
the tenth dawn had shown forth with her light upon mortals,
they carried out bold Hektor, weeping, and set the body
aloft a towering pyre for burning. And set fire to it.
But when the young dawn showed again with her rosy fingers,
the people gathered around the pyre of illustrious Hektor.
But when all were gathered to one place and assembled together,
first with gleaming wine they put out the pyre that was burning,
all where the fury of the fire still was in force, and thereafter

the brothers and companions of Hektor gathered the white bones
up, mourning, as the tears swelled and ran down their cheeks. Then
they laid what they had gathered up in a golden casket
and wrapped this about with soft robes of purple, and presently
put it away in the hollow of the grave, and over it
piled huge stones laid close together. Lightly and quickly
they piled up the grave-barrow, and on all sides were set watchmen
for fear the strong-greaved Achaians might too soon set upon them.
They piled up the grave-barrow and went away, and thereafter
assembled in a fair gathering and held a glorious
feast within the house of Priam, king under God's hand.

Such was their burial of Hektor, breaker of horses.

The Odyssey[1]

[Ten years after the fall of Troy, Odysseus, king of Ithaca, on the west coast of Greece, has still not returned home to his wife Penélopê and his son Telémakhos. He is stranded on Ogýgia, the far-off island of the nymph Kalypso, where he was cast up, sole survivor of his fleet, seven years before, after many adventures in unknown seas. But in the tenth year the gods contrive his home-coming. Kalypso releases him, and on a raft he makes his way toward his home, only to be cast up, naked and battered, on the shore of Phaiákia, home of rich merchant princes.]

Book VI

THE PRINCESS AT THE RIVER

Far gone in weariness, in oblivion,
the noble and enduring man slept on;
but Athena in the night went down the land
of the Phaiákians, entering their city.
In days gone by, these men held Hypereia,[2]
a country of wide dancing grounds, but near them
were overbearing Kyklopês, whose power
could not be turned from pillage. So the Phaiákians
migrated thence únder Nausíthoös
to settle a New World across the sea,
Skhería Island. That first captain walled
their promontory, built their homes and shrines,

1. Translated by Robert Fitzgerald. 2. An imaginary place, probably, and the one-eyed Kyklopes are certainly mythical but the migration under pressure and the founding of the new city (fortification, homes, temples, division of the land) suggests the atmosphere of the great age of Greek colonization (eighth century B.C.).

and parcelled out the black land for the plow.
But he had gone down long ago to Death.
Alkínoös ruled, and Heaven gave him wisdom,
so on this night the goddess, grey-eyed Athena,
entered the palace of Alkínoös
to make sure of Odysseus' voyage home.
She took her way to a painted bedchamber
where a young girl lay fast asleep—so fine
in mould and feature that she seemed a goddess—
the daughter of Alkínoös, Nausikaa.
On either side, as Graces[3] might have slept,
her maids were sleeping. The bright doors were shut,
but like a sudden stir of wind, Athena
moved to the bedside of the girl, and grew
visible as the shipman Dymas' daughter,
a girl the princess' age, and her dear friend.
In this form grey-eyed Athena said to her:

"How so remiss, and yet thy mother's daughter?
leaving thy clothes uncared for, Nausikaa,
when soon thou must have store of marriage linen,
and put thy minstrelsy in wedding dress!
Beauty, in these, will make the folk admire,
and bring thy father and gentle mother joy.
Let us go washing in the shine of morning!
Beside thee will I drub, so wedding chests
will brim by evening. Maidenhood must end!
Have not the noblest born Phaiákians
paid court to thee, whose birth none can excel?
Go beg thy sovereign father, even at dawn,
to have the mule cart and the mules brought round
to take thy body-linen, gowns and mantles.
Thou shouldst ride, for it becomes thee more,
the washing pools are found so far from home."

On this word she departed, grey-eyed Athena,
to where the gods have their eternal dwelling—
as men say—in the fastness of Olympos.
Never a tremor of wind, or a splash of rain,
no errant snowflake comes to stain that heaven,
so calm, so vaporless, the world of light.
Here, where the gay gods live their days of pleasure,
the grey-eyed one withdrew, leaving the princess.

3. Goddesses (usually three) personifying charm and beauty.

And now Dawn took her own fair throne, awaking
the girl in the sweet gown, still charmed by dream.
Down through the rooms she went to tell her parents,
whom she found still at home: her mother seated
near the great hearth among her maids—and twirling
out of her distaff yarn dyed like the sea—;
her father at the door, bound for a council
of princes on petition of the gentry.
She went up close to him and softly said:
"My dear Papà, could you not send the mule cart
around for me—the gig with pretty wheels?
I must take all our things and get them washed
at the river pools; our linen is all soiled.
And you should wear fresh clothing, going to council
with counselors and first men of the realm.
Remember your five sons at home: though two
are married, we have still three bachelor sprigs;
they will have none but laundered clothes each time
they go to the dancing. See what I must think of!"

She had no word to say of her own wedding,
though her keen father saw her blush. Said he:

"No mules would I deny you, child, nor anything.
Go along, now; the grooms will bring your gig
with pretty wheels and the cargo box upon it."

He spoke to the stableman, who soon brought round
the cart, low-wheeled and nimble;
harnessed the mules, and backed them in the traces.
Meanwhile the girl fetched all her soiled apparel
to bundle in the polished wagon box.
Her mother, for their luncheon, packed a hamper
with picnic fare, and filled a skin of wine,
and, when the princess had been handed up,
gave her a golden bottle of olive oil
for softening girls' bodies, after bathing.
Nausikaa took the reins and raised her whip,
lashing the mules. What jingling! What a clatter!
But off they went in a ground-covering trot,
with princess, maids, and laundry drawn behind.
By the lower river where the wagon came
were washing pools, with water all year flowing
in limpid spillways that no grime withstood.
The girls unhitched the mules, and sent them down

along the eddying stream to crop sweet grass.
Then sliding out the cart's tail board, they took
armloads of clothing to the dusky water,
and trod them in the pits, making a race of it.
All being drubbed, all blemish rinsed away,
they spread them, piece by piece, along the beach
whose pebbles had been laundered by the sea;
then took a dip themselves, and, all anointed
with golden oil, ate lunch beside the river
while the bright burning sun dried out their linen.
Princess and maids delighted in that feast;
then, putting off their veils,
they ran and passed a ball to a rhythmic beat,
Nausikaa flashing first with her white arms.

So Artemis goes flying after her arrows flown
down some tremendous valley-side—
Taÿgetos, Erymanthos—[4]
chasing the mountain goats or ghosting deer,
with nymphs of the wild places flanking her;
and Lêto's[5] heart delights to see them running,
for, taller by a head than nymphs can be,
the goddess shows more stately, all being beautiful.
So one could tell the princess from the maids.

Soon it was time, she knew, for riding homeward—
mules to be harnessed, linen folded smooth—
but the grey-eyed goddess Athena made her tarry,
so that Odysseus might behold her beauty
and win her guidance to the town.
It happened
when the king's daughter threw her ball off line
and missed, and put it in the whirling stream,—
at which they all gave such a shout, Odysseus
awoke and sat up, saying to himself:

"Now, by my life, mankind again! But who?
Savages, are they, strangers to courtesy?
Or gentle folk, who know and fear the gods?
That was a lusty cry of tall young girls—
most like the cry of nymphs, who haunt the peaks,
and springs of brooks, and inland grassy places.

4. Taÿgetos is the mountain range west of Sparta; *Erymanthos*, a mountain in Arcadia—both places rich in game. 5. Mother of Artemis and Apollo.

Or am I amid people of human speech?
Up again, man; and let me see for myself."
He pushed aside the bushes, breaking off
with his great hand a single branch of olive,
whose leaves might shield him in his nakedness;
so came out rustling, like a mountain lion,
rain-drenched, wind-buffeted, but in his might at ease,
with burning eyes—who prowls among the herds
or flocks, or after game, his hungry belly
taking him near stout homesteads for his prey.
Odysseus had this look, in his rough skin
advancing on the girls with pretty braids;
and he was driven on by hunger, too.
Streaked with brine, and swollen, he terrified them,
so that they fled, this way and that. Only
Alkínoös' daughter stood her ground, being given
a bold heart by Athena, and steady knees.

She faced him, waiting. And Odysseus came,
debating inwardly what he should do:
embrace this beauty's knees in supplication?
or stand apart, and using honeyed speech,
inquire the way to town, and beg some clothing?
In his swift reckoning, he thought it best
to trust in words to please her—and keep away;
he might anger the girl, touching her knees.
So he began, and let the soft words fall:

"Mistress: please: are you divine, or mortal?
If one of those who dwell in the wide heaven,
you are most near to Artemis, I should say—
great Zeus's daughter—in your grace and presence.
If you are one of earth's inhabitants,
how blest your father, and your gentle mother,
blest all your kin. I know what happiness
must send the warm tears to their eyes, each time
they see their wondrous child go to the dancing!
But one man's destiny is more than blest—
he who prevails, and takes you as his bride.
Never have I laid eyes on equal beauty
in man or woman. I am hushed indeed.
So fair, one time, I thought a young palm tree
at Delos[6] near the altar of Apollo—

6. A small island in the middle of the Aegean Sea, the birthplace of Apollo and a center for his worship.

I had troops under me when I was there
on the sea route that later brought me grief—
but that slim palm tree filled my heart with wonder:
never came shoot from earth so beautiful.
So now, my lady, I stand in awe so great
I cannot take your knees. And yet my case is desperate:
twenty days, yesterday, in the winedark sea,
on the ever-lunging swell, under gale winds,
getting away from the Island of Ogýgia.
And now the terror of Storm has left me stranded
upon this shore—with more blows yet to suffer,
I must believe, before the gods relent.
Mistress, do me a kindness!
After much weary toil, I come to you,
and you are the first soul I have seen—I know
no others here. Direct me to the town,
give me a rag that I can throw around me,
some cloth or wrapping that you brought along.
And may the gods accomplish your desire:
a home, a husband, and harmonious
converse with him—the best thing in the world
being a strong house held in serenity
where man and wife agree. Woe to their enemies,
joy to their friends! But all this they know best."

Then she of the white arms, Nausikaa, replied:

"Stranger, there is no quirk or evil in you
that I can see. You know Zeus metes out fortune
to good and bad men as it pleases him.
Hardship he sent to you, and you must bear it.
But now that you have taken refuge here
you shall not lack for clothing, or any other
comfort due to a poor man in distress.
The town lies this way, and the men are called
Phaiákians, who own the land and city.
I am daughter to the Prince Alkínoös,
by whom the power of our people stands."
Turning, she called out to her maids-in-waiting:

"Stay with me! Does the sight of a man scare you?
Or do you take this one for an enemy?
Why, there's no fool so brash, and never will be,
as to bring war or pillage to this coast,
for we are dear to the immortal gods,

living here, in the sea that rolls forever,
distant from other lands and other men.
No: this man is a castaway, poor fellow;
we must take care of him. Strangers and beggars
come from Zeus: a small gift, then, is friendly.
Give our new guest some food and drink, and take him
into the river, out of the wind, to bathe."

They stood up now, and called to one another
to go on back. Quite soon they led Odysseus
under the river bank, as they were bidden;
and there laid out a tunic, and a cloak,
and gave him olive oil in the golden flask.
"Here," they said, "go bathe in the flowing water."
But heard now from that kingly man, Odysseus:

"Maids," he said, "keep away a little; let me
wash the brine from my own back, and rub on
plenty of oil. It is long since my anointing.
I take no bath, however, where you can see me—
naked before young girls with pretty braids."

They left him, then, and went to tell the princess.
And now Odysseus, dousing in the river,
scrubbed the coat of brine from back and shoulders
and rinsed the clot of sea-spume from his hair;
got himself all rubbed down, from head to foot,
then he put on the clothes the princess gave him.
Athena lent a hand, making him seem
taller, and massive too, with crisping hair
in curls like petals of wild hyacinth,
but all red-golden. Think of gold infused
on silver by a craftsman, whose fine art
Hephaistos taught him, or Athena: one
whose work moves to delight: just so she lavished
beauty over Odysseus' head and shoulders.
Then he went down to sit on the sea beach
in his new splendor. There the girl regarded him,
and after a time she said to the maids beside her:

"My gentlewoman, I have a thing to tell you.
The Olympian gods cannot be all averse
to this man's coming here among our islanders.
Uncouth he seemed, I thought so, too, before;
but now he looks like one of heaven's people.

I wish my husband could be fine as he
and glad to stay forever on Skheria!

But have you given refreshment to our guest?"

At this the maids, all gravely listening, hastened
to set out bread and wine before Odysseus,
and ah! how ravenously that patient man
took food and drink, his long fast at an end.

The princess Nausikaa now turned aside
to fold her linens; in the pretty cart
she stowed them, put the mule team under harness,
mounted the driver's seat, and then looked down
to say with cheerful prompting to Odysseus:

"Up with you now, friend; back to town we go;
and I shall send you in before my father
who is wondrous wise; there in our house with him
you'll meet the noblest of the Phaiákians.
You have good sense, I think; here's how to do it:
while we go through the countryside and farmland
stay with my maids, behind the wagon, walking
briskly enough to follow where I lead.
But near the town—well, there's a wall with towers
around the Isle, and beautiful ship basins
right and left of the causeway of approach;
seagoing craft are beached beside the road
each on its launching ways. The agora,[7]
with fieldstone benches bedded in the earth,
lies either side Poseidon's shrine—for there
men are at work on pitch-black hulls and rigging,
cables and sails, and tapering of oars.
The archer's craft is not for the Phaiákians,
but ship designing, modes of oaring cutters
in which they love to cross the foaming sea.
From these fellows I will have no salty talk,
no gossip later. Plenty are insolent.
And some seadog might say, after we passed:
'Who is this handsome stranger trailing Nausikaa?
Where did she find him? Will he be her husband?
Or is she being hospitable to some rover
come off his ship from lands across the sea—

7. Place of assembly.

there being no lands nearer. A god, maybe?
a god from heaven, the answer to her prayer,
descending now—to make her his forever?
Better, if she's roamed and found a husband
somewhere else: none of our own will suit her,
though many come to court her, and those the best.'
This is the way they might make light of me.
And I myself should hold it shame
for any girl to flout her own dear parents,
taking up with a man, before her marriage.

Note well, now, what I say, friend, and your chances
are excellent for safe conduct from my father.
You'll find black poplars in a roadside park
around a meadow and fountain—all Athena's—
this within earshot of the city wall.
Go in there and sit down, giving us time
to pass through town and reach my father's house.
And when you can imagine we're at home,
then take the road into the city, asking
directions to the palace of Alkínoös.
You'll find it easily: any small boy
can take you there; no family has a mansion
half so grand as he does, being king.
As soon as you are safe inside, cross over
and go straight through into the mégaron[1]
to find my mother. She'll be there in firelight
before a column, with her maids in shadow,
spinning a wool dyed richly as the sea.
My father's great chair faces the fire, too;
there like a god he sits and takes his wine.
Go past him; cast yourself before my mother,
embrace her knees—and you may wake up soon
at home rejoicing, though your home be far.
On Mother's feeling much depends; if she
looks on you kindly, you shall see your friends
under your own roof in your father's country."

At this she raised her glistening whip, lashing
the team into a run; they left the river
cantering beautifully, then trotted smartly.
But then she reined them in, and spared the whip,
so that her maids could follow with Odysseus.

1. The great hall of the palace.

The sun was going down when they went by
Athena's grove. Here, then, Odysseus rested,
and lifted up his prayer to Zeus's daughter:

"Hear me, unwearied child of royal Zeus!
O listen to me now—thou so aloof
while the Earthshaker wrecked and battered me.
May I find love and mercy among these people."

He prayed for that, and Pallas Athena heard him—
although in deference to her father's brother
she would not show her true form to Odysseus,
at whom Poseidon smoldered on
until the kingly man came home to his own shore.

[Odysseus follows Nausikaa's instructions and is received as a guest in the palace by her mother Arêtê and her father Alkínoös, who promises to help him return home.]

Book VIII

THE SONGS OF THE HARPER

Under the opening fingers of the dawn
Alkínoös, the sacred prince, arose,
and then arose Odysseus, raider of cities.
As the king willed, they went down by the shipways
to the assembly ground of the Phaiákians.
Side by side the two men took their ease there
on smooth stone benches. Meanwhile Pallas Athena
roamed through the byways of the town, contriving
Odysseus' voyage home—in voice and feature
the crier of the king Alkínoös
who stopped and passed the word to every man:

"Phaiákian lords and counselors, this way!
Come to assembly: learn about the stranger,
the new guest at the palace of Alkínoös—
a man the sea drove, but a comely man;
the gods' own light is on him."

She aroused them,
and soon the assembly ground and seats were filled
with curious men, a throng who peered and saw
the master mind of war, Laërtês' son.

Athena now poured out her grace upon him,
head and shoulders, height and mass—a splendor
awesome to the eyes of the Phaiákians;
she put him in a fettle to win the day,
mastering every trial they set to test him.
When all the crowd sat marshalled, quieted,
Alkínoös addressed the full assembly:

"Hear me, lords and captains of the Phaiákians!
Hear what my heart would have me say!
Our guest and new friend—nameless to me still—
comes to my house after long wandering
in Dawn lands, or among the Sunset races.
Now he appeals to me for conveyance home.
As in the past, therefore, let us provide
passage, and quickly, for no guest of mine
languishes here for lack of it. Look to it:
get a black ship afloat on the noble sea,
and pick our fastest sailer; draft a crew
of two and fifty from our younger townsmen—
men who have made their names at sea. Loop oars
well to your tholepins, lads, then leave the ship,
come to our house, fall to, and take your supper:
we'll furnish out a feast for every crewman.
These are your orders. As for my older peers
and princes of the realm, let them foregather
in festival for our friend in my great hall;
and let no man refuse. Call in our minstrel,
Demódokos, whom God made lord of song,
heart-easing, sing upon what theme he will."

He turned, led the procession, and those princes
followed, while his herald sought the minstrel.
Young oarsmen from the assembly chose a crew
of two and fifty, as the king commanded,
and these filed off along the waterside
to where the ship lay, poised above open water.
They hauled the black hull down to ride the sea,
rigging a mast and spar in the black ship,
with oars at trail from corded rawhide, all
seamanly; then tried the white sail, hoisting,
and moored her off the beach. Then going ashore
the crew went up to the great house of Alkínoös.
Here the enclosures, entrance ways, and rooms
were filled with men, young men and old, for whom
Alkínoös had put twelve sheep to sacrifice,

eight tuskers and a pair of shambling oxen.
These, now, they flayed and dressed to make their banquet.
The crier soon came, leading that man of song
whom the Muse cherished; by her gift he knew
the good of life, and evil—
for she who lent him sweetness made him blind.
Pontónoös fixed a studded chair for him
hard by a pillar amid the banqueters,
hanging the taut harp from a peg above him,
and guided up his hands upon the strings;
placed a bread basket at his side, and poured
wine in a cup, that he might drink his fill.
Now each man's hand went out upon the banquet.

In time, when hunger and thirst were turned away,
the Muse brought to the minstrel's mind a song
of heroes whose great fame rang under heaven:
the clash between Odysseus and Akhilleus,
how one time they contended at the godfeast
raging, and the marshal, Agamémnon,
felt inward joy over his captains' quarrel;
for such had been foretold him by Apollo
at Pytho[7]—hallowed height—when the Akhaian
crossed that portal of rock to ask a sign—
in the old days when grim war lay ahead
for Trojans and Danaans, by God's will.
So ran the tale the minstrel sang. Odysseus
with massive hand drew his rich mantle down
over his brow, cloaking his face with it,
to make the Phaiákians miss the secret tears
that started to his eyes. How skillfully
he dried them when the song came to a pause!
threw back his mantle, spilt his gout of wine!
But soon the minstrel plucked his note once more
to please the Phaiákian lords, who loved the song;
then in his cloak Odysseus wept again.
His tears flowed in the mantle unperceived:
only Alkínoös, at his elbow, saw them,
and caught the low groan in the man's breathing.
At once he spoke to all the seafolk round him:

"Hear me, lords and captains of the Phaiákians.
Our meat is shared, our hearts are full of pleasure
from the clear harp tone that accords with feasting;

7. The oracular shrine of Apollo at Delphi, high up on the mountain side.

now for the field and track; we shall have trials
in the pentathlon. Let our guest go home
and tell his friends what champions we are
at boxing, wrestling, broadjump and foot racing."

On this he led the way and all went after.
The crier unslung and pegged the shining harp
and, taking Demódokos's hand,
led him along with all the rest—Phaiákian
peers, gay amateurs of the great games.
They gained the common, where a crowd was forming,
and many a young athlete now came forward
with seaside names like Tipmast, Tiderace, Sparwood,
Hullman, Sternman, Beacher and Pullerman,
Bluewater, Shearwater, Runningwake, Boardalee,
Seabelt, son of Grandfleet Shipwrightson;
Seareach stepped up, son of the Launching Master,
rugged as Arês,[8] bane of men; his build
excelled all but the Prince Laódamas;
and Laódamas made entry with his brothers,
Halios and Klytóneus, sons of the king.
The runners, first, must have their quarter mile.
All lined up tense; then Go! and down the track
they raised the dust in a flying bunch, strung out
longer and longer behind Prince Klytóneus.
By just so far as a mule team, breaking ground,
will distance oxen, he left all behind
and came up to the crowd, an easy winner.
Then they made room for wrestling—grinding bouts
that Seareach won, pinning the strongest men;
then the broadjump; first place went to Seabelt;
Sparwood gave the discus the mightiest fling,
and Prince Laódamas outboxed them all.
Now it was he, the son of Alkínoös,
who said when they had run through these diversions:

"Look here, friends, we ought to ask the stranger
if he competes in something. He's no cripple;
look at his leg muscles and his forearms.
Neck like a bollard; strong as a bull, he seems;
and not old, though he may have gone stale under
the rough times he had. Nothing like the sea
for wearing out the toughest man alive."

8. The Greek war-god.

Then Seareach took him up at once, and said:

"Laódamas, you're right, by all the powers.
Go up to him, yourself, and put the question."

At this, Alkínoös' tall son advanced
to the center ground, and there addressed Odysseus:

"Friend, Excellency, come join our competition,
if you are practiced, as you seem to be.
While a man lives he wins no greater honor
than footwork and the skill of hands can bring him.
Enter our games, then; ease your heart of trouble.
Your journey home is not far off, remember;
the ship is launched, the crew all primed for sea."

Odysseus, canniest of men, replied:

"Laódamas, why do you young chaps challenge me?
I have more on my mind than track and field—
hard days, and many, have I seen, and suffered.
I sit here at your field meet, yes; but only
as one who begs your king to send him home."

Now Seareach put his word in, and contentiously:

"The reason being, as I see it, friend,
you never learned a sport, and have no skill
in any of the contests of fighting men.
You must have been the skipper of some tramp
that crawled from one port to the next, jam full
of chaffering hands: a tallier of cargoes,
itching for gold—not, by your looks, an athlete."

Odysseus frowned, and eyed him coldly, saying:

"That was uncalled for, friend, you talk like a fool.
The gods deal out no gift, this one or any—
birth, brains, or speech—to every man alike.
In looks a man may be a shade, a specter,
and yet be master of speech so crowned with beauty
that people gaze at him with pleasure. Courteous,
sure of himself, he can command assemblies,
and when he comes to town, the crowds gather.
A handsome man, contrariwise, may lack

grace and good sense in everything he says.
You now, for instance, with your fine physique—
a god's, indeed—you have an empty noddle.
I find my heart inside my ribs aroused
by your impertinence. I am no stranger
to contests, as you fancy. I rated well
when I could count on youth and my two hands.
Now pain has cramped me, and my years of combat
hacking through ranks in war, and the bitter sea.
Aye. Even so I'll give your games a trial.
You spoke heart-wounding words. You shall be answered."

He leapt out, cloaked as he was, and picked a discus,
a rounded stone, more ponderous than those
already used by the Phaiákian throwers,
and, whirling, let it fly from his great hand
with a low hum. The crowd went flat on the ground—
all those oar-pulling, seafaring Phaiákians—
under the rushing noise. The spinning disk
soared out, light as a bird, beyond all others.
Disguised now as a Phaiákian, Athena
staked it and called out:

"Even a blind man,
friend, could judge this, finding with his fingers
one discus, quite alone, beyond the cluster.
Congratulations; this event is yours;
not a man here can beat you or come near you."

That was a cheering hail, Odysseus thought,
seeing one friend there on the emulous field,
so, in relief, he turned among the Phaiákians
and said:

"Now come alongside that one, lads.
The next I'll send as far, I think, or farther.
Anyone else on edge for competition
try me now. By heaven, you angered me.
Racing, wrestling, boxing—I bar nothing
with any man except Laódamas,
for he's my host. Who quarrels with his host?
Only a madman—or no man at all—
would challenge his protector among strangers,
cutting the ground away under his feet.
Here are no others I will not engage,

none but I hope to know what he is made of.
Inept at combat, am I? Not entirely.
Give me a smooth bow; I can handle it,
and I might well be first to hit my man
amid a swarm of enemies, though archers
in company around me drew together.
Philoktêtês[9] alone, at Troy, when we
Akhaians took the bow, used to outshoot me.
Of men who now eat bread upon the earth
I hold myself the best hand with a bow—
conceding mastery to the men of old,
Heraklês, or Eurýtos of Oikhalía,[1]
heroes who vied with gods in bowmanship.
Eurýtos came to grief, it's true; old age
never crept over him in his long hall;
Apollo took his challenge ill, and killed him.
What then, the spear? I'll plant it like an arrow.
Only in sprinting, I'm afraid, I may
be passed by someone. Roll of the sea waves
wearied me, and the victuals in my ship
ran low; my legs are flabby."
When he finished,
the rest were silent, but Alkínoös answered:

"Friend, we take your challenge in good part,
for this man angered and affronted you
here at our peaceful games. You'd have us note
the prowess that is in you, and so clearly,
no man of sense would ever cry it down!
Come, turn your mind, now, on a thing to tell
among your peers when you are home again,
dining in hall, beside your wife and children:
I mean our prowess, as you may remember it,
for we, too, have our skills, given by Zeus,
and practiced from our father's time to this—
not in the boxing ring nor the palestra[2]
conspicuous, but in racing, land or sea;
and all our days we set great store by feasting,
harpers, and the grace of dancing choirs,
changes of dress, warm baths, and downy beds.
O master dancers of the Phaiákians!

9. He inherited the bow of Herakles, which never missed its mark. 1. Eurýtos of Oikhalía (in central Greece) challenged Apollo (also an archer) and was killed by the god. Eurýtos' bow was given to Odysseus by his son Iphitos and it is with that bow that Odysseus will kill the suitors in Book XXII. 2. Wrestling ground.

Perform now: let our guest on his return
tell his companions we excel the world
in dance and song, as in our ships and running.
Someone go find the gittern[3] harp in hall
and bring it quickly to Demódokos!"

At the serene king's word, a squire ran
to bring the polished harp out of the palace,
and place was given to nine referees—
peers of the realm, masters of ceremony—
who cleared a space and smoothed a dancing floor.
The squire brought down, and gave Demódokos,
the clear-toned harp; and centering on the minstrel
magic young dancers formed a circle
with a light beat, and stamp of feet. Beholding,
Odysseus marvelled at the flashing ring.

Now to his harp the blinded minstrel sang
of Arês' dalliance with Aphroditê:
how hidden in Hephaistos' house they played
at love together, and the gifts of Arês,
dishonoring Hephaistos' bed—and how
the word that wounds the heart came to the master
from Hêlios,[4] who had seen the two embrace;
and when he learned it, Lord Hephaistos went
with baleful calculation to his forge.
There mightily he armed his anvil block
and hammered out a chain, whose tempered links
could not be sprung or bent; he meant that they should hold.
Those shackles fashioned, hot in wrath Hephaistos
climbed to the bower and the bed of love,
pooled all his net of chain around the bed posts
and swung it from the rafters overhead—
light as a cobweb even gods in bliss
could not perceive, so wonderful his cunning.
Seeing his bed now made a snare, he feigned
a journey to the trim stronghold of Lemnos,[5]
the dearest of earth's towns to him. And Arês?
Ah, golden Arês' watch had its reward
when he beheld the great smith leaving home.
How promptly to the famous door he came,
intent on pleasure with sweet Kythereia![6]

3. Shaped like a guitar. 4. The sun, who sees everything. 5. An island off the coast of Asia Minor, the "dearest of earth's towns" to Hephaistos because when Zeus threw him off Olympus (*Iliad*, I.590ff) he landed on Lemnos and the inhabitants took care of him. 6. A title of Aphrodite.

She, who had left her father's side but now,
sat in her chamber when her lover entered;
and tenderly he pressed her hand and said:

"Come and lie down, my darling, and be happy!
Hephaistos is no longer here, but gone
to see his grunting[7] Sintian friends on Lemnos."

As she, too, thought repose would be most welcome,
the pair went in to bed—into a shower
of clever chains, the netting of Hephaistos.
So trussed, they could not move apart, nor rise,
at last they knew there could be no escape,
they were to see the glorious cripple now—
for Hêlios had spied for him, and told him;
so he turned back, this side of Lemnos Isle,
sick at heart, making his way homeward.
Now in the doorway of the room he stood
while deadly rage took hold of him; his voice,
hoarse and terrible, reached all the gods:

"O Father Zeus, O gods in bliss forever,
here is indecorous entertainment for you,
Aphroditê, Zeus's daughter,
caught in the act, cheating me, her cripple,
with Arês—devastating Arês.
Cleanlimbed beauty is her joy, not these
bandylegs I came into the world with:
no one to blame but the two gods who bred me![8]
Come see this pair entwining here
in my own bed! How hot it makes me burn!
I think they may not care to lie much longer,
pressing on one another, passionate lovers;
they'll have enough of bed together soon.
And yet the chain that bagged them holds them down
till Father sends me back my wedding gifts—
all that I poured out for his damned pigeon,
so lovely, and so wanton."

All the others
were crowding in, now, to the brazen house—
Poseidon who embraces earth, and Hermês
the runner, and Apollo, lord of Distance.
The goddesses stayed home for shame; but these

7. The Sintians, the inhabitants of Lemnos, do not speak Greek. 8. Zeus and Hera.

munificences ranged there in the doorway,
and irrepressible among them all
arose the laughter of the happy gods.
Gazing hard at Hephaistos' handiwork
the gods in turn remarked among themselves:

"No dash in adultery now."
"The tortoise tags the hare—
Hephaistos catches Arês—and Arês outran the wind."

"The lame god's craft has pinned him. Now shall he
pay what is due from gods taken in cuckoldry."

They made these improving remarks to one another,
but Apollo leaned aside to say to Hermês:
"Son of Zeus, beneficent Wayfinder,
would you accept a coverlet of chain, if only
you lay by Aphroditê's golden side?"

To this the Wayfinder replied, shining:

"Would I not, though, Apollo of distances!
Wrap me in chains three times the weight of these,
come goddesses and gods to see the fun;
only let me lie beside the pale-golden one!"

The gods gave way again to peals of laughter,
all but Poseidon, and he never smiled,
but urged Hephaistos to unpinion Arês,
saying emphatically, in a loud voice:
"Free him;
you will be paid, I swear; ask what you will;
he pays up every jot the gods decree."

To this the Great Gamelegs replied:

"Poseidon,
lord of the earth-surrounding sea, I should not
swear to a scoundrel's honor. What have I
as surety from you, if Arês leaves me
empty-handed, with my empty chain?"

The Earth-shaker for answer urged again:

"Hephaistos, let us grant he goes, and leaves
the fine unpaid; I swear, then, I shall pay it."

Then said the Great Gamelegs at last:

"No more;
you offer terms I cannot well refuse."

And down the strong god bent to set them free,
till disencumbered of their bond, the chain,
the lovers leapt away—he into Thrace,[9]
while Aphroditê, laughter's darling, fled
to Kypros[1] Isle and Paphos, to her meadow
and altar dim with incense. There the Graces
bathed and anointed her with golden oil—
a bloom that clings upon immortal flesh alone—
and let her folds of mantle fall in glory.

So ran the song the minstrel sang.

Odysseus,
listening, found sweet pleasure in the tale,
among the Phaiákian mariners and oarsmen.
And next Alkínoös called upon his sons,
Halios and Laódamas, to show
the dance no one could do as well as they—
handling a purple ball carven by Pólybos.
One made it shoot up under the shadowing clouds
as he leaned backward; bounding high in air
the other cut its flight far off the ground—
and neither missed a step as the ball soared.
The next turn was to keep it low, and shuttling
hard between them, while the ring of boys
gave them a steady stamping beat.
Odysseus now addressed Alkínoös:

"O majesty, model of all your folk,
your promise was to show me peerless dancers;
here is the promise kept. I am all wonder."

At this Alkínoös in his might rejoicing
said to the seafarers of Phaiákia:

"Attend me now, Phaiákian lords and captains:
our guest appears a clear-eyed man and wise.
Come, let him feel our bounty as he should.
Here are twelve princes of the kingdom—lords

9. The non-Greek territory to the North, where the war-god was supposed to be at home.
1. Cyprus, where Aphrodite had a famous shrine at Paphos.

paramount, and I who make thirteen;
let each one bring a laundered cloak and tunic,
and add one bar of honorable gold.
Heap all our gifts together; load his arms;
let him go joyous to our evening feast!
As for Seareach—why, man to man
he'll make amends, and handsomely; he blundered."
Now all as one acclaimed the king's good pleasure,
and each one sent a squire to bring his gifts.
Meanwhile Seareach found speech again, saying:

"My lord and model of us all, Alkínoös,
as you require of me, in satisfaction,
this broadsword of clear bronze goes to our guest.
Its hilt is silver, and the ringed sheath
of new-sawn ivory—a costly weapon."

He turned to give the broadsword to Odysseus,
facing him, saying blithely:

"Sir, my best
wishes, my respects; if I offended,
I hope the seawinds blow it out of mind.
God send you see your lady and your homeland
soon again, after the pain of exile."

Odysseus, the great tactician, answered:

"My hand, friend; may the gods award you fortune.
I hope no pressing need comes on you ever
for this fine blade you give me in amends."

He slung it, glinting silver, from his shoulder,
as the light shone from sundown. Messengers
were bearing gifts and treasure to the palace,
where the king's sons received them all, and made
a glittering pile at their grave mother's side;
then, as Alkínoös took his throne of power,
each went to his own high-backed chair in turn,
and said Alkínoös to Arêtê:

"Lady, bring here a chest, the finest one;
a clean cloak and tunic; stow these things;
and warm a cauldron for him. Let him bathe,
when he has seen the gifts of the Phaiákians,

and so dine happily to a running song.
My own wine-cup of gold intaglio
I'll give him, too; through all the days to come,
tipping his wine to Zeus or other gods
in his great hall, he shall remember me."

Then said Arêtê to her maids:

"The tripod:
stand the great tripod legs about the fire."

They swung the cauldron on the fire's heart,
poured water in, and fed the blaze beneath
until the basin simmered, cupped in flame.
The queen set out a rich chest from her chamber
and folded in the gifts—clothing and gold
given Odysseus by the Phaiákians;
then she put in the royal cloak and tunic,
briskly saying to her guest:

"Now here, sir,
look to the lid yourself, and tie it down
against light fingers, if there be any,
on the black ship tonight while you are sleeping."

Noble Odysseus, expert in adversity,
battened the lid down with a lightning knot
learned, once, long ago, from the Lady Kirkê.[2]
And soon a call came from the Bathing Mistress
who led him to a hip-bath, warm and clear—
a happy sight, and rare in his immersions
after he left Kalypso's home—where, surely,
the luxuries of a god were ever his.
When the bath maids had washed him, rubbed him down,
put a fresh tunic and a cloak around him,
he left the bathing place to join the men
at wine in hall.

The princess Nausikaa,
exquisite figure, as of heaven's shaping,
waited beside a pillar as he passed
and said swiftly, with wonder in her look:

2. Or Circe. A divine sorceress on whose island Odysseus had spent some time during his travels (see Book XII).

"Fare well, stranger; in your land remember me
who met and saved you. It is worth your thought."

The man of all occasions now met this:

"Daughter of great Alkínoös, Nausikaa,
may Zeus the lord of thunder, Hera's consort,
grant me daybreak again in my own country!
But there and all my days until I die
may I invoke you as I would a goddess,
princess, to whom I owe my life."

He left her
and went to take his place beside the king.

Now when the roasts were cut, the winebowls full,
a herald led the minstrel down the room
amid the deference of the crowd, and paused
to seat him near a pillar in the center—
whereupon that resourceful man, Odysseus,
carved out a quarter from his chine of pork,
crisp with fat, and called the blind man's guide:

"Herald! here, take this to Demódokos:
let him feast and be merry, with my compliments.
All men owe honor to the poets—honor
and awe, for they are dearest to the Muse
who puts upon their lips the ways of life."

Gentle Demódokos took the proffered gift
and inwardly rejoiced. When all were served,
every man's hand went out upon the banquet,
repelling hunger and thirst, until at length
Odysseus spoke again to the blind minstrel:

"Demódokos, accept my utmost praise.
The Muse, daughter of Zeus in radiance,
or else Apollo gave you skill to shape
with such great style your songs of the Akhaians—
their hard lot, how they fought and suffered war.
You shared it, one would say, or heard it all.
Now shift your theme, and sing that wooden horse
Epeios built, inspired by Athena—
the ambuscade Odysseus filled with fighters
and sent to take the inner town of Troy.

Sing only this for me, sing me this well,
and I shall say at once before the world
the grace of heaven has given us a song."

The minstrel stirred, murmuring to the god, and soon
clear words and notes came one by one, a vision
of the Akhaians in their graceful ships
drawing away from shore: the torches flung
and shelters flaring: Argive soldiers crouched
in the close dark around Odysseus: and
the horse, tall on the assembly ground of Troy.
For when the Trojans pulled it in, themselves,
up to the citadel, they sat nearby
with long-drawn-out and hapless argument—
favoring, in the end, one course of three:
either to stave the vault with brazen axes,
or haul it to a cliff and pitch it down,
or else to save it for the gods, a votive glory—
the plan that could not but prevail.
For Troy must perish, as ordained, that day
she harbored the great horse of timber; hidden
the flower of Akhaia lay, and bore
slaughter and death upon the men of Troy.
He sang, then, of the town sacked by Akhaians
pouring down from the horse's hollow cave,
this way and that way raping the steep city,
and how Odysseus came like Arês to
the door of Deïphobos, with Meneláos,
and braved the desperate fight there—
conquering once more by Athena's power.

The splendid minstrel sang it.
And Odysseus
let the bright molten tears run down his cheeks,
weeping the way a wife mourns for her lord
on the lost field where he has gone down fighting
the day of wrath that came upon his children.
At sight of the man panting and dying there,
she slips down to enfold him, crying out;
then feels the spears, prodding her back and shoulders,
and goes bound into slavery and grief.
Piteous weeping wears away her cheeks:
but no more piteous than Odysseus' tears,
cloaked as they were, now, from the company.
Only Alkínoös, at his elbow, knew—

hearing the low sob in the man's breathing—
and when he knew, he spoke:

"Hear me, lords and captains of Phaiákia!
And let Demódokos touch his harp no more.
His theme has not been pleasing to all here.
During the feast, since our fine poet sang,
our guest has never left off weeping. Grief
seems fixed upon his heart. Break off the song!
Let everyone be easy, host and guest;
there's more decorum in a smiling banquet!
We had prepared here, on our friend's behalf,
safe conduct in a ship, and gifts to cheer him,
holding that any man with a grain of wit
will treat a decent suppliant like a brother.
Now by the same rule, friend, you must not be
secretive any longer! Come, in fairness,
tell me the name you bore in that far country;
how were you known to family, and neighbors?
No man is nameless—no man, good or bad,
but gets a name in his first infancy,
none being born, unless a mother bears him!
Tell me your native land, your coast and city—
sailing directions for the ships, you know—
for those Phaiákian ships of ours
that have no steersman, and no steering oar,
divining the crew's wishes, as they do,
and knowing, as they do, the ports of call
about the world. Hidden in mist or cloud
they scud the open sea, with never a thought
of being in distress or going down.
There is, however, something I once heard
Nausíthoös, my father, say: Poseidon
holds it against us that our deep sea ships
are sure conveyance for all passengers.
My father said, some day one of our cutters
homeward bound over the cloudy sea
would be wrecked by the god, and a range of hills
thrown round our city. So, in his age, he said,
and let it be, or not, as the god please.
But come, now, put it for me clearly, tell me
the sea ways that you wandered, and the shores
you touched; the cities, and the men therein,
uncivilized, if such there were, and hostile,
and those godfearing who had kindly manners.

Tell me why you should grieve so terribly
over the Argives and the fall of Troy.
That was all gods' work, weaving ruin there
so it should make a song for men to come!
Some kin of yours, then, died at Ilion,
some first rate man, by marriage near to you,
next your own blood most dear?
Or some companion of congenial mind
and valor? True it is, a wise friend
can take a brother's place in our affection."

Book IX

NEW COASTS AND POSEIDON'S SON

Now this was the reply Odysseus made:
"Alkínoös, king and admiration of men,
how beautiful this is, to hear a minstrel
gifted as yours: a god he might be, singing!
There is no boon in life more sweet, I say,
then when a summer joy holds all the realm,
and banqueters sit listening to a harper
in a great hall, by rows of tables heaped
with bread and roast meat, while a steward goes
to dip up wine and brim your cups again.
Here is the flower of life, it seems to me!
But now you wish to know my cause for sorrow—
and thereby give me cause for more.
What shall I say first? What
shall I keep until the end?
The gods have tried me in a thousand ways.
But first my name: let that be known to you,
and if I pull away from pitiless death,
friendship will bind us, though my land lies far.

I am Laërtês' son, Odysseus.
Men hold me
formidable for guile in peace and war:
this fame has gone abroad to the sky's rim.
My home is on the peaked sea-mark of Ithaka
under Mount Neion's wind-blown robe of leaves,
in sight of other islands—Doulíkhion,
Samê, wooded Zakynthos—Ithaka
being most lofty in that coastal sea,
and northwest, while the rest lie east and south.
A rocky isle, but good for a boy's training;

I shall not see on earth a place more dear,
though I have been detained long by Kalypso,
loveliest among goddesses, who held me
in her smooth caves, to be her heart's delight,
as Kirkê of Aiaia, the enchantress,
desired me, and detained me in her hall.
But in my heart I never gave consent.
Where shall a man find sweetness to surpass
his own home and his parents? In far lands
he shall not, though he find a house of gold.

What of my sailing, then, from Troy?
What of those years
of rough adventure, weathered under Zeus?
The wind that carried west from Ilion
brought me to Ísmaros, on the far shore,
a strongpoint on the coast of the Kikonês.[3]
I stormed that place and killed the men who fought.
Plunder we took, and we enslaved the women,
to make division, equal shares to all—
but on the spot I told them: 'Back, and quickly!
Out to sea again!' My men were mutinous,
fools, on stores of wine. Sheep after sheep
they butchered by the surf, and shambling cattle,
feasting,—while fugitives went inland, running
to call to arms the main force of Kikonês.
This was an army, trained to fight on horseback
or, where the ground required, on foot. They came
with dawn over that terrain like the leaves
and blades of spring. So doom appeared to us,
dark word of Zeus for us, our evil days.
My men stood up and made a fight of it—
backed on the ships, with lances kept in play,
from bright morning through the blaze of noon
holding our beach, although so far outnumbered;
but when the sun passed toward unyoking time,
then the Akhaians, one by one, gave way.
Six benches were left empty in every ship
that evening when we pulled away from death.
And this new grief we bore with us to sea:
our precious lives we had, but not our friends.
No ship made sail next day until some shipmate
had raised a cry, three times, for each poor ghost

3. Allies of the Trojans, but Odysseus does not even mention this fact to excuse the piratical raid; he did not think any excuse was needed.

unfleshed by the Kikonês on that field.
Now Zeus the lord of cloud roused in the north
a storm against the ships, and driving veils
of squall moved down like night on land and sea.
The bows went plunging at the gust; sails
cracked and lashed out strips in the big wind.
We saw death in that fury, dropped the yards,
unshipped the oars, and pulled for the nearest lee:
then two long days and nights we lay offshore
worn out and sick at heart, tasting our grief,
until a third Dawn came with ringlets shining.
Then we put up our masts, hauled sail, and rested,
letting the steersmen and the breeze take over.

I might have made it safely home, that time,
but as I came round Malea[4] the current
took me out to sea, and from the north
a fresh gale drove me on, past Kythera.
Nine days I drifted on the teeming sea
before dangerous high winds. Upon the tenth
we came to the coastline of the Lotos Eaters,[5]
who live upon that flower. We landed there
to take on water. All ships' companies
mustered alongside for the mid-day meal.
Then I sent out two picked men and a runner
to learn what race of men that land sustained.
They fell in, soon enough, with Lotos Eaters,
who showed no will to do us harm, only
offering the sweet Lotos to our friends—
but those who ate this honeyed plant, the Lotos,
never cared to report, nor to return:
they longed to stay forever, browsing on
that native bloom, forgetful of their homeland.
I drove them, all three wailing, to the ships,
tied them down under their rowing benches,
and called the rest: 'All hands aboard;
come, clear the beach and no one taste
the Lotos, or you lose your hope of home.'
Filing in to their places by the rowlocks
my oarsmen dipped their long oars in the surf,
and we moved out again on our sea faring.

4. The southeastern tip of the Peloponnese. *Kythera*: a large island off the headland. 5. It is generally thought that this story contains some memory of early Greek contact with North Africa; the north wind Odysseus describes would have taken him to the area of Cyrenaica, modern Libya. Modern identifications of the lotos range from dates to hashish.

In the next land[6] we found were Kyklopês,
giants, louts, without a law to bless them.
In ignorance leaving the fruitage of the earth in mystery
to the immortal gods, they neither plow
nor sow by hand, nor till the ground, though grain—
wild wheat and barley—grows untended, and
wine-grapes, in clusters, ripen in heaven's rain.
Kyklopês have no muster and no meeting,
no consultation or old tribal ways,
but each one dwells in his own mountain cave
dealing out rough justice to wife and child,
indifferent to what the others do.
Well, then:
across the wide bay from the mainland
there lies a desert island, not far out,
but still not close inshore. Wild goats in hundreds
breed there; and no human being comes
upon the isle to startle them—no hunter
of all who ever tracked with hounds through forests
or had rough going over mountain trails.
The isle, unplanted and untilled, a wilderness,
pastures goats alone. And this is why:
good ships like ours with cheekpaint[7] at the bows
are far beyond the Kyklopês. No shipwright
toils among them, shaping and building up
symmetrical trim hulls to cross the sea
and visit all the seaboard towns, as men do
who go and come in commerce over water.
This isle—seagoing folk would have annexed it
and built their homestead on it: all good land,
fertile for every crop in season: lush
well-watered meads along the shore, vines in profusion,
prairie, clear for the plow, where grain would grow
chin high by harvest time, and rich sub-soil.
The island cover is landlocked, so you need
no hawsers out astern, bow-stones[8] or mooring:
run in and ride there till the day your crews
chafe to be under sail and a fair wind blows.
You'll find good water flowing from a cavern
through dusky poplars into the upper bay.
Here we made harbor. Some god guided us
that night, for we could barely see our bows

6. According to ancient tradition the Kyklopes lived in Sicily. 7. On a Greek ship an emblem (often shown as a huge eye on vase-paintings) was painted on the bows. 8. A primitive anchor made up of a stone attached to a rope.

in the dense fog around us, and no moonlight
filtered through the overcast. No look-out,
nobody saw the island dead ahead,
nor even the great landward rolling billow
that took us in: we found ourselves in shallows,
keels grazing shore: so furled our sails
and disembarked where the low ripples broke.
There on the beach we lay, and slept till morning.

When Dawn spread out her finger tips of rose
we turned out marvelling, to tour the isle,
while Zeus's shy nymph daughters flushed wild goats
down from the heights—a breakfast for my men.
We ran to fetch our hunting bows and long-shanked
lances from the ships, and in three companies
we took our shots. Heaven gave us game a-plenty:
for every one of twelve ships in my squadron
nine goats fell to be shared; my lot was ten.
So there all day, until the sun went down,
we made our feast on meat galore, and wine—
wine from the ship, for our supply held out,
so many jars were filled at Ísmaros
from stores of the Kikonês that we plundered.
We gazed, too, at Kyklopês Land, so near,
we saw their smoke, heard bleating from their flocks.
But after sundown, in the gathering dusk,
we slept again above the wash of ripples.

When the young Dawn with finger tips of rose
came in the east, I called my men together
and made a speech to them:
'Old shipmates, friends,
the rest of you stand by; I'll make the crossing
in my own ship, with my own company,
and find out what the mainland natives are—
for they may be wild savages, and lawless,
or hospitable and god-fearing men.'

At this I went aboard, and gave the word
to cast off by the stern. My oarsmen followed,
filing in to their benches by the rowlocks,
and all in line dipped oars in the grey sea.

As we rowed on, and nearer to the mainland,
at one end of the bay, we saw a cavern

yawning above the water, screened with laurel,
and many rams and goats about the place
inside a sheepfold—made from slabs of stone
earthfast between tall trunks of pine and rugged
towering oak trees.
A prodigious man
slept in this cave alone, and took his flocks
to graze afield—remote from all companions,
knowing none but savage ways, a brute
so huge, he seemed no man at all of those
who eat good wheaten bread; but he seemed rather
a shaggy mountain reared in solitude.
We beached there, and I told the crew
to stand by and keep watch over the ship;
as for myself I took my twelve best fighters
and went ahead. I had a goatskin full
of that sweet liquor that Euanthês' son,
Maron, had given me. He kept Apollo's
holy grove at Ísmaros; for kindness
we showed him there, and showed his wife and child,
he gave me seven shining golden talents[9]
perfectly formed, a solid silver winebowl,
and then this liquor—twelve two-handled jars
of brandy, pure and fiery. Not a slave
in Maron's household knew this drink; only
he, his wife and the storeroom mistress knew;
and they would put one cupful—ruby-colored,
honey-smooth—in twenty more of water,
but still the sweet scent hovered like a fume
over the winebowl. No man turned away
when cups of this came round.
A wineskin full
I brought along, and victuals in a bag,
for in my bones I knew some towering brute
would be upon us soon—all outward power,
a wild man, ignorant of civility.

We climbed, then, briskly to the cave. But Kyklops
had gone afield, to pasture his fat sheep,
so we looked round at everything inside:
a drying rack that sagged with cheeses, pens
crowded with lambs and kids, each in its class:
firstlings apart from middlings, and the 'dewdrops,'

9. Ingots of gold; the talent was a standard weight.

or newborn lambkins, penned apart from both.
And vessels full of whey were brimming there—
bowls of earthenware and pails of milking.
My men came pressing round me, pleading:
'Why not
take these cheeses, get them stowed, come back,
throw open all the pens, and make a run for it?
We'll drive the kids and lambs aboard. We say
put out again on good salt water!'
Ah,
how sound that was! Yet I refused, I wished
to see the caveman, what he had to offer—
no pretty sight, it turned out, for my friends.
We lit a fire, burnt an offering,
and took some cheese to eat; then sat in silence
around the embers, waiting. When he came
he had a load of dry boughs on his shoulder
to stoke his fire at suppertime. He dumped it
with a great crash into that hollow cave,
and we all scattered fast to the far wall.
Then over the broad cavern floor he ushered
the ewes he meant to milk. He left his rams
and he-goats in the yard outside, and swung
high overhead a slab of solid rock
to close the cave. Two dozen four-wheeled wagons,
with heaving wagon teams, could not have stirred
the tonnage of that rock from where he wedged it
over the doorsill. Next he took his seat
and milked his bleating ewes. A practiced job
he made of it, giving each ewe her suckling:
thickened his milk, then, into curds and whey,
sieved out the curds to drip in withy baskets,
and poured the whey to stand in bowls
cooling until he drank it for his supper.
When all these chores were done, he poked the fire,
heaping on brushwood. In the glare he saw us.

'Strangers,' he said, 'who are you? And where from?
What brings you here by sea ways—a fair traffic?
Or are you wandering rogues, who cast your lives
like dice, and ravage other folk by sea?'

We felt a pressure on our hearts, in dread
of that deep rumble and that mighty man.
But all the same I spoke up in reply:

'We are from Troy, Akhaians, blown off course
by shifting gales on the Great South Sea;
homeward bound, but taking routes and ways
uncommon; so the will of Zeus would have it.
We served under Agamémnon, son of Atreus—
the whole world knows what city
he laid waste, what armies he destroyed.
It was our luck to come here; here we stand,
beholden for your help, or any gifts
you give[1]—as custom is to honor strangers.
We would entreat you, great Sir, have a care
for the gods' courtesy; Zeus will avenge
the unoffending guest.'
He answered this
from his brute chest, unmoved:
'You are a ninny,
or else you come from the other end of nowhere,
telling me, mind the gods! We Kyklopês
care not a whistle for your thundering Zeus
or all the gods in bliss; we have more force by far.
I would not let you go for fear of Zeus—
you or your friends—unless I had a whim to.
Tell me, where was it, now, you left your ship—
around the point, or down the shore, I wonder?'

He thought he'd find out, but I saw through this,
and answered with a ready lie:
'My ship?
Poseidon Lord, who sets the earth a-tremble,
broke it up on the rocks at your land's end.
A wind from seaward served him, drove us there.
We are survivors, these good men and I.'

Neither reply nor pity came from him,
but in one stride he clutched at my companions
and caught two in his hands like squirming puppies
to beat their brains out, spattering the floor.
Then he dismembered them and made his meal,
gaping and crunching like a mountain lion—
everything: innards, flesh, and marrow bones.
We cried aloud, lifting our hands to Zeus,
powerless, looking on at this, appalled;
but Kyklops went on filling up his belly

1. It is the mark of civilized men in the *Odyssey*, like Meneláos and Alkínoös, that they welcome the stranger and send him on his way with gifts.

with manflesh and great gulps of whey,
then lay down like a mast among his sheep.
My heart beat high now at the chance of action,
and drawing the sharp sword from my hip I went
along his flank to stab him where the midriff
holds the liver. I had touched the spot
when sudden fear stayed me: if I killed him
we perished there as well, for we could never
move his ponderous doorway slab aside.
So we were left to groan and wait for morning.

When the young Dawn with finger tips of rose
lit up the world, the Kyklops built a fire
and milked his handsome ewes, all in due order,
putting the sucklings to the mothers. Then,
his chores being all dispatched, he caught
another brace of men to make his breakfast,
and whisked away his great door slab
to let his sheep go through—but he, behind,
reset the stone as one would cap a quiver.
There was a din of whistling as the Kyklops
rounded his flock to higher ground, then stillness.
And now I pondered how to hurt him worst,
if but Athena granted what I prayed for.

Here are the means I thought would serve my turn:
a club, or staff, lay there along the fold—
an olive tree, felled green and left to season
for Kyklops' hand. And it was like a mast
a lugger of twenty oars, broad in the beam—
a deep-sea going craft—might carry:
so long, so big around, it seemed. Now I
chopped out a six foot section of this pole
and set it down before my men, who scraped it;
and when they had it smooth, I hewed again
to make a stake with pointed end. I held this
in the fire's heart and turned it, toughening it,
then hid it, well back in the cavern, under
one of the dung piles in profusion there.
Now came the time to toss for it: who ventured
along with me? whose hand could bear to thrust
and grind that spike in Kyklops' eye, when mild
sleep had mastered him? As luck would have it,
the men I would have chosen, won the toss—
four strong men, and I made five as captain.

At evening came the shepherd with his flock,
his woolly flock. The rams as well, this time,
entered the cave: by some sheep-herding whim—
or a god's bidding—none were left outside.
He hefted his great boulder into place
and sat him down to milk the bleating ewes
in proper order, put the lambs to suck,
and swiftly ran through all his evening chores.
Then he caught two more men and feasted on them.
My moment was at hand, and I went forward
holding an ivy bowl of my dark drink,
looking up, saying:
'Kyklops, try some wine.
Here's liquor to wash down your scraps of men.
Taste it, and see the kind of drink we carried
under our planks. I meant it for an offering
if you would help us home. But you are mad,
unbearable, a bloody monster! After this,
will any other traveller come to see you?'

He seized and drained the bowl, and it went down
so fiery and smooth he called for more:
'Give me another, thank you kindly. Tell me,
how are you called? I'll make a gift will please you.
Even Kyklopês know the wine-grapes grow
out of grassland and loam in heaven's rain,
but here's a bit of nectar and ambrosia!'

Three bowls I brought him and he poured them down.
I saw the fuddle and flush come over him,
then I sang out in cordial tones:
'Kyklops,
you ask my honorable name? Remember
the gift you promised me, and I shall tell you.
My name is Nohbdy: mother, father, and friends,
everyone calls me Nohbdy.'

And he said:
'Nohbdy's my meat, then, after I eat his friends.
Others come first. There's a noble gift, now.'

Even as he spoke, he reeled and tumbled backward,
his great head lolling to one side; and sleep
took him like any creature. Drunk, hiccuping,
he dribbled streams of liquor and bits of men.

Now, by the gods, I drove my big hand spike
deep in the embers, charring it again,
and cheered my men along with battle talk
to keep their courage up: no quitting now.
The pike of olive, green though it had been,
reddened and glowed as if about to catch.
I drew it from the coals and my four fellows
gave me a hand, lugging it near the Kyklops
as more than natural force nerved them; straight
forward they sprinted, lifted it, and rammed it
deep in his crater eye, and I leaned on it
turning it as a shipwright turns a drill
in planking, having men below to swing
the two-handled strap that spins it in the groove.
So with our brand we bored that great eye socket
while blood ran out around the red hot bar.
Eyelid and lash were seared; the pierced ball
hissed broiling, and the roots popped.

In a smithy
one sees a white-hot axehead or an adze
plunged and wrung in a cold tub, screeching steam—
the way they make soft iron hale and hard—:
just so that eyeball hissed around the spike.
The Kyklops bellowed and the rock roared round him,
and we fell back in fear. Clawing his face
he tugged the bloody spike out of his eye,
threw it away, and his wild hands went groping;
then he set up a howl for Kyklopês
who lived in caves on windy peaks nearby.
Some heard him; and they came by divers ways
to clump around outside and call:
'What ails you,
Polyphêmos? Why do you cry so sore
in the starry night? You will not let us sleep.
Sure no man's driving off your flock? No man
has tricked you, ruined you?'
Out of the cave
the mammoth Polyphêmos roared in answer:
'Nohbdy, Nohbdy's tricked me, Nohbdy's ruined me!'

To this rough shout they made a sage reply;
'Ah well, if nobody has played you foul
there in your lonely bed, we are no use in pain
given by great Zeus. Let it be your father,
Poseidon Lord, to whom you pray.'

So saying
they trailed away. And I was filled with laughter
to see how like a charm the name deceived them.
Now Kyklops, wheezing as the pain came on him,
fumbled to wrench away the great doorstone
and squatted in the breach with arms thrown wide
for any silly beast or man who bolted—
hoping somehow I might be such a fool.
But I kept thinking how to win the game:
death sat there huge; how could we slip away?
I drew on all my wits, and ran through tactics,
reasoning as a man will for dear life,
until a trick came—and it pleased me well.
The Kyklops' rams were handsome, fat, with heavy
fleeces, a dark violet.

Three abreast
I tied them silently together, twining
cords of willow from the ogre's bed;
then slung a man under each middle one
to ride there safely, shielded left and right.
So three sheep could convey each man. I took
the woolliest ram, the choicest of the flock,
and hung myself under his kinky belly,
pulled up tight, with fingers twisted deep
in sheepskin ringlets for an iron grip.
So, breathing hard, we waited until morning.

When Dawn spread out her finger tips of rose
the rams began to stir, moving for pasture,
and peals of bleating echoed round the pens
where dams with udders full called for a milking.
Blinded, and sick with pain from his head wound,
the master stroked each ram, then let it pass,
but my men riding on the pectoral fleece
the giant's blind hands blundering never found.
Last of them all my ram, the leader, came,
weighted by wool and me with my meditations.
The Kyklops patted him, and then he said:
'Sweet cousin ram, why lag behind the rest
in the night cave? You never linger so,
but graze before them all, and go afar
to crop sweet grass, and take your stately way
leading along the streams, until at evening
you run to be the first one in the fold.

Why, now, so far behind? Can you be grieving
over your Master's eye? That carrion rogue
and his accurst companions burnt it out
when he had conquered all my wits with wine.
Nohbdy will not get out alive, I swear.
Oh, had you brain and voice to tell
where he may be now, dodging all my fury!
Bashed by this hand and bashed on this rock wall
his brains would strew the floor, and I should have
rest from the outrage Nohbdy worked upon me.'
He sent us into the open, then. Close by,
I dropped and rolled clear of the ram's belly,
going this way and that to untie the men.
With many glances back, we rounded up
his fat, stiff-legged sheep to take aboard,
and drove them down to where the good ship lay.
We saw, as we came near, our fellows' faces
shining; then we saw them turn to grief
tallying those who had not fled from death.
I hushed them, jerking head and eyebrows up,
and in a low voice told them: 'Load this herd;
move fast, and put the ship's head toward the breakers.'
They all pitched in at loading, then embarked
and struck their oars into the sea. Far out,
as far off shore as shouted words would carry,
I sent a few back to the adversary:
'O Kyklops! Would you feast on my companions?
Puny, am I, in a Caveman's hands?
How do you like the beating that we gave you,
you damned cannibal? Eater of guests
under your roof! Zeus and the gods have paid you!'

The blind thing in his doubled fury broke
a hilltop in his hands and heaved it after us.
Ahead of our black prow it struck and sank
whelmed in a spuming geyser, a giant wave
that washed the ship stern foremost back to shore.
I got the longest boathook out and stood
fending us off, with furious nods to all
to put their backs into a racing stroke—
row, row, or perish. So the long oars bent
kicking the foam sternward, making head
until we drew away, and twice as far.
Now when I cupped my hands I heard the crew
in low voices protesting:

'Godsake, Captain!
Why bait the beast again? Let him alone!'
'That tidal wave he made on the first throw
all but beached us.'

'All but stove us in!'

'Give him our bearing with your trumpeting,
he'll get the range and lob a boulder.'

'Aye
He'll smash our timbers and our heads together!'

I would not heed them in my glorying spirit,
but let my anger flare and yelled:
'Kyklops,
if ever mortal man inquire
how you were put to shame and blinded, tell him
Odysseus, raider of cities, took your eye:
Laërtês' son, whose home's on Ithaka!'

At this he gave a mighty sob and rumbled:
'Now comes the weird[2] upon me, spoken of old.
A wizard, grand and wondrous, lived here—Télemos,
a son of Eurymos; great length of days
he had in wizardry among the Kyklopês,
and these things he foretold for time to come:
my great eye lost, and at Odysseus' hands.
Always I had in mind some giant, armed
in giant force, would come against me here.
But this, but you—small, pitiful and twiggy—
you put me down with wine, you blinded me.
Come back, Odysseus, and I'll treat you well,
praying the god of earthquake to befriend you—
his son I am, for he by his avowal
fathered me, and, if he will, he may
heal me of this black wound—he and no other
of all the happy gods or mortal men.'

Few words I shouted in reply to him:
'If I could take your life I would and take
your time away, and hurl you down to hell!
The god of earthquake could not heal you there!'

2. Fate, destiny.

At this he stretched his hands out in his darkness
toward the sky of stars, and prayed Poseidon:
'O hear me, lord, blue girdler of the islands,
if I am thine indeed, and thou art father:
grant that Odysseus, raider of cities, never
see his home: Laërtês' son, I mean,
who kept his hall on Ithaka. Should destiny
intend that he shall see his roof again
among his family in his father land,
far be that day, and dark the years between.
Let him lose all companions, and return
under strange sail to bitter days at home.'

In these words he prayed, and the god heard him.
Now he laid hands upon a bigger stone
and wheeled around, titanic for the cast,
to let it fly in the black-prowed vessel's track.
But it fell short, just aft the steering oar,
and whelming seas rose giant above the stone
to bear us onward toward the island.
There
as we ran in we saw the squadron waiting,
the trim ships drawn up side by side, and all
our troubled friends who waited, looking seaward.
We beached her, grinding keel in the soft sand,
and waded in, ourselves, on the sandy beach.
Then we unloaded all the Kyklops' flock
to make division, share and share alike,
only my fighters voted that my ram,
the prize of all, should go to me. I slew him
by the sea side and burnt his long thighbones
to Zeus beyond the stormcloud, Kronos' son,
who rules the world. But Zeus disdained my offering;
destruction for my ships he had in store
and death for those who sailed them, my companions.
Now all day long until the sun went down
we made our feast on mutton and sweet wine,
till after sunset in the gathering dark
we went to sleep above the wash of ripples.

When the young Dawn with finger tips of rose
touched the world, I roused the men, gave orders
to man the ships, cast off the mooring lines;
and filing in to sit beside the rowlocks
oarsmen in line dipped oars in the grey sea.

so we moved out, sad in the vast offing,
having our precious lives, but not our friends.

Book X

THE GRACE OF THE WITCH

We made our landfall on Aiolia Island,[3]
domain of Aiolos Hippotadês,
the wind king, dear to the gods who never die—
an isle adrift upon the sea, ringed round
with brazen ramparts on a sheer cliffside.
Twelve children had old Aiolos at home—
six daughters and six lusty sons—and he
gave girls to boys to be their gentle brides;
now those lords, in their parents' company,
sup every day in hall—a royal feast
with fumes of sacrifice and winds that pipe
'round hollow courts; and all the night they sleep
on beds of filigree beside their ladies.
Here we put in, lodged in the town and palace,
while Aiolos played host to me. He kept me
one full month to hear the tale of Troy,
the ships and the return of the Akhaians,
all which I told him point by point in order.
When in return I asked his leave to sail
and asked provisioning, he stinted nothing,
adding a bull's hide sewn from neck to tail
into a mighty bag, bottling storm winds;
for Zeus had long ago made Aiolos
warden of winds, to rouse or calm at will.
He wedged this bag under my afterdeck,
lashing the neck with shining silver wire
so not a breath got through; only the west wind
he lofted for me in a quartering breeze
to take my squadron spanking home.
No luck:
the fair wind failed us when our prudence failed.
Nine days and nights we sailed without event,
till on the tenth we raised our land. We neared it,
and saw men building fires along the shore;
but now, being weary to the bone, I fell

3. A moving island, the home of the king of the winds (whose name in Greek means "shifting, changeable"). It has been located by modern geographers in the Lipari Islands of the Sicilian coast. The great ancient geographer Eratosthenes was not so confident. He once said that we would know exactly where Odysseus wandered after we had traced the leatherworker who made the bag in which the winds were contained.

into deep slumber; I had worked the sheet
nine days alone, and given it to no one,
wishing to spill no wind on the homeward run.
But while I slept, the crew began to parley:
silver and gold, they guessed, were in that bag
bestowed on me by Aiolos' great heart;
and one would glance at his benchmate and say:
'It never fails. He's welcome everywhere:
hail to the captain when he goes ashore!
He brought along so many presents, plunder
out of Troy, that's it. How about ourselves—
his shipmates all the way. Nigh home we are
with empty hands. And who has gifts from Aiolos?
He has. I say we ought to crack that bag,
there's gold and silver, plenty, in that bag!'

Temptation had its way with my companions,
and they untied the bag.
Then every wind
roared into hurricane; the ships went pitching
west with many cries; our land was lost.
Roused up, despairing in that gloom, I thought:
"Should I go overside for a quick finish
or clench my teeth and stay among the living?'
Down in the bilge I lay, pulling my sea cloak
over my head, while the rough gale blew the ships
and rueful crews clear back to Aiolia.

We put ashore for water; then all hands
gathered alongside for a mid-day meal.
When we had taken bread and drink, I picked
one soldier, and one herald, to go with me
and called again on Aiolos. I found him
at meat with his young princes and his lady,
but there beside the pillars, in his portico,
we sat down silent at the open door.
The sight amazed them, and they all exclaimed:
'Why back again, Odysseus?'
'What sea fiend
rose in your path?'
'Did we not launch you well
for home, or for whatever land you chose?'

Out of my melancholy I replied:
'Mischief aboard and nodding at the tiller—
a damned drowse—did for me. Make good my loss,
dear friends! You have the power!'

Gently I pleaded,
but they turned cold and still. Said Father Aiolos:
'Take yourself out of this island, creeping thing—
no law, no wisdom, lays it on me now
to help a man the blessed gods detest—
out! Your voyage here was cursed by heaven!'

He drove me from the place, groan as I would,
and comfortless we went again to sea,
days of it, till the men flagged at the oars—
no breeze, no help in sight, by our own folly—
six indistinguishable nights and days
before we raised the Laistrygonian height
and far stronghold of Lamos.[4] In that land
the daybreak follows dusk, and so the shepherd
homing calls to the cowherd setting out;
and he who never slept could earn two wages,
tending oxen, pasturing silvery flocks,
where the low night path of the sun is near
the sun's path by day.[5] Here, then, we found
a curious bay with mountain walls of stone
to left and right, and reaching far inland,—
a narrow entrance opening from the sea
where cliffs converged as though to touch and close.
All of my squadron sheltered here, inside
the cavern of this bay.
Black prow by prow
those hulls were made fast in a limpid calm
without a ripple stillness all around them.
My own black ship I chose to moor alone
on the sea side, using a rock for bollard;
and climbed a rocky point to get my bearings.
No farms, no cultivated land appeared,
but puffs of smoke rose in the wilderness;
so I sent out two picked men and a herald
to learn what race of men this land sustained.

My party found a track—a wagon road
for bringing wood down from the heights to town;
and near the settlement they met a daughter
of Antiphatês the Laistrygon—a stalwart
young girl taking her pail to Artakía,
the fountain where these people go for water.
My fellows hailed her, put their questions to her:

4. Presumably the founder of the city of the Laistrygonians, a race of man-eating giants.
5. Generally thought to be a confused reference to the short summer nights of the far north.

who might the king be? ruling over whom?
She waved her hand, showing her father's lodge,
so they approached it. It its gloom they saw
a woman like a mountain crag, the queen—
and loathed the sight of her. But she, for greeting,
called from the meeting ground her lord and master,
Antiphatês, who came to drink their blood.
He seized one man and tore him on the spot,
making a meal of him; the other two
leaped out of doors and ran to join the ships.
Behind, he raised the whole tribe howling, countless
Laistrygonês—and more than men they seemed,
gigantic when they gathered on the sky line
to shoot great boulders down from slings; and hell's own
crashing rose, and crying from the ships,
as planks and men were smashed to bits—poor gobbets
the wildmen speared like fish and bore away.
But long before it ended in the anchorage—
havoc and slaughter—I had drawn my sword
and cut my own ship's cable. 'Men,' I shouted,
'man the oars and pull till your hearts break
if you would put this butchery behind!'
The oarsmen rent the sea in mortal fear
and my ship spurted out of range, far out
from that deep canyon where the rest were lost.
So we fared onward, and death fell behind,
and we took breath to grieve for our companions.

Our next landfall was on Aiaia, island
of Kirkê, dire beauty and divine,
sister of baleful Aiêtês, like him
fathered by Hêlios the light of mortals
on Persê, child of the Ocean stream.
We came
washed in our silent ship upon her shore,
and found a cove, a haven for the ship—
some god, invisible, conned us in. We landed,
to lie down in that place two days and nights,
worn out and sick at heart, tasting our grief.
But when Dawn set another day a-shining
I took my spear and broadsword, and I climbed
a rocky point above the ship, for sight
or sound of human labor. Gazing out
from that high place over a land of thicket,
oaks and wide watercourses, I could see
a smoke wisp from the woodland hall of Kirké.

So I took counsel with myself: should I
go inland scouting out that reddish smoke?
No: better not, I thought, but first return
to waterside and ship, and give the men
breakfast before I sent them to explore.
Now as I went down quite alone, and came
a bowshot from the ship, some god's compassion
set a big buck in motion to cross my path—
a stag with noble antlers, pacing down
from pasture in the woods to the riverside,
as long thirst and the power of sun constrained him.
He started from the bush and wheeled: I hit him
square in the spine midway along his back
and the bronze point broke through it. In the dust
he fell and whinnied as life bled away.
I set one foot against him, pulling hard
to wrench my weapon from the wound, then left it,
butt-end on the ground. I plucked some withies
and twined a double strand into a rope—
enough to tie the hocks of my huge trophy;
then pickaback I lugged him to the ship,
leaning on my long spearshaft; I could not
haul that mighty carcass on one shoulder.
Beside the ship I let him drop, and spoke
gently and low to each man standing near:
'Come, friends, though hard beset, we'll not go down
into the House of Death before our time.
As long as food and drink remain aboard
let us rely on it, not die of hunger.'

At this those faces, cloaked in desolation
upon the waste sea beach, were bared;
their eyes turned toward me and the mighty trophy,
lighting, foreseeing pleasure, one by one.
So hands were washed to take what heaven sent us.
And all that day until the sun went down
we had our fill of venison and wine,
till after sunset in the gathering dusk
we slept at last above the line of breakers.
When the young Dawn with finger tips of rose
made heaven bright, I called them round and said:
'Shipmates, companions in disastrous time,
O my dear friends, where Dawn lies,[6] and the West,

6. In view of the immediately preceding lines, this can hardly be taken literally. It is possibly a sailor's metaphorical way of saying, "We don't know where we are."

and where the great Sun, light of men, may go
under the earth by night, and where he rises—
of these things we know nothing. Do we know
any least thing to serve us now? I wonder.
All that I saw when I went up the rock
was one more island in the boundless main,
a low landscape, covered with woods and scrub,
and puffs of smoke ascending in mid-forest.'

They were all silent, but their hearts contracted,
remembering Antiphatês the Laistrygon
and that prodigious cannibal, the Kyklops.
They cried out, and the salt tears wet their eyes.
But seeing our time for action lost in weeping,
I mustered those Akhaians under arms,
counting them off in two platoons, myself
and my godlike Eurýlokhos commanding.
We shook lots in a soldier's dogskin cap
and his came bounding out—valiant Eurýlokhos!—
So off he went, with twenty-two companions
weeping, as mine wept, too, who stayed behind.

In the wild wood they found an open glade,
around a smooth stone house—the hall of Kirkê—
and wolves and mountain lions lay there, mild
in her soft spell, fed on her drug of evil.
None would attack—oh, it was strange, I tell you—
but switching their long tails they faced our men
like hounds, who look up when their master comes
with tidbits for them—as he will—from table.
Humbly those wolves and lions with mighty paws
fawned on our men—who met their yellow eyes
and feared them.
In the entrance way they stayed
to listen there: inside her quiet house
they heard the goddess Kirkê.
Low she sang
in her beguiling voice, while on her loom
she wove ambrosial fabric sheer and bright,
by that craft known to the goddesses of heaven.
No one would speak, until Politês—most
faithful and likable of my officers, said:
'Dear friends, no need for stealth: here's a young weaver
singing a pretty song to set the air
a-tingle on these lawns and paven courts.
Goddess she is, or lady. Shall we greet her?'

So reassured, they all cried out together,
and she came swiftly to the shining doors
to call them in. All but Eurýlokhos—
who feared a snare—the innocents went after her.
On thrones she seated them, and lounging chairs,
while she prepared a meal of cheese and barley
and amber honey mixed with Pramnian wine,[7]
adding her own vile pinch, to make them lose
desire or thought of our dear father land.
Scarce had they drunk when she flew after them
with her long stick and shut them in a pigsty—
bodies, voices, heads, and bristles, all
swinish now, though minds were still unchanged.
So, squealing, in they went. And Kirkê tossed them
acorns, mast, and cornel berries—fodder
for hogs who rut and slumber on the earth.

Down to the ship Eurýlokhos came running
to cry alarm, foul magic doomed his men!
But working with dry lips to speak a word
he could not, being so shaken; blinding tears
welled in his eyes; foreboding filled his heart.
When we were frantic questioning him, at last
we heard the tale: our friends were gone. Said he:
'We went up through the oak scrub where you sent us,
Odysseus, glory of commanders,
until we found a palace in a glade,
a marble house on open ground, and someone
singing before her loom a chill, sweet song—
goddess or girl, we could not tell. They hailed her,
and then she stepped through shining doors and said,
"Come, come in!" Like sheep they followed her,
but I saw cruel deceit, and stayed behind.
Then all our fellows vanished. Not a sound,
and nothing stirred, although I watched for hours.'

When I heard this I slung my silver-hilted
broadsword on, and shouldered my long bow,
and said, 'Come, take me back the way you came.'
But he put both his hands around my knees
in desperate woe, and said in supplication:
'Not back there, O my lord! Oh, leave me here!
You, even you, cannot return, I know it,

7. A harsh, dark wine.

I know you cannot bring away our shipmates;
better make sail with these men, quickly too,
and save ourselves from horror while we may.'

But I replied:
'By heaven, Eurýlokhos,
rest here then; take food and wine;
stay in the black hull's shelter. Let me go,
as I see nothing for it but to go.'

I turned and left him, left the shore and ship,
and went up through the woodland hushed and shady
to find the subtle witch in her long hall.
But Hermês met me, with his golden wand,
barring the way—a boy whose lip was downy
in the first bloom of manhood, so he seemed.
He took my hand and spoke as though he knew me:[8]

'Why take the inland path alone,
poor seafarer, by hill and dale
upon this island all unknown?
Your friends are locked in Kirkê's pale;
all are become like swine to see;
and if you go to set them free
you go to stay, and never more make sail
for your old home upon Thaki.

But I can tell you what to do
to come unchanged from Kirkê's power
and disenthrall your fighting crew:
take with you to her bower
as amulet, this plant I know—
it will defeat her horrid show,
so pure and potent is the flower;
no mortal herb was ever so.

Your cup with numbing drops of night
and evil, stilled of all remorse,
she will infuse to charm your sight;
but this great herb with holy force
will keep your mind and senses clear:
when she turns cruel, coming near

8. The four rhymed stanzas which follow are a translator's license; in the original there is no change of meter and, of course, no rhyme. *Thaki*, below: Ithaka.

with her long stick to whip you out of doors,
then let your cutting blade appear,

Let instant death upon it shine,
and she will cower and yield her bed—
a pleasure you must not decline,
so may her lust and fear bestead
you and your friends, and break her spell;
but make her swear by heaven and hell
no witches' tricks, or else, your harness shed,
you'll be unmanned by her as well.'

He bent down glittering for the magic plant
and pulled it up, black root and milky flower—
a *molü* in the language of the gods—
fatigue and pain for mortals to uproot;
but gods do this, and everything, with ease.

Then toward Olympos through the island trees
Hermês departed, and I sought out Kirkê,
my heart high with excitement, beating hard.
Before her mansion in the porch I stood
to call her, all being still. Quick as a cat
she opened her bright doors and sighed a welcome;
then I strode after her with heavy heart
down the long hall, and took the chair she gave me,
silver-studded, intricately carved,
made with a low footrest. The lady Kirkê
mixed me a golden cup of honeyed wine,
adding in mischief her unholy drug.
I drank, and the drink failed. But she came forward
aiming a stroke with her long stick, and whispered:
'Down in the sty and snore among the rest!'

Without a word, I drew my sharpened sword
and in one bound held it against her throat.
She cried out, then slid under to take my knees,
catching her breath to say, in her distress:
'What champion, of what country, can you be?
Where are your kinsmen and your city?
Are you not sluggish with my wine? Ah, wonder!
Never a mortal man that drank this cup
but when it passed his lips he had succumbed.
Hale must your heart be and your tempered will.
Odysseus then you are, O great contender,

of whom the glittering god with golden wand[9]
spoke to me ever, and foretold
the black swift ship would carry you from Troy.
Put up your weapon in the sheath. We two
shall mingle and make love upon our bed.
So mutual trust may come of play and love.'

To this I said:
'Kirkê, am I a boy,
that you should make me soft and doting now?
Here in this house you turned my men to swine;
now it is I myself you hold, enticing
into your chamber, to your dangerous bed,
to take my manhood when you have me stripped.
I mount no bed of love with you upon it.
Or swear me first a great oath, if I do,
you'll work no more enchantment to my harm.'
She swore at once, outright, as I demanded,
and after she had sworn, and bound herself,
I entered Kirkê's flawless bed of love.

Presently in the hall her maids were busy,
the nymphs who waited upon Kirkê: four,
whose cradles were in fountains, under boughs,
or in the glassy seaward-gliding streams.
One came with richly colored rugs to throw
on seat and chairback, over linen covers;
a second pulled the tables out, all silver,
and loaded them with baskets all of gold;
a third mixed wine as tawny-mild as honey
in a bright bowl, and set out golden cups.
The fourth came bearing water, and lit a blaze
under a cauldron. By and by it bubbled,
and when the dazzling brazen vessel seethed
she filled a bathtub to my waist, and bathed me,
pouring a soothing blend on head and shoulder,
warming the soreness of my joints away.
When she had done, and smoothed me with sweet oil,
she put a tunic and a cloak around me
and took me to a silver-studded chair
with footrest, all elaborately carven.
Now came a maid to tip a golden jug
of water into a silver finger bowl,

9. Hermes.

and draw a polished table to my side.
The larder mistress brought her tray of loaves
with many savory slices, and she gave
the best, to tempt me. But no pleasure came;
I huddled with my mind elsewhere, oppressed.

Kirkê regarded me, as there I sat
disconsolate, and never touched a crust.
Then she stood over me and chided me:
'Why sit at table mute, Odysseus?
Are you mistrustful of my bread and drink?
Can it be treachery that you fear again,
after the gods' great oath I swore for you?'
I turned to her at once, and said:
'Kirkê,
where is the captain who could bear to touch
this banquet, in my place? A decent man
would see his company before him first.
Put heart in me to eat and drink—you may,
by freeing my companions. I must see them.'

But Kirkê had already turned away.
Her long staff in her hand, she left the hall
and opened up the sty, I saw her enter,
driving those men turned swine to stand before me.
She stroked them, each in turn, with some new chrism;
and then, behold! their bristles fell away,
the coarse pelt grown upon them by her drug
melted away, and they were men again,
younger, more handsome, taller than before.
Their eyes upon me, each one took my hands,
and wild regret and longing pierced them through,
so the room rang with sobs, and even Kirkê
pitied that transformation. Exquisite
the goddess looked as she stood near me, saying:
'Son of Laërtês and the gods of old,
Odysseus, master mariner and soldier,
go to the sea beach and sea-breasting ship;
drag it ashore, full length upon the land;
stow gear and stores in rock-holes under cover;
return; be quick; bring all your dear companions.'

Now, being a man, I could not help consenting.
So I went down to the sea beach and the ship,
where I found all my other men on board,

weeping, in despair along the benches.
Sometimes in farmyards when the cows return
well fed from pasture to the barn, one sees
the pens give way before the calves in tumult,
breaking through to cluster about mothers,
bumping together, bawling. Just that way
my crew poured round me when they saw me come—
their faces wet with tears as if they saw
their homeland, and the crags of Ithaka,
even the very town where they were born.
And weeping still they all cried out in greeting:
'Prince, what joy this is, your safe return!
Now Ithaka seems here, and we in Ithaka!
But tell us now, what death befell our friends?'

And, speaking gently, I replied:
'First we must get the ship high on the shingle,
and stow our gear and stores in clefts of rock
for cover. Then come follow me, to see
your shipmates in the magic house of Kirkê
eating and drinking, endlessly regaled.'

They turned back, as commanded, to this work;
only one lagged, and tried to hold the others;
Eurýlokhos it was, who blurted out:
'Where now, poor remnants? is it devil's work
you long for? Will you go to Kirkê's hall?
Swine, wolves, and lions she will make us all,
beasts of her courtyard, bound by her enchantment.
Remember those the Kyklops held, remember
shipmates who made that visit with Odysseus!
The daring man! They died for his foolishness!'
When I heard this I had a mind to draw
the blade that swung against my side and chop him,
bowling his head upon the ground—kinsman[1]
or no kinsman, close to me though he was.
But others came between, saying, to stop me,
'Prince, we can leave him, if you say the word;
let him stay here on guard. As for ourselves,
show us the way to Kirkê's magic hall.'

So all turned inland, leaving shore and ship,
and Eurýlokhos—he, too, came on behind,

1. Eurýlokhos was related to Odysseus by marriage.

fearing the rough edge of my tongue. Meanwhile
at Kirkê's hands the rest were gently bathed,
anointed with sweet oil, and dressed afresh
in tunics and new cloaks with fleecy linings.
We found them all at supper when we came.
But greeting their old friends once more, the crew
could not hold back their tears; and now again
the rooms rang with sobs. Then Kirkê, loveliest
of all immortals, came to counsel me:
'Son of Laërtês and the gods of old.
Odysseus, master mariner and soldier,
enough of weeping fits. I know—I, too—
what you endured upon the inhuman sea,
what odds you met on land from hostile men.
Remain with me, and share my meat and wine;
restore behind your ribs those gallant hearts
that served you in the old days, when you sailed
from stony Ithaka. Now parched and spent,
your cruel wandering is all you think of,
never of joy, after so many blows.'

As we were men we could not help consenting.
So day by day we lingered, feasting long
on roasts and wine, until a year grew fat.
But when the passing months and wheeling seasons
brought the long summery days, the pause of summer,
my shipmates one day summoned me and said:
'Captain, shake off this trance, and think of home—
if home indeed awaits us,
if we shall ever see
your own well-timbered hall on Ithaka.'

They made me feel a pang, and I agreed.
That day, and all day long, from dawn to sundown,
we feasted on roast meat and ruddy wine,
and after sunset when the dusk came on
my men slept in the shadowy hall, but I
went through the dark to Kirkê's flawless bed
and took the goddess' knees in supplication,
urging, as she bent to hear:
'O Kirkê,
now you must keep your promise; it is time.
Help me make sail for home. Day after day
my longing quickens, and my company
give me no peace, but wear my heart away
pleading when you are not at hand to hear.'

The loveliest of goddesses replied:
'Son of Laërtês and the gods of old,
Odysseus, master mariner and soldier,
you shall not stay here longer against your will;
but home you may not go
unless you take a strange way round and come
to the cold homes of Death and pale Perséphonê.[2]
You shall hear prophecy from the rapt shade
of blind Teirêsias of Thebes,[3] forever
charged with reason even among the dead;
to him alone, of all the flitting ghosts,
Perséphonê has given a mind undarkened.'

At this I felt a weight like stone within me,
and, moaning, pressed my length against the bed,
with no desire to see the daylight more.
But when I had wept and tossed and had my fill
of this despair, at last I answered her:
'Kirkê, who pilots me upon this journey?
No man has ever sailed to the land of Death.'

That loveliest of goddesses replied:
'Son of Laërtês and gods of old,
Odysseus, master of land ways and sea ways,
feel no dismay because you lack a pilot;
only set up your mast and haul your canvas
to the fresh blowing North; sit down and steer,
and hold that wind, even to the bourne of Ocean,
Perséphonê's deserted stand and grove,
dusky with poplars and the drooping willow.
Run through the tide-rip, bring your ship to shore,
land there, and find the crumbling homes of Death.
Here, toward the Sorrowing Water, run the streams
of Wailing, out of Styx, and quenchless Burning[4]—
torrents that join in thunder at the Rock.
Here then, great soldier, setting foot obey me:
dig a well shaft a forearm square; pour out
libations round it to the unnumbered dead:
sweet milk and honey, then sweet wine, and last
clear water, scattering handfuls of white barley.
Pray now, with all your heart, to the faint dead;
swear you will sacrifice your finest heifer,
at home in Ithaka, and burn for them

2. Queen of the underworld. 3. A blind prophet who figures prominently in the legends of Thebes (he is a character in Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*). 4. Pyriphlegethon, a river of the underworld, as are the Sorrowing Water (Acheron), the stream of Wailing (Cocytus), and the Styx.

her tenderest parts in sacrifice; and vow
to the lord Teirêsias, apart from all,
a black lamb, handsomest of all your flock—
thus to appease the nations of the dead.
Then slash a black ewe's throat, and a black ram,
facing the gloom of Erebos;[5] but turn
your head away toward Ocean. You shall see, now
souls of the buried dead in shadowy hosts,
and now you must call out to your companions
to flay those sheep the bronze knife has cut down,
for offerings, burnt flesh to those below,
to sovereign Death and pale Perséphonê.
Meanwhile draw sword from hip, crouch down, ward off
the surging phantoms from the bloody pit
until you know the presence of Teirêsias.
He will come soon, great captain; be it he
who gives you course and distance for your sailing
homeward across the cold fish-breeding sea.'

As the goddess ended, Dawn came stitched in gold.
Now Kirkê dressed me in my shirt and cloak,
put on a gown of subtle tissue, silvery,
then wound a golden belt about her waist
and veiled her head in linen,
while I went through the hall to rouse my crew.
I bent above each one, and gently said:
'Wake from your sleep; no more sweet slumber. Come,
we sail: the Lady Kirkê so ordains it.'
They were soon up, and ready at that word;
but I was not to take my men unharmed
from this place, even from this. Among them all
the youngest was Elpênor—
no mainstay in a fight nor very clever—
and this one, having climbed on Kirkê's roof[6]
to taste the cool night, fell asleep with wine.
Waked by our morning voices, and the tramp
of men below, he started up, but missed
his footing on the long steep backward ladder
and fell that height headlong. The blow smashed
the nape cord, and his ghost fled to the dark.
But I was outside, walking with the rest,
saying:

'Homeward you think we must be sailing

5. The darkest region of the underworld, usually imagined as below the underworld itself but here to the west. 6. A flat roof, and the coolest place to sleep.

to our own land; no, elsewhere is the voyage
Kirkê has laid upon me. We must go
to the cold homes of Death and pale Perséphonê
to hear Teirêsias tell of time to come.'

They felt so stricken, upon hearing this,
they sat down wailing loud, and tore their hair.
but nothing came of giving way to grief.
Down to the shore and ship at last we went,
bowed with anguish, cheeks all wet with tears,
to find that Kirkê had been there before us
and tied nearby a black ewe and a ram:
she had gone by like air.
For who could see the passage of a goddess
unless she wished his mortal eyes aware?

Book XI

A GATHERING OF SHADES

We bore down on the ship at the sea's edge
and launched her on the salt immortal sea,
stepping our mast and spar in the black ship;
embarked the ram and ewe and went aboard
in tears, with bitter and sore dread upon us.
But now a breeze came up for us astern—
a canvas-bellying landbreeze, hale shipmate
sent by the singing nymph with sun-bright hair;
so we made fast the braces, took our thwarts,
and let the wind and steersman work the ship
with full sail spread all day above our coursing,
till the sun dipped, and all the ways grew dark
upon the fathomless unresting sea.
By night
our ship ran onward toward the Ocean's bourne,
the realm and region of the Men of Winter,[7]
hidden in mist and cloud. Never the flaming
eye of Hêlios lights on those men
at morning, when he climbs the sky of stars,
nor in descending earthward out of heaven;
ruinous night being rove[8] over those wretches.
We made the land, put ram and ewe ashore,
and took our way along the Ocean stream

7. Although Homer usually places Hades below the earth, here he puts it across a great expanse of sea, apparently in the far north. 8. Stretched or spread.

to find the place foretold for us by Kirkê.
There Perimêdês and Eurýlokhos
pinioned the sacred beast. With my drawn blade
I spaded up the votive pit, and poured
libations round it to the unnumbered dead:
sweet milk and honey, then sweet wine, and last
clear water; and I scattered barley down.
Then I addressed the blurred and breathless dead,
vowing to slaughter my best heifer for them
before she calved, at home in Ithaka,
and burn the choice bits on the altar fire;
as for Teirêsias, I swore to sacrifice
a black lamb, handsomest of all our flock.
Thus to assuage the nations of the dead
I pledged these rites, then slashed the lamb and ewe,
letting their black blood stream into the wellpit.
Now the souls gathered, stirring out of Erebos,
brides and young men, and men grown old in pain,
and tender girls whose hearts were new to grief;
many were there, too, torn by brazen lanceheads,
battle-slim, bearing still their bloody gear.
From every side they came and sought the pit
with rustling cries; and I grew sick with fear.
But presently I gave command to my officers
to flay those sheep the bronze cut down, and make
burnt offerings of flesh to the gods below—
to sovereign Death, to pale Perséphonê.
Meanwhile I crouched with my drawn sword to keep
the surging phantoms from the bloody pit
till I should know the presence of Teirêsias.
One shade came first—Elpênor, of our company,
who lay unburied still on the wide earth
as we had left him—dead in Kirkê's hall,
untouched, unmourned, when other cares compelled us.
Now when I saw him there I wept for pity
and called out to him:
'How is this, Elpênor,
how could you journey to the western gloom
swifter afoot than I in the black lugger?'

He sighed, and answered:
'Son of great Laërtês,
Odysseus, master mariner and soldier,
bad luck shadowed me, and no kindly power;
ignoble death I drank with so much wine.

I slept on Kirkê's roof, then could not see
the long steep backward ladder, coming down,
and fell that height. My neck bone, buckled under,
snapped, and my spirit found this well of dark.
Now hear the grace I pray for, in the name
of those back in the world, not here—your wife
and father, he who gave you bread in childhood,
and your own child, your only son, Telémakhos,
long ago left at home.
When you make sail
and put these lodgings of dim Death behind,
you will moor ship, I know, upon Aiaia Island;
there, O my lord, remember me, I pray,
do not abandon me unwept, unburied,
to tempt the gods' wrath, while you sail for home;
but fire my corpse, and all the gear I had,
and build a cairn for me above the breakers—
an unknown sailor's mark for men to come.
Heap up the mound there and implant upon it
the oar I pulled in life with my companions.'

He ceased, and I replied:
'Unhappy spirit,
I promise you the barrow and the burial.'

So we conversed, and grimly, at a distance,
with my long sword between, guarding the blood,
while the faint image of the lad spoke on.
Now came the soul of Antikleía, dead,
my mother, daughter of Autólykos,
dead now, though living still when I took ship
for holy Troy. Seeing this ghost I grieved,
but held her off, through pang on pang of tears,
till I should know the presence of Teirêsias.
Soon from the dark that prince of Thebes came forward
bearing a golden staff; and he addressd me:
'Son of Laërtês and the gods of old,
Odysseus, master of land ways and sea ways,
why leave the blazing sun, O man of woe,
to see the cold dead and the joyless region?
Stand clear, put up your sword;
let me but taste of blood, I shall speak true.'

At this I stepped aside, and in the scabbard
let my long sword ring home to the pommel silver,

as he bent down to the sombre blood. Then spoke
the prince of those with gift of speech:[9]
'Great captain,
a fair wind and the honey lights of home
are all you seek. But anguish lies ahead;
the god who thunders on the land prepares it,
not to be shaken from your track, implacable,
in rancor for the son whose eye you blinded.
One narrow strait may take you through his blows:
denial of yourself, restraint of shipmates.
When you make landfall on Thrinakia first
and quit the violet sea, dark on the land
you'll find the grazing herds of Hêlios
by whom all things are seen, all speech is known.
Avoid those kine, hold fast to your intent,
and hard seafaring brings you all to Ithaka.
But if you raid the beeves, I see destruction
for ship and crew. Though you survive alone,
bereft of all companions, lost for years,
under strange sail shall you come home, to find
your own house filled with trouble: insolent men
eating your livestock as they court your lady.
Aye, you shall make those men atone in blood!
But after you have dealt out death—in open
combat or by stealth—to all the suitors,
go overland on foot, and take an oar,
until one day you come where men have lived
with meat unsalted, never known the sea,
nor seen seagoing ships, with crimson bows
and oars that fledge light hulls for dipping flight.
The spot will soon be plain to you, and I
can tell you how: some passerby will say,
"What winnowing fan is that upon your shoulder?"
Halt, and implant your smooth oar in the turf
and make fair sacrifice to Lord Poseidon:
a ram, a bull, a great buck boar; turn back,
and carry out pure hekatombs at home
to all wide heaven's lords, the undying gods,
to each in order. Then a seaborne death
soft as this hand of mist will come upon you
when you are wearied out with rich old age,

9. Tiresias here predicts the future of Odysseus. Like many Greek prophecies, it contains alternatives. The second (l. 120ff.) is what happens. The journey inland to find a people who have never seen the sea (and so mistake an oar for a winnowing-fan—l. 136) does not take place within the *Odyssey* itself.

your country folk in blessed peace around you.
And all this shall be just as I foretell.'

When he had done, I said at once,
'Teirêsias,
my life runs on then as the gods have spun it.
But come, now, tell me this; make this thing clear:
I see my mother's ghost among the dead
sitting in silence near the blood. Not once
has she glanced this way toward her son, nor spoken.
Tell me, my lord,
may she in some way come to know my presence?'

To this he answered:
'I shall make it clear
in a few words and simply. Any dead man
whom you allow to enter where the blood is
will speak to you, and speak the truth; but those
deprived will grow remote again and fade.'
When he had prophesied, Teirêsias' shade
retired lordly to the halls of Death;
but I stood fast until my mother stirred,
moving to sip the black blood; then she knew me
and called out sorrowfully to me:
'Child,
how could you cross alive into this gloom
at the world's end?—No sight for living eyes;
great currents run between, desolate waters,
the Ocean first, where no man goes a journey
without ship's timber under him.
Say, now,
is it from Troy, still wandering, after years,
that you come here with ship and company?
Have you not gone at all to Ithaka?
Have you not seen your lady in your hall?'

She put these questions, and I answered her:
'Mother, I came here, driven to the land of death
in want of prophecy from Teirêsias' shade;
nor have I yet coasted Akhaia's hills
nor touched my own land, but have had hard roving
since first I joined Lord Agamémnon's host
by sea for Ilion, the wild horse country,
to fight the men of Troy.
But come now, tell me this, and tell me clearly,

what was the bane that pinned you down in Death?
Some ravaging long illness, or mild arrows
a-flying down one day from Artemis?
Tell me of Father, tell me of the son
I left behind me; have they still my place,
my honors, or have other men assumed them?
Do they not say that I shall come no more?
And tell me of my wife: how runs her thought,
still with her child, still keeping our domains,
or bride again to the best of the Akhaians?'

To this my noble mother quickly answered:
'Still with her child indeed she is, poor heart,
still in your palace hall. Forlorn her nights
and days go by, her life used up in weeping.
But no man takes your honored place. Telémakhos
has care of all your garden plots and fields,
and holds the public honor of a magistrate,
feasting and being feasted. But your father
is country bound and comes to town no more.
He owns no bedding, rugs, or fleecy mantles,
but lies down, winter nights, among the slaves,
rolled in old cloaks for cover, near the embers
Or when the heat comes at the end of summer,
the fallen leaves, all round his vineyard plot,
heaped into windrows, make his lowly bed.
He lies now even so, with aching heart,
and longs for your return, while age comes on him.
So I, too, pined away, so doom befell me,
not that the keen-eyed huntress[1] with her shafts
had marked me down and shot to kill me; not
that illness overtook me—no true illness
wasting the body to undo the spirit;
only my loneliness for you, Odysseus,
for your kind heart and counsel, gentle Odysseus,
took my own life away.'
I bit my lip,
rising perplexed, with longing to embrace her,
and tried three times, putting my arms around her,
but she went sifting through my hands, impalpable
as shadows are, and wavering like a dream.
Now this embittered all the pain I bore,
and I cried in the darkness:

1. Artemis.

'O my mother,
will you not stay, be still, here in my arms,
may we not, in this place of Death, as well,
hold one another, touch with love, and taste
salt tears' relief, the twinge of welling tears?
Or is this all hallucination, sent
against me by the iron queen, Perséphonê,
to make me groan again?'

My noble mother
answered quickly:
'O my child—alas,
most sorely tried of men—great Zeus's daughter,
Perséphonê, knits no illusion for you.
All mortals meet this judgment when they die.
No flesh and bone are here, none bound by sinew,
since the bright-hearted pyre consumed them down—
the white bones long exanimate—to ash;
dreamlike the soul flies, insubstantial.
You must crave sunlight soon.
Note all things strange
seen here, to tell your lady in after days.'

So went our talk; then other shadows came,
ladies in company, sent by Perséphonê—
consorts or daughters of illustrious men—
crowding about the black blood.
I took thought
how best to separate and question them,
and saw no help for it, but drew once more
the long bright edge of broadsword from my hip,
that none should sip the blood in company
but one by one, in order; so it fell
that each declared her lineage and name.

Here was great loveliness of ghosts![2] I saw
before them all, that princess of great ladies,
Tyro,[3] Salmoneus' daughter, as she told me,
and queen to Krêtheus, a son of Aiolos.
She had gone daft for the river Enipeus,[4]
most graceful of all running streams, and ranged

2. There follows a "catalogue of women," a list of famous and beautiful women of former times. 3. A queen of Thessaly; among her famous descendants were Nestor and Jason. 4. A river of Thessaly. Tyro had fallen in love with the rivergod; Poseidon, the "god who makes earth tremble," assumed his shape.

all day by Enipeus' limpid side,
whose form the foaming girdler of the islands,
the god who makes earth tremble, took and so
lay down with her where he sent flooding seaward,
their bower a purple billow, arching round
to hide them in a sea-vale, god and lady.
Now when his pleasure was complete, the god
spoke to her softly, holding fast her hand:
'Dear mortal, go in joy! At the turn of seasons,
winter to summer, you shall bear me sons;
no lovemaking of gods can be in vain.
Nurse our sweet children tenderly, and rear them.
Home with you now, and hold your tongue, and tell
no one your lover's name—though I am yours,
Poseidon, lord of surf that makes earth tremble.'

He plunged away into the deep sea swell,
and she grew big with Pelias and Neleus,[5]
powerful vassals, in their time, of Zeus.
Pelias lived on broad Iolkos seaboard
rich in flocks, and Neleus at Pylos.
As for the sons borne by that queen of women
to Krêtheus, their names were Aison,[6] Pherês,
and Amythâon, expert charioteer.
Next after her I saw Antiopê,
daughter of Ásopos.[7] She too could boast
a god for lover, having lain with Zeus
and borne two sons to him: Amphion and
Zêthos, who founded Thebes, the upper city,
and built the ancient citadel. They sheltered
no life upon that plain, for all their power,
without a fortress wall.
And next I saw
Amphitrion's true wife, Alkmênê, mother,
as all men know, of lionish Heraklês,
conceived when she lay close in Zeus's arms;
and Megarê, high-hearted Kreon's daughter,
wife of Amphitrion's unwearying son.

I saw the mother of Oidipous, Epikastê,[8]
whose great unwitting deed it was
to marry her own son. He took that prize

5. Father of Nestor of Pylos. 6. Father of Jason, the Argonaut. 7. A river in Boeotia, the territory of Thebes. 8. Usually known as Jocasta. *Oidipous*: Oedipus.

from a slain father; presently the gods
brought all to light that made the famous story.
But by their fearsome wills he kept his throne
in dearest Thebes, all through his evil days,
while she descended to the place of Death,
god of the locked and iron door. Steep down
from a high rafter, throttled in her noose,
she swung, carried away by pain, and left him
endless agony from a mother's Furies.

And I saw Khloris, that most lovely lady,
whom for her beauty in the olden time
Neleus wooed with countless gifts, and married.
She was the youngest daughter of Amphion,
son of Iasos. In those days he[9] held
power at Orkhómenos, over the Minyai.
At Pylos then as queen she bore her children—
Nestor, Khromios, Periklýmenos,
and Pêro, too, who turned the heads of men
with her magnificence. A host of princes
from nearby lands came courting her; but Neleus
would hear of no one, not unless the suitor
could drive the steers of giant Iphiklos
from Phylakê—longhorns, broad in the brow,
so fierce that one man only, a diviner,[1]
offered to round them up. But bitter fate
saw him bound hand and foot by savage herdsmen.
Then days and months grew full and waned, the year
went wheeling round, the seasons came again,
before at last the power of Iphiklos,
relenting, freed the prisoner, who foretold
all things to him. So Zeus's will was done.

And I saw Lêda,[2] wife of Tyndareus,
upon whom Tyndareus had sired twins
indomitable: Kastor, tamer of horses,
and Polydeukês, best in the boxing ring.
Those two live still, though life-creating earth
embraces them: even in the underworld
honored as gods by Zeus, each day in turn[3]
one comes alive, the other dies again.

9. Amphion (not the same Amphion who founded Thebes, l. 284). 1. Named Melampus. 2. She bore Helen to Zeus; to her husband Tyndareus, she bore the two sons, Castor and Polydeuces, and Clytemnestra, who was to be the wife of Agamemnon. 3. They shared, as it were, one immortality between them.

Then after Lêda to my vision came
the wife of Aloeus, Iphimedeia,
proud that she once had held the flowing sea[4]
and borne him sons, thunderers for a day,
the world-renowned Otos and Ephialtês.
Never were men on such a scale
bred on the plowlands and the grainlands, never
so magnificent any, after Orion.[5]
At nine years old they towered nine fathoms tall,
nine cubits in the shoulders, and they promised
furor upon Olympos, heaven broken by battle cries,
the day they met the gods in arms.
With Ossa's
mountain peak[6] they meant to crown Olympos
and over Ossa Pelion's forest pile
for footholds up the sky. As giants grown
they might have done it, but the bright son of Zeus[7]
by Lêto of the smooth braid shot them down
while they were boys unbearded; no dark curls
clustered yet from temples to the chin.
Then I saw Phaidra,[8] Prokris; and Ariadnê,
daughter of Minos,[9] the grim king. Theseus took her
aboard with him from Krete for the terraced land
of ancient Athens; but he had no joy of her.
Artemis killed her on the Isle of Dia
at a word from Dionysos.[1]
Maira, then,
and Klymênê, and that detested queen,
Eriphylê,[2] who betrayed her lord for gold . . .
but how name all the women I beheld there,
daughters and wives of kings? The starry night
wanes long before I close.
Here, or aboard ship,
amid the crew, the hour for sleep has come.
Our sailing is the gods' affair and yours."[3]

4. Poseidon. 5. The hunter who was, according to later legend, transformed into the constellation which still bears his name; in Homer he is in the underworld after his death (ll. 643ff.). 6. Ossa and Pelion are mountains near Olympus in Thessaly. 7. Apollo, son of Zeus and Lêto. 8. The Cretan wife of Theseus of Athens, who fell in love with her stepson Hippolytus. *Prokris:* the unfaithful wife of Cephalus, king of Athens. *Ariadnê:* sister of Phaedra; she helped Theseus slay the Minotaur on Crete and escaped with him, only to die on the island of Dia. 9. *Minos:* king of Crete, father of Phaedra and Ariadnê. 1. We have no other account of this version of the episode which explains why Dionysus wanted Ariadnê killed; the prevalent version of the story in later times is that Dionysus carried Ariadnê off to be his bride. *Maira:* a nymph of Artemis who broke her vow of chastity and was killed by the goddess. 2. Bribed with a golden necklace by Polynices, son of Oedipus, she persuaded her husband Amphiaraus to take part in the attack on Thebes, where he was killed. *Klymênê:* some story must have been attached to this name, but we do not know what it was. 3. Odysseus breaks off the story of his wanderings, and we are transported back to the scene of the banqueting hall of the Phaiakians.

Then he fell silent. Down the shadowy hall
the enchanted banqueters were still. Only
the queen with ivory pale arms, Arêtê, spoke,
saying to all the silent men:
"Phaiákians,
how does he stand, now, in your eyes, this captain,
the look and bulk of him, the inward poise?
He is my guest, but each one shares that honor.
Be in no haste to send him on his way
or scant your bounty in his need. Remember
how rich, by heaven's will, your possessions are."

Then Ekhenêos, the old soldier, eldest
of all Phaiákians, added his word:
"Friends, here was nothing but our own thought spoken,
the mark hit square. Our duties to her majesty.
For what is to be said and done,
we wait upon Alkínoös' command."

At this the king's voice rang:
"I so command—
as sure as it is I who, while I live,
rule the sea rovers of Phaiákia. Our friend
longs to put out for home, but let him be
content to rest here one more day, until
I see all gifts bestowed. And every man
will take thought for his launching and his voyage,
I most of all, for I am master here."

Odysseus, the great tactician, answered:
"Alkínoös, king and admiration of men,
even a year's delay, if you should urge it,
in loading gifts and furnishing for sea—
I too could wish it; better far that I
return with some largesse of wealth about me—
I shall be thought more worthy of love and courtesy
by every man who greets me home in Ithaka."
The king said:
"As to that, one word, Odysseus:
from all we see, we take you for no swindler—
though the dark earth be patient of so many,
scattered everywhere, baiting their traps with lies
of old times and of places no one knows.
You speak with art, but your intent is honest.
The Argive troubles, and your own troubles,
you told as a poet would, a man who knows the world.

But now come tell me this: among the dead
did you meet any of your peers, companions
who sailed with you and met their doom at Troy?
Here's a long night—an endless night—before us,
and no time yet for sleep, not in this hall.
Recall the past deeds and the strange adventures.
I could stay up until the sacred Dawn
as long as you might wish to tell your story."

Odysseus the great tactician answered:
"Alkínoös, king and admiration of men,
there is a time for story telling; there is
also a time for sleep. But even so,
if, indeed, listening be still your pleasure,
I must not grudge my part. Other and sadder
tales there are to tell, of my companions,
of some who came through all the Trojan spears,
clangor and groan of war,
only to find a brutal death at home—
and a bad wife behind it.
After Perséphonê,
icy and pale, dispersed the shades of women,
the soul of Agamémnon, son of Atreus,
came before me, sombre in the gloom,
and others gathered round, all who were with him
when death and doom struck in Aigísthos' hall.
Sipping the black blood, the tall shade perceived me,
and cried out sharply, breaking into tears;
then tried to stretch his hands toward me, but could not,
being bereft of all the reach and power
he once felt in the great torque of his arms.
Gazing at him, and stirred, I wept for pity,
and spoke across to him:
'O son of Atreus,
illustrious Lord Marshal, Agamémnon,
what was the doom that brought you low in death?
Were you at sea, aboard ship, and Poseidon
blew up a wicked squall to send you under,
or were you cattle-raiding on the mainland
or in a fight for some strongpoint, or women,
when the foe hit you to your mortal hurt?'

But he replied at once:
'Son of Laërtês,
Odysseus, master of land ways and sea ways,

neither did I go down with some good ship
in any gale Poseidon blew, nor die
upon the mainland, hurt by foes in battle.
It was Aigísthos who designed my death,
he and my heartless wife, and killed me, after
feeding me, like an ox felled at the trough.
That was my miserable end—and with me
my fellows butchered, like so many swine
killed for some troop, or feast, or wedding banquet
in a great landholder's household. In your day
you have seen men, and hundreds, die in war,
in the bloody press, or downed in single combat,
but these were murders you would catch your breath at:
think of us fallen, all our throats cut, winebowl
brimming, tables laden on every side,
while blood ran smoking over the whole floor.
In my extremity I heard Kassandra,[4]
Priam's daughter, piteously crying
as the traitress Klytaimnéstra made to kill her
along with me. I heaved up from the ground
and got my hands around the blade, but she
eluded me, that whore. Nor would she close
my two eyes[5] as my soul swam to the underworld
or shut my lips. There is no being more fell,
more bestial than a wife in such an action,
and what an action that one planned!
The murder of her husband and her lord.
Great god, I thought my children and my slaves
at least would give me welcome. But that woman,
plotting a thing so low, defiled herself
and all her sex, all women yet to come,
even those few who may be virtuous,'
He paused then, and I answered:
'Foul and dreadful.
That was the way that Zeus who views the wide world
vented his hatred on the sons of Atreus—
intrigues of women, even from the start.
Myriads
died by Helen's fault, and Klytaimnéstra
plotted against you half the world away.'

And he at once said:
'Let it be a warning
even to you. Indulge a woman never,

4. She was part of Agamémnon's share of the booty at Troy. 5. *I.e.*, give me a proper burial.

and never tell her all you know. Some things
a man may tell, some he should cover up.
Not that I see a risk for you, Odysseus,
of death at your wife's hands. She is too wise,
too clear-eyed, sees alternatives too well,
Penélopê, Ikários' daughter—
that young bride whom we left behind—think of it!—
when we sailed off to war. The baby boy
still cradled at her breast—now he must be
a grown man, and a lucky one. By heaven,
you'll see him yet, and he'll embrace his father
with old fashioned respect, and rightly.
My own
lady never let me glut my eyes
on my own son, but bled me to death first.
One thing I will advise, on second thought;
stow it away and ponder it.
Land your ship
in secret on your island; give no warning.
The day of faithful wives is gone forever.

But tell me, have you any word at all
about my son's life? Gone to Orkhómenos
or sandy Pylos, can he be? Or waiting
with Meneláos in the plain of Sparta?
Death on earth has not yet taken Orestês.'

But I could only answer:
'Son of Atreus,
why do you ask these questions of me? Neither
news of home have I, nor news of him,
alive or dead. And empty words are evil.'

So we exchanged our speech, in bitterness,
weighed down by grief, and tears welled in our eyes,
when there appeared the spirit of Akhilleus,
son of Peleus; then Patróklos' shade,
and then Antílokhos,[6] and then Aias,
first among all the Danaans in strength
and bodily beauty, next to prince Akhilleus.
Now that great runner, grandson of Aíakhos,[7]
recognized me and called across to me:
'Son of Laërtês and the gods of old,

6. Son of Nestor. 7. Akhilleus.

Odysseus, master mariner and soldier,
old knife, what next? What greater feat remains
for you to put your mind on, after this?
How did you find your way down to the dark
where these dimwitted dead are camped forever,
the after images of used-up men?'

I answered:
'Akhilleus, Peleus' son, strongest of all
among the Akhaians, I had need of foresight
such as Teirêsias alone could give
to help me, homeward bound for the crags of Ithaka.
I have not yet coasted Akhaia, not yet
touched my land; my life is all adversity.
But was there ever a man more blest by fortune
than you, Akhilleus? Can there ever be?
We ranked you with immortals in your lifetime,
we Argives did, and here your power is royal
among the dead men's shades. Think, then, Akhilleus:
you need not be so pained by death.'

To this
he answered swiftly:
'Let me hear no smooth talk
of death from you, Odysseus, light of councils.
Better, I say, to break sod as a farm hand
for some poor country man, on iron rations,
than lord it over all the exhausted dead.
Tell me, what news of the prince my son:[8] did he
come after me to make a name in battle
or could it be he did not? Do you know
if rank and honor still belong to Peleus
in the towns of the Myrmidons? Or now, may be,
Hellas and Phthia spurn him, seeing old age
fetters him, hand and foot. I cannot help him
under the sun's rays, cannot be that man
I was on Troy's wide seaboard, in those days
when I made bastion for the Argives
and put an army's best men in the dust.
Were I but whole again, could I go now
to my father's house, one hour would do to make
my passion and my hands no man could hold
hateful to any who shoulder him aside.'

8. Neoptólemos (the name means "new war").

Now when he paused I answered:
'Of all that—
of Peleus' life, that is—I know nothing;
but happily I can tell you the whole story
of Neoptólemos, as you require.
In my own ship I brought him out from Skyros[9]
to join the Akhaians under arms.
And I can tell you,
in every council before Troy thereafter
your son spoke first and always to the point;
no one but Nestor and I could out-debate him.
And when we formed against the Trojan line
he never hung back in the mass, but ranged
far forward of his troops—no man could touch him
for gallantry. Aye, scores went down before him
in hard fights man to man. I shall not tell
all about each, or name them all—the long
roster of enemies he put out of action,
taking the shock of charges on the Argives.
But what a champion his lance ran through
in Eurýpulos[1] the son of Télephos! Keteians
in throngs around that captain also died—
all because Priam's gifts had won his mother
to send the lad to battle; and I thought
Memnon[2] alone in splendor ever outshone him.

But one fact more: while our picked Argive crew
still rode that hollow horse Epeios built,
and when the whole thing lay with me, to open
the trapdoor of the ambuscade or not,
at that point our Danaan lords and soldiers
wiped their eyes, and their knees began to quake,
all but Neoptólemos. I never saw
his tanned cheek change color or his hand
brush one tear away. Rather he prayed me,
hand on hilt, to sortie, and he gripped
his tough spear, bent on havoc for the Trojans.
And when we had pierced and sacked Priam's tall city
he loaded his choice plunder and embarked
with no scar on him; not a spear had grazed him
nor the sword's edge in close work—common wounds

9. The Greeks were told by a prophet that Troy would fall only to the son of Achilles, who was living on the rocky island of Skyros. 1. He came to the aid of the Trojans with a fresh army. *Keteians*: The people of Eurýpulos, from Asia Minor. 2. Son of the dawn goddess, King of the Ethiopians, and a Trojan ally.

one gets in war. Arês in his mad fits
knows no favorites.'

But I said no more,
for he had gone off striding the field of asphodel,
the ghost of our great runner, Akhilleus Aikidês,[3]
glorying in what I told him of his son.

Now other souls of mournful dead stood by,
each with his troubled questioning, but one
remained alone, apart: the son of Télamon,
Aías, it was—the great shade burning still
because I had won favor on the beachhead
in rivalry over Akhilleus' arms.[4]
The Lady Thetis, mother of Akhilleus,
laid out for us the dead man's battle gear,
and Trojan children, with Athena,
named the Danaan fittest to own them. Would
god I had not borne the palm that day!
For earth took Aías then to hold forever,
the handsomest and, in all feats of war,
noblest of the Danaans after Akhilleus.
Gently therefore I called across to him:
'Aías, dear son of royal Télamon,
you would not then forget, even in death,
your fury with me over those accurst
calamitous arms?—and so they were, a bane
sent by the gods upon the Argive host.
For when you died by your own hand we lost
a tower, formidable in war. All we Akhaians
mourn you forever, as we do Akhilleus;
and no one bears the blame but Zeus.
He fixed that doom for you because he frowned
on the whole expedition of our spearmen.
My lord, come nearer, listen to our story!
Conquer your indignation and your pride.'

But he gave no reply, and turned away,
following other ghosts toward Erebos.
Who knows if in that darkness he might still
have spoken, and I answered?

3. Akhilleus is the son of Peleus, whose father was Aiakos. 4. After Akhilleus was killed by the Trojan Paris, his mother Thetis offered his weapons as a prize to the Greek who had done most harm to the Trojans. They were awarded to Odysseus. Ajax, after an attempt to kill Odysseus and the two kings, Meneláos and Agamémnon, committed suicide.

But my heart
longed, after this, to see the dead elsewhere.
And now there came before my eyes Minos,
the son of Zeus, enthroned, holding a golden staff,
dealing out justice among ghostly pleaders
arrayed about the broad doorways of Death.

And then I glimpsed Orion, the huge hunter,
gripping his club, studded with bronze, unbreakable,
with wild beasts he had overpowered in life
on lonely mountainsides, now brought to bay
on fields of asphodel.
And I saw Tityos,
the son of Gaia, lying
abandoned over nine square rods of plain.
Vultures, hunched above him, left and right,
rifling his belly, stabbed into the liver,
and he could never push them off.
This hulk
had once committed rape of Zeus's mistress,
Léto, in her glory, when she crossed
the open grass of Panopeus toward Pytho.
Then I saw Tántalos[5] put to the torture:
in a cool pond he stood, lapped round by water
clear to the chin, and being athirst he burned
to slake his dry weasand with drink, though drink
he would not ever again. For when the old man
put his lips down to the sheet of water
it vanished round his feet, gulped underground,
and black mud baked there in a wind from hell.
Boughs, too, drooped low above him, big with fruit,
pear trees, pomegranates, brilliant apples,
luscious figs, and olive ripe and dark;
but if he stretched his hand for one, the wind
under the dark sky tossed the bough beyond him.

Then Sísyphos[6] in torment I beheld
being roustabout to a tremendous boulder.
Leaning with both arms braced and legs driving,
he heaved it toward a height, and almost over,
but then a Power spun him round and sent
the cruel boulder bounding again to the plain.

5. King of Lydia. He was the confidant of the gods and ate at their table, but he betrayed their secrets. 6. King of Corinth, the archetype of the liar and trickster. We do not know what misdeed he is being punished for in this passage.

Whereon the man bent down again to toil,
dripping sweat, and the dust rose overhead.
Next I saw manifest the power of Heraklês—
a phantom, this, for he himself has gone
feasting amid the gods, reclining soft
with Hêbê of the ravishing pale ankles,
daughter of Zeus and Hêra, shod in gold.
But, in my vision, all the dead around him
cried like affrighted birds; like Night itself
he loomed with naked bow and nocked arrow
and glances terrible as continual archery.
My hackles rose at the gold swordbelt he wore
sweeping across him: gorgeous intaglio
of savage bears, boars, lions with wildfire eyes,
swordfights, battle, slaughter, and sudden death—
the smith who had that belt in him, I hope
he never made, and never will make, another.
The eyes of the vast figure rested on me,
and of a sudden he said in kindly tones:
'Son of Laërtês and the gods of old,
Odysseus, master mariner and soldier,
under a cloud, you too? Destined to grinding
labors like my own in the sunny world?
Son of Kroníon Zeus or not, how many
days I sweated out, being bound in servitude
to a man far worse than I, a rough master![7]
He made me hunt this place one time
to get the watchdog of the dead: no more
perilous task, he thought, could be; but I
brought back that beast, up from the underworld.
Hermês and grey-eyed Athena showed the way.'

And Heraklês, down the vistas of the dead,
faded from sight; but I stood fast, awaiting
other great souls who perished in times past.
I should have met, then, god-begotten Theseus[8]
and Peirithoös, whom both I longed to see,
but first came shades in thousands, rustling
in a pandemonium of whispers, blown together,
and the horror took me that Perséphonê
had brought from darker hell some saurian death's head.

7. Heraklês, son of Zeus, was made subject to the orders of Eurýstheus of Argos who ordered him to perform the twelve famous labors. One of them was to bring back from Hades the dog which guarded the gate. 8. After his adventures in Krete, he went with his friend Perithoös to Hades to kidnap Perséphonê; the venture failed, and the two heroes, imprisoned in Hades, were rescued by Heraklês.

I whirled then, made for the ship, shouted to crewmen
to get aboard and cast off the stern hawsers,
an order soon obeyed. They took their thwarts,
and the ship went leaping toward the stream of Ocean
first under oars, then with a following wind.

SAPPHO OF LESBOS

born ca. 630 B.C.

About Sappho's life we know very little: she was born about 630 B.C. on the fertile island of Lesbos off the coast of Asia Minor and spent most of her life there; she was married and had a daughter. Her lyric poems (i.e., poems sung to the accompaniment of the lyre) were so admired in the ancient world that a later poet called her the tenth Muse. In the third century B.C. scholars at the great library in Alexandria arranged her poems in nine books, of which the first contained over a thousand lines. But what we have now is a pitiful remnant: one (or possibly two) complete short poems, and a collection of quotations from her work by ancient writers, supplemented by bits and pieces written on ancient scraps of papyrus found in excavations in Egypt. Yet these remnants fully justify the enthusiasm of the ancient critics; Sappho's poems (insofar as we can guess at their nature from the fragments) give us the most vivid evocation of the joys and sorrows of love in all Greek literature.

Her themes are those of a Greek woman's world—girlhood, marriage, and love, especially the love of young women for each other and the poignancy of their parting as they leave to assume the responsibilities of a wife. About the social context of these songs we can only guess; all that can be said is that they reflect a world in which women, at least women of the aristocracy, lived an intense communal life of their own, one of female occasions, functions, and festivities, in which their young passionate natures were fully engaged with each other; to most of them, presumably, this was a stage preliminary to their later career in that world as wife and mother.

The first two poems in our selection were quoted in their entirety by ancient critics (though it is possible that there was another stanza at the end of the second); their text is not a problem. But the important recent additions to our knowledge of Sappho's poetry, the pieces of ancient books found in Egypt, are difficult to read and usually full of gaps. Our third selection, in fact, comes from the municipal rubbish heap of the Egyptian village of Oxyrhyncos. Most of the gaps in the text are due to holes or tears in the papyrus and can easily be filled in from our knowledge of Sappho's dialect and the strict meter in which she wrote, but the end of the third stanza and the whole of the fourth are imaginative reconstructions by the translator. The papyrus, for instance, tells us only that someone or something led Helen astray; Lattimore's "Queen of Cyprus" (i.e., the love goddess Aphrodite) may well be right but is not certain. In the next stanza all that we have is part of

a word that means something like "flexible" (Lattimore's "hearts that can be persuaded"), an adverb "lightly" and "remembering Anaktoria who is not here." As a matter of fact we don't have that all-important "not" but the sense demands it. Fortunately, the final stanza, with its telling echo of the opening theme, is almost intact. The most recent short survey of Sappho's poetry (by David A. Campbell) is to be found in *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature Vol. I* (1985). For a fuller treatment see C. M. Bowra, *Greek Lyric Poetry* (1961). Worth consulting also is A. Lesky *A History of Greek Literature* (1966).

1[1]

Throned in splendor, deathless, O Aphrodite,
child of Zeus, charm-fashioner, I entreat you
not with griefs and bitternesses to break my
spirit, O goddess:

standing by me rather, if once before now
far away you heard, when I called upon you,
left your father's dwelling place and descended,
yoking the golden

chariot to sparrows,[2] who fairly drew you
down in speed aslant the black world, the bright air
trembling at the heart to the pulse of countless
fluttering wingbeats.

Swiftly then they came, and you, blessed lady,
smiling on me out of immortal beauty,
asked me what affliction was on me, why I
called thus upon you,

what beyond all else I would have befall my
tortured heart: "Whom then would you have Persuasion
force to serve desire in your heart? Who is it,
Sappho, that hurt you?

Though she now escape, she soon will follow;
though she take not gifts from you, she will give them:
though she love not, yet she will surely love you
even unwilling."

In such guise come even again and set me
free from doubt and sorrow; accomplish all those

1. A prayer to the goddess of love, Aphrodite. The translator, Richmond Lattimore, has skillfully reproduced the metrical form of the Greek, the "Sapphic" stanza. 2. Aphrodite's sacred birds.

things my heart desires to be done; appear and
stand at my shoulder.

2

Like the very gods in my sight is he who
sits where he can look in your eyes, who listens
close to you, to hear the soft voice, its sweetness
murmur in love and

laughter, all for him. But it breaks my spirit;
underneath my breast all the heart is shaken.
Let me only glance where you are, the voice dies,
I can say nothing,

but my lips are stricken to silence, under-
neath my skin the tenuous flame suffuses;
nothing shows in front of my eyes, my ears are
muted in thunder.

And the sweat breaks running upon me, fever
shakes my body, paler I turn than grass is;
I can feel that I have been changed, I feel that
death has come near me.

3

Some there are who say that the fairest thing seen
on the black earth is an array of horsemen;
some, men marching; some would say ships; but I say
she whom one loves best

is the loveliest. Light were the work to make this
plain to all, since she, who surpassed in beauty
all mortality, Helen, once forsaking
her lordly husband,

fled away to Troy-land across the water.
Not the thought of child nor beloved parents
was remembered, after the Queen of Cyprus[3]
won her at first sight.

Since young brides have hearts that can be persuaded
easily, light things, palpitant to passion
as am I, remembering Anaktória
who has gone from me

3. Aphrodite.

and whose lovely walk and the shining pallor
of her face I would rather see before my
eyes than Lydia's chariots in all their glory
armored for battle. 20

AESCHYLUS

524?–456 B.C.

The earliest documents in the history of the Western theater are the seven plays of Aeschylus which have come down to us through the more than two thousand years since his death. When he produced his first play in the opening years of the fifth century B.C., the performance that we know as drama was still less than half a century old; it was still open to innovation and Aeschylus, in fact, made such significant contributions to its development that he has been called "the creator of tragedy."

The origins of the theatrical contests in Athens are obscure; they were a puzzle even for Aristotle who in the fourth century B.C. wrote a famous treatise on tragedy. All that we know for certain is that the drama began as a religious celebration which took the form of song and dance.

Such ceremonies are of course to be found in the communal life of many early cultures but it was in Athens, and in Athens alone, that the ceremony gave rise to what we know as tragedy and comedy and produced dramatic masterpieces which are still admired, read, and performed.

At some time in the late sixth century B.C. the Athenians converted what seems to have been a rural celebration of Dionysius, a vegetation deity especially associated with the vine, into an annual city festival at which dancing choruses, competing for prizes, sang hymns of praise to the god. It was from this choral performance that tragedy and comedy developed; some unknown innovator (his name was probably Thespis) combined the choral song with the speech of a masked actor, who, playing a god or hero, engaged the chorus in dialogue. It was Aeschylus who added a second actor and so created the possibility of conflict and the prototype of the drama as we know it.

After the defeat of the Persian invaders (480–479 B.C.), as Athens with its fleets and empire moved toward supremacy in the Greek world, this spring festival became a splendid occasion; the Dionysia, as it was now called, lasted for four days, during which public business (except in emergencies) was suspended and prisoners released on bail for the duration of the festival. In an open-air theater which could seat 14,000 spectators, tragic and comic poets competed for the prizes offered by the city. Three poets in each genre had been selected by the magistrates for the year; after an opening day devoted to the traditional choral hymns, a tragic poet with three plays and a comic poet with one provided the program for each of the three remaining days.

The three tragedies could deal with quite separate stories or, as in the case of Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, with the successive stages of one extended action. By the time this trilogy was produced (458 B.C.) the number of actors had been raised to three; the spoken part of the performance became steadily more

important. In the *Oresteia* an equilibrium between the two elements of the performance has been established; the actors, with their speeches, create the dramatic situation and its movement, the plot; the chorus, while contributing to dramatic suspense and illusion, ranges free of the immedate situation in its odes, which extend and amplify the significance of the action.

In 458 B.C. Aeschylus was at the end of a great career; he was to die, two years later, in the Greek city of Gela, in Sicily. He had begun his career as a dramatist before the Persian Wars, in the first days of the new Athenian democracy. He fought against the Persians at Marathon (where his brother was killed) and almost certainly also in the great sea fight at Salamis in 480 (his play, the *Persians*, produced in 472 B.C., contains what sounds like an eyewitness account of that battle). Only seven of his plays survive (we know that he produced 90); besides the *Persians* and the three plays of the *Oresteia*, we have the text of *Suppliants* (sometime in the 460s) and a famous and influential play, the *Prometheus Bound* (date unknown).

The *Oresteia* is a trilogy: the first play, *Agamemnon*, was followed at its performance by two more plays, the *Libation Bearers* and the *Eumenides*, which carried on its story and its theme to a conclusion. The theme of the trilogy is justice; and its story, like that of almost all Greek tragedies, is a legend which was already well-known to the audience that saw the first performance of the play. This particular legend, the story of the house of Atreus, was rich in dramatic potential, for it deals with a series of retributive murders which stained the hands of three generations of a royal family, and it has also a larger, a social and historical significance, of which Aeschylus took full advantage. The legend preserves the memory of an important historical process through which the Greeks had passed, the transition from tribal institutions of justice to communal justice, from a tradition which demanded that a murdered man's next of kin avenge his death, to a system requiring settlement of the private quarrel by the court of law, the typical institution of the city-state which replaced the primitive tribe. When Agamemnon returns victorious from Troy, he is killed by his wife, Clytemnestra, and her lover, Aegisthus, who is Agamemnon's cousin. Clytemnestra kills her husband to avenge her daughter Iphigenia, whom Agamemnon sacrificed to the goddess Artemis when he had to choose between his daughter's life and his ambition to conquer Troy. Aegisthus avenges the crime of a previous generation, the hideous murder of his brothers by Agamemnon's father, Atreus. The killing of Agamemnon is, by the standards of the old system, justice; but it is the nature of this justice that the process can never be arrested, that one act of violence must give rise to another. Agamemnon's murder must be avenged too, as it is in the second play of the trilogy by Orestes, his son, who kills both Aegisthus and his own mother, Clytemnestra. Orestes has acted justly according to the code of tribal society based on blood relationship, but in doing so he has violated the most sacred blood relationship of all, the bond between mother and son. The old system of justice has produced an insoluble dilemma.

At the end of the *Libation Bearers*, Orestes sees a vision of the Furies; they are serpent-haired female hunters, the avengers of blood. Agamemnon had a son to avenge him but for Clytemnestra there was no one to exact payment. This task is taken up by the Furies, who are the guardians of the

ancient tribal sanctities; they enforce the old dispensation when no earthly agent is at hand to do so. Female themselves, they assert the claim of the mother against the son who killed her to avenge his father. At the end of the second play they are only a vision in Orestes' mind—"You can't see them," he says to the chorus. "*I* can; they drive me on. I must move on." But in the final play we see them too; they are the chorus, and they have pursued Orestes to the great shrine of Apollo at Delphi where he has come to seek refuge.

Apollo can save him from immediate destruction at the Furies' hands but he cannot resolve the dilemma; Orestes must go to Athens, where Athena, the patron goddess of the city, will set up the first court of law to try his case. At Athens, before the ancient court of the Areopagus, the Furies argue eloquently but Apollo himself arrives to testify that he ordered Orestes to act. Athena instructs the judges in Orestes' favor and Orestes, acquitted, goes home to Argos. The Furies threaten to turn their dreadful wrath against Athens itself but the goddess persuades them to accept a home deep in Athenian earth, to act as protectors of the court and of the land.

More important than the arguments employed in the trial and the decision reached by the judges is the fact of the court's establishment. This is the end of an old era and the beginning of a new. The existence of the court is a guarantee that the tragic series of events which drove Orestes to the murder of his mother will never be repeated. The system of communal justice, which allows consideration of circumstance and motive, and which punishes impersonally, has at last replaced the inconclusive anarchy of individual revenge.

But the play is concerned with much more than the history of human institutions, with more even than the general problem of violence between man and man for which the particular instances of the trilogy stand. It is also a religious statement. The whole sequence of events, stretching over many generations, is presented as the working out of the will of Zeus. The tragic action of the *Iliad* was also the expression of the will of Zeus (though it is characteristic of Homer that Achilles was at least equally responsible), but for Aeschylus the will of Zeus means something new. In this trilogy the working out of Zeus' will proceeds intricately through three generations of bloodshed to the creation of a human institution which will prevent any repetition of the cycle of murder that produced it. Agamemnon dies, and Clytemnestra dies in her turn, and Orestes is hounded over land and sea to his trial, but out of all this suffering comes an important advance in human understanding and civilization. The chorus of the *Agamemnon*, celebrating the power of Zeus, tells us that he

> . . . has led us on to know,
> that Helmsman lays it down as law
> that we must suffer, suffer into truth.

From the suffering comes knowledge of the truth, whereas in the *Iliad* nothing at all comes out of the suffering, except the certainty of more. "Far from the land of my fathers," says Achilles to Priam, "I sit here in Troy, and bring nothing but sorrow to you and your children"; but his last words to Priam

are a reminder that this interval of sympathy is only temporary. After Hector's burial the war will go on as before. This is Zeus' will; Homer does not attempt to explain it. But the Aeschylean trilogy is nothing less than an attempt to justify the ways of God to man; the suffering is shown to us as the fulfillment of a purpose we can understand, a purpose beneficent to man.

The full scope of Zeus' will is apparent only to the audience, which follows the pattern of its execution through the three plays of the trilogy; as in the Book of Job, the characters who act and suffer are in the dark. They claim a knowledge of Zeus' will and boast that their actions are its fulfillment (it is in these terms that Agamemnon speaks of the sack of Troy, and Clytemnestra of Agamemnon's murder), and they are, of course, in one sense, right. But their knowledge is limited; Agamemnon does not realize that Zeus' will includes his death at the hands of Clytemnestra, nor Clytemnestra that it demands her death at the hands of her son. The chorus has, at times, a deeper understanding; in its opening ode it announces the law of Zeus, that men must learn by suffering, and at the end it recognizes the responsibility of Zeus in the death of Agamemnon—"all through the will of Zeus, the cause of all, the one who works it all." But the chorus cannot interpret the event in any way it can accept, for it can see no further than the immediate present; its knowledge of Zeus' law is an abstraction which it cannot relate to the terrible fact.

In this murky atmosphere (made all the more terrible by the beacon fire of the opening lines, which brings not light, but deeper darkness), one human being sees clear; she possesses the concrete vision of the future which complements the chorus' abstract knowledge of the law. This is the prophet Cassandra, Priam's daughter, brought from Troy as Agamemnon's share of the spoils. She has been given the power of true prophecy by the god Apollo, but the gift is nullified by the condition that her prophecies will never be believed. Like the Hebrew prophets, she sees reality—past, present, and future—so clearly that she is cut off from ordinary human beings by the clarity of her vision and the terrible burden of her knowledge; like them she expresses herself in poetic figures, and like them she is rejected by her hearers. To the everyday world, represented by the chorus, she appears to be mad, the fate of prophets in all ages; and it is only as she goes into the palace to the death she foresees that the old men of the chorus begin to accept, fearfully and hesitantly, the truth which she has been telling them.

The great scene in which she mouths her hysterical prophecies at them delays the action for which everything has been prepared—the death of Agamemnon. Before we hear his famous cry off stage, Cassandra presents us with a mysterious vision in which she combines cause, effect, and result: the murders which have led to this terrible moment, the death of Agamemnon (which will not take place until she leaves the stage), and the murders which will follow. We do not see Agamemnon's death—we see much more. The past, present, and future of Clytemnestra's action and Agamemnon's suffering are fused into a timeless unity in Cassandra's great lines, an unearthly unity which is dissolved only when Agamemnon, in the real world of time and space, screams in mortal agony.

The tremendous statement of the trilogy is made in a style which for magnificence and richness of suggestion can be compared only with the style

of Shakespeare at the height of his poetic power, the Shakespeare of *King Lear* and *Antony and Cleopatra*. The language of the *Oresteia* is an Oriental carpet of imagery in which combinations of metaphor, which at first seem bombastic in their violence, take their place in the ordered pattern of the poem as a whole. An image, once introduced, recurs, and reappears again, to run its course verbally and visually through the whole length of the trilogy, richer in meaning with each fresh appearance. In the second choral ode, for example, the chorus, welcoming the news of Agamemnon's victory at Troy, sings of the net which Zeus and Night threw over the city, trapping the inhabitants like animals. The net is here an image of Zeus' justice, a retributive justice, since Troy is paying for the crime of taking Helen, and the image identifies Zeus' justice with Agamemnon's action in sacking the city. This image occurs again, with a different emphasis, in the hypocritical speech of welcome which Clytemnestra makes to her husband on his return. She tells how she feared for his safety at Troy, how she trembled at the rumors of his death:

> and the rumors spread and fester,
> a runner comes with something dreadful,
> close on his heels the next and his news worse,
> and they shout it out and the whole house can hear;
> and wounds—if he took one wound for each report
> to penetrate these walls, he's gashed like a dragnet. . . .

This vision of Agamemnon dead she speaks of as her fear, but we know that it represents her deepest desire, and more, the purpose which she is now preparing to execute. When, later, she stands in triumph over her husband's corpse, she uses the same image to describe the robe which she threw over his limbs to blind and baffle him before she stabbed him—"Inextricable like a net for fishes/I cast about him a vicious wealth of raiment"—and this time the image materializes into an object visible on stage. We can see the net, the gashed robe still folded round Agamemnon's body. We shall see it again, for in the second play Orestes, standing over his mother's body as she now stands over his father's, will display the robe before us, with its holes and bloodstains, as a justification for what he has just done. Elsewhere in the *Agamemnon* the chorus compares Cassandra to a wild animal caught in the net, and later Aegisthus exults to see Agamemnon's body lying "in the nets of Justice." For each speaker the image has a different meaning, but not one realizes the terrible sense in which it applies to them all. They are all caught in the net, the system of justice by vengeance which only binds tighter the more its captives struggle to free themselves. Clytemnestra attempts to escape, to arrest the process of the chain of murders and the working out of the will of Zeus. "But I will swear a pact with the spirit born within us," she says, but Agamemnon's body and the net she threw over him are there on the stage to remind us that her appeal will not be heard; one more generation must act and suffer before the net will vanish, never to be seen again.

Richmond Lattimore, *Aeschylus, Oresteia* (1953), contains a valuable introduction aimed at the general reader. Gilbert Murray, *Aeschylus, Creator of Tragedy* (1940), discusses the theme of the *Oresteia*.

The Oresteia[1]

Agamemnon

Characters

WATCHMAN
CLYTAEMNESTRA
HERALD
AGAMEMNON
CASSANDRA
AEGISTHUS
CHORUS, the Old Men of Argos and their Leader
Attendants of Clytaemnestra and of Agamemnon, bodyguard of Aegisthus

[TIME AND SCENE: *A night in the tenth and final autumn of the Trojan war. The house of Atreus in Argos. Before it, an altar stands unlit; a watchman on the high roofs fights to stay awake.*]

WATCHMAN: Dear gods, set me free from all the pain,
the long watch I keep, one whole year awake . . .
propped on my arms, crouched on the roofs of Atreus
like a dog.
I know the stars by heart,
the armies of the night, and there in the lead
the ones that bring us snow or the crops of summer,
bring us all we have—
our great blazing kings of the sky,
I know them, when they rise and when they fall . . .
and now I watch for the light, the signal-fire[2]
breaking out of Troy, shouting Troy is taken.
So she commands, full of her high hopes.
That woman[3]—she maneuvers like a man.

And when I keep to my bed, soaked in dew,
and the thoughts go groping through the night
and the good dreams that used to guard my sleep . . .
not here, it's the old comrade, terror, at my neck.
I mustn't sleep, no—

[*Shaking himself awake.*]

Look alive, sentry.
And I try to pick out tunes, I hum a little,
a good cure for sleep, and the tears start,

1. Translated by Robert Fagles. 2. The fire the watchman waits to see is the bonfire nearest to Argos, the last in a chain extending all the way to Troy, each one visible, when fired at night, from the next. 3. Clytaemnestra.

I cry for the hard times come to the house,
no longer run like the great place of old.

Oh for a blessed end to all our pain,
some godsend burning through the dark—

[*Light appears slowly in the east; he struggles to his feet and scans it.*]

I salute you!
You dawn of the darkness, you turn night to day—
I see the light at last.
They'll be dancing in the streets of Argos[4]
thanks to you, thanks to this new stroke of—
Aieeeeee!
There's your signal clear and true, my queen!
Rise up from bed—hurry, lift a cry of triumph
through the house, praise the gods for the beacon,
if they've taken Troy . . .
But there it burns,
fire all the way. I'm for the morning dances.
Master's luck is mine. A throw of the torch
has brought us triple-sixes[5]—we have won!
My move now—

[*Beginning to dance, then breaking off, lost in thought.*]

Just bring him home. My king,
I'll take your loving hand in mine and then . . .
the rest is silence. The ox is on my tongue.[6]
Aye, but the house and these old stones,
give them a voice and what a tale they'd tell.
And so would I, gladly . . .
I speak to those who know; to those who don't
my mind's a blank. I never say a word.

[*He climbs down from the roof and disappears into the palace through a side entrance.* A CHORUS, *the old men of Argos who*

4. In Homer Agamemnon, son of Atreus, is King of Mycenae. Later Greek poets, however, referred to his kingdom as Argos or Mycenae, perhaps because the Achaeans in Homer are sometimes called Argives. In 463 B.C., just five years before the production of the play, Argos had defeated Mycenae in battle and put an end to the city, displacing the inhabitants or selling them into slavery. Soon after, Argos and Athens entered into an alliance, aimed, of course, at Sparta. Since in the last play of the trilogy this alliance will be alluded to, it is important for Aeschylus to establish the un-Homeric location of the action right at the beginning. 5. The highest throw in the ancient Greek dice game. 6. A proverbial phrase for enforced silence.

have not learned the news of victory, enters and marches round the altar.]

CHORUS: Ten years gone, ten to the day
our great avenger went for Priam—
Menelaus and lord Agamemnon,[7]
two kings with the power of Zeus,
the twin throne, twin sceptre,
Atreus' sturdy yoke of sons
launched Greece in a thousand ships,
armadas cutting loose from the land,
armies massed for the cause, the rescue—

[*From within the palace* CLYTAEMNESTRA *raises a cry of triumph.*]

the heart within them screamed for all-out war!
Like vultures robbed of their young,
the agony sends them frenzied,
soaring high from the nest, round and
round they wheel, they row their wings,
stroke upon churning thrashing stroke,
but all the labor, the bed of pain,
the young are lost forever.
Yet someone hears on high—Apollo,
Pan, or Zeus[8]—the piercing wail
these guests of heaven raise,
and drives at the outlaws, late
but true to revenge, a stabbing Fury![9]

[CLYTAEMNESTRA *appears at the doors and pauses with her entourage.*[1]]

So towering Zeus the god of guests[2]
drives Atreus' sons at Paris,
all for a woman manned by many
the generations wrestle, knees

7. Sons of Atreus, kings of Argos, commanders of the Greek expedition against Troy. *Priam:* King of Troy. His son Paris abducted (or seduced) Menelaus' wife, Helen. 8. Pan as a god of the wild places; Zeus because eagles and vultures were symbolic of his power; Apollo perhaps as a prophetic god: the movements of birds are regarded as prophetic signs. 9. The Greek word is *Erinyes*. This is the first mention of these avenging spirits who will actually appear on stage as the chorus of the final play. 1. There are no stage directions on the manuscript copies of the plays which have come down to us. Here the translator has the queen enter so that she will be visible on stage when the chorus addresses her by name in 94. Other scholars, pointing out that in Greek tragedy characters who are off stage are often addressed, disagree, and bring Clytaemnestra on stage only at 256. 2. Zeus was thought to be particularly interested in punishing those who violated the code of hospitality. Paris, a guest in Menelaus' house, had run away with his wife, Helen.

grinding the dust, the manhood drains,
the spear snaps in the first blood rites
that marry Greece and Troy.
And now it goes as it goes
and where it ends is Fate.
And neither by singeing flesh
nor tipping cups of wine[3]
nor shedding burning tears can you
enchant away the rigid Fury.

[CLYTAEMNESTRA *lights the altarfires.*]

We are the old, dishonoured ones,[4]
the broken husks of men.
Even then they cast us off,
the rescue mission left us here
to prop a child's strength upon a stick.
What if the new sap rises in his chest?
He has no soldiery in him,
no more than we,
and we are aged past aging,
gloss of the leaf shriveled,
three legs[5] at a time we falter on.
Old men are children once again,
a dream that sways and wavers
into the hard light of day.
But you,
daughter of Leda, queen Clytaemnestra,
what now, what news, what message
drives you through the citadel
burning victims?[6] Look,
the city gods, the gods of Olympus,
gods of the earth and public markets—
all the altars blazing with your gifts!
Argos blazes! Torches
race the sunrise up her skies—
drugged by the lulling holy oils,
unadulterated,
run from the dark vaults of kings.
Tell us the news!
What you can, what is right—

3. Neither by burnt sacrifice nor by pouring libations. 4. The general sense of the passage is that only two classes of the male population are left in Argos, those who are too young to fight and those who, like the chorus, are too old. 5. Because they walk with a stick to support them. 6. Clytemnestra is sacrificing in thanksgiving for the news of Troy's fall; the chorus does not know that the news has come via the signalfires.

Heal us, soothe our fears!
Now the darkness comes to the fore,
now the hope glows through your victims,
beating back this raw, relentless anguish
gnawing at the heart.

[CLYTAEMNESTRA *ignores them and pursues her rituals; they assemble for the opening chorus.*]

O but I still have power to sound the god's command at the roads
that launched the kings. The gods breathe power through my song,
my fighting strength, Persuasion grows with the years—
I sing how the flight of fury hurled the twin command,
one will that hurled young Greece
and winged the spear of vengeance straight for Troy!
The kings of birds[7] to kings of the beaking prows, one black,
one with a blaze of silver
skimmed the palace spearhand right
and swooping lower, all could see,
plunged their claws in a hare, a mother
bursting with unborn young—the babies spilling,
quick spurts of blood—cut off the race just dashing into life!
Cry, cry for death, but good win out in glory in the end.
But the loyal seer[8] of the armies studied Atreus' sons,
two sons with warring hearts—he saw two eagle-kings
devour the hare and spoke the things to come,[9]
"Years pass, and the long hunt nets the city of Priam,
the flocks beyond the walls,
a kingdom's life and soul—Fate stamps them out.
Just let no curse of the gods lour on us first,
shatter our giant armor
forged to strangle Troy. I see
pure Artemis bristle in pity[1]—
yes, the flying hounds[2] of the Father
slaughter for armies . . . their own victim . . a woman

7. Eagles. The chorus proceeds to describe the omen which accompanied the departure of the army for Troy ten years before. Two eagles seized and tore a pregnant hare; this was interpreted by the prophet Calchas as meaning that the two kings would destroy the city of Troy, thus killing not only the living Trojans but the Trojan generations yet unborn. 8. Calchas. 9. The seer identified the two eagles as symbolic of the two kings, their action as a symbolic prophecy of the destruction of Troy. 1. Artemis, a virgin goddess, patron of hunting and the protectress of wild life, is angry that the eagles have destroyed a pregnant animal. The prophet fears that she may turn her wrath against the kings whom the eagles represent. 2. The eagles.

trembling young, all born to die—She[3] loathes the eagles' feast!"
Cry, cry for death, but good win out in glory in the end.

"Artemis, lovely Artemis, so kind
to the ravening lion's tender, helpless cubs,
the suckling young of beasts that stalk the wilds—
bring this sign for all its fortune,
all its brutal torment home to birth![4]
I beg you, Healing Apollo, soothe her before
her crosswinds hold us down and moor the ships too long,[5]
pressing us on to another victim . . .
nothing sacred, no
no feast to be eaten[6]
the architect of vengeance

[*Turning to the palace.*]

growing strong in the house
with no fear of the husband
here she waits
the terror raging back and back in the future

the stealth, the law of the hearth, the mother—
Memory womb of Fury child-avenging Fury!"
So as the eagles wheeled at the crossroads,
Calchas clashed out the great good blessings mixed with doom
for the halls of kings, and singing with our fate
we cry, cry for death, but good win out in glory in the end.
Zeus, great nameless all in all,
if that name will gain his favor,[7]
I will call him Zeus.
I have no words to do him justice,
weighing all in the balance,
all I have is Zeus, Zeus—

3. Artemis. A *woman trembling young:* Just as the eagles kill the hare, the kings will kill Agamemnon's daughter Iphigenia. The Greek text refers only to the hare but the translator has made the allusion clear. 4. Calchas prays that in spite of its bad aspects, the omen will be truly prophetic, i.e., that the Achaeans will capture Troy. He goes on to anticipate and try to avert some of the evils it portends. 5. He foresees the future. Artemis will send unfavorable winds to prevent the sailing of the Greek expedition from Aulis, the port of embarkation. She will demand the sacrifice of Agamemnon's daughter Iphigenia as the price of the fleet's release.
6. At an ordinary sacrifice the celebrants gave the gods their due portion and then feasted on the animal's flesh. The word "sacrifice" comes to have the connotation of "feast." There will be no feast at this sacrifice, since the victim will be a human being. The ominous phrase reminds us of a feast of human flesh which has already taken place, Thyestes' feasting on his own children.
7. It was important, in prayer, to address the divinity by his or her right name: here the chorus uses an inclusive formula—they call on Zeus by whatever name pleases him.

lift this weight, this torment from my spirit,
cast it once for all.

He who was so mighty once,[8]
storming for the wars of heaven,
he has had his day.
And then his son[9] who came to power
met his match in the third fall
and he is gone. Zeus, Zeus—
raise your cries and sing him Zeus the Victor!
You will reach the truth:

Zeus has led us on to know,
the Helmsman lays it down as law
that we must suffer, suffer into truth.
We cannot sleep, and drop by drop at the heart
the pain of pain remembered comes again,
and we resist, but ripeness comes as well
From the gods enthroned on the awesome rowing-bench[1]
there comes a violent love.

So it was that day the king,
the steersman at the helm of Greece,
would never blame a word the prophet said—
swept away by the wrenching winds of fortune
he conspired! Weatherbound we could not sail,
our stores exhausted, fighting strength hard-pressed,
and the squadrons rode in the shallows off Chalkis[2]
where the riptide crashes, drags,
and winds from the north pinned down our hulls at Aulis,
port of anguish . . . head winds starving,
sheets and the cables snapped
and the men's minds strayed,
the pride, the bloom of Greece
was raked as time ground on,
ground down, and then the cure for the storm
and it was harsher—Calchas cried,
"My captains, Artemis must have blood!"—

8. Uranus, father of Cronos, grandfather of Zeus, the first lord of heaven. This whole passage refers to a primitive legend which told how Uranus was violently supplanted by his son, Cronos, who was in his turn overthrown by his son, Zeus. This legend is made to bear new meaning by Aeschylus, for he suggests that it is not a meaningless series of acts of violence, but a progression to the rule of Zeus, who stands for order and justice. Thus the law of human life which Zeus proclaims and administers, that wisdom comes through suffering, has its counterpart in the history of the establishment of the divine rule. 9. Cronos. 1. The bench of the ship where the helmsman sat. 2. The unruly water of the narrows between Aulis on the mainland and Chalkis on the island of Euboea.

so harsh the sons of Atreus
dashed their sceptres on the rocks,
could not hold back the tears,

and I still can hear the older warlord saying,
"Obey, obey, or a heavy doom will crush me!—
Oh but doom *will* crush me
once I rend my child,
the glory of my house—
a father's hands are stained,
blood of a young girl streaks the altar.
Pain both ways and what is worse?
Desert the fleets, fail the alliance?
No, but stop the winds with a virgin's blood,
feed their lust, their fury?—feed their fury!—
Law is law!—
Let all go well."

And once he slipped his neck in the strap of Fate,
his spirit veering black, impure, unholy,
once he turned he stopped at nothing,
seized with the frenzy
blinding driving to outrage—
wretched frenzy, cause of all our grief!
Yes, he had the heart
to sacrifice his daughter,
to bless the war that avenged a woman's loss,
a bridal rite that sped the men-of-war.
"My father, father!"—she might pray to the winds;
no innocence moves her judges mad for war.
Her father called his henchmen on,
on with a prayer,
"Hoist her over the altar
like a yearling, give it all your strength!
She's fainting—lift her,
sweep her robes around her,
but slip this strap in her gentle curving lips . . .
here, gag her hard, a sound will curse the house"—

and the bridle chokes her voice . . . her saffron robes
pouring over the sand
her glance like arrows showering
wounding every murderer through with pity
clear as a picture, live,
she strains to call their names . . .

I remember often the days with father's guests
when over the feast her voice unbroken,
pure as the hymn her loving father
bearing third libations,[3] sang to Saving Zeus—
transfixed with joy, Atreus' offspring
throbbing out their love.

What comes next? I cannot see it, cannot say.
The strong techniques of Calchas do their work.[4]
But Justice turns the balance scales,
sees that we suffer
and we suffer and we learn.
And we will know the future when it comes.
Greet it too early, weep too soon.
It all comes clear in the light of day.
Let all go well today, well as she could want,

[*Turning to* CLYTAEMNESTRA.]

our midnight watch, our lone defender,
single-minded queen.

LEADER: We've come,
Clytaemnestra. We respect your power.
Right it is to honor the warlord's woman
once he leaves the throne.
But why these fires?
Good news, or more good hopes? We're loyal,
we want to hear, but never blame your silence.

CLYTAEMNESTRA: Let the new day shine—as the proverb says—
glorious from the womb of Mother Night.

[*Lost in prayer, then turning to the* CHORUS.]

You will hear a joy beyond your hopes.
Priam's citadel—the Greeks have taken Troy!

LEADER: No, what do you mean? I can't believe it.

CLYTAEMNESTRA: Troy is ours. Is that clear enough?

LEADER: The joy of it,
stealing over me, calling up my tears—

CLYTAEMNESTRA: Yes, your eyes expose your loyal hearts.

LEADER: And you have proof?

3. At the banquet three libations (offerings of wine) were poured, the third and last to Zeus the Savior. The last libation was accompanied by a hymn of praise. 4. This seems to refer to the sacrifice of Iphigenia. Some scholars take the Greek words to refer to the fulfillment of Calchas' prophecies.

CLYTAEMNESTRA: I do,
I must. Unless the god is lying.
LEADER: That,
or a phantom spirit sends you into raptures.
CLYTAEMNESTRA: No one takes me in with visions—senseless dreams.
LEADER: Or giddy rumor, you haven't indulged yourself—
CLYTAEMNESTRA: You treat me like a child, you mock me?
LEADER: Then when did they storm the city?
CLYTAEMNESTRA: Last night, I say, the mother of this morning.
LEADER: And who on earth could run the news so fast?
CLYTAEMNESTRA The god of fire—rushing fire from Ida![5]
And beacon to beacon rushed it on to me,
my couriers riding home the torch.
From Troy
to the bare rock of Lemnos, Hermes' Spur,
and the Escort winged the great light west
to the Saving Father's face, Mount Athos hurled it
third in the chain and leaping Oceana's back
the blaze went dancing on to ecstasy—pitch-pine
streaming gold like a new-born sun—and brought
the word in flame to Mount Makistos' brow.
No time to waste, straining, fighting sleep,
that lookout heaved a torch glowing over
the murderous straits of Euripos to reach
Messapion's watchmen craning for the signal.
Fire for word of fire! tense with the heather
withered gray, they stack it, set it ablaze—

5. The mountain range near Troy. The names which follow in this speech designate the places where beacon fires flashed the message of Troy's fall to Argos. The chain extends from Ida to Hermes' cliff on the island of Lemnos (off the coast of Asia Minor), to Mount Athos (which is situated on a rocky peninsula in north Greece), to Mount Makistos on the island of Euboea (off the coast of central Greece), to Messapion, a mountain of the mainland, to Kithairon, a mountain near Thebes, across Lake Gorgopis (the Gorgon's Eye) to Mount Aegiplanctus (the wild goat's range) on the Isthmus of Corinth, across the sea (the Saronic Gulf) to Mount Arachnaeus (Spider—Black Widow Mountain) in Argive territory. This fire is the one seen by the watchman at the beginning of the play. The speech has often been criticized as discursive, but it has great poetic importance. The image of the light which will dispel the darkness, first introduced by the watchman, is one of the dominant images of the trilogy, and is here developed with magnificent ambiguous effect. For the watchman the light means the safe return of Agamemnon and the restoration of order in the house; for Clytemnestra it means the return of Agamemnon to his death at her hands. Each swift jump of the racing light is one step nearer home and death for Agamemnon. The light the watchman longs for brings only greater darkness, but eventually it brings darkness for Clytaemnestra too. The final emergence of the true light comes in the glare of the torchlight procession which ends the last play of the trilogy, a procession which symbolizes perfect reconciliation on both the human and the divine levels, and the working out of the will of Zeus in the substitution of justice for vengeance. The conception of the beacons as a chain of descendants (compare "the true son of the burning flanks of Ida," l. 311) is also important; the fire at Argos which announces Agamemnon's imminent death is a direct descendant of the fire on Ida which announces the sack of Troy and Agamemnon's sacrilegious conduct there. The metaphor thus reminds us of the sequence of crimes from generation to generation which is the history of the house of Pelops.

the hot force of the beacon never flags,
it springs the Plain of Asôpos, rears
like a harvest moon to hit Kithairon's crest
and drives new men to drive the fire on.
That relay pants for the far-flung torch,
they swell its strength outstripping my commands
and the light inflames the marsh, the Gorgon's Eye,
it strikes the peak where the wild goats range—
my laws, my fire whips that camp!
They spare nothing, eager to build its heat,
and a huge beard of flame overcomes the headland
beetling down the Saronic Gulf, and flaring south
it brings the dawn to the Black Widow's face—
the watch that looms above your heads—and now
the true son of the burning flanks of Ida
crashes on the roofs of Atreus' sons!
And I ordained it all.
Torch to torch, running for their lives,
one long succession racing home my fire.
One,
first in the laps and last,[6] wins out in triumph.
There you have my proof, *my* burning sign, I tell you—
the power my lord passed on from Troy to me!

LEADER: We'll thank the gods, my lady—first this story,
let me lose myself in the wonder of it all!
Tell it start to finish, tell us all.

CLYTAEMNESTRA: The city's ours—in our hands this very day!
I can hear the cries in crossfire rock the walls.
Pour oil and wine in the same bowl,
what have you, friendship? A struggle to the end.
So with the victors and the victims—outcries,
you can hear them clashing like their fates.

They are kneeling by the bodies of the dead,
embracing men and brothers, infants over
the aged loins that gave them life, and sobbing,
as the yoke constricts their last free breath,
for every dear one lost.
And the others,
there, plunging breakneck through the night—
to breakfast on the last remains of Troy.
Not by rank but chance, by the lots they drew,

6. The chain of beacons is compared to a relay race in which the runners carry torches: the last runner (who runs the final lap) comes in first to win.

they lodge in the houses captured by the spear,
settling in so soon, released from the open sky,
the frost and dew. Lucky men, off guard at last,
they sleep away their first good night in years.
If only they are revering the city's gods,
the shrines of the gods who love the conquered land,
no plunderer will be plundered in return.
Just let no lust, no mad desire[7] seize the armies
to ravish what they must not touch—
overwhelmed by all they've won!
The run for home
and safety waits, the swerve at the post,[8]
the final lap of the gruelling two-lap race.
And even if the men come back with no offence
to the gods, the avenging dead may never rest—
Oh let no new disaster strike! And here
you have it, what a woman has to say.
Let the best win out, clear to see.
A small desire but all that I could want.

LEADER: Spoken like a man, my lady, loyal,
full of self-command. I've heard your sign
and now your vision.

[*Reaching towards her as she turns and re-enters the palace.*]

Now to praise the gods.
The joy is worth the labor.

CHORUS: O Zeus my king and Night, dear Night,[9]
queen of the house who covers us with glories,[1]
you slung your net on the towers of Troy,
neither young nor strong could leap
the giant dredge net of slavery,
all-embracing ruin.
I adore you, iron Zeus of the guests
and your revenge—you drew your longbow
year by year to a taut full draw
till one bolt, not falling short
or arching over the stars,
could split the mark of Paris!

7. Clytaemnestra, who intends to murder Agamemnon on his return, hopes of course for the opposite of what she here prays for. The audience was familiar with the traditional account, according to which Agamemnon and his army failed signally to respect the gods and temples of Troy. 8. Greek runners turned at the post and came back on a parallel track. 9. Troy fell to a night attack. 1. An obscure expression in the original; the "glories" must be the moon and stars.

The sky stroke of god!—it is all Troy's to tell,
but even I can trace it to its cause:
god does as god decrees.
And still some say
that heaven would never stoop to punish men
who trample the lovely grace of things[2]
untouchable. How wrong they are!
A curse burns bright on crime—[3]
full-blown, the father's crimes will blossom,
burst into the son's.
Let there be less suffering . . .
give us the sense to live on what we need.

Bastions of wealth
are no defence for the man
who treads the grand altar of Justice
down and out of sight.

Persuasion, maddening child of Ruin
overpowers him—Ruin plans it all.
And the wound will smolder on,
there is no cure,
a terrible brilliance kindles on the night.
He is bad bronze scraped on a touchstone:
put to the test, the man goes black.[4]
Like the boy who chases
a bird on the wing, brands his city,
brings it down and prays,
but the gods are deaf
to the one who turns to crime, they tear him down.

So Paris learned:
he came to Atreus' house
and shamed the tables spread for guests,
he stole away the queen.

And she left her land *chaos,* clanging shields,
companions tramping, bronze prows, men in bronze,
and she came to Troy with a dowry, death,
strode through the gates
defiant in every stride,

2. The language throughout this passage is significantly general. The chorus refers to Paris but everything it says is equally applicable to Agamemnon, who sacrificed his daughter for his ambitions. 3. The original Greek is corrupt (i.e., has been garbled in the hand-written tradition) but seems to proclaim the doctrine that the sins of the fathers are visited on the children. So Paris (and Agamemnon) pay for the misdeeds of their ancestors (as well as their own). 4. Inferior bronze, adulterated with lead, turns black with use.

as prophets of the house[5] looked on and wept,
"Oh the halls and the lords of war,
the bed and the fresh prints of love.
I *see* him, unavenging, unavenged,
the stun of his desolation is so clear—
he longs for the one who lies across the sea
until her phantom seems to sway the house.

Her curving images,
her beauty hurts her lord,
the eyes starve and the touch
of love is gone,

"and radiant dreams are passing in the night,
the memories throb with sorrow, joy with pain . . .
it is pain to dream and see desires
slip through the arms,
a vision lost for ever
winging down the moving drifts of sleep."
So he grieves at the royal hearth
yet others' grief is worse, far worse.
All through Greece for those who flocked to war
they are holding back the anguish now,
you can feel it rising now in every house;
I tell you there is much to tear the heart.

They knew the men they sent,
but now in place of men
ashes and urns come back
to every hearth.[6]

War, War, the great gold-broker[7] of corpses
holds the balance of the battle on his spear!
Home from the pyres he sends them,
home from Troy to the loved ones,
heavy with tears, the urns brimmed full,
the heroes return in gold-dust,
dear, light ash for men; and they weep,
they praise them, "He had skill in the swordplay,"
"He went down so tall in the onslaught,"
"All for another's woman." So they mutter

5. The house of Menelaus. 6. This strikes a contemporary note. In Homer the fallen Achaeans are buried at Troy: it was in the Athens of Aeschylus that the dead were cremated on the battlefield and their ashes brought home for burial. 7. The war god is a broker who gives, in exchange for bodies, gold dust, (the word used for "bodies" could mean living bodies or corpses); the "dust" he gives is of course the ashes of the warrior.

in secret and the rancor steals
towards our staunch defenders, Atreus' sons.

And there they ring the walls, the young,
the lithe, the handsome hold the graves
they won in Troy; the enemy earth
rides over those who conquered.

The people's voice is heavy with hatred,
now the curses of the people must be paid,
and now I wait, I listen . . .
there—there is something breathing
under the night's shroud. God takes aim
at the ones who murder many;
the swarthy Furies stalk the man
gone rich beyond all rights—with a twist
of fortune grind him down, dissolve him
into the blurring dead—there is no help.
The reach for power can recoil,
the bolt of god can strike you at a glance.

Make me rich with no man's envy,
neither a raider of cities,[8] no,
nor slave come face to face with life
overpowered by another.

[*Speaking singly.*]
—Fire comes and the news is good,
it races through the streets
but is it true? Who knows?
Or just another lie from heaven?

—Show us the man so childish, wonderstruck,
he's fired up with the first torch,
then when the message shifts
he's sick at heart.
—Just like a woman
to fill with thanks before the truth is clear.

—So gullible. Their stories spread like wildfire,
they fly fast and die faster;
rumors voiced by women come to nothing.

8. Later we will see Agamemnon come on stage with the spoils of Troy and Cassandra, his Trojan captive. The chorus, which started out to sing a hymn of praise for the fall of Troy (l. 357) ends in fear and despondency. They now question the truth of Clytemnaestra's announcement: perhaps Troy has not fallen after all (l. 469).

LEADER: Soon we'll know her fires for what they are,
her relay race of torches hand-to-hand—
know if they're real or just a dream,
the hope of a morning here to take our senses.
I see a herald running from the beach
and a victor's spray of olive shades his eyes
and the dust he kicks, twin to the mud of Troy,
shows he has a voice—no kindling timber
on the cliffs, no signal-fires for him.
He can shout the news and give us joy, or else . . . please, not that.
Bring it on,
good fuel to build the first good fires.
And if anyone calls down the worst on Argos
let him reap the rotten harvest of his mind.

[*The* HERALD *rushes in and kneels on the ground.*]

HERALD: Good Greek earth, the soil of my fathers!
Ten years out, and a morning brings me back.
All hopes snapped but one—I'm home at last.
Never dreamed I'd die in Greece, assigned
the narrow plot I love the best.
And now
I salute the land, the light of the sun,
our high lord Zeus and the king of Pytho[9]—
no more arrows, master, raining on our heads![1]
At Scamander's banks we took our share,
your longbow brought us down like plague.
Now come, deliver us, heal us—lord Apollo!
Gods of the market, here, take my salute.
And you, my Hermes, Escort,
loving Herald, the herald's shield and prayer![2]—
And the shining dead[3] of the land who launched the armies,
warm us home . . . we're all the spear has left.
You halls of the kings, you roofs I cherish,
sacred seats—you gods that catch the sun,
if your glances ever shone on him in the old days,
greet him well—so many years are lost.
He comes, he brings us light in the darkness,
free for every comrade, Agamemnon lord of men.

9. Apollo. 1. Cf. the opening scene of the *Iliad*, Book I where Apollo punishes the Greeks with his arrows (a metaphor for plague). 2. Hermes, the gods' messenger, was the patron deity of heralds. 3. The heroes of past time, buried in the soil of Argos and worshipped.

Give him the royal welcome he deserves!
He hoisted the pickaxe of Zeus who brings revenge,
he dug Troy down, he worked her soil down,
the shrines of her gods and the high altars, gone!—
and the seed of her wide earth he ground to bits.
That's the yoke he claps on Troy. The king,
the son of Atreus comes. The man is blest,
the one man alive to merit such rewards.

Neither Paris nor Troy, partners to the end,
can say their work outweighs their wages now.
Convicted of rapine, stripped of all his spoils,
and his father's house and the land that gave it life—
he's scythed them to the roots. The sons of Priam
pay the price twice over.

LEADER: Welcome home
from the wars, herald, long live your joy.
HERALD: *Our* joy—
now I could die gladly. Say the word, dear gods.
LEADER: Longing for your country left you raw?
HERALD: The tears fill my eyes, for joy.
LEADER: You too,
down the sweet disease that kills a man
with kindness . . .
HERALD: Go on, I don't see what you—
LEADER: Love
for the ones who love you—that's what took you.
HERALD: You mean
the land and the armies hungered for each other?
LEADER: There were times I thought I'd faint with longing.
HERALD: So anxious for the armies, why?
LEADER: For years now,
only my silence kept me free from harm.
HERALD: What,
with the kings gone did someone threaten you?
LEADER: So much . . .
now as you say,[4] it would be good to die.
HERALD: True, we *have* done well.
Think back in the years and what have you?
A few runs of luck, a lot that's bad.
Who but a god can go through life unmarked?
A long, hard pull we had, if I would tell it all.

4. Throughout this dialogue the chorus has been nerving itself to warn the herald that there may be danger for Agamemnon at home; at this point its nerve fails, and it abandons the attempt.

The iron rations, penned in the gangways
hock by jowl like sheep. Whatever miseries
break a man, our quota, every sun-starved day.

Then on the beaches it was worse. Dug in
under the enemy ramparts—deadly going.
Out of the sky, out of the marshy flats
the dews soaked us, turned the ruts we fought from
into gullies, made our gear, our scalps
crawl with lice.
And talk of the cold,
the sleet to freeze the gulls, and the big snows
come avalanching down from Ida. Oh but the heat,
the sea and the windless noons, the swells asleep,
dropped to a dead calm . . .

But why weep now?
It's over for us, over for them.
The dead can rest and never rise gain;
no need to call their muster. We're alive,
do we have to go on raking up old wounds?
Good-bye to all that. Glad I am to say it.

For us, the remains of the Greek contingents,
the good wins out, no pain can tip the scales,
not now. So shout this boast to the bright sun—
fitting it is—wing it over the seas and rolling earth:

"Once when an Argive expedition captured Troy
they hauled these spoils back to the gods of Greece,
they bolted them high across the temple doors,
the glory of the past!"

And hearing that,
men will applaud our city and our chiefs,
and Zeus will have the hero's share of fame—
he did the work.
That's all I have to say.

LEADER: I'm convinced, glad that I was wrong.
Never too old to learn; it keeps me young.

[CLYTAEMNESTRA *enters with her women.*]

First the house and the queen, it's their affair,
but I can taste the riches.

CLYTAEMNESTRA: I cried out long ago![5]
for joy, when the frst herald came burning
through the night and told the city's fall.
And there were some who smiled and said,
"A few fires persuade you Troy's in ashes.
Women, women, elated over nothing."

You made me seem deranged.
For all that I sacrificed—a woman's way,
you'll say—station to station on the walls
we lifted cries of triumph that resounded
in the temples of the gods. We lulled and blessed
the fires with myrrh and they consumed our victims.

[*Turning to the* HERALD.]

But enough. Why prolong the story?
From the king himself I'll gather all I need.
Now for the best way to welcome home
my lord, my good lord . . .No time to lose!
What dawn can feast a woman's eyes like this?
I can see the light, the husband plucked from war
by the Saving God and open wide the gates.

Tell him that, and have him come with speed,
the people's darling—how they long for him.
And for his wife,
may he return and find her true at hall,
just as the day he left her, faithful to the last.
A watchdog gentle to him alone,

[*Glancing towards the palace.*]

savage
to those who cross his path. I have not changed.
The strains of time can never break our seal.
In love with a new lord, in ill repute I am
as practised as I am in dyeing bronze.[6]

That is my boast, teeming with the truth.
I am proud, a woman of my nobility—
I'd hurl it from the roofs!

5. As the Watchman had told her to (l. 30). 6. She is no more capable of adultery, she claims, than she is of dyeing bronze. But she will later kill Agamemnon with a bronze weapon.

[*She turns sharply, enters the palace.*]

LEADER: She speaks well, but it takes no seer to know
she only says what's right.

[*The* HERALD *attempts to leave; the leader takes him by the arm.*]

Wait, one thing.
Menelaus, is he home too, safe with the men?[7]
The power of the land—dear king.
HERALD: I doubt that lies will help my friends,
in the lean months to come.
LEADER: Help us somehow, tell the truth as well.
But when the two conflict it's hard to hide—
out with it.
HERALD: He's lost, gone from the fleets![8]
He and his ship, it's true.
LEADER: After you watched him
pull away from Troy? Or did some storm
attack you all and tear him off the line?
HERALD: There,
like a marksman, the whole disaster cut to a word.
LEADER: How do the escorts give him out—dead or alive?
HERALD: No clear report. No one knows . . .
only the wheeling sun that heats the earth to life.
LEADER: But then the storm—how did it reach the ships?
How did it end? Were the angry gods on hand?
HERALD: This blessed day, ruin it with *them?*
Better to keep their trophies far apart.

When a runner comes, his face in tears,
saddled with what his city dreaded most,[9]
the armies routed, two wounds in one,
one to the city, one to hearth and home . . .
our best men, droves of them, victims
herded from every house by the two-barb whip
that Ares[1] likes to crack,
that charioteer
who packs destruction shaft by shaft,

7. The relevance of this question and the following speeches lies in the fact that Menelaus' absence makes Agamemnon's murder easier (his presence might have made it impossible), and in the fact that Menelaus is bringing Helen home; the choral ode which follows shows how much the chorus is obsessed with Helen's guilt—so much that it fails to recognize the true responsibility for the war and the imminence of disaster. 8. Like Odysseus, he suffered many hardships before reaching home. 9. The Herald creates a vivid picture of a messenger bringing news of disaster to his city—a role he wishes to avoid. 1. The war god.

careering on with his brace of bloody mares—
When he comes in, I tell you, dragging that much pain, wail your
battle-hymn to the Furies, and high time!
But when he brings salvation home to a city
singing out her heart—
how can I mix the good with so much bad
and blurt out this?
"Storms swept the Greeks,
and not without the anger of the gods!"

Those enemies for ages, fire[2] and water,
sealed a pact and showed it to the world—
they crushed our wretched squadrons.
Night looming,
breakers lunging in for the kill
and the black gales come brawling out of the north—
ships ramming, prow into hooking prow, gored
by the rush-and-buck of hurricane pounding rain
by the cloudburst—
ships stampeding into the darkness,
lashed and spun by the savage shepherd's hand![3]

But when the sun comes up to light the skies
I see the Aegean heaving into a great bloom
of corpses . . . Greeks, the pick of a generation
scattered through the wrecks and broken spars.

But not us, not our ship, our hull untouched.
Someone stole us away or begged us off.
No mortal—a god, death grip on the tiller,
or lady luck herself, perched on the helm,
she pulled us through, she saved us. Aye,
we'll never battle the heavy surf at anchor,
never shipwreck up some rocky coast.

But once we cleared that sea-hell, not even
trusting luck in the cold light of day,
we battened on our troubles, they were fresh—
the armada punished, bludgeoned into nothing.
And now if one of them still has the breath
he's saying we are lost. Why not?
We say the same of him. Well,
here's to the best.

2. I.e., lightning. 3. The ships were scattered like sheep dispersed by a cruel shepherd.

And Menelaus?
Look to it, he's come back, and yet . . .
if a shaft of the sun can track him down,
alive, and his eyes full of the old fire—
thanks to the strategies of Zeus, Zeus
would never tear the house out by the roots—
then there's hope our man will make it home.

You've heard it all. Now you have the truth.

[*Rushing out.*]

CHORUS: Who—what power named the name[4] that drove your fate?—
what hidden brain could divine your future
steer that word to the mark,
to the bride of spears,
the whirlpool churning armies,
Oh for all the world a Helen!
Hell at the prows, hell at the gates
hell on the men-of-war,
from her lair's sheer veils she drifted
launched by the giant western wind,
and the long tall waves of men in armor,[5]
huntsmen trailing the oar-blades' dying spoor
slipped into her moorings,
Simois'[6] mouth that chokes with foliage,
bayed for bloody strife,
for Troy's Blood Wedding Day—she drives her word,
her burning will to the birth, the Fury
late but true to the course,
to the tables shamed
and Zeus who guards the hearth—[7]
the Fury makes the Trojans pay!
Shouting their hymns, hymns for the bride
hymns for the kinsmen doomed
to the wedding march of Fate.
Troy changed her tune in her late age,
and I think I hear the dirges mourning
"Paris, born and groomed for the bed of Fate!"
They mourn with their life breath,
they sing their last, the sons of Priam
born for bloody slaughter.

4. Helen. The name contains a Greek root *hele*—which means "destroy." 5. The Achaean army which came after her, like huntsmen. 6. One of the rivers of Troy. 7. Zeus in his capacity as protector of host and guest.

So a man once reared
a lion cub at hall, snatched
from the breast, still craving milk
in the first flush of life.
A captivating pet for the young,
and the old men adored it, pampered it
in their arms, day in, day out,
like an infant just born.
Its eyes on fire, little beggar,
fawning for its belly, slave to food.

But it came of age
and the parent strain broke out
and it paid its breeders back.
Grateful it was, it went
through the flock to prepare a feast,
an illicit orgy—the house swam with blood,
none could resist that agony—
massacre vast and raw!
From god there came a priest of ruin,
adopted by the house to lend it warmth.
And the first sensation Helen brought to Troy . . .
call it a spirit
shimmer of winds dying
glory light as gold
shaft of the eyes dissolving, open bloom
that wounds the heart with love.
But veering wild in mid-flight
she whirled her wedding on to a stabbing end,
slashed at the sons of Priam—heartmate, friend to the death,
sped by Zeus who speeds the guest,
a bride of tears, a Fury.

There's an ancient saying,[8] old as man himself:
men's prosperity
never will die childless,
once full-grown it breeds.
Sprung from the great good fortune in the race
comes bloom on bloom of pain—
insatiable wealth! But not I,
I alone say this. Only the reckless act

8. These lines state the traditional Greek view that immoderate good fortune (or excellence of any kind beyond the average) is itself the cause of disaster. In the lines which follow, the chorus rejects this view and states that only an act of evil produces evil consequences. It later admits by implication (ll. 739 ff.) that those who are less prosperous are less likely to commit such an act.

can breed impiety, multiplying crime on crime,
while the house kept straight and just
is blessed with radiant children.

But ancient Violence longs to breed,
new Violence comes
when its fatal hour comes, the demon comes
to take her toll—no war, no force, no prayer
can hinder the midnight Fury stamped
with parent Fury moving through the house.

But Justice shines in sooty hovels,[9]
loves the decent life.
From proud halls crusted with gilt by filthy hands
she turns her eyes to find the pure in spirit—
spurning the wealth stamped counterfeit with praise,
she steers all things toward their destined end.

[AGAMEMNON *enters in his chariot, his plunder borne before him by his entourage; behind him, half hidden, stands* CASSANDRA. *The old men press towards him.*]

Come, my king, the scourge of Troy,
the true son of Atreus—
How to salute you, how to praise you
neither too high nor low, but hit
the note of praise that suits the hour?
So many prize some brave display,
they prefer some flaunt of honor
once they break the bounds.[1]
When a man fails they share his grief,
but the pain can never cut them to the quick.
When a man succeeds they share his glory,
torturing their faces into smiles.
But the good shepherd knows his flock.
When the eyes seem to brim with love
and it is only unction,
he will know, better than we can know.
That day you marshalled the armies
all for Helen—no hiding it now—
I drew you in my mind in black;
you seemed a menace at the helm,
sending men to the grave

9. The homes of the poor. 1. The chorus tries to warn Agamemnon against flatterers and dissemblers, but he misses their drift.

to bring her home, that hell on earth.
But now from the depths of trust and love
I say Well fought, well won—
the end is worth the labor!
Search, my king, and learn at last
who stayed at home and kept their faith
and who betrayed the city.

AGAMEMNON: First,
with justice I salute my Argos and my gods,
my accomplices who brought me home and won
my rights from Priam's Troy—the just gods.
No need to hear our pleas. Once for all
they consigned their lots to the urn of blood,[2]
they pitched on death for men, annihilation
for the city. Hope's hand, hovering
over the urn of mercy, left it empty.
Look for the smoke—it is the city's seamark,
building even now.
The storms of ruin live!
Her last dying breath, rising up from the ashes
sends us gales of incense rich in gold.

For that we must thank the gods with a sacrifice
our sons will long remember. For their mad outrage
of a queen we raped their city—we were right.
The beast of Argos, foals of the wild mare,[3]
thousands massed in armor rose on the night
the Pleiades went down,[4] and crashing through
their walls our bloody lion lapped its fill,
gorging on the blood of kings.
Our thanks to the gods,
long drawn out, but it is just the prelude.

[CLYTAEMNESTRA *approaches with her women; they are carrying dark red tapestries.* AGAMEMNON *turns to the leader.*]

And your concern, old man, is on my mind.
I hear you and agree, I will support you.
How rare, men with the character to praise
a friend's success without a trace of envy,
poison to the heart—it deals a double blow.

2. In an Athenian law court there were two urns, one for acquittal, one for condemnation, into which the jurors dropped their pebbles. (The audience will see them on stage in the final play of the trilogy.) 3. The wooden horse, the stratagem with which the Greeks captured the city. 4. The setting of the constellation called the Pleiades, late in the fall.

Your own losses weigh you down but then,
look at your neighbor's fortune and you weep.
Well I know. I understand society,
the fawning mirror of the proud.
My comrades . . .
they're shadows, I tell you, ghosts of men
who swore they'd die for me. Only Odysseus:
I dragged that man to the wars[5] but once in harness
he was a trace-horse, he gave his all for me.
Dead or alive, no matter, I can praise him.

And now this cause involving men and gods.
We must summon the city for a trial,
found a national tribunal. Whatever's healthy,
shore it up with law and help it flourish.
Wherever something calls for drastic cures
we make our noblest effort: amputate or wield
the healing iron, burn the cancer at the roots.

Now I go to my father's house—
I give the gods my right hand, my first salute.
The ones who sent me forth have brought me home.

[*He starts down from the chariot, looks at* CLYTAEMNESTRA, *stops, and offers up a prayer.*]

Victory, you have sped my way before,
now speed me to the last.

[CLYTAEMNESTRA *turns from the king to the* CHORUS.]

CLYTAEMNESTRA: Old nobility of Argos
gathered here, I am not ashamed to tell you
how I love the man. I am older,
and the fear dies away . . . I am human.
Nothing I say was learned from others.
This is my life, my ordeal, long as the siege
he laid at Troy and more demanding.
First,
when a woman sits at home and the man is gone,
the loneliness is terrible,
unconscionable . . .

5. Feigning madness in order to escape going to Troy, Odysseus was tricked into demonstrating his sanity. Agamemnon's remark shows that the truth is far from his mind; he has no thought that his danger comes from a woman.

and the rumors spread and fester,
a runner comes with something dreadful,
close on his heels the next and his news worse,
and they shout it out and the whole house can hear;
and wounds—if he took one wound for each report
to penetrate these walls, he's gashed like a dragnet,
more, if he had only died . . .
for each death that swelled his record, he could boast
like a triple-bodied Geryon[6] risen from the grave,
"Three shrouds I dug from the earth, one for every body
that went down!"
The rumors broke like fever,
broke and then rose higher. There were times
they cut me down and eased my throat from the noose.
I wavered between the living and the dead.

[*Turning to* AGAMEMNON.]

And so
our child is gone, not standing by our side,
the bond of our dearest pledges, mine and yours;
by all rights our child should be here . . .
Orestes. You seem startled.
You needn't be. Our loyal brother-in-arms
will take good care of him, Strophios[7] the Phocian.
He warned from the start we court two griefs in one.
You risk all on the wars—and what if the people
rise up howling for the king, and anarchy
should dash our plans?
Men, it is their nature,
trampling on the fighter once he's down.
Our child is gone. That is my self-defence
and it is true.
For me, the tears that welled
like springs are dry. I have no tears to spare.
I'd watch till late at night, my eyes still burn,
I sobbed by the torch I lit for you alone.

[*Glancing towards the palace.*]

I never let it die . . . but in my dreams
the high thin wail of a gnat would rouse me,

6. A monster (eventually killed by Heracles) who had three bodies and three heads. 7. King of Phocis, a mountainous region near Delphi. His son, Pylades, accompanies Orestes when he returns to avenge Agamemnon's death.

piercing like a trumpet—I could see you
suffer more than all
the hours that slept with me could ever bear.

I endured it all. And now, free of grief,
I would salute that man the watchdog of the fold,
the mainroyal,[8] saving stay of the vessel,
rooted oak that thrusts the roof sky-high,
the father's one true heir.
Land at dawn to the shipwrecked past all hope,
light of the morning burning off the night of storm,
the cold clear spring to the parched horseman—
O the ecstasy, to flee the yoke of Fate!
It is right to use the titles he deserves.
Let envy keep her distance. We have suffered
long enough.

[*Reaching towards* AGAMEMNON:]

Come to me now, my dearest,
down from the car of war, but never set the foot
that stamped out Troy on earth again, my great one.

Women, why delay? You have your orders.
Pave his way with tapestries.[9]

[*They begin to spread the crimson tapestries between the king and the palace doors.*]

Quickly.
Let the red stream flow and bear him home
to the home he never hoped to see—Justice,
lead him in!
Leave all the rest to me.
The spirit within me never yields to sleep.
We will set things right, with the god's help.
We will do whatever Fate requires.

AGAMEMNON: There
is Leda's daughter,[1] the keeper of my house.
And the speech to suit my absence, much too long.

8. Upper section of the mainmast. 9. To walk on those tapestries, wall hangings dyed with the expensive crimson, would be an act of extravagant pride. Pride is the keynote of Agamemnon's character, and it suits Clytaemnestra's sense of fitness that he should go into his death in godlike state, "trampling royal crimson," the color of blood. 1. Clytaemnestra and Helen are both daughters of Leda.

But the praise that does us justice,
let it come from others, then we prize it.
This—
you treat me like a woman. Groveling, gaping up at me—
what am I, some barbarian[2] peacocking out of Asia?
Never cross my path with robes and draw the lightning.
Never—only the gods deserve the pomps of honor
and the stiff brocades of fame. To walk on them . . .
I am human, and it makes my pulses stir
with dread.
Give me the tributes of a man
and not a god, a little earth to walk on,
not this gorgeous work.
There is no need to sound my reputation.
I have a sense of right and wrong, what's more—
heaven's proudest gift. Call no man blest
until he ends his life in peace, fulfilled.
If I can live by what I say, I have no fear.

CLYTAEMNESTRA: One thing more. Be true to your ideals and tell me—

AGAMEMNON: True to my ideals? Once I violate them I am lost.

CLYTAEMNESTRA: Would you have sworn this act to god in a time of terror?

AGAMEMNON: Yes, if a prophet called for a last, drastic rite.

CLYTAEMNESTRA: But Priam—can you see him if he had your success?

AGAMEMNON: Striding on the tapestries of God, I see him now.

CLYTAEMNESTRA: And *you* fear the reproach of common men?

AGAMEMNON: The voice of the people—aye, they have enormous power.

CLYTAEMNESTRA: Perhaps, but where's the glory without a little gall?

AGAMEMNON: And where's the woman in all this lust for glory?

CLYTAEMNESTRA: But the great victor—it becomes him to give way.

AGAMEMNON: Victory in this . . . war of ours, it means so much to you?

CLYTAEMNESTRA: O give way! The power is yours if you surrender all of your own free will to me.

AGAMEMNON: Enough.
If you are so determined—

[*Turning to the women, pointing to his boots.*]

2. Foreigner, especially Asiatic. Aeschylus is thinking of the pomp and servility of the contemporary Persian court.

Let someone help me off with these at least.
Old slaves, they've stood me well.
Hurry,
and while I tread his splendors dyed red in the sea,[3]
may no god watch and strike me down with envy
from on high. I feel such shame—
to tread the life of the house, a kingdom's worth
of silver in the weaving.

[*He steps down from the chariot to the tapestries and reveals* CASSANDRA, *dressed in the sacred regalia, the fillets, robes and sceptre of Apollo.*]

Done is done.
Escort this stranger[4] in, be gentle.
Conquer with compassion. Then the gods
shine down upon you, gently. No one chooses
the yoke of slavery, not of one's free will—
and she least of all. The gift of the armies,
flower and pride of all the wealth we won,
she follows me from Troy.
And now,
since you have brought me down with your insistence,
just this once I enter my father's house,
trampling royal crimson as I go.

[*He takes his first steps and pauses.*]

CLYTAEMNESTRA: There is the sea
and who will drain it dry? Precious as silver,
inexhaustible, ever-new, it breeds the more we reap it—
tides on tides of crimson dye our robes blood-red.
Our lives are based on wealth, my king,
the gods have seen to that.
Destitution, our house has never heard the word.
I would have sworn to tread on legacies of robes,
at one command from an oracle, deplete the house—
suffer the worst to bring that dear life back!

[*Encouraged,* AGAMEMNON *strides to the entrance.*]

3. The dye was made from shellfish. 4. Cassandra, daughter of Priam, Agamemnon's share of the human booty of the sack of Troy. She was loved by Apollo and by him given the gift of prophecy; but when she refused her love to the god he added to his gift the proviso that her prophecies, though true, should never be believed until it was too late.

When the root lives on, the new leaves come back,
spreading a dense shroud of shade across the house
to thwart the Dog Star's fury.[5] So you return
to the father's hearth, you bring us warmth in winter
like the sun—
And you are Zeus when Zeus
tramples the bitter virgin grape for new wine
and the welcome chill steals through the halls, at last
the master moves among the shadows of his house, fulfilled.

[AGAMEMNON *goes over the threshold; the women gather up the tapestries while* CLYTAEMNESTRA *prays.*]

Zeus, Zeus, master of all fulfillment, now fulfil our prayers—
speed our rites to their fulfillment once for all!

[*She enters the palace, the doors close, the old men huddle in terror.*]

CHORUS: Why, why does it rock me, never stops,
this terror beating down my heart,
this seer that sees it all—
it beats its wings, uncalled unpaid
thrust on the lungs
the mercenary song beats on and on
singing a prophet's strain—
and I can't throw it off
like dreams that make no sense,
and the strength drains
that filled the mind with trust,
and the years drift by and the driven sand
has buried the mooring lines
that churned when the armored squadrons cut for Troy . . .
and now I believe it, I can prove he's home,
my own clear eyes for witness—
Agamemnon!
Still it's chanting, beating deep so deep in the heart
this dirge of the Furies, oh dear god,
not fit for the lyre,[6] its own master
it kills our spirit
kills our hopes
and it's real, true, no fantasy—

5. The appearance of Sirius, the Dog Star, in the summer sky, marked the beginning of the hot season. 6. The lyre was played on joyful occasions (hence "lyric" poetry): the Furies' song is a dirge.

stark terror whirls the brain
and the end is coming
Justice comes to birth—
I pray my fears prove false and fall
and die and never come to birth!

Even exultant health, well we know,
exceeds its limits,[7] comes so near disease
it can breach the wall between them.

Even a man's fate, held true on course,
in a blinding flash rams some hidden reef;
but if caution only casts the pick of the cargo—[8]
one well-balanced cast—
the house will not go down, not outright;
laboring under its wealth of grief
the ship of state rides on.

Yes, and the great green bounty of god,
sown in the furrows year by year and reaped each fall
can end the plague of famine.

But a man's life-blood
is dark and mortal.
Once it wets the earth
what song can sing it back?
Not even the master-healer[9]
who brought the dead to life—
Zeus stopped the man before he did more harm.

Oh, if only the gods had never forged
the chain that curbs our excess,
one man's fate curbing the next man's fate,
my heart would outrace my song, I'd pour out all I feel—
but no, I choke with anguish,
mutter through the nights.
Never to ravel out a hope in time
and the brain is swarming, burning—

[CLYTAEMNESTRA *emerges from the palace and goes to* CASSANDRA, *impassive in the chariot.*]

7. Excess, even in blessings like health, is always dangerous. The chorus fears that Agamemnon's triumphant success may threaten his safety. 8. These lines refer to a traditional Greek belief that the fortunate man could avert the envy of heaven by deliberately getting rid of some precious possession. 9. Asklepius, the great physician who was so skilled that he finally succeeded in restoring a dead man to life. Zeus struck him with a thunderbolt for going too far.

CLYTAEMNESTRA: Won't you come inside? I mean you, Cassandra.
Zeus in all his mercy wants you to share
some victory libations with the house.
The slaves are flocking. Come, lead them
up to the altar of the god who guards
our dearest treasures.
Down from the chariot,
this is no time for pride. Why even Heracles,[1]
they say, was sold into bondage long ago,
he had to endure the bitter bread of slaves.
But if the yoke descends on you, be grateful
for a master born and reared in ancient wealth.
Those who reap a harvest past their hopes
are merciless to their slaves.
From us
you will receive what custom says is right.

[CASSANDRA *remains impassive.*]

LEADER: It's *you* she is speaking to, it's all too clear.
You're caught in the nets of doom—obey
if you can obey, unless you cannot bear to.
CLYTAEMNESTRA: Unless she's like a swallow, possessed
of her own barbaric song,[2] strange, dark.
I speak directly as I can—she must obey.
LEADER: Go with her. Make the best of it, she's right.
Step down from the seat, obey her.
CLYTAEMNESTRA: Do it *now*—
I have no time to spend outside. Already
the victims crowd the hearth, the Navelstone,[3]
to bless this day of joy I never hoped to see!—
our victims waiting for the fire and the knife,
and you,
if you want to taste our mystic rites, come now.
If my words can't reach you—

[*Turning to the* LEADER.]

Give her a sign,
one of her exotic handsigns.
LEADER: I think
the stranger needs an interpreter, someone clear.
She's like a wild creature, fresh caught.

1. The Greek hero, famous for his twelve labors which rid the earth of monsters, was at one time forced to be the slave to Omphale, an Eastern queen. 2. The comparison of foreign speech to the twittering of a swallow was a Greek commonplace. 3. The hearth, which was the religious center of the home, with an altar of Zeus Herkeios, guardian of the enclosed space.

CLYTAEMNESTRA: She's mad,
her evil genius murmuring in her ears.
She comes from a *city* fresh caught.
She must learn to take the cutting bridle
before she foams her spirit off in blood—
and that's the last I waste on her contempt!

[*Wheeling, re-entering the palace. The* LEADER *turns to* CASSANDRA, *who remains transfixed.*]

LEADER: Not I, I pity her. I will be gentle.
Come, poor thing. Leave the empty chariot—
Of your own free will try on the yoke of Fate.
CASSANDRA: Aieeeeee! Earth—Mother—
Curse of the Earth—Apollo Apollo!
LEADER: Why cry to Apollo?
He's not the god to call with sounds of mourning.
CASSANDRA: Aieeeeee! Earth—Mother—
Rape of the Earth—Apollo Apollo!
LEADER: Again, it's a bad omen.
She cries for the god who wants no part of grief.[4]

[CASSANDRA *steps from the chariot, looks slowly towards the rooftops of the palace.*]

CASSANDRA: God of the long road,
Apollo *Apollo* my destroyer—
you destroy me once, destroy me twice—[5]
LEADER: She's about to sense her own ordeal, I think.
Slave that she is, the god lives on inside her.
CASSANDRA: God of the iron marches,
Apollo *Apollo* my destroyer—
where, where have you led[6] me now? what house—
LEADER: The house of Atreus and his sons. Really—
don't you know? It's true, see for yourself.
CASSANDRA: No . . . the house that hates god,
an echoing womb of guilt, kinsmen
torturing kinsmen, severed heads,
slaughterhouse of heroes, soil streaming blood—
LEADER: A keen hound, this stranger.

4. Apollo, and the Olympian gods in general, were not invoked in mourning or lamentation.
5. The name Apollo suggests the Greek word *(apollumi)* for "destroy." He "destroyed" her the first time when, as she tells later, he gave her the gift of true prophecy that no one would believe. *God of the long road:* Apollo Agyieus; this statue, a conical pillar, was set up outside the door of the house; no doubt there was one on stage. 6. The Greek word for led (a form of the verb *ago*) suggests the god's title Agyieus.

Trailing murder, and murder she will find.
CASSANDRA: See, my witnesses—
I trust to them, to the babies
wailing, skewered on the sword,
their flesh charred, the father gorging on their parts—[7]
LEADER: We'd heard your fame as a seer,
but no one looks for seers in Argos.
CASSANDRA: Oh no, what horror, what new plot,
new agony this?—[8]
it's growing, massing, deep in the house,
a plot, a monstrous—*thing*
to crush the loved ones, no,
there is no cure, and rescue's far away[9] and—
LEADER: I can't read these signs; I knew the first,
the city rings with them.
CASSANDRA: You, you godforsaken—you'd do *this?*
The lord of your bed,
you bathe him . . . his body glistens, then—
how to tell the climax?—
comes so quickly, see.
hand over hand shoots out, hauling ropes—
then lunge!
LEADER: Still lost. Her riddles, her dark words of god—
I'm groping, helpless.
CASSANDRA: No no, look *there!*—
what's that? some net flung out of hell—
No, *she* is the snare,
the bedmate, deathmate, murder's strong right arm!
Let the insatiate discord in the race
rear up and shriek "Avenge the victim—stone them dead!"
LEADER: What Fury is this? Why rouse it, lift its wailing
through the house? I hear you and lose hope.
CHORUS: Drop by drop at the heart, the gold of life ebbs out.
We are the old soldiers . . . wounds will come
with the crushing sunset of our lives.
Death is close, and quick.
CASSANDRA: Look out! *look out!*—
Ai, drag the great bull from the mate!—
a thrash of robes, she traps him—
writhing—
black horn glints, twists—
she gores him through!
And now he buckles, look, the bath swirls red—

7. The feast of Thyestes. 8. Cassandra foresees Clytaemnestra's murder of Agamemnon.
9. A reference to Menelaus (distant in space) and Orestes (distant in time).

There's stealth and murder in the cauldron, do you hear?
LEADER: I'm no judge, I've little skill with the oracles,
but even I know danger when I hear it.
CHORUS: What good are the oracles to men? Words, more words,
and the hurt comes on us, endless words
and a seer's techniques have brought us
terror and the truth.
CASSANDRA: The agony—O I am breaking!—Fate's so hard,
and the pain that floods my voice is mine alone.
Why have you brought me here, tormented as I am?
Why, unless to die with him, why else?
LEADER AND CHORUS: Mad with the rapture—god speeds you on
to the song, the deathsong,
like the nightingale that broods on sorrow,[1]
mourns her son, her son,
her life inspired with grief for him,
she lilts and shrills, dark bird that lives for night.
CASSANDRA: The nightingale—O for a song, a fate like hers!
The gods gave her a life of ease, swathed her in wings,
no tears, no wailing. The knife waits for me.
They'll splay me on the iron's double edge.
LEADER AND CHORUS: Why—what god hurls you on, stroke on stroke
to the long dying fall?
Why the horror clashing through your music,
terror struck to song?—
why the anguish, the wild dance?
Where do your words of god and grief begin?
CASSANDRA: Ai, the wedding, wedding of Paris,
death to the loved ones. Oh Scamander,[2]
you nursed my father . . . once at your banks
I nursed and grew, and now at the banks
of Acheron,[3] the stream that carries sorrow,
it seems I'll chant my prophecies too soon.
LEADER AND CHORUS: What are you saying? Wait, it's clear,
a child could see the truth, it wounds within,
like a bloody fang it tears—
I hear your destiny—breaking sobs,
cries that stab the ears,
CASSANDRA: Oh the grief, the grief of the city
ripped to oblivion. Oh the victims,
the flocks my father burned at the wall

1. Philomela was raped by Tereus, the husband of her sister Procne. The two sisters avenged themselves by killing Tereus' son, Itys, and serving up his flesh to Tereus to eat. Procne was changed into a nightingale mourning for Itys (the name is an imitation of the sound of the nightingale's song). 2. A Trojan river. 3. One of the rivers of the underworld.

rich herds in flames . . . no cure for the doom
that took the city after all, and I,
her last ember, I go down with her.
LEADER AND CHORUS: You cannot stop, your song goes on—
some spirit drops from the heights and treads you down
and the brutal strain grows—
your death-throes come and come and
I cannot see the end!
CASSANDRA: Then off with the veils that hid the fresh young bride—[4]
we will see the truth.
Flare up once more, my oracle! Clear and sharp
as the wind that blows towards the rising sun,
I can feel a deeper swell now, gathering head
to break at last and bring the dawn of grief.
No more riddles. I will teach you.
Come, bear witness, run and hunt with me.
We trail the old barbaric works of slaughter.

These roofs—look up—there is a dancing troupe
that never leaves. And they have their harmony
but it is harsh, their words are harsh, they drink
beyond the limit. Flushed on the blood of men
their spirit grows and none can turn away
their revel breeding in the veins—the Furies!
They cling to the house for life. They sing,
sing of the frenzy that began it all,
strain rising on strain, showering curses
on the man who tramples on his brother's bed.[5]

There. Have I hit the mark or not? Am I a fraud,
a fortune-teller babbling lies from door to door?
Swear how well I know the ancient crimes
that live within this house.
LEADER: And if I did?
Would an oath bind the wounds and heal us?
But you amaze me. Bred across the sea,
your language strange, and still you sense the truth
as if you had been here.
CASSANDRA: Apollo the Prophet
introduced me to his gift.
LEADER: A *god*—and moved with love?

4. At this point, as the meter indicates, Cassandra changes from lyric song, the medium of emotion, to spoken iambic lines, the medium of rational discourse. 5. Thyestes, who seduced the wife of his brother, Atreus.

CASSANDRA: I was ashamed to tell this once,
but now . . .
LEADER: We spoil ourselves with scruples,
long as things go well.
CASSANDRA: He came like a wrestler,
magnificent, took me down and breathed his fire
through me and—
LEADER: You bore him a child?
CASSANDRA: I yielded,
then at the climax I recoiled—I deceived Apollo!
LEADER: But the god's skills—they seized you even then?
CASSANDRA: Even then I told my people all the grief to come.
LEADER: And Apollo's anger never touched you?—is it possible?
CASSANDRA: Once I betrayed him I could never be believed.
LEADER: We believe you. Your visions seem so true.
CASSANDRA: Aieeeee!—
the pain, the terror! the birth-pang of the seer
who tells the truth—
it whirls me, oh,
the storm comes again, the crashing chords!
Look, you see them nestling at the threshold?
Young, young in the darkness like a dream,
like children really, yes, and their loved ones
brought them down . . .
their hands, they fill their hands
with their own flesh, they are serving it like food,
holding out their entrails . . . now it's clear,
I can see the armfuls of compassion, see the father
reach to taste and—
For so much suffering,
I tell you, someone plots revenge.
A lion who lacks a lion's heart,[6]
he sprawled at home in the royal lair
and set a trap for the lord on his return.
My lord . . . I must wear his yoke, I am his slave.
The lord of the men-of-war, he obliterated Troy—
he is so blind, so lost to that detestable hellhound
who pricks her ears and fawns and her tongue draws out
her glittering words of welcome—
No, he cannot see
the stroke that Fury's hiding, stealth, and murder.
What outrage—the woman kills the man!
What to call

6. Aegisthus.

that . . . monster of Greece, and bring my quarry down?
Viper coiling back and forth?
Some sea-witch?—
Scylla[7] crouched in her rocky nest—nightmare of sailors?
Raging mother of death, storming deathless war against
the ones she loves!
And how she howled in triumph,
boundless outrage. Just as the tide of battle
broke her way, she seems to rejoice that he
is safe at home from war, saved for her.
Believe me if you will. What will it matter
if you won't? It comes when it comes,
and soon you'll see it face to face
and say the seer was all too true.
You will be moved with pity.

LEADER: Thyestes' feast,
the children's flesh—that I know,
and the fear shudders through me. It's true,
real, no dark signs about it. I hear the rest
but it throws me off the scent.

CASSANDRA: Agamemnon.
You will see him dead.

LEADER: Peace, poor girl!
Put those words to sleep.

CASSANDRA: No use,
the Healer[8] has no hand in this affair.

LEADER: Not if it's true—but god forbid it is!

CASSANDRA: You pray, and they close in to kill!

LEADER: What man prepares this, this dreadful—

CASSANDRA: Man?
You *are* lost, to every word I've said.

LEADER: Yes—
I don't see who can bring the evil off.

CASSANDRA: And yet I know my Greek, too well.

LEADER: So does the Delphic oracle,[9]
but he's hard to understand.

CASSANDRA: His *fire!*—
sears me, sweeps me again—the torture!
Apollo Lord of the Light, you burn,
you blind me—
Agony!
She is the lioness,

7. A man-eating sea monster. 8. Apollo. 9. Its replies were celebrated for their obscurity and ambiguity.

she rears on her hind legs, she beds with the wolf
when her lion king goes ranging—
she will kill me—
Ai, the torture!
She is mixing her drugs,
adding a measure more of hate for me.
She gloats as she whets the sword for him.
He brought me home and we will pay in carnage.

Why mock yourself with these—trappings, the rod,
the god's wreath, his yoke around my throat?
Before I die I'll tread you—

[*Ripping off her regalia, stamping it into the ground.*]

down, out,
die die die!
Now you're down. I've paid you back.
Look for another victim—I am free at last—
make her rich in all your curse and doom.

[*Staggering backwards as if wrestling with a spirit tearing at her robes.*]

See,
Apollo himself, his fiery hands—I feel him again,
he's stripping off my robes, the Seer's robes!
And after he looked down and saw me mocked,
even in these, his glories, mortified by friends
I loved, and they hated me, they were so blind
to their own demise—
I went from door to door,
I was wild with the god, I heard them call me
"Beggar! Wretch! Starve for bread in hell!"

And I endured it all, and now he will
extort me as his due. A seer for the Seer.
He brings me here to die like this,
not to serve at my father's altar. No,
the block is waiting. The cleaver steams
with my life blood, the first blood drawn
for the king's last rites.

[*Regaining her composure and moving to the altar.*]

We will die,
but not without some honor from the gods.
There will come another to avenge us,[1]
born to kill his mother, born
his father's champion. A wanderer, a fugitive
driven off his native land, he will come home
to cope the stones of hate that menace all he loves.
The gods have sworn a monumental oath: as his father lies
upon the ground he draws him home with power like a prayer.

Then why so pitiful, why so many tears?
I have seen my city faring as she fared,
and those who took her, judged by the gods,
faring as they fare. I must be brave.
It is my turn to die.

[*Approaching the doors.*]

I address you as the Gates of Death.
I pray it comes with one clear stroke,
no convulsions, the pulses ebbing out
in gentle death. I'll close my eyes and sleep.

LEADER: So much pain, poor girl, and so much truth,
you've told so much. But if you *see* it coming,
clearly—how can you go to your own death,
like a beast to the altar driven on by god,
and hold your head so high?

CASSANDRA: No escape, my friends,
not now.

LEADER: But the last hour should be savored.

CASSANDRA: My time has come. Little to gain from flight.

LEADER: You're brave, believe me, full of gallant heart.

CASSANDRA: Only the wretched go with praise like that.

LEADER: But to go nobly lends a man some grace.

CASSANDRA: My noble father—you and your noble children.

[*She nears the threshold and recoils, groaning in revulsion.*]

LEADER: What now? what terror flings you back?
Why? Unless some horror in the brain—

CASSANDRA: Murder.
The house breathes with murder—bloody shambles[2]!

LEADER: No, no, only the victims at the hearth.

1. Orestes. 2. A slaughterhouse.

CASSANDRA: I know that odor. I smell the open grave.
LEADER: But the Syrian myrrh,[3] it fills the halls with splendor,
can't you sense it?
CASSANDRA: Well, I must go in now,
mourning Agamemnon's death and mine.
Enough of life!

[*Approaching the doors again and crying out.*]

Friends—I cried out,
not from fear like a bird fresh caught,
but that you will testify to *how* I died.
When the queen, woman for woman, dies for me,
and a man falls for the man who married grief.
That's all I ask, my friends. A stranger's gift
for one about to die.
LEADER: Poor creature, you
and the end you see so clearly. I pity you.
CASSANDRA: I'd like a few words more, a kind of dirge,
it is my own. I pray to the sun,
the last light I'll see,
that when the avengers cut the assassins down
they will avenge me too, a slave who died,
an easy conquest.
Oh men, your destiny.
When all is well a shadow can overturn it.
When trouble comes a stroke of the wet sponge,
and the picture's blotted out. And that,
I think that breaks the heart.

[*She goes through the doors.*]

CHORUS: But the lust for power never dies—
men cannot have enough.
No one will lift a hand to send it
from his door, to give it warning,
"Power, never come again!"
Take this man: the gods in glory
gave him Priam's city to plunder,
brought him home in splendor like a god.
But now if he must pay for the blood
his father shed, and die for the deaths
he brought to pass, and bring more death

3. Incense burned at the sacrifice. Another interpretation of this line runs: "What you speak of [i.e., the smell of the open grave] is no Syrian incense, giving splendor to the palace."

to avenge his dying, show us one
who boasts himself born free
of the raging angel, once he hears—

[*Cries break out within the palace.*]

AGAMEMNON: Aagh!
Struck deep—the death-blow, deep—
LEADER: Quiet. Cries,
but who? Someone's stabbed—
AGAMEMNON:
Aaagh, again . . .
second blow—struck home.
LEADER: The work is done,
you can feel it. The king, and the great cries—
Close ranks now, find the right way out.

[*But the old men scatter, each speaks singly.*]

CHORUS:—I say send out heralds, muster the guard,
they'll save the house.
—And I say rush in now,
catch them red-handed—butchery running on their blades.

—Right with you, do something—now or never!

—Look at them, beating the drum for insurrection.

—Yes,
we're wasting time. They rape the name of caution,
their hands will never sleep.

—Not a plan in sight.
Let men of action do the planning, too.

—I'm helpless. Who can raise the dead with words?

—What, drag out our lives? bow down to the tyrants,
the ruin of the house?

—Never, better to die
on your feet than live on your knees.

—Wait,
do we take the cries for signs, prophesy like seers
and give him up for dead?

—No more suspicions,
not another word till we have proof.

—Confusion
on all sides—one thing to do. See how it stands
with Agamemnon, once and for all we'll see—

[*He rushes at the doors. They open and reveal a silver cauldron that holds the body of* AGAMEMNON *shrouded in bloody robes, with the body of* CASSANDRA *to his left and* CLYTAEMNESTRA *standing to his right, sword in hand. She strides towards the chorus.*]

CLYTAEMNESTRA: Words endless words I've said to serve the moment—
now it makes me proud to tell the truth.
How else to prepare a death for deadly men
who seem to love you? How to rig the nets
of pain so high no man can overleap them?
I brooded on this trial, this ancient blood feud
year by year. At last my hour came.
Here I stand and here I struck
and here my work is done.
I did it all. I don't deny it, no.
He had no way to flee or fight his destiny—

[*Unwinding the robes from* AGAMEMNON'S *body, spreading them before the altar where the old men cluster around them, unified as a chorus once again.*]

our never-ending, all embracing net, I cast it
wide for the royal haul, I coil him round and round
in the wealth, the robes of doom, and then I strike him
once, twice, and at each stroke he cries in agony—
he buckles at the knees and crashes here!
And when he's down I add the third, last blow,
to the Zeus who saves the dead beneath the ground
I send that third blow[4] home in homage like a prayer.

So he goes down, and the life is bursting out of him—
great sprays of blood, and the murderous shower
wounds me, dyes me black and I, I revel
like the Earth when the spring rains come down,
the blessed gifts of god, and the new green spear
splits the sheath and rips to birth in glory!

4. Like the third libation to Zeus above.

So it stands, elders of Argos gathered here.
Rejoice if you can rejoice—I glory.
And if I'd pour upon his body the libation
it deserves, what wine could match my words?
It is right and more than right. He flooded
the vessel of our proud house with misery,
with the vintage of the curse and now
he drains the dregs. My lord is home at last.
LEADER: You appall me, you, your brazen words—
exulting over your fallen king.
CLYTAEMNESTRA: And you,
you try me like some desperate woman.
My heart is steel, well you know. Praise me,
blame me as you choose. It's all one.
Here is Agamemnon, my husband made a corpse
by this right hand—a masterpiece of Justice.
Done is done.
CHORUS: Woman!—what poison cropped from the soil
or strained from the heaving sea, what nursed you,
drove you insane? You brave the curse of Greece.
You have cut away and flung away and now
the people cast you off to exile,
broken with our hate.
CLYTAEMNESTRA: And now you sentence me?—
you banish *me* from the city, curses breathing
down my neck? But *he*—
name one charge you brought against him then.
He thought no more of it than killing a beast,
and his flocks were rich, teeming in their fleece,
but he sacrificed his own child, our daughter,
the agony I labored into love,
to charm away the savage winds of Thrace.[5]
Didn't the law demand you banish him?—
hunt him from the land for all his guilt?
But now you witness what I've done
and you are ruthless judges.
Threaten away!
I'll meet you blow for blow. And if I fall
the throne is yours. If god decrees the reverse,
late as it is, old men, you'll learn your place.
CHORUS: Mad with ambition,
shrilling pride!—some Fury
crazed with the carnage rages through your brain—

5. I.e., winds from the North (at Aulis).

I can see the flecks of blood inflame your eyes!
But vengeance comes—you'll lose your loved ones,
stroke for painful stroke.
CLYTAEMNESTRA: Then learn this, too, the power of my oaths.
By the child's Rights I brought to birth,
by Ruin, by Fury—the three gods to whom
I sacrificed this man—I swear my hopes
will never walk the halls of fear so long
as Aegisthus lights the fire on my hearth.
Loyal to me as always, no small shield
to buttress my defiance.
Here he lies.
He brutalized me. The darling of all
the golden girls[6] who spread the gates of Troy.
And here his spear-prize . . . what wonders she beheld!—
the seer of Apollo shared my husband's bed,
his faithful mate who knelt at the rowing-benches,
worked by every hand.
They have their rewards.
He as you know. And she, the swan of the gods
who lived to sing her latest, dying song—
his lover lies beside him.
She brings a fresh, voluptuous relish to my bed!
CHORUS: Oh quickly, let me die—
no bed of labor, no, no wasting illness . . .
bear me off in the sleep that never ends,
now that he has fallen,
now that our dearest shield lies battered—
Woman made him suffer,
woman struck him down.

Helen the wild, maddening Helen,
one for the many, the thousand lives
you murdered under Troy, now you are crowned
with this consummate wreath, the blood
that lives in memory, glistens age to age.
Once in the halls she walked and she was war,
angel of war, angel of agony, lighting men to death.

CLYTAEMNESTRA: Pray no more for death, broken
as you are. And never turn
your wrath on her, call her
the scourge of men, the one alone

6. In Greek *Chryseidon*, which recalls the girl in the first book of the *Iliad*, Chryseis, whom Agamemnon said he preferred to Clytemnestra (*Iliad*, I. 113).

who destroyed a myriad Greek lives—
Helen the grief that never heals.
CHORUS: The *spirit!*—you who tread
the house and the twinborn sons of Tantalus—[7]
you empower the sisters, Fury's twins
whose power tears the heart!
Perched on the corpse your carrion raven
glories in her hymn,
her screaming hymn of pride.
CLYTAEMNESTRA: Now you set your judgment straight,
you summon *him!* Three generations
feed the spirit in the race.
Deep in the veins he feeds our bloodlust—
aye, before the old wound dies
it ripens in another flow of blood.
CHORUS: The great curse of the house, the spirit,
dead weight wrath—and you can praise it!
Praise the insatiate doom that feeds
relentless on our future and our sons.
Oh all through the will of Zeus,
the cause of all, the one who works it all.
What comes to birth that is not Zeus?
Our lives are pain, what part not come from god?

Oh, my king, my captain,
how to salute you, how to mourn you?
What can I say with all my warmth and love?
Here in the black widow's web you lie,
gasping out your life
in a sacrilegious death, dear god,
reduced to a slave's bed,
my king of men, yoked by stealth and Fate,
by the wife's hand that thrust the two-edged sword.

CLYTAEMNESTRA: You claim the work is mine, call me
Agamemnon's wife—you are so wrong.
Fleshed in the wife of this dead man,
the spirit lives within me,
our savage ancient spirit of revenge.
In return for Atreus' brutal feast
he kills his perfect son—for every
murdered child, a crowning sacrifice.
CHORUS: And *you,* innocent of his murder?

7. Father of Pelops, grandfather of Atreus. "Sons" here must mean 'descendants,' i.e., Agamemnon and Menelaus.

And who could swear to that? and how? . . .
and still an avenger could arise,
bred by the fathers' crimes, and lend a hand.
He wades in the blood of brothers,
stream on mounting stream—black war erupts
and where he strides revenge will stride,
clots will mass for the young who were devoured.

Oh my king, my captain,
how to salute you, how to mourn you?
What can I say with all my warmth and love?
Here in the black widow's web you lie,
gasping out your life
in a sacrilegious death, dear god,
reduced to a slave's bed,
my king of men, yoked by stealth and Fate,
by the wife's hand that thrust the two-edged sword.

CLYTAEMNESTRA: No slave's death, I think—
no stealthier than the death he dealt
our house and the offspring of our loins,
Iphigeneia, girl of tears.
Act for act, wound for wound!
Never exult in Hades, swordsman,
here you are repaid. By the sword
you did your work and by the sword you die.
CHORUS: The mind reels—where to turn?
All plans dashed, all hope! I cannot think . . .
the roofs are toppling, I dread the drumbeat thunder
the heavy rains of blood will crush the house
the first light rains are over—
Justice brings new acts of agony, yes,
on new grindstones Fate is grinding sharp the sword of Justice.
Earth, dear Earth,
if only you'd drawn me under
long before I saw him huddled
in the beaten silver bath.
Who will bury him, lift his dirge?

[*Turning to* CLYTAEMNESTRA.]

You, can you dare *this?*
To kill your lord with your own hand
then mourn his soul with tributes, terrible tributes—

do his enormous works a great dishonor.
This god-like man, this hero. Who at the grave
will sing his praises, pour the wine of tears?
Who will labour there with truth of heart?
CLYTAEMNESTRA: This is no concern of yours.
The hand that bore and cut him down
will hand him down to Mother Earth.
This house will never mourn for him.
Only our daughter Iphigeneia,
by all rights, will rush to meet him
first at the churning straits,[8]
the ferry over tears—
she'll fling her arms around her father,
pierce him with her love.
CHORUS: Each charge meets counter-charge.
None can judge between them. Justice.
The plunderer plundered, the killer pays the price.
The truth still holds while Zeus still holds the throne:
the one who acts must suffer—
that is law. Who can tear from the veins
the bad seed, the curse? The race is welded to its ruin.
CLYTAEMNESTRA: At last you see the future and the truth!
But I will swear a pact with the spirit
born within us. I embrace his works,
cruel as they are but done at last,
if he will leave our house
in the future, bleed another line
with kinsmen murdering kinsmen.
Whatever he may ask. A few things
are all I need, once I have purged
our fury to destroy each other—
purged it from our halls.

[AEGISTHUS *has emerged from the palace with his bodyguard and stands triumphant over the body of* AGAMEMNON.]

AEGISTHUS: O what a brilliant day
it is for vengeance! Now I can say once more
there are gods in heaven avenging men,
blazing down on all the crimes of earth.
Now at last I see this man brought down
in the Furies' tangling robes. It feasts my eyes—
he pays for the plot his father's hand contrived.

8. The river of the lower world over which the dead were ferried.

Atreus, this man's father, was king of Argos.
My father, Thyestes—let me make this clear—
Atreus' brother challenged him for the crown,
and Atreus drove him out of house and home
then lured him back, and home Thyestes came,
poor man, a suppliant to his own hearth,
to pray that Fate might save him.
So it did.
There was no dying, no staining our native ground
with *his* blood. Thyestes was the guest,
and this man's godless father—

[*Pointing to* AGAMEMNON.]

the zeal of the host outstripping a brother's love,
made my father a feast that seemed a feast for gods,
a love feast of his children's flesh.
He cuts
the extremities, feet and delicate hands
into small pieces, scatters them over the dish
and serves it to Thyestes throned on high.
He picks at the flesh he cannot recognize,
the soul of innocence eating the food of ruin—
look,

[*Pointing to the bodies at his feet.*]

that feeds upon the house! And then,
when he sees the monstrous thing he's done, he shrieks,
he reels back head first and vomits up that butchery,
tramples the feast—brings down the curse of Justice:
"Crash to ruin, all the race of Pleisthenes,[9] crash down!"

So you see him, down. And I, the weaver of Justice,
plotted out the kill. Atreus drove us into exile,
my struggling father and I, a babe-in-arms,
his last son, but I became a man
and Justice brought me home. I was abroad
but I reached out and seized my man,
link by link I clamped the fatal scheme
together. Now I could die gladly, even I—
now I see this monster in the nets of Justice.

LEADER: Aegisthus, you revel in pain—you sicken me.

9. A name sometimes inserted into the genealogy of the house of Tantalus.

You say you killed the king in cold blood,
single-handed planned his pitiful death?
I say there's no escape. In the hour of judgment,
trust to this, your head will meet the people's
rocks and curses.

AEGISTHUS: You say! you slaves at the oars—
while the master of the benches cracks the whip?
You'll learn, in your late age, how much it hurts
to teach old bones their place. We have techniques—
chains and the pangs of hunger,
two effective teachers, excellent healers.
They can even cure old men of pride and gall.
Look—can't you see? The more you kick
against the pricks, the more you suffer.

LEADER: You, pathetic—
the king had just returned from battle.
You waited out the war and fouled his lair,
you planned my great commander's fall.

AEGISTHUS: Talk on—
you'll scream for every word, my little Orpheus.[1]
We'll see if the world comes dancing to your song,
your absurd barking—snarl your breath away!
I'll make you dance, I'll bring you all to heel.

LEADER: *You* rule Argos? You who schemed his death
but cringed to cut him down with your own hand?

AEGISTHUS: The treachery was the woman's work, clearly.
I was a marked man, his enemy for ages.
But I will use his riches, stop at nothing
to civilize his people. All but the rebel:
him I'll yoke and break—
no cornfed colt, running free in the traces.
Hunger, ruthless mate of the dark torture-chamber,
trains her eyes upon him till he drops!

LEADER: Coward, why not kill the man yourself?
Why did the woman, the corruption of Greece
and the gods of Greece, have to bring him down?
Orestes—If he still sees the light of day,
bring him home, good Fates, home to kill
this pair at last. Our champion in slaughter!

AEGISTHUS: Bent on insolence? Well, you'll learn, quickly.
At them, men—you have your work at hand!

[*His men drew swords; the old men take up their sticks.*]

1. A mythical singer who charmed all nature with his music.

LEADER: At them, fist at the hilt, to the last man—
AEGISTHUS: Fist at the hilt, I'm not afraid to die.
LEADER: It's death you want and death you'll have—
we'll make that word your last.

[CLYTAEMNESTRA *moves between them, restraining* AEGISTHUS.]

CLYTAEMNESTRA: No more, my dearest,
no more grief. We have too much to reap
right here, our mighty harvest of despair.
Our lives are based on pain. No bloodshed now.

Fathers of Argos, turn for home before you act
and suffer for it. What we did was destiny.
If we could end the suffering, how we would rejoice.
The spirit's brutal hoof has struck our heart.
And that is what a woman has to say.
Can you accept the truth?

[CLYTAEMNESTRA *turns to leave.*]
AEGISTHUS: But these . . . mouths
that bloom in filth—spitting insults in my teeth.
You tempt your fates, you insubordinate dogs—
to hurl abuse at me, your master!
LEADER: No Greek
worth his salt would grovel at your feet.
AEGISTHUS: I—I'll stalk you all your days!
LEADER: Not if the spirit brings Orestes home.
AEGISTHUS: Exiles feed on hope—well I know.
LEADER: More,
gorge yourself to bursting—soil justice, while you can.
AEGISTHUS: I promise you, you'll pay, old fools—in good time,
too!
LEADER: Strut on your own dunghill, you cock beside your mate.
CLYTAEMNESTRA: Let them howl—they're impotent. You and I have
power now.
We will set the house in order once for all.

[*They enter the palace; the great doors close behind them; the old men disband and wander off.*]

SOPHOCLES

496–406 B.C.

Aeschylus belonged to the generation which fought at Marathon; his manhood and his old age were passed in the heroic period of the Persian defeat on Greek soil and the war which Athens fought to liberate her kinsmen in the islands of the Aegean and on the Asiatic coast. Sophocles, his younger contemporary, lived to see an Athens which had advanced in power and prosperity far beyond the city that Aeschylus knew. The league of free Greek cities against Persia which Athens had led to victory in the Aegean had become an empire, in which Athens taxed and coerced the subject cities that had once been her free allies. Sophocles, born around 496 B.C., played his part, a prominent one, in the city's affairs. In 443 B.C. he served as one of the treasurers of the imperial league and, with Pericles, as one of the ten generals elected for the war against the island of Samos which tried to secede from the Athenian league a few years later. When the Athenian expedition to Sicily ended in disaster, Sophocles was appointed to a special committee set up in 411 B.C. to deal with the emergency. He died in 406, two years before Athens surrendered to Sparta.

His career as a brilliantly successful dramatist began in 468; in that year he won first prize at the Dionysia, competing against Aeschylus. Over the next sixty-two years he produced over a hundred and twenty plays; he won first prize no less than twenty-four times and when he was not first, came in second, never third.

Aeschylus had been actor as well as playwright and director but Sophocles, early in his career, gave up acting. It was he who added a third actor to the team; the early Aeschylean plays (*Persians*, *Seven Against Thebes*, and *Suppliants*) can be played by two actors (who of course can change masks to extend the range of *dramatis personae*). In the *Oresteia*, Aeschylus has taken advantage of the Sophoclean third actor; this makes possible the role of Cassandra, the one three-line speech of Pylades in *Libation Bearers*, and the trial scene in *Eumenides*. But Sophocles used his third actor to create complex triangular scenes like the dialogue between Oedipus and the Corinthian messenger, which reveals to a listening Jocasta the ghastly truth which Oedipus will not discover until the next scene.

We have only seven of his plays and not many of them can be accurately dated. The *Ajax* (which deals with the suicide of the hero whose shade turns silently away from Odysseus in the *Odyssey*) and the *Trachiniae* (the story of the death of Heracles) are both generally thought to be early productions. *Antigone* is fairly securely fixed in the late 440s and *Oedipus the King* was probably staged during the early years of the Peloponnesian War, which began in 431 B.C. For *Electra* we have no date but it is probably later than *Oedipus the King*. *Philoctetes*, a tale of the Trojan War, was staged in 409 B.C. and *Oedipus at Colonus*, which presents Oedipus' strangely triumphant death on Athenian soil, was produced after Sophocles' death.

Most of these plays date from the last half of the fifth century; they were

written in and for an Athens that, since the days of Aeschylus, had undergone an intellectual revolution. It was in a time of critical re-evaluation of accepted standards and traditions (see pp. 6–9) that Sophocles, in the early years of the Peloponnesian war (431–404 B.C.), produced his masterpiece, *Oedipus the King*, and the problems of the time are reflected in the play.

OEDIPUS THE KING

This tragedy, which deals with a man of high principles and probing intelligence who follows the prompting of that intelligence to the final consequence of true self-knowledge, which makes him put out his eyes, was as full of significance for Sophocles' contemporaries as it is for us. Unlike a modern dramatist, Sophocles used for his tragedy a story well known to the audience and as old as their own history, a legend told by father to son, handed down from generation to generation because of its implicit wealth of meaning, learned in childhood and rooted deep in the consciousness of every member of the community. Such a story the Greeks called a *myth*, and the use of it presented Sophocles, as it did Aeschylus in his trilogy, with material which, apart from its great inherent dramatic potential, already possessed the significance and authority which the modern dramatist must create for himself. It had the authority of history, for the history of ages which leave no records is myth—that is to say, the significant event of the past, stripped of irrelevancies and imaginatively shaped by the oral tradition. It had a religious authority, for the Oedipus story, like the story of the house of Atreus, is concerned with the relation between man and god. Lastly, and this is especially true of the Oedipus myth, it had the power, because of its subject matter, to arouse the irrational hopes and fears which lie deep and secret in the human consciousness.

The use of the familiar myth enabled the dramatist to draw on all its wealth of unformulated meaning, but it did not prevent him from striking a contemporary note. Oedipus, in Sophocles' play, is at one and the same time the mysterious figure of the past who broke the most fundamental human taboos and a typical fifth-century Athenian. His character contains all the virtues for which the Athenians were famous and the vices for which they were notorious. The best commentary on Oedipus' character is the speech which Thucydides, the contemporary historian of the Peloponnesian War, attributed to a Corinthian spokesman at Sparta: it is a hostile but admiring assessment of the Athenian genius. "Athenians . . . [are] equally quick in the conception and in the execution of every new plan"—so Oedipus has already sent to Delphi when the priest advises him to do so, and has already sent for Tiresias when the chorus suggests this course of action. "They are bold beyond their strength; they run risks which prudence would condemn"—as Oedipus risked his life to answer the riddle of the Sphinx and later, in spite of the oracle about his marriage, accepted the hand of the queen. "In the midst of misfortune they are full of hope"—so Oedipus, when he is told that he is not the son of Polybus and Merope, and Jocasta has already realized whose son he is, claims that he is the "child of Fortune." "When they do not carry out an intention which they have formed, they seem to have sustained a personal bereavement"—so Oedipus, shamed

by Jocasta and the chorus into sparing Creon's life, yields sullenly and petulantly.

The Athenian devotion to the city, which received the main emphasis in Pericles' praise of Athens, is strong in Oedipus; his answer to the priest at the beginning of the play shows that he is a conscientious and patriotic ruler. His sudden unreasoning rage is the characteristic fault of Athenian democracy, which in 406 B.C., to give only one instance, condemned and executed the generals who had failed, in the stress of weather and battle, to pick up the drowned bodies of their own men killed in the naval engagement at Arginusae. Oedipus is like the fifth-century Athenian most of all in his confidence in the human intelligence, especially his own. This confidence takes him in the play through the whole cycle of the critical, rationalist movement of the century, from the piety and orthodoxy he displays in the opening scene, through his taunts at oracles when he hears that Polybus is dead, to the despairing courage with which he accepts the consequences when he sees the abyss opening at his feet. "Ah master, do I *have* to speak?" asks the herdsman from whom he is dragging the truth. "You have to," Oedipus replies. "And I *have* to hear." And hear he does. He learns that the oracle he had first fought against and then laughed at has been fulfilled; that every step his intelligence prompted was one step nearer to disaster; that his knowledge was ignorance, his clear vision blindness. Faced with the reality that his determined probing finally reveals, he puts out his eyes.

The relation of Oedipus' character to the development of the action is the basis of the most famous attempt to define the nature of the tragic process, Aristotle's theory that pity and terror are aroused most effectively by the spectacle of a man who is "not pre-eminent in virtue and justice, and yet on the other hand does not fall into misfortune through vice or depravity, but falls because of some mistake, one among the number of the highly renowned and prosperous, such as Oedipus." Other references by Aristotle to this play make it clear that this influential critical canon is based particularly on Sophocles' masterpiece and the canon has been universally applied to the play. But the great influence (and validity) of the Aristotelian theory should not be allowed to obscure the fact that Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* is more highly organized and economical than Aristotle implies. The fact that the critics have differed about the nature of Oedipus' mistake or frailty (his errors are many and his frailties include anger, impiety, and self-confidence) is a clue to the real situation. Oedipus falls not through "some vicious mole of nature" or some "particular fault" (to use Hamlet's terms), but because he is the man he is, because of all aspects of his character, good and bad alike; and the development of the action right through to the catastrophe shows us every aspect of his character at work in the process of self-revelation and self-destruction. His first decision in the play, to hear Creon's message from Delphi in public rather than, as Creon suggests, in private, is evidence of his kingly solicitude for his people and his trust in them, but it makes certain the full publication of the truth. His impetuous proclamation of a curse on the murderer of Laius, an unnecessary step prompted by his civic zeal, makes his final situation worse than it need have been. His anger at Tiresias forces a revelation which drives him on to accuse Creon; this in turn provokes Jocasta's revelations. And throughout the play his confidence in the efficacy

of his own action, his hopefulness as the situation darkens, and his passion for discovering the truth, guide the steps of the investigation which is to reveal the detective as the criminal. All aspects of his character, good and bad alike, are equally involved; it is no frailty or error that leads him to the terrible truth, but his total personality.

The character of Oedipus as revealed in the play does something more than explain the present action, it also explains his past. In Oedipus' speeches and actions on stage we can see the man who, given the circumstances in which Oedipus was involved, would inevitably do just what Oedipus has done. Each action on stage shows us the mood in which he committed some action in the past; his angry death sentence on Creon reveals the man who killed Laius because of an insult on the highway; his impulsive proclamation of total excommunication for the unknown murderer shows us the man who, without forethought, accepted the hand of Jocasta; his intelligent, persistent search for the truth shows us the brain and the courage which solved the riddle of the Sphinx. The revelation of his character in the play is at once a re-creation of his past and an interpretation of the oracle which predicted his future.

This organization of the material is what makes it possible for us to accept the story as tragedy at all, for it emphasizes Oedipus' independence of the oracle. When we first see Oedipus, he has already committed the actions for which he is to suffer, actions prophesied, before his birth, by Apollo. But the dramatist's emphasis on Oedipus' character suggests that although Apollo has predicted what Oedipus will do, he does not determine it; Oedipus determines his own conduct, by being the man he is. Milton's explanation of a similar situation, Adam's fall and God's foreknowledge of it, may be applied to Oedipus; foreknowledge had no influence on his fault. The relationship between Apollo's prophecy and Oedipus' actions is not that of cause and effect. It is the relationship of two independent entities which are equated.

This correspondence between his character and his fate removes the obstacle to our full acceptance of the play which an external fate governing his action would set up. Nevertheless, we feel that he suffers more than he deserves. He has served as an example of the inadequacy of the human intellect and a warning that there is a power in the universe which humanity cannot control, nor even fully understand, but Oedipus the man still has our sympathy. Sophocles felt this too, and in a later play, his last, the *Oedipus at Colonus*, he dealt with the reward which finally balanced Oedipus' suffering. In *Oedipus the King* itself there is a foreshadowing of this final development; the last scene shows us a man already beginning to recover from the shock of the catastrophe and reasserting a natural superiority.

"I am going—you know on what condition?" he says to Creon when ordered back into the house, and a few lines later Creon has to say bluntly to him: "Still the king, the master of all things? No more; here your power ends." This renewed imperiousness is the first expression of a feeling on his part that he is not entirely guilty, a beginning of the reconstitution of the magnificent man of the opening scenes; it reaches its fulfillment in the final Oedipus play, the *Oedipus at Colonus*, in which he is a titanic figure, confident of his innocence and more masterful than he has ever been.

C. H. Whitman, *Sophocles, A Study in Heroic Humanism* (1951), is a

brilliant study, which explores an approach very different from that proposed here. S. M. Adams, *Sophocles the Playwright* (1957), pays particular attention to dramatic technique. B. M. W. Knox, *Oedipus at Thebes* (1957), is a detailed examination of the play in the context of its age; Knox's *The Heroic Temper* (1964) concentrates on the characters of Oedipus, Antigone, Electra, and Philoctetes. Sophocles, *The Three Theban Plays*, translated by R. Fagles, introductions and notes by B. Knox (1982), contains substantial introductions to *Oedipus the King*.

Oedipus the King[1]

Characters

OEDIPUS, *king of Thebes*
A PRIEST *of Zeus*
CREON, *brother of Jocasta*
A CHORUS *of Theban citizens and their Leader*
TIRESIAS, *a blind prophet*
JOCASTA, *the queen, wife of Oedipus*
A MESSENGER *from Corinth*
A SHEPHERD
A MESSENGER *from inside the palace*
ANTIGONE, ISMENE, *daughters of Oedipus and Jocasta*
GUARDS *and attendants*
PRIESTS *of Thebes*

[TIME AND SCENE: *The royal house of Thebes. Double doors dominate the façade; a stone altar stands at the center of the stage.*

Many years have passed since OEDIPUS *solved the riddle of the Sphinx and ascended the throne of Thebes, and now a plague has struck the city. A procession of priests enters; suppliants, broken and despondent, they carry branches wound in wool and lay them on the altar.*

The doors open. Guards assemble. OEDIPUS *comes forward, majestic but for a telltale limp, and slowly views the condition of his people.*]

OEDIPUS: Oh my children, the new blood of ancient Thebes,
why are you here? Huddling at my altar,
praying before me, your branches wound in wool.[2]
Our city reeks with the smoke of burning incense,
rings with cries for the Healer[3] and wailing for the dead.

1. Translated by Robert Fagles. 2. The insignia of suppliants, laid on the altar and left there until the suppliant's request was granted. At the end of the scene, when Oedipus promises action, he will tell them to take the branches away. 3. A title of Apollo.

I thought it wrong, my children, to hear the truth
from others, messengers. Here I am myself—
you all know me, the world knows my fame:
I am Oedipus.

[*Helping a Priest to his feet.*]

Speak up, old man. Your years,
your dignity—you should speak for the others.
Why here and kneeling, what preys upon you so?
Some sudden fear? some strong desire?
You can trust me. I am ready to help,
I'll do anything. I would be blind to misery
not to pity my people kneeling at my feet.

PRIEST: Oh Oedipus, king of the land, our greatest power!
You see us before you now, men of all ages
clinging to your altars. Here are boys,
still too weak to fly from the nest,
and here the old, bowed down with the years,
the holy ones—a priest of Zeus myself—and here
the picked, unmarried men, the young hope of Thebes.
And all the rest, your great family gathers now,
branches wreathed, massing in the squares,
kneeling before the two temples of queen Athena
or the river-shrine where the embers glow and die
and Apollo sees the future in the ashes.[4]

Our city—
look around you, see with your own eyes—
our ship pitches wildly, cannot lift her head
from the depths, the red waves of death . . .
Thebes is dying. A blight on the fresh crops
and the rich pastures, cattle sicken and die,
and the women die in labor, children stillborn,
and the plague, the fiery god of fever hurls down
on the city, his lightning slashing through us—
raging plague in all its vengeance, devastating
the house of Cadmus![5] And black Death luxuriates
in the raw, wailing miseries of Thebes.
Now we pray to you. You cannot equal the gods,
your children know that, bending at your altar.
But we do rate you first of men,
both in the common crises of our lives

4. At a temple of Apollo in Thebes the priests foretold the future according to patterns they saw in the ashes of the burned flesh of sacrificial victims. 5. Mythical founder of Thebes and its first king.

and face-to-face encounters with the gods.
You freed us from the Sphinx,[6] you came to Thebes
and cut us loose from the bloody tribute[7] we had paid
that harsh, brutal singer. We taught you nothing,
no skill, no extra knowledge, still you triumphed.
A god was with you, so they say, and we believe it—
you lifted up our lives.
So now again,
Oedipus, king, we bend to you, your power—
we implore you, all of us on our knees:
find us strength, rescue! Perhaps you've heard
the voice of a god or something from other men,
Oedipus . . . what do you know?
The man of experience—you see it every day—
his plans will work in a crisis, his first of all.

Act now—we beg you, best of men, raise up our city!
Act, defend yourself, your former glory!
Your country calls you savior now
for your zeal, your action years ago.
Never let us remember of your reign:
you helped us stand, only to fall once more.
Oh raise up our city, set us on our feet.
The omens were good that day you brought us joy—
be the same man today!
Rule our land, you know you have the power,
but rule a land of the living, not a wasteland.
Ship and towered city are nothing, stripped of men
alive within it, living all as one.

OEDIPUS: My children,
I pity you. I see—how could I fail to see
what longings bring you here? Well I know
you are sick to death, all of you,
but sick as you are, not one is sick as I.
Your pain strikes each of you alone, each
in the confines of himself, no other. But my spirit
grieves for the city, for myself and all of you.
I wasn't asleep, dreaming. You haven't wakened me—
I've wept through the nights, you must know that,
groping, laboring over many paths of thought.

6. The winged female monster which terrorized the city of Thebes until her riddle was finally answered by Oedipus. The riddle was: "What is it that walks on four feet and two feet and three feet and has only one voice; when it walks on most feet, it is weakest?" Oedipus' answer was Man. (He has four feet as a child crawling on "all fours," and three feet in old age when he walks with the aid of a stick.) 7. Many young men of Thebes had tried to answer the riddle, failed, and been killed.

After a painful search I found one cure:
I acted at once. I sent Creon,
my wife's own brother, to Delphi[8]—
Apollo the Prophet's oracle—to learn
what I might do or say to save our city.

Today's the day. When I count the days gone by
it torments me . . . what is he doing?
Strange, he's late, he's gone too long.
But once he returns, then, then I'll be a traitor
if I do not do all the god makes clear.

PRIEST: Timely words. The men over there
are signaling—Creon's just arriving.

[*Sighting* CREON, *then turning to the altar.*]

OEDIPUS: Lord Apollo,
let him come with a lucky word of rescue,
shining like his eyes!

PRIEST: Welcome news, I think—he's crowned, look,
and the laurel wreath is bright with berries.[9]

OEDIPUS: We'll soon see. He's close enough to hear—

[*Enter* CREON *from the side; his face is shaded with a wreath.*]

Creon, prince, my kinsman, what do you bring us?
What message from the god?

CREON: Good news.
I tell you even the hardest things to bear,
if they should turn out well, all would be well.

OEDIPUS: Of course, but what were the god's *words?* There's no hope
and nothing to fear in what you've said so far.

CREON: If you want my report in the presence of these people,

[*Pointing to the priests while drawing* OEDIPUS *toward the palace.*]

I'm ready now, or we might go inside.

OEDIPUS: Speak out,
speak to us all. I grieve for these, my people,
far more than I fear for my own life.

CREON: Very well,
I will tell you what I heard from the god.

8. The oracular shrine of Apollo at Delphi, below Mount Parnassus in central Greece. 9. Creon is wearing a crown of laurel as a sign that he brings good news.

Apollo commands us—he was quite clear—
"Drive the corruption from the land,
don't harbor it any longer, past all cure,
don't nurse it in your soil—root it out!"
OEDIPUS: How can we cleanse ourselves—what rites?
What's the source of the trouble?
CREON: Banish the man, or pay back blood with blood.
Murder sets the plague-storm on the city.
OEDIPUS: Whose murder?
Whose fate does Apollo bring to light?
CREON: Our leader,
my lord, was once a man named Laius,
before you came and put us straight on course.
OEDIPUS: I know—
or so I've heard. I never saw the man myself.
CREON: Well, he was killed, and Apollo commands us now—
he could not be more clear,
"Pay the killers back—whoever is responsible."
OEDIPUS: Where on earth are they? Where to find it now,
the trail of the ancient guilt so hard to trace?
CREON: "Here in Thebes," he said.
Whatever is sought for can be caught, you know,
whatever is neglected slips away.
OEDIPUS: But where,
in the palace, the fields or foreign soil,
where did Laius meet his bloody death?
CREON: He went to consult an oracle, Apollo said,
and he set out and never came home again.
OEDIPUS: No messenger, no fellow-traveler saw what happened?
Someone to cross-examine?
CREON: No,
they were all killed but one. He escaped,
terrified, he could tell us nothing clearly,
nothing of what he saw—just one thing.
OEDIPUS: What's that?
one thing could hold the key to it all,
a small beginning give us grounds for hope.
CREON: He said thieves attacked them—a whole band,
not single-handed, cut King Laius down.
OEDIPUS: A thief,
so daring, so wild, he'd kill a king? Impossible,
unless conspirators paid him off in Thebes.
CREON: We suspected as much. But with Laius dead
no leader appeared to help us in our troubles.
OEDIPUS: Trouble? Your *king* was murdered—royal blood!

What stopped you from tracking down the killer
then and there?

CREON: The singing, riddling Sphinx.
She . . . persuaded us to let the mystery go
and concentrate on what lay at our feet.

OEDIPUS: No,
I'll start again—I'll bring it all to light myself!
Apollo is right, and so are you, Creon,
to turn our attention back to the murdered man.
Now you have *me* to fight for you, you'll see:
I am the land's avenger by all rights,
and Apollo's champion too.
But not to assist some distant kinsman, no,
for my own sake I'll rid us of this corruption.
Whoever killed the king may decide to kill me too,
with the same violent hand—by avenging Laius
I defend myself.

[*To the priests.*]

Quickly, my children.
Up from the steps, take up your branches now.

[*To the guards.*]

One of you summon the city[1] here before us,
tell them I'll do everything. God help us,
we will see our triumph—or our fall.

[OEDIPUS *and* CREON *enter the palace, followed by the guards.*]

PRIEST: Rise, my sons. The kindness we came for
Oedipus volunteers himself.
Apollo has sent his word, his oracle—
Come down, Apollo, save us, stop the plague.

[*The priests rise, remove their branches and exit to the side.*]
[*Enter a* CHORUS, *the citizens of Thebes, who have not heard the news that* CREON *brings. They march around the altar, chanting.*]

CHORUS: Zeus!
Great welcome voice of Zeus,[2] what do you bring?

1. Represented by the chorus which comes on to the circular dancing floor immediately after this scene. 2. Apollo was his son, and spoke for him.

What word from the gold vaults of Delphi
comes to brilliant Thebes? Racked with terror—
terror shakes my heart
and I cry your wild cries, Apollo, Healer of Delos[3]
I worship you in dread . . . what now, what is your price?
some new sacrifice? some ancient rite from the past
come round again each spring?—
what will you bring to birth?
Tell me, child of golden Hope
warm voice that never dies!

You are the first I call, daughter of Zeus
deathless Athena—I call your sister Artemis,[4]
heart of the market place enthroned in glory,
guardian of our earth—
I call Apollo, Archer astride the thunderheads of heaven—
O triple shield against death, shine before me now!
If ever, once in the past, you stopped some ruin
launched against our walls
you hurled the flame of pain
far, far from Thebes—you gods
come now, come down once more!
No, no
the miseries numberless, grief on grief, no end—
too much to bear, we are all dying
O my people . . .
Thebes like a great army dying
and there is no sword of thought to save us, no
and the fruits of our famous earth, they will not ripen
no and the women cannot scream their pangs to birth—
screams for the Healer, children dead in the womb
and life on life goes down
you can watch them go
like seabirds winging west, outracing the day's fire
down the horizon, irresistibly
streaking on to the shores of Evening
Death
so many deaths, numberless deaths on deaths, no end—
Thebes is dying, look, her children
stripped of pity . . .
generations strewn on the ground
unburied, unwept, the dead spreading death
and the young wives and gray-haired mothers with them

3. Apollo was born on the sacred island of Delos. 4. Sister of Apollo: a goddess associated with hunting, and also a protector of women in childbirth.

cling to the altars, trailing in from all over the city—
Thebes, city of death, one long cortege
and the suffering rises
wails for mercy rise
and the wild hymn for the Healer blazes out
clashing with our sobs our cries of mourning—
O golden daughter of god,[5] send rescue
radiant as the kindness in your eyes!
Drive him back!—the fever, the god of death
that raging god of war[6]
not armored in bronze, not shielded now, he burns me,
battle cries in the onslaught burning on—
O rout him from our borders!
Sail him, blast him out to the Sea-queen's chamber
the black Atlantic gulfs
or the northern harbor, death to all
where the Thracian surf[7] comes crashing.
Now what the night spares he comes by day and kills—
the god of death.

O lord of the stormcloud,
you who twirl the lightning, Zeus, Father,
thunder Death to nothing!

Apollo, lord of the light, I beg you—
whip your longbow's golden cord
showering arrows on our enemies—shafts of power
champions strong before us rushing on!

Artemis, Huntress,
torches flaring over the eastern ridges—
ride Death down in pain!

God of the headdress gleaming gold, I cry to you—
your name and ours are one, Dionysus—
come with your face a flame with wine
your raving women's[8] cries
your army on the march! Come with the lightning
come with torches blazing, eyes ablaze with glory!
Burn that god of death that all gods hate!

5. Athena, daughter of Zeus. 6. The plague is identified with Ares, the war-god, though he comes now without armor and shield. Ares is not elsewhere connected with plague; this passage may be an allusion to the early years of the Peloponnesian War, when Spartan troops threatened the city from outside and the plague raged inside the walls. 7. Ares was thought to be at home among the savages of Thrace, to the northeast of Greece proper. 8. The Bacchanals, nymphs or human female votaries of the god Dionysus (Bacchus) who celebrated him with wild dancing rites.

[OEDIPUS *enters from the palace to address the* CHORUS, *as if addressing the entire city of Thebes.*]

OEDIPUS: You pray to the gods? Let me grant your prayers.
Come, listen to me—do what the plague demands:
you'll find relief and lift your head from the depths.

I will speak out now as a stranger to the story,
a stranger to the crime. If I'd been present then,
there would have been no mystery, no long hunt
without a clue in hand. So now, counted
a native Theban years after the murder,
to all of Thebes I make this proclamation:
if any one of you knows who murdered Laius,
the son of Labdacus, I order him to reveal
the whole truth to me. Nothing to fear,
even if he must denounce himself,
let him speak up
and so escape the brunt of the charge—
he will suffer no unbearable punishment,
nothing worse than exile, totally unharmed.

[OEDIPUS *pauses, waiting for a reply.*]

Next,
if anyone knows the murderer is a stranger,
a man from alien soil, come, speak up.
I will give him a handsome reward, and lay up
gratitude in my heart for him besides.

[*Silence again, no reply.*]

But if you keep silent, if anyone panicking,
trying to shield himself or friend or kin,
rejects my offer, then hear what I will do.
I order you, every citizen of the state
where I hold throne and power: banish this man—
whoever he may be—never shelter him, never
speak a word to him, never make him partner
to your prayers, your victims burned to the gods.
Never let the holy water touch his hands
Drive him out, each of you, from every home.
He is the plague, the heart of our corruption,
as Apollo's oracle has just revealed to me.

So I honor my obligations:
I fight for the god and for the murdered man.

Now my curse on the murderer. Whoever he is,
a lone man unknown in his crime
or one among many, let that man drag out
his life in agony, step by painful step—
I curse myself as well . . . if by any chance
he proves to be an intimate of our house,
here at my hearth, with my full knowledge,
may the curse I just called down on him strike me!
These are your orders: perform them to the last.
I command you, for my sake, for Apollo's, for this country
blasted root and branch by the angry heavens.
Even if god had never urged you on to act,
how could you leave the crime uncleansed so long?
A man so noble—your king, brought down in blood—
you should have searched. But I am the king now,
I hold the throne that he held then, possess his bed
and a wife who shares our seed . . . why, our seed
might be the same, children born of the same mother
might have created blood-bonds between us
if his hope of offspring hadn't met disaster—
but fate swooped at his head and cut him short.
So I will fight for him as if he were my father,
stop at nothing, search the world
to lay my hands on the man who shed his blood,
the son of Labdacus descended of Polydorus,
Cadmus of old and Agenor, founder of the line:
their power and mine are one.
Oh dear gods,
my curse on those who disobey these orders!
Let no crops grow out of the earth for them—
shrivel their women, kill their sons,
burn them to nothing in this plague
that hits us now, or something even worse.
But you, loyal men of Thebes who approve my actions,
may our champion, Justice, may all the gods
be with us, fight beside us to the end!

LEADER: In the grip of your curse, my king, I swear
I'm not the murderer, I cannot point him out.
As for the search, Apollo pressed it on us—
he should name the killer.

OEDIPUS: Quite right,

but to force the gods to act against their will—
no man has the power.
LEADER: Then if I might mention
the next best thing . . .
OEDIPUS: The third best too—
don't hold back, say it.
LEADER: I still believe . . .
Lord Tiresias[9] sees with the eyes of Lord Apollo.
Anyone searching for the truth, my king,
might learn it from the prophet, clear as day.
OEDIPUS: I've not been slow with that. On Creon's cue
I sent the escorts, twice, within the hour.
I'm surprised he isn't here.
LEADER: We need him—
without him we have nothing but old, useless rumors.
OEDIPUS: Which rumors? I'll search out every word.
LEADER: Laius was killed, they say, by certain travelers.
OEDIPUS: I know—but no one can find the murderer.
LEADER: If the man has a trace of fear in him
he won't stay silent long,
not with your curses ringing in his ears.
OEDIPUS: He didn't flinch at murder,
he'll never flinch at words.

[*Enter* TIRESIAS, *the blind prophet, led by a boy with escorts in attendance. He remains at a distance.*]

LEADER: Here is the one who will convict him, look,
they bring him on at last, the seer, the man of god.
The truth lives inside him, him alone.
OEDIPUS: O Tiresias,
master of all the mysteries of our life,
all you teach and all you dare not tell,
signs in the heavens, signs that walk the earth!
Blind as you are, you can feel all the more
what sickness haunts our city. You, my lord,
are the one shield, the one savior we can find.

We asked Apollo—perhaps the messengers
haven't told you—he sent his answer back:
"Relief from the plague can only come one way.
Uncover the murderers of Laius,

9. The blind prophet of Thebes (whose ghost Odysseus goes to consult in Hades in *Odyssey* XI).

put them to death or drive them into exile."
So I beg you, grudge us nothing now, no voice,
no message plucked from the birds, the embers
or the other mantic ways within your grasp.
Rescue yourself, your city, rescue me—
rescue everything infected by the dead.
We are in your hands. For a man to help others
with all his gifts and native strength:
that is the noblest work.

TIRESIAS: How terrible—to see the truth
when the truth is only pain to him who sees!
I knew it well, but I put it from my mind,
else I never would have come.

OEDIPUS: What's this? Why so grim, so dire?

TIRESIAS: Just send me home. You bear your burdens,
I'll bear mine. It's better that way,
please believe me.

OEDIPUS: Strange response . . . unlawful,
unfriendly too to the state that bred and reared you—
you withhold the word of god.

TIRESIAS: I fail to see
that your own words are so well-timed.
I'd rather not have the same thing said of me . . .

OEDIPUS: For the love of god, don't turn away,
not if you know something. We beg you,
all of us on our knees.

TIRESIAS: None of you knows—
and I will never reveal my dreadful secrets,
not to say your own.

OEDIPUS: What? You know and you won't tell?
You're bent on betraying us, destroying Thebes?

TIRESIAS: I'd rather not cause pain for you or me.
So why this . . . useless interrogation?
You'll get nothing from me.

OEDIPUS: Nothing! You,
you scum of the earth, you'd enrage a heart of stone!
You won't talk? Nothing moves you?
Out with it, once and for all!

TIRESIAS: You criticize my temper . . . unaware
of the one[1] *you* live with, you revile me.

OEDIPUS: Who could restrain his anger hearing you?
What outrage—you spurn the city!

TIRESIAS: What will come will come.

1. In the Greek the veiled reference to Jocasta is more forceful, since the word translated "the one" has a feminine ending (agreeing with the feminine noun *orgê*—"temper").

Even if I shroud it all in silence.
OEDIPUS: What will come? You're bound to *tell* me that.
TIRESIAS: I'll say no more. Do as you like, build your anger
to whatever pitch you please, rage your worst—
OEDIPUS: Oh I'll let loose, I have such fury in me—
now I see it all. You helped hatch the plot,
you did the work, yes, short of killing him
with your own hands—and given eyes I'd say
you did the killing single-handed!
TIRESIAS: Is that so!
I charge you, then, submit to that decree
you just laid down: from this day onward
speak to no one, not these citizens, not myself.
You are the curse, the corruption of the land!
OEDIPUS: You, shameless—
aren't you appalled to start up such a story?
You think you can get away with this?
TIRESIAS: I have already.
The truth with all its power lives inside me.
OEDIPUS: Who primed you for this? Not your prophet's trade.
TIRESIAS: You did, you forced me, twisted it out of me.
OEDIPUS: What? Say it again—I'll understand it better.
TIRESIAS: Didn't you understand, just now?
Or are you tempting me to talk?
OEDIPUS: No, I can't say I grasped your meaning.
Out with it, again!
TIRESIAS: I say you are the murderer you hunt.
OEDIPUS: That obscenity, twice—by god, you'll pay.
TIRESIAS: Shall I say more, so you can really rage?
OEDIPUS: Much as you want. Your words are nothing—
futile.
TIRESIAS: You cannot imagine . . . I tell you,
you and your loved ones live together in infamy,
you cannot see how far you've gone in guilt.
OEDIPUS: You think you can keep this up and never suffer?
TIRESIAS: Indeed, if the truth has any power.
OEDIPUS: It does
but not for you; old man. You've lost your power,
stone-blind, stone-deaf—senses, eyes blind as stone!
TIRESIAS: I pity you, flinging at me the very insults
each man here will fling at you so soon.
OEDIPUS: Blind,
lost in the night, endless night that cursed you!
You can't hurt me or anyone else who sees the light—
you can never touch me.
TIRESIAS: True, it is not your fate

to fall at my hands. Apollo is quite enough,
and he will take some pains to work this out.
OEDIPUS: Creon! Is this conspiracy his or yours?
TIRESIAS: Creon is not your downfall, no, you are your own.
OEDIPUS: O power—
wealth and empire, skill outstripping skill
in the heady rivalries of life,
what envy lurks inside you! Just for this,
the crown the city gave me—I never sought it,
they laid it in my hands—for this alone, Creon,
the soul of trust, my loyal friend from the start
steals against me . . . so hungry to overthrow me
he sets this wizard on me, this scheming quack,
this fortune-teller peddling lies, eyes peeled
for his own profit—seer blind in his craft!

Come here, you pious fraud. Tell me,
when did you ever prove yourself a prophet?
When the Sphinx, that chanting Fury kept her deathwatch here,
why silent then, not a word to set our people free?
There was a riddle, not for some passer-by to solve—
it cried out for a prophet. Where were you?
Did you rise to the crisis? Not a word,
you and your birds, your gods—nothing.
No, but I came by, Oedipus the ignorant,
I stopped the Sphinx! With no help from the birds,
the flight of my own intelligence hit the mark.

And this is the man you'd try to overthrow?
You think you'll stand by Creon when he's king?
You and the great mastermind—
you'll pay in tears, I promise you, for this,
this witch-hunt. If you didn't look so senile
the lash would teach you what your scheming means!
LEADER: I would suggest his words were spoken in anger,
Oedipus . . . yours too, and it isn't what we need.
The best solution to the oracle, the riddle
posed by god—we should look for that.
TIRESIAS: You are the king no doubt, but in one respect,
at least, I am your equal: the right to reply.
I claim that privilege too.
I am not your slave. I serve Apollo.
I don't need Creon to speak for me in public.
So,
you mock my blindness? Let me tell you this.
You with your precious eyes,

you're blind to the corruption of your life,
to the house you live in, those you live with—
who *are* your parents? Do you know? All unknowing
you are the scourge of your own flesh and blood,
the dead below the earth and the living here above,
and the double lash of your mother and your father's curse
will whip you from this land one day, their footfall
treading you down in terror, darkness shrouding
your eyes that now can see the light!
Soon, soon
you'll scream aloud—what haven won't reverberate?
What rock of Cithaeron[2] won't scream back in echo?
That day you learn the truth about your marriage,
the wedding-march that sang you into your halls,
the lusty voyage home to the fatal harbor!
And a crowd of other horrors you'd never dream
will level you with yourself and all your children.

There. Now smear us with insults—Creon, myself,
and every word I've said. No man will ever
be rooted from the earth as brutally as you.

OEDIPUS: Enough! Such filth from him? Insufferable—
what, still alive? Get out—
faster, back where you came from—vanish!

TIRESIAS: I would never have come if you hadn't called me here.

OEDIPUS: If I thought you would blurt out such absurdities,
you'd have died waiting before I'd had you summoned.

TIRESIAS: Absurd, am I! To you, not to your parents:
the ones who bore you found me sane enough.

OEDIPUS: Parents—who? Wait . . . who is my father?

TIRESIAS: This day will bring your birth and your destruction.

OEDIPUS: Riddles—all you can say are riddles, murk and
darkness.

TIRESIAS: Ah, but aren't you the best man alive at solving riddles?

OEDIPUS: Mock me for that, go on, and you'll reveal my greatness.

TIRESIAS: Your great good fortune, true, it was your ruin.

OEDIPUS: Not if I saved the city—what do I care?

TIRESIAS: Well then, I'll be going.

[*To his attendant.*]

Take me home, boy.

OEDIPUS: Yes, take him away. You're a nuisance here.
Out of the way, the irritation's gone.

2. The mountain range near Thebes, on which Oedipus was left to die when an infant.

[*Turning his back on* TIRESIAS, *moving toward the palace.*[3]]

TIREIAS: I will go,
once I have said what I came here to say.
I'll never shrink from the anger in your eyes—
you can't destroy me. Listen to me closely:
the man you've sought so long, proclaiming,
cursing up and down, the murderer of Laius—
he is here. A stranger,
you may think, who lives among you,
he soon will be revealed a native Theban
but he will take no joy in the revelation.
Blind who now has eyes, beggar who now is rich,
he will grope his way toward a foreign soil,
a stick tapping before him step by step.
[OEDIPUS *enters the palace.*]
Revealed, at last, brother and father both
to the children he embraces, to his mother
son and husband both—he sowed the loins
his father sowed, he spilled his father's blood!

Go in and reflect on that, solve that.
And if you find I've lied
from this day onward call the prophet blind.

[TIRESIAS *and the boy exit to the side.*]

CHORUS: Who—
who is the man the voice of god denounces
resounding out of the rocky gorge of Delphi?
The horror too dark to tell,
whose ruthless bloody hands have done the work?
His time has come to fly
to outrace the stallions of the storm
his feet a streak of speed—
Cased in armor, Apollo son of the Father
lunges on him, lightning-bolts afire!
And the grim unerring Furies[4]
closing for the kill.
Look,
the word of god has just come blazing
flashing off Parnassus'[5] snowy heights!

3. There are no stage directions in our texts. It is suggested here that Oedipus moves off stage and does not hear the critical section of Tiresias' speech (520 ff) which he could hardly fail to connect with the prophecy made to him by Apollo many years ago. 4. Avenging spirits who pursued a murderer when no earthly avenger was at hand. 5. A mountain range in central Greece. The great oracular shrine of Apollo at Delphi was on its lower slopes.

That man who left no trace—
after him, hunt him down with all our strength!
Now under bristling timber
up through rocks and caves he stalks
like the wild mountain bull—
cut off from men, each step an agony, frenzied, racing blind
but he cannot outrace the dread voices of Delphi
ringing out of the heart of Earth,
the dark wings beating around him shrieking doom
the doom that never dies, the terror—
The skilled prophet scans the birds and shatters me with terror!
I can't accept him, can't deny him, don't know what to say,
I'm lost, and the wings of dark foreboding beating—
I cannot see what's come, what's still to come . . .
and what could breed a blood feud between
Laius' house and the son of Polybus?[6]
I know of nothing, not in the past and not now,
no charge to bring against our king, no cause
to attack his fame that rings throughout Thebes—
not without proof—not for the ghost of Laius,
not to avenge a murder gone without a trace.

Zeus and Apollo know, they know, the great masters
of all the dark and depth of human life.
But whether a mere man can know the truth,
whether a seer can fathom more than I—
there is no test, no certain proof
though matching skill for skill
a man can outstrip a rival. No, not till I see
these charges proved will I side with his accusers.
We saw him then, when the she-hawk[7] swept against him,
saw with our own eyes his skill, his brilliant triumph—
there was the test—he was the joy of Thebes!
Never will I convict my king, never in my heart.

[*Enter* CREON *from the side.*]

CREON: My fellow-citizens, I hear King Oedipus
levels terrible charges at me. I had to come.
I resent it deeply. If, in the present crisis
he thinks he suffers any abuse from me,
anything I've done or said that offers him
the slightest injury, why, I've no desire

6. King of Corinth and, so far as anyone except Tiresias knows, the father of Oedipus. 7. The Sphinx.

to linger out this life, my reputation in ruins.
The damage I'd face from such an accusation
is nothing simple. No, there's nothing worse:
branded a traitor in the city, a traitor
to all of you and my good friends.
LEADER: True,
but a slur might have been forced out of him,
by anger perhaps, not any firm conviction.
CREON: The charge was made in public, wasn't it?
I put the prophet up to spreading lies?
LEADER: Such things were said . . .
I don't know with what intent, if any.
CREON: Was his glance steady, his mind right
when the charge was brought against me?
LEADER: I really couldn't say. I never look
to judge the ones in power.

[*The doors open.* OEDIPUS *enters.*]

Wait,
here's Oedipus now.
OEDIPUS: You—here? You have the gall
to show your face before the palace gates?
You, plotting to kill me, kill the king—
I see it all, the marauding thief himself
scheming to steal my crown and power!
Tell me,
in god's name, what did you take me for,
coward or fool, when you spun out your plot?
Your treachery—you think I'd never detect it
creeping against me in the dark? Or sensing it,
not defend myself? Aren't you the fool,
you and your high adventure. Lacking numbers,
powerful friends, out for the big game of empire—
you need riches, armies to bring that quarry down!
CREON: Are you quite finished? It's your turn to listen
for just as long as you've . . . instructed me.
Hear me out, then judge me on the facts.
OEDIPUS: You've a wicked way with words, Creon,
but I'll be slow to learn—from you.
I find you a menace, a great burden to me.
CREON: Just one thing, hear me out in this.
OEDIPUS: Just one thing,
don't tell *me* you're not the enemy, the traitor.
CREON: Look, if you think crude, mindless stubbornness

such a gift, you've lost your sense of balance.
OEDIPUS: If you think you can abuse a kinsman,
then escape the penalty, you're insane.
CREON: Fair enough, I grant you. But this injury
you say I've done you, what is it?
OEDIPUS: Did you induce me, yes or no,
to send for that sanctimonious prophet?
CREON: I did. And I'd do the same again.
OEDIPUS: All right then, tell me, how long is it now
since Laius . . .
CREON: Laius—what did *he* do?
OEDIPUS: Vanished,
swept from sight, murdered in his tracks.
CREON: The count of the years would run you far back . . .
OEDIPUS: And that far back, was the prophet at his trade?
CREON: Skilled as he is today, and just as honored.
OEDIPUS: Did he ever refer to me then, at that time?
CREON: No,
never, at least, when I was in his presence.
OEDIPUS: But you did investigate the murder, didn't you?
CREON: We did our best, of course, discovered nothing.
OEDIPUS: But the great seer never accused me then—why not?
CREON: I don't know. And when I don't, *I* keep quiet.
OEDIPUS: You do know this, you'd tell it too—
if you had a shred of decency.
CREON: What?
If I know, I won't hold back.
OEDIPUS: Simply this:
if the two of you had never put heads together,
we would never have heard about *my* killing Laius.
CREON: If that's what he says . . . well, you know best.
But now I have a right to learn from you
as you just learned from me.
OEDIPUS: Learn your fill,
you never will convict me of the murder.
CREON: Tell me, you're married to my sister, aren't you?
OEDIPUS: A genuine discovery—there's no denying that.
CREON: And you rule the land with her, with equal power?
OEDIPUS: She receives from me whatever she desires.
CREON: And I am the third, all of us are equals?
OEDIPUS: Yes, and it's there you show your stripes—
you betray a kinsman.
CREON: Not at all.
Not if you see things calmly, rationally,
as I do. Look at it this way first:

who in his right mind would rather rule
and live in anxiety than sleep in peace?
Particularly if he enjoys the same authority.
Not I, I'm not the man to yearn for kingship,
not with a king's power in my hands. Who would?
No one with any sense of self-control.
Now, as it is, you offer me all I need,
not a fear in the world. But if I wore the crown . . .
there'd be many painful duties to perform,
hardly to my taste.
How could kingship
please me more than influence, power
without a qualm? I'm not that deluded yet,
to reach for anything but privilege outright,
profit free and clear.
Now all men sing my praises, all salute me,
now all who request your favors curry mine.
I am their best hope: success rests in me.
Why give up that, I ask you, and borrow trouble?
A man of sense, someone who sees things clearly
would never resort to treason.
No, I've no lust for conspiracy in me,
nor could I ever suffer one who does.

Do you want proof? Go to Delphi yourself,
examine the oracle and see if I've reported
the message word-for-word. This too:
if you detect that I and the clairvoyant
have plotted anything in common, arrest me,
execute me. Not on the strength of one vote,
two in this case, mine as well as yours.
But don't convict me on sheer unverified surmise.
How wrong it is to take the good for bad,
purely at random, or take the bad for good.
But reject a friend, a kinsman? I would as soon
tear out the life within us, priceless life itself.
You'll learn this well, without fail, in time.
Time alone can bring the just man to light—
the criminal you can spot in one short day.

LEADER: Good advice,
my lord, for anyone who wants to avoid disaster.
Those who jump to conclusions may go wrong.

OEDIPUS: When my enemy moves against me quickly
plots in secret, I move quickly too, I must,
I plot and pay him back. Relax my guard a moment,

waiting his next move—he wins his objective,
I lose mine.
CREON: What do you want?
You want me banished?
OEDIPUS: No, I want you dead.
CREON: Just to show how ugly a grudge can . . .
OEDIPUS: So,
still stubborn? you don't think I'm serious?
CREON: I think you're insane.
OEDIPUS: Quite sane—in my behalf.
CREON: Not just as much in mine?
OEDIPUS: You—my mortal enemy?
CREON: What if you're wholly wrong?
OEDIPUS: No matter—I must rule.
CREON: Not if you rule unjustly.
OEDIPUS: Hear him, Thebes, my city!
CREON: My city too, not yours alone!
LEADER: Please, my lords.

[*Enter* JOCASTA *from the palace.*]

Look, Jocasta's coming,
and just in time too. With her help
you must put this fighting of yours to rest.
JOCASTA: Have you no sense? Poor misguided men,
such shouting—why this public outburst?
Aren't you ashamed, with the land so sick,
to stir up private quarrels?

[*To* OEDIPUS.]

Into the palace now. And Creon, you go home.
Why make such a furor over nothing?
CREON: My sister, it's dreadful . . . Oedipus, your husband,
he's bent on a choice of punishments for me,
banishment from the fatherland or death.
OEDIPUS: Precisely. I caught him in the act, Jocasta,
plotting, about to stab me in the back.
CREON: Never—curse me, let me die and be damned
if I've done you any wrong you charge me with.
JOCASTA: Oh god, believe it, Oedipus,
honor the solemn oath he swears to heaven.
Do it for me, for the sake of all your people.

[*The* CHORUS *begins to chant.*]

CHORUS: Believe it, be sensible
give way, my king, I beg you!
OEDIPUS: What do you want from me, concessions?
CHORUS: Respect him—he's been no fool in the past
and now he's strong with the oath he swears to god.
OEDIPUS: You know what you're asking?
CHORUS: I do.
OEDIPUS: Then out with it!
CHORUS: The man's your friend, your kin, he's under oath—
don't cast him out, disgraced
branded with guilt on the strength of hearsay only.
OEDIPUS: Know full well, if that is what you want
you want me dead or banished from the land.
CHORUS: Never—
no, by the blazing Sun, first god of the heavens!
Stripped of the gods, stripped of loved ones,
let me die by inches if that ever crossed my mind.
But the heart inside me sickens, dies as the land dies
and now on top of the old griefs you pile this,
your fury—both of you!
OEDIPUS: Then let him go,
even if it does lead to my ruin, my death
or my disgrace, driven from Thebes for life.
It's you, not him I pity—your words move me.
He, wherever he goes, my hate goes with him.
CREON: Look at you, sullen in yielding, brutal in your rage—
you'll go too far. It's perfect justice:
natures like yours are hardest on themselves.
OEDIPUS: Then leave me alone—get out!
CREON: I'm going.
You're wrong, so wrong. These men know I'm right.

[*Exit to the side. The* CHORUS *turns to* JOCASTA.]

CHORUS: Why do you hesitate, my lady
why not help him in?
JOCASTA: Tell me what's happened first.
CHORUS: Loose, ignorant talk started dark suspicions
and a sense of injustice cut deeply too.
JOCASTA: On both sides?
CHORUS: Oh yes.
JOCASTA: What did they say?
CHORUS: Enough, please, enough! The land's so racked already
or so it seems to me . . .
End the trouble here, just where they left it.

OEDIPUS: You see what comes of your good intentions now?
And all because you tried to blunt my anger.
CHORUS: My king,
I've said it once, I'll say it time and again—
I'd be insane, you know it,
senseless, ever to turn my back on you.
You who set our beloved land—storm-tossed, shattered—
straight on course. Now again, good helmsman,
steer us through the storm!

[*The* CHORUS *draws away, leaving* OEDIPUS *and* JOCASTA *side by side.*]

JOCASTA: For the love of god,
Oedipus, tell me too, what is it?
Why this rage? You're so unbending.
OEDIPUS: I will tell you. I respect you, Jocasta,
much more than these men here . . .

[*Glancing at the* CHORUS.]

Creon's to blame, Creon schemes against me.
JOCASTA: Tell me clearly, how did the quarrel start?
OEDIPUS: He says *I* murdered Laius—I am guilty.
JOCASTA: How does he know? Some secret knowledge
or simple hearsay?
OEDIPUS: Oh, he sent his prophet in
to do his dirty work. You know Creon,
Creon keeps his own lips clean.
JOCASTA: A prophet?
Well then, free yourself of every charge!
Listen to me and learn some peace of mind:
no skill in the world,
nothing human can penetrate the future.
Here is proof, quick and to the point.

An oracle came to Laius one fine day
(I won't say from Apollo himself
but his underlings, his priests) and it declared
that doom would strike him down at the hands of a son,
our son, to be born of our own flesh and blood. But Laius,
so the report goes at least, was killed by strangers,
thieves, at a place where three roads meet . . . my son—
he wasn't three days old and the boy's father

fastened his ankles, had a henchman fling him away
on a barren, trackless mountain.
There, you see?
Apollo brought neither thing to pass. My baby
no more murdered his father than Laius suffered—
his wildest fear—death at his own son's hands.
That's how the seers and all their revelations
mapped out the future. Brush them from your mind.
Whatever the god needs and seeks
he'll bring to light himself, with ease.
OEDIPUS: Strange,
hearing you just now . . . my mind wandered,
my thoughts racing back and forth.
JOCASTA: What do you mean? Why so anxious, startled?
OEDIPUS: I thought I heard you say that Laius
was cut down at a place where three roads meet.
JOCASTA: That was the story. It hasn't died out yet.
OEDIPUS: Where did this thing happen? Be precise.
JOCASTA: A place called Phocis, where two branching roads,
one from Daulia, one from Delphi,
come together—a crossroads.
OEDIPUS: When? How long ago?
JOCASTA: The heralds no sooner reported Laius dead
than you appeared and they hailed you king of Thebes.
OEDIPUS: My god, my god—what have you planned to do to me?
JOCASTA: What, Oedipus? What haunts you so?
OEDIPUS: Not yet.
Laius—how did he look? Describe him.
Had he reached his prime?
JOCASTA: He was swarthy,
and the gray had just begun to streak his temples,
and his build . . . wasn't far from yours.
OEDIPUS: Oh no no,
I think I've just called down a dreadful curse
upon myself—I simply didn't know!
JOCASTA: What are you saying? I shudder to look at you.
OEDIPUS: I have a terrible fear the blind seer can see.
I'll know in a moment. One thing more—
JOCASTA: Anything,
afraid as I am—ask, I'll answer, all I can.
OEDIPUS: Did he go with a light or heavy escort,
several men-at-arms, like a lord, a king?
JOCASTA: There were five in the party, a herald among them,
and a single wagon carrying Laius.

OEDIPUS: Ai—
now I can see it all, clear as day.
Who told you all this at the time, Jocasta?
JOCASTA: A servant who reached home, the lone survivor.
OEDIPUS: So, could he still be in the palace—even now?
JOCASTA: No indeed. Soon as he returned from the scene
and saw you on the throne with Laius dead and gone,
he knelt and clutched my hand, pleading with me
to send him into the hinterlands, to pasture,
far as possible, out of sight of Thebes.
I sent him away. Slave though he was,
he'd earned that favor—and much more.
OEDIPUS: Can we bring him back, quickly?
JOCASTA: Easily. Why do you want him so?
OEDIPUS: I'm afraid,
Jocasta, I have said too much already.
That man—I've got to see him.
JOCASTA: Then he'll come.
But even I have a right, I'd like to think,
to know what's torturing you, my lord.
OEDIPUS: And so you shall—I can hold nothing back from you,
now I've reached this pitch of dark foreboding.
Who means more to me than you? Tell me,
whom would I turn toward but you
as I go through all this?

My father was Polybus, king of Corinth.
My mother, a Dorian, Merope. And I was held
the prince of the realm among the people there,
till something struck me out of nowhere,
something strange . . . worth remarking perhaps,
hardly worth the anxiety I gave it.
Some man at a banquet who had drunk too much
shouted out—he was far gone, mind you—
that I am not my father's son. Fighting words!
I barely restrained myself that day
but early the next I went to mother and father,
questioned them closely, and they were enraged
at the accusation and the fool who let it fly.
So as for my parents I was satisfied,
but still this thing kept gnawing at me,
the slander spread—I had to make my move.
And so,
unknown to mother and father I set out for Delphi,
and the god Apollo spurned me, sent me away

denied the facts I came for,
but first he flashed before my eyes a future
great with pain, terror, disaster—I can hear him cry,
"You are fated to couple with your mother, you will bring
a breed of children into the light no man can bear to see—
you will kill your father, the one who gave you life!"
I heard all that and ran. I abandoned Corinth,
from that day on I gauged its landfall only
by the stars, running, always running
toward some place where I would never see
the shame of all those oracles come true.
And as I fled I reached that very spot
where the great king, you say, met his death.
Now, Jocasta, I will tell you all.
Making my way toward this triple crossroad
I began to see a herald, then a brace of colts
drawing a wagon, and mounted on the bench . . . a man,
just as you've described him, coming face-to-face,
and the one in the lead and the old man himself
were about to thrust me off the road—brute force—
and the one shouldering me aside, the driver,
I strike him in anger!—and the old man, watching me
coming up along his wheels—he brings down
his prod, two prongs straight at my head!
I paid him back with interest!
Short work, my god—with one blow of the staff
in this right hand I knock him out of his high seat,
roll him out of the wagon, sprawling headlong—
I killed them all—every mother's son!

Oh, but if there is any blood-tie
between Laius and this stranger . . .
what man alive more miserable than I?
More hated by the gods? *I* am the man
no alien, no citizen welcomes to his house,
law forbids it—not a word to me in public,
driven out of every hearth and home.
And all these curses I—no one but I
brought down these piling curses on myself!
And you, his wife, I've touched your body with these,
the hands that killed your husband cover you with blood.

Wasn't I born for torment? Look me in the eyes!
I am abomination—heart and soul!
I must be exiled, and even in exile

never see my parents, never set foot
on native ground again. Else I am doomed
to couple with my mother and cut my father down . . .
Polybus who reared me, gave me life.
But why, why?
Wouldn't a man of judgment say—and wouldn't he be right—
some savage power has brought this down upon my head?

Oh no, not that, you pure and awesome gods,
never let me see that day! Let me slip
from the world of man, vanish without a trace
before I see myself stained with such corruption,
stained to the heart.

LEADER: My lord, you fill our hearts with fear.
But at least until you question the witness,
do take hope.

OEDIPUS: Exactly. He is my last hope—
I am waiting for the shepherd. He is crucial.

JOCASTA: And once he appears, what then? Why so urgent?

OEDIPUS: I will tell you. If it turns out that his story
matches yours, I've escaped the worst.

JOCASTA: What did I say? What struck you so?

OEDIPUS: You said *thieves*—
he told you a whole band of them murdered Laius.
So, if he still holds to the same number,
I cannot be the killer. One can't equal many.
But if he refers to one man, one alone,
clearly the scales come down on me:
I am guilty.

JOCASTA: Impossible. Trust me,
I told you precisely what he said,
and he can't retract it now;
the whole city heard it, not just I.
And even if he should vary his first report
by one man more or less, still, my lord,
he could never make the murder of Laius
truly fit the prophecy. Apollo was explicit:
my son was doomed to kill my husband . . . my son,
poor defenseless thing, he never had a chance
to kill his father. They destroyed him first.

So much for prophecy. It's neither here nor there.
From this day on, I wouldn't look right or left.

OEDIPUS: True, true. Still, that shepherd,
someone fetch him—now!

JOCASTA: I'll send at once. But do let's go inside.
I'd never displease you, least of all in this.

[OEDIPUS *and* JOCASTA *enter the palace.*]

CHORUS: Destiny guide me always
Destiny find me filled with reverence
pure in word and deed.
Great laws tower above us, reared on high
born for the brilliant vault of heaven—
Olympian Sky their only father,
nothing mortal, no man gave them birth,
their memory deathless, never lost in sleep:
within them lives a mighty god, the god does not
grow old.

Pride breeds the tyrant
violent pride, gorging, crammed to bursting
with all that is overripe and rich with ruin—
clawing up to the heights, headlong pride
crashes down the abyss—sheer doom!
No footing helps, all foothold lost and gone.
But the healthy strife that makes the city strong—
I pray that god will never end that wrestling:
god, my champion, I will never let you go.
But if any man comes striding, high and mighty
in all he says and does,
no fear of justice, no reverence
for the temples of the gods—
let a rough doom tear him down,
repay his pride, breakneck, ruinous pride!
If he cannot reap his profits fairly
cannot restrain himself from outrage—
mad, laying hands on the holy things untouchable!

Can such a man, so desperate, still boast
he can save his life from the flashing bolts of god?
If all such violence goes with honor now
why join the sacred dance?

Never again will I go reverent to Delphi,
the inviolate heart of Earth
or Apollo's ancient oracle at Abae
or Olympia[8] of the fires—

8. Abae was a city in central Greece, and Olympia a site in the western Peloponnese, where there were important oracles of Apollo and Zeus, respectively.

unless these prophecies all come true
for all mankind to point toward in wonder.
King of kings, if you deserve your titles
Zeus, remember, never forget!
You and your deathless, everlasting reign.

They are dying, the old oracles sent to Laius,
now our masters strike them off the rolls.
Nowhere Apollo's golden glory now—
the gods, the gods go down.

[*Enter* JOCASTA *from the palace, carrying a suppliant's branch wound in wool.*]

JOCASTA: Lords of the realm,[9] it occurred to me,
just now, to visit the temples of the gods,
so I have my branch in hand and incense too.

Oedipus is beside himself. Racked with anguish,
no longer a man of sense, he won't admit
the latest prophecies are hollow as the old—
he's at the mercy of every passing voice
if the voice tells of terror.
I urge him gently, nothing seems to help,
so I turn to you, Apollo, you are nearest.

[*Placing her branch on the altar, while an old herdsman enters from the side, not the one just summoned by the King but an unexpected* MESSENGER *from Corinth.*]

I come with prayers and offerings . . . I beg you,
cleanse us, set us free of defilement!
Look at us, passengers in the grip of fear,
watching the pilot of the vessel go to pieces.

[*Approaching* JOCASTA *and the* CHORUS.]

MESSENGER: Strangers, please, I wonder if you could lead us
to the palace of the king . . . I think it's Oedipus.
Better, the man himself—you know where he is?
LEADER: This is his palace, stranger. He's inside.
But here is his queen, his wife and mother
of his children.

9. She is addressing the chorus.

MESSENGER: Blessings on you, noble queen,
queen of Oedipus crowned with all your family—
blessings on you always!
JOCASTA: And the same to you, stranger, you deserve it . . .
such a greeting. But what have you come for?
Have you brought us news?
MESSENGER: Wonderful news—
for the house, my lady, for your husband too.
JOCASTA: Really, what? Who sent you?
MESSENGER: Corinth.
I'll give you the message in a moment.
You'll be glad of it—how could you help it?—
though it costs a little sorrow in the bargain.
JOCASTA: What can it be, with such a double edge?
MESSENGER: The people there, they want to make your Oedipus
king of Corinth, so they're saying now.
JOCASTA: Why? Isn't old Polybus still in power?
MESSENGER: No more. Death has got him in the tomb.
JOCASTA: What are you saying? Polybus, dead?—dead?
MESSENGER: If not,
if I'm not telling the truth, strike me dead too.

[*To a servant.*]

JOCASTA: Quickly, go to your master, tell him this!
You prophecies of the gods, where are you now?
This is the man that Oedipus feared for years,
he fled him, not to kill him—and now he's dead,
quite by chance, a normal, natural death,
not murdered by his son.

[*Emerging from the palace.*]

OEDIPUS: Dearest,
what now? Why call me from the palace?

[*Bringing the* MESSENGER *closer.*]

JOCASTA: Listen to *him,* see for yourself what all
those awful prophecies of god have come to.
OEDIPUS: And who is he? What can he have for me?
JOCASTA: He's from Corinth, he's come to tell you
your father is no more—Polybus—he's dead!

[*Wheeling on the* MESSENGER.]

OEDIPUS: What? Let me have it from your lips.
MESSENGER: Well,
if that's what you want first, then here it is:
make no mistake, Polybus is dead and gone.
OEDIPUS: How—murder? sickness?—what? what killed him?
MESSENGER: A light tip of the scales can put old bones to rest.
OEDIPUS: Sickness then—poor man, it wore him down.
MESSENGER: That,
and the long count of years he's measured out.
OEDIPUS: So!
Jocasta, why, why look to the Prophet's hearth,
the fires of the future? Why scan the birds
that scream above our heads? They winged me on
to the murder of my father, did they? That was my doom?
Well look, he's dead and buried, hidden under the earth,
and here I am in Thebes, I never put hand to sword—
unless some longing for me wasted him away,
then in a sense you'd say I caused his death.
But now, all those prophecies I feared—Polybus
packs them off to sleep with him in hell!
They're nothing, worthless.
JOCASTA: There.
Didn't I tell you from the start?
OEDIPUS: So you did. I was lost in fear.
JOCASTA: No more, sweep it from your mind forever.
OEDIPUS: But my mother's bed, surely I must fear—
JOCASTA: Fear?
What should a man fear? It's all chance,
chance rules our lives. Not a man on earth
can see a day ahead, groping through the dark.
Better to live at random, best we can.
And as for this marriage with your mother—
have no fear. Many a man before you,
in his dreams, has shared his mother's bed.
Take such things for shadows, nothing at all—
Live, Oedipus,
as if there's no tomorrow!
OEDIPUS: Brave words,
and you'd persuade me if mother weren't alive.
But mother lives, so for all your reassurances
I live in fear, I must.
JOCASTA: But your father's death,
that, at least, is a great blessing, joy to the eyes!
OEDIPUS: Great, I know . . . but I fear *her*—she's still alive.
MESSENGER: Wait, who is this woman, makes you so afraid?

OEDIPUS: Merope, old man. The wife of Polybus.
MESSENGER: The queen? What's there to fear in her?
OEDIPUS: A dreadful prophecy, stranger, sent by the gods.
MESSENGER: Tell me, could you? Unless it's forbidden
other ears to hear.
OEDIPUS: Not at all.
Apollo told me once—it is my fate—
I must make love with my own mother,
shed my father's blood with my own hands.
So for years I've given Corinth a wide berth,
and it's been my good fortune too. But still,
to see one's parents and look into their eyes
is the greatest joy I know.
MESSENGER: You're afraid of that?
That kept you out of Corinth?
OEDIPUS: My *father,* old man—
so I wouldn't kill my father.
MESSENGER: So that's it.
Well then, seeing I came with such good will, my king,
why don't I rid you of that old worry now?
OEDIPUS: What a rich reward you'd have for that!
MESSENGER: What do you think I came for, majesty?
So you'd come home and I'd be better off.
OEDIPUS: Never, I will never go near my parents.
MESSENGER: My boy, it's clear, you don't know what you're
doing.
OEDIPUS: What do you mean, old man? For god's sake, explain.
MESSENGER: If you ran from *them,* always dodging home . . .
OEDIPUS: Always, terrified Apollo's oracle might come true—
MESSENGER: And you'd be covered with guilt, from both your parents.
OEDIPUS: That's right, old man, that fear is always with me.
MESSENGER: Don't you know? You've really nothing to fear.
OEDIPUS: But why? If I'm their son—Merope, Polybus?
MESSENGER: Polybus was nothing to you, that's why, not in blood.
OEDIPUS: What are you saying—Polybus was not my father?
MESSENGER: No more than I am. He and I are equals.
OEDIPUS: My father—
how can my father equal nothing? You're nothing to me!
MESSENGER: Neither was he, no more your father than I am.
OEDIPUS: Then why did he call me his son?
MESSENGER: You were a gift,
years ago—know for a fact he took you
from my hands.
OEDIPUS: No, from another's hands?

Then how could he love me so? He loved me, deeply . . .
MESSENGER: True, and his early years without a child
made him love you all the more.
OEDIPUS: And you, did you . . .
buy me? find me by accident?
MESSENGER: I stumbled on you,
down the woody flanks of Mount Cithaeron.
OEDIPUS: So close,
what were you doing here, just passing through?
MESSENGER: Watching over my flocks, grazing them on the slopes.
OEDIPUS: A herdsman, were you? A vagabond, scraping for wages?
MESSENGER: Your savior too, my son, in your worst hour.
OEDIPUS: Oh—
when you picked me up, was I in pain? What exactly?
MESSENGER: Your ankles . . . they tell the story. Look at them.
OEDIPUS: Why remind me of that, that old affliction?
MESSENGER: Your ankles were pinned together. I set you free.
OEDIPUS: That dreadful mark—I've had it from the cradle.
MESSENGER: And you got your name[1] from that misfortune too,
the name's still with you.
OEDIPUS: Dear god, who did it?—
mother? father? Tell me.
MESSENGER: I don't know.
The one who gave you to me, he'd know more.
OEDIPUS: What? You took me from someone else?
You didn't find me yourself?
MESSENGER: No sir,
another shepherd passed you on to me.
OEDIPUS: Who? Do you know? Describe him.
MESSENGER: He called himself a servant of . . .
if I remember rightly—Laius.

[JOCASTA *turns sharply.*]

OEDIPUS: The king of the land who ruled here long ago?
MESSENGER: That's the one. That herdsman was *his* man.
OEDIPUS: Is he still alive? Can I see him?
MESSENGER: They'd know best, the people of these parts.

[OEDIPUS *and the* MESSENGER *turn to the* CHORUS.]

OEDIPUS: Does anyone know that herdsman,
the one he mentioned? Anyone seen him

1. In Greek the name *Oidipous* suggests "swollen foot."

in the fields, here in the city? Out with it!
The time has come to reveal this once for all.
LEADER: I think he's the very shepherd you wanted to see,
a moment ago. But the queen, Jocasta,
she's the one to say.
OEDIPUS: Jocasta,
you remember the man we just sent for?
Is *that* the one he means?
JOCASTA: That man . . .
why ask? Old shepherd, talk, empty nonsense,
don't give it another thought, don't even think—
OEDIPUS: What—give up now, with a clue like this?
Fail to solve the mystery of my birth?
Not for all the world!
JOCASTA: Stop—in the name of god,
if you love your own life, call off this search!
My suffering is enough.
OEDIPUS: Courage!
Even if my mother turns out to be a slave,
and I a slave, three generations back,
you would not seem common.
JOCASTA: Oh no,
listen to me, I beg you, don't do this.
OEDIPUS: Listen to you? No more. I must know it all,
must see the truth at last.
JOCASTA: No, please—
for your sake—I want the best for you!
OEDIPUS: Your best is more than I can bear.
JOCASTA: You're doomed—
may you never fathom who you are!

[*To a servant.*]

OEDIPUS: Hurry, fetch me the herdsman, now!
Leave her to glory in her royal birth.
JOCASTA: Aieeeeee—
man of agony—
that is the only name I have for you,
that, no other—ever, ever, ever!

[*Flinging through the palace doors. A long, tense silence follows.*]

LEADER: Where's she gone, Oedipus?
Rushing off, such wild grief . . .

I'm afraid that from this silence
something monstrous may come bursting forth.
OEDIPUS: Let it burst! Whatever will, whatever must!
I must know my birth, no matter how common
it may be—I must see my origins face-to-face.
She perhaps, she with her woman's pride
may well be mortified by my birth,
but I, I count myself the son of Chance,
the great goddess, giver of all good things—
I'll never see myself disgraced. She is my mother!
And the moons have marked me out, my blood-brothers,
one moon on the wane, the next moon great with power.
That is my blood, my nature—I will never betray it,
never fail to search and learn my birth!
CHORUS: Yes—if I am a true prophet
if I can grasp the truth,
by the boundless skies of Olympus,
at the full moon of tomorrow, Mount Cithaeron
you will know how Oedipus glories in you—
you, his birthplace, nurse, his mountain-mother!
And we will sing you, dancing out your praise—
you lift our monarch's heart!
Apollo, Apollo, god of the wild cry
may our dancing please you!
Oedipus—
son, dear child, who bore you?
Who of the nymphs who seem to live forever[2]
mated with Pan,[3] the mountain-striding Father?
Who was your mother? who, some bride of Apollo
the god who loves the pastures spreading toward the sun?
Or was it Hermes, king of the lightning ridges?
Or Dionysus,[4] lord of frenzy, lord of the barren peaks—
did he seize you in his hands, dearest of all his lucky finds?—
found by the nymphs, their warm eyes dancing, gift
to the lord who loves them dancing out his joy!

[OEDIPUS *strains to see a figure coming from the distance. Attended by palace guards, an old* SHEPHERD *enters slowly, reluctant to approach the king.*]

OEDIPUS: I never met the man, my friends . . . still,
if I had to guess, I'd say that's the shepherd,

2. Nymphs were not immortal, like the gods, but lived much longer than mortals. 3. A woodland god; patron of shepherds and flocks. 4. Dionysus like Pan and Hermes haunted the wild country, woods and mountains. Hermes was born on Mount Kyllene in Arcadia.

the very one we've looked for all along.
Brothers in old age, two of a kind,
he and our guest here. At any rate
the ones who bring him in are my own men,
I recognize them.

[*Turning to the* LEADER.]

But you know more than I,
you should, you've seen the man before.

LEADER: I know him, definitely. One of Laius' men,
a trusty shepherd, if there ever was one.

OEDIPUS: You, I ask you first, stranger,
you from Corinth—is this the one you mean?

MESSENGER: You're looking at him. He's your man.

[*To the* SHEPHERD.]

OEDIPUS: You, old man, come over here—
look at me. Answer all my questions.
Did you ever serve King Laius?

SHEPHERD: So I did . . .
a slave, not bought on the block though,
born and reared in the palace.

OEDIPUS: Your duties, your kind of work?

SHEPHERD: Herding the flocks, the better part of my life.

OEDIPUS: Where, mostly? Where did you do your grazing?

SHEPHERD: Well,
Cithaeron sometimes, or the foothills round about.

OEDIPUS: This man—you know him? ever see him there?

[*Confused, glancing from the* MESSENGER *to the King.*]

SHEPHERD: Doing what?—what man do you mean?

[*Pointing to the* MESSENGER.]

OEDIPUS: This one here—ever have dealings with him?

SHEPHERD: Not so I could say, but give me a chance,
my memory's bad . . .

MESSENGER: No wonder he doesn't know me, master.
But let me refresh his memory for him.
I'm sure he recalls old times we had
on the slopes of Mount Cithaeron;
he and I, grazing our flocks, he with two

and I with one—we both struck up together,
three whole seasons, six months at a stretch
from spring to the rising of Arcturus in the fall,[5]
then with winter coming on I'd drive my herds
to my own pens, and back he'd go with his
to Laius' folds.

[*To the* SHEPHERD.]

Now that's how it was,
wasn't it—yes or no?
SHEPHERD: Yes, I suppose . . .
it's all so long ago.
MESSENGER: Come, tell me,
you gave me a child back then, a boy, remember?
A little fellow to rear, my very own.
SHEPHERD: What? Why rake up that again?
MESSENGER: Look, here he is, my fine old friend—
the same man who was just a baby then.
SHEPHERD: Damn you, shut your mouth—quiet!
OEDIPUS: Don't lash out at him, old man—
you need lashing more than he does.
SHEPHERD: Why,
master, majesty—what have I done wrong?
OEDIPUS: You won't answer his question about the boy.
SHEPHERD: He's talking nonsense, wasting his breath.
OEDIPUS: So, you won't talk willingly—
then you'll talk with pain.

[*The guards seize the* SHEPHERD.]

SHEPHERD: No, dear god, don't torture an old man!
OEDIPUS: Twist his arms back, quickly!
SHEPHERD: God help us, why?—
what more do you need to know?
OEDIPUS: Did you give him that child? He's asking.
SHEPHERD: I did . . . I wish to god I'd died that day.
OEDIPUS: You've got your wish if you don't tell the truth.
SHEPHERD: The more I tell, the worse the death I'll die.
OEDIPUS: Our friend here wants to stretch things out, does he?

[*Motioning to his men for torture.*]

5. Arcturus is the principal star in the constellation Bootes. Its "rising" (i.e., its reappearance in the night sky just before dawn in September) signaled the end of summer.

SHEPHERD: No, no, I gave it to him—I just said so.
OEDIPUS: Where did you get it? Your house? Someone else's?
HEPHERD: It wasn't mine, no, I got it from . . . someone.
OEDIPUS: Which one of them?

[*Looking at the citizens.*]

Whose house?
SHEPHERD: No—
god's sake, master, no more questions!
OEDIPUS: You're a dead man if I have to ask again.
SHEPHERD: Then—the child came from the house . . .
of Laius.
OEDIPUS: A slave? or born of his own blood?
SHEPHERD: Oh no,
I'm right at the edge, the horrible truth—I've got to say it!
OEDIPUS: And I'm at the edge of hearing horrors, yes, but I must hear!
SHEPHERD: All right! His son, they said it was—his son!
But the one inside, your wife,
she'd tell it best.
OEDIPUS: My wife—
she gave it to you?
SHEPHERD: Yes, yes, my king.
OEDIPUS: Why, what for?
SHEPHERD: To kill it.
OEDIPUS: Her own child,
how could she?
SHEPHERD: She was afraid—
frightening prophecies.
OEDIPUS: What?
SHEPHERD: They said—
he'd kill his parents.
OEDIPUS: But you gave him to this old man—why?
SHEPHERD: I pitied the little baby, master,
hoped he'd take off to his own country,
far away, but he saved him for this, this fate.
If you are the man he says you are, believe me,
you were born for pain.
OEDIPUS: O god—
all come true, all burst to light!
O light—now let me look my last on you!
I stand revealed at last—
cursed in my birth, cursed in marriage,
cursed in the lives I cut down with these hands!

[*Rushing through the doors with a great cry. The Corinthian* MESSENGER, *the* SHEPHERD *and attendants exit slowly to the side.*]

CHORUS: O the generations of men
the dying generations—adding the total
of all your lives I find they come to nothing . . .
does there exist, is there a man on earth
who seizes more joy than just a dream, a vision?
And the vision no sooner dawns than dies
blazing into oblivion.

You are my great example, you, your life
your destiny, Oedipus, man of misery—
I count no man blest.
You outranged all men!
Bending your bow to the breaking-point
you captured priceless glory, O dear god,
and the Sphinx came crashing down,
the virgin, claws hooked
like a bird of omen singing, shrieking death—
like a fortress reared in the face of death
you rose and saved our land.

From that day on we called you king
we crowned you with honors, Oedipus, towering over all—
mighty king of the seven gates of Thebes.
But now to hear your story—is there a man more agonized?
More wed to pain and frenzy? Not a man on earth,
the joy of your life ground down to nothing
O Oedipus, name for the ages—
one and the same wide harbor served you
son and father both
son and father came to rest in the same bridal chamber.
How, how could the furrows your father plowed
bear you, your agony, harrowing on
in silence O so long?

But now for all your power
Time, all-seeing Time has dragged you to the light,
judged your marriage monstrous from the start—
the son and the father tangling, both one—
O child of Laius, would to god
I'd never seen you, never never!
Now I weep like a man who wails the dead
and the dirge comes pouring forth with all my heart!

I tell you the truth, you gave me life
my breath leapt up in you
and now you bring down night upon my eyes.

[*Enter a* MESSENGER *from the palace.*]

MESSENGER: Men of Thebes, always first in honor,
what horrors you will hear, what you will see,
what a heavy weight of sorrow you will shoulder . . .
if you are true to your birth, if you still have
some feeling for the royal house of Thebes.
I tell you neither the waters of the Danube
nor the Nile[6] can wash this palace clean.
Such things it hides, it soon will bring to light—
terrible things, and none done blindly now,
all done with a will. The pains
we inflict upon ourselves hurt most of all.
LEADER: God knows we have pains enough already.
What can you add to them?
MESSENGER: The queen is dead.
LEADER: Poor lady—how?
MESSENGER: By her own hand. But you are spared the worst,
you never had to watch . . . I saw it all,
and with all the memory that's in me
you will learn what that poor woman suffered.

Once she'd broken in through the gates,
dashing past us, frantic, whipped to fury,
ripping her hair out with both hands—
straight to her rooms she rushed, flinging herself
across the bridal-bed, doors slamming behind her—
once inside, she wailed for Laius, dead so long,
remembering how she bore his child long ago
the life that rose up to destroy him, leaving
its mother to mother living creatures
with the very son she'd borne.
Oh how she wept, mourning the marriage-bed
where she let loose that double brood—monsters—
husband by her husband, children by her child.
And then—
but how she died is more than I can say. Suddenly
Oedipus burst in, screaming, he stunned us so
we couldn't watch her agony to the end,

6. The Greek says Phasis—a river in Asia Minor. The translator has substituted a big river more familiar to modern readers.

our eyes were fixed on him. Circling
like a maddened beast, stalking, here, there,
crying out to us—
Give him a sword![7] His wife,
no wife, his mother, where can he find the mother earth
that cropped two crops at once, himself and all his children?
He was raging—one of the dark powers pointing the way,
none of us mortals crowding around him, no,
with a great shattering cry—someone, something leading him on—
he hurled at the twin doors and bending the bolts back
out of their sockets, crashed through the chamber.
And there we saw the woman hanging by the neck,
cradled high in a woven noose, spinning,
swinging back and forth. And when he saw her,
giving a low, wrenching sob that broke our hearts,
slipping the halter from her throat, he eased her down,
in a slow embrace he laid her down, poor thing . . .
then, what came next, what horror we beheld!

He rips off her brooches, the long gold pins
holding her robes—and lifting them high,
looking straight up into the points,
he digs them down the sockets of his eyes, crying, "You,
you'll see no more the pain I suffered, all the pain I caused!
Too long you looked on the ones you never should have seen,
blind to the ones you longed to see, to know! Blind
from this hour on! Blind in the darkness—blind!"
His voice like a dirge, rising, over and over
raising the pins, raking them down his eyes.
And at each stroke blood spurts from the roots,
splashing his beard, a swirl of it, nerves and clots—
black hail of blood pulsing, gushing down.

These are the griefs that burst upon them both,
coupling man and woman. The joy they had so lately,
the fortune of their old ancestral house
was deep joy indeed. Now, in this one day,
wailing, madness and doom, death, disgrace,
all the griefs in the world that you can name,
all are theirs forever.

LEADER: Oh poor man, the misery—
has he any rest from pain now?

[A voice within, in torment.]

7. Presumably so that he could kill himself.

MESSENGER: He's shouting,
"Loose the bolts, someone, show me to all of Thebes!
My father's murderer, my mother's—"
No, I can't repeat it, it's unholy.
Now he'll tear himself from his native earth,
not linger, curse the house with his own curse.
But he needs strength, and a guide to lead him on.
This is sickness more than he can bear.

[*The palace doors open.*]

Look,
he'll show you himself. The great doors are opening—
you are about to see a sight, a horror
even his mortal enemy would pity.

[*Enter* OEDIPUS, *blinded, led by a boy. He stands at the palace steps, as if surveying his people once again.*]

CHORUS: O the terror—
the suffering, for all the world to see,
the worst terror that ever met my eyes.
What madness swept over you? What god,
what dark power leapt beyond all bounds,
beyond belief, to crush your wretched life?—
godforsaken, cursed by the gods!
I pity you but I can't bear to look.
I've much to ask, so much to learn,
so much fascinates my eyes,
but you . . . I shudder at the sight.
OEDIPUS: Oh, Ohh—
the agony! I am agony—
where am I going? where on earth?
where does all this agony hurl me?
where's my voice?—
winging, swept away on a dark tide—
My destiny, my dark power, what a leap you made!
CHORUS: To the depths of terror, too dark to hear, to see.
OEDIPUS: Dark, horror of darkness
my darkness, drowning, swirling around me
Crashing wave on wave—unspeakable, irresistible
headwind, fatal harbor! Oh again,
the misery, all at once, over and over
the stabbing daggers, stab of memory
raking me insane.
CHORUS: No wonder you suffer

twice over, the pain of your wounds,
the lasting grief of pain.
OEDIPUS: Dear friend, still here?
Standing by me, still with a care for me,
the blind man? Such compassion,
loyal to the last. Oh it's you,
I know you're here, dark as it is
I'd know you anywhere, your voice—
it's yours, clearly yours.
CHORUS: Dreadful, what you've done . . .
how could you bear it, gouging out your eyes?
What superhuman power drove you on?
OEDIPUS: Apollo, friends, Apollo—
he ordained my agonies—these, my pains on pains!
But the hand that struck my eyes was mine,
mine alone—no one else—
I did it all myself!
What good were eyes to me?
Nothing I could see could bring me joy.
CHORUS: No, no, exactly as you say.
OEDIPUS: What can I ever see?
What love, what call of the heart
can touch my ears with joy? Nothing, friends.
Take me away, far, far from Thebes,
quickly, cast me away, my friends—
this great murderous ruin, this man cursed to heaven,
the man the deathless gods hate most of all!
CHORUS: Pitiful, you suffer so, you understand so much . . .
I wish you'd never known.
OEDIPUS: Die, die—
whoever he was that day in the wilds
who cut my ankles free of the ruthless pins,
he pulled me clear of death, he saved my life
for this, this kindness—
Curse him, kill him!
If I'd died then, I'd never have dragged myself,
my loved ones through such hell.
CHORUS: Oh if only . . . would to god.
OEDIPUS: I'd never have come to this,
my father's murderer—never been branded
mother's husband, all men see me now! Now,
loathed by the gods, son of the mother I defiled
coupling in my father's bed, spawning lives in the loins
that spawned my wretched life. What grief can crown this grief?
It's mine alone, my destiny—I am Oedipus!

CHORUS: How can I say you've chosen for the best?
Better to die than be alive and blind.
OEDIPUS: What I did was best—don't lecture me,
no more advice. I, with *my* eyes,
how could I look my father in the eyes
when I go down to death? Or mother, so abused . . .
I have done such things to the two of them,
crimes too huge for hanging.
Worse yet,
the sight of my children, born as they were born,
how could I long to look into their eyes?
No, not with these eyes of mine, never.
Not this city either, her high towers,
the sacred glittering images of her gods—
I am misery! I, her best son, reared
as no other son of Thebes was ever reared,
I've stripped myself I gave the command myself.
All men must cast away the great blasphemer,
the curse now brought to light by the gods,
the son of Laius—I, my father's son!

Now I've exposed my guilt, horrendous guilt,
could I train a level glance on you, my countrymen?
Impossible! No, if I could just block off my ears,
the springs of hearing, I would stop at nothing—
I'd wall up my loathsome body like a prison,
blind to the sound of life, not just the sight.
Oblivion—what a blessing . . .
for the mind to dwell a world away from pain.

O Cithaeron, why did you give me shelter?
Why didn't you take me, crush my life out on the spot?
I'd never have revealed my birth to all mankind.

O Polybus, Corinth, the old house of my fathers,
so I believed—what a handsome prince you raised
under the skin, what sickness to the core.
Look at me! Born of outrage, outrage to the core.
O triple roads—it all comes back, the secret,
dark ravine, and the oaks closing in
where the three roads join . . .
You drank my father's blood, my own blood
spilled by my own hands—you still remember me?
What things you saw me do? Then I came here
and did them all once more!

Marriages! O marriage,
you gave me birth, and once you brought me into the world
you brought my sperm rising back, springing to light
fathers, brothers, sons—one murderous breed—
brides, wives, mothers. The blackest things
a man can do, I have done them all!
No more—
it's wrong to name what's wrong to do. Quickly,
for the love of god, hide me somewhere,
kill me, hurl me into the sea
where you can never look on me again.

[*Beckoning to the* CHORUS *as they shrink away.*]

Closer,
it's all right. Touch the man of grief.
Do. Don't be afraid. My troubles are mine
and I am the only man alive who can sustain them.

[*Enter* CREON *from the palace, attended by palace guards.*]

LEADER: Put your requests to Creon. Here he is,
just when we need him. He'll have a plan, he'll act.
Now that he's the sole defense of the country
in your place.
OEDIPUS: Oh no, what can I say to him?
How can I ever hope to win his trust?
I wronged him so, just now, in every way.
You must see that—I was so wrong, so wrong.
CREON: I haven't come to mock you, Oedipus,
or to criticize your former failings.

[*Turning to the guards.*]

You there,
have you lost all respect for human feelings?
At least revere the Sun, the holy fire
that keeps us all alive. Never expose a thing
of guilt and holy dread so great it appalls
the earth, the rain from heaven, the light of day!
Get him into the halls—quickly as you can.
Piety demands no less. Kindred alone
should see a kinsman's shame. This is obscene.
OEDIPUS: Please, in god's name . . . you wipe my fears away,
coming so generously to me, the worst of men.

Do one thing more, for your sake, not mine.
CREON: What do you want? Why so insistent?
OEDIPUS: Drive me out of the land at once, far from sight,
where I can never hear a human voice.
CREON: I'd have done that already, I promise you.
First I wanted the god to clarify my duties.
OEDIPUS: The god? His command was clear, every word:
death for the father-killer, the curse—
he said destroy me!
CREON: So he did. Still, in such a crisis
it's better to ask precisely what to do.
OEDIPUS: So miserable—
you'd consult the god about a man like me?
CREON: By all means. And this time, I assume,
even you will obey the god's decrees.
OEDIPUS: I will,
I will. And you, I command you—I beg you . . .
the woman inside, bury her as you see fit.
It's the only decent thing,
to give your own the last rites. As for me,
never condemn the city of my fathers
to house my body, not while I'm alive, no,
let me live on the mountains, on Cithaeron,
my favorite haunt, I have made it famous.
Mother and father marked out that rock
to be my everlasting tomb—buried alive.
Let me die there, where they tried to kill me.

Oh but this I know: no sickness can destroy me,
nothing can. I would never have been saved
from death—I have been saved
for something great and terrible, something strange.
Well let my destiny come and take me on its way!
About my children, Creon, the boys at least,
don't burden yourself. They're men,
wherever they go, they'll find the means to live.
But my two daughters, my poor helpless girls,
clustering at our table, never without me
hovering near them . . . whatever I touched,
they always had their share. Take care of them,
I beg you. Wait, better—permit me, would you?
Just to touch them with my hands and take
our fill of tears. Please . . . my king.
Grant it, with all your noble heart.
If I could hold them, just once, I'd think

I had them with me, like the early days
when I could see their eyes.

[ANTIGONE *and* ISMENE, *two small childen, are led in from the palace by a nurse.*]

What's that
O god! Do I really hear you sobbing?—
my two children. Creon, you've pitied me?
Sent me my darling girls, my own flesh and blood!
Am I right?

CREON: Yes, it's my doing.
I know the joy they gave you all these years,
the joy you must feel now.

OEDIPUS: Bless you, Creon!
May god watch over you for this kindness,
better than he ever guarded me.
Children, where are you?
Here, come quickly—

[*Groping for* ANTIGONE *and* ISMENE, *who approach their father cautiously, then embrace him.*]

Come to these hands of mine,
your brother's hands, your own father's hands
that served his once bright eyes so well—
that made them blind. Seeing nothing, children,
knowing nothing, I became your father,
I fathered you in the soil that gave me life.

How I weep for you—I cannot see you now . . .
just thinking of all your days to come, the bitterness,
the life that rough mankind will thrust upon you.
Where are the public gatherings you can join,
the banquets of the clans? Home you'll come,
in tears, cut off from the sight of it all,
the brilliant rites unfinished.
And when you reach perfection, ripe for marriage,
who will he be, my dear ones? Risking all
to shoulder the curse that weighs down my parents,
yes and you too—that wounds us all together.
What more misery could you want?
Your father killed his father, sowed his mother,
one, one and the selfsame womb sprang you—
he cropped the very roots of his existence.

Such disgrace, and you must bear it all!
Who will marry you then? Not a man on earth.
Your doom is clear: you'll wither away to nothing,
single, without a child.

[*Turning to* CREON.]

Oh Creon,
you are the only father they have now . . .
we who brought them into the world
are gone, both gone at a stroke—
Don't let them go begging, abandoned,
women without men. Your own flesh and blood!
Never bring them down to the level of my pains.
Pity them. Look at them, so young, so vulnerable,
shorn of everything—you're their only hope.
Promise me, noble Creon, touch my hand!

[*Reaching toward* CREON, *who draws back.*]

You, little ones, if you were old enough
to understand, there is much I'd tell you.
Now, as it is, I'd have you say a prayer.
Pray for life, my children,
live where you are free to grow and season. Pray god you find a
better life than mine,
the father who begot you.

CREON: Enough.
You've wept enough. Into the palace now.

OEDIPUS: I must, but I find it very hard.

CREON: Time is the great healer, you will see.

OEDIPUS: I am going—you know on what condition?

CREON: Tell me. I'm listening.

OEDIPUS: Drive me out of Thebes, in exile.

CREON: Not I. Only the gods can give you that.

OEDIPUS: Surely the gods hate me so much—

CREON: You'll get your wish at once.

OEDIPUS: You consent?

CREON: I try to say what I mean; it's my habit.

OEDIPUS: Then take me away. It's time.

CREON: Come along, let go of the children.

OEDIPUS: No—
don't take them away from me, not now! No no no!

[*Clutching his daughters as the guards wrench them loose and take them through the palace doors.*]

CREON: Still the king, the master of all things?
No more: here your power ends.
None of your power follows you through life.

[*Exit* OEDIPUS *and* CREON *to the palace. The* CHORUS *comes forward to address the audience directly.*]

CHORUS: People of Thebes, my countrymen, look on Oedipus.
He solved the famous riddle with his brilliance,
he rose to power, a man beyond all power.
Who could behold his greatness without envy?
Now what a black sea of terror has overwhelmed him.
Now as we keep our watch and wait the final day,
count no man happy till he dies, free of pain at last.

[*Exit in procession.*]

EURIPIDES
480–406 B.C.

Euripides' *Medea*, produced in 431 B.C., the year that brought the beginning of the Peloponnesian War, appeared earlier than the *Oedipus the King* of Sophocles, but it has a bitterness that is more in keeping with the spirit of a later age. If the *Oedipus* is, in one sense, a warning to a generation which has embarked on an intellectual revolution, the *Medea* is the ironic expression of the disillusion that comes after the ship-wreck. In this play we are conscious for the first time of an attitude characteristic of modern literature, the artist's feeling of separation from his audience, the isolation of the poet. "Often previously," says Medea to the king,

> Through being considered clever
> I have suffered much. . . .
> If you put new ideas before the eyes
> of fools
> They'll think you foolish and
> worthless into the bargain;
> And if you are thought superior to
> those who have
> Some reputation for learning, you
> will become hated.

The common background of audience and poet is disappearing, the old certainties are being undermined, the city divided. Euripides is the first Greek poet to suffer the fate of so many of the great modern writers: rejected by most of his contemporaries (he rarely won first prize and was the favorite

target for the scurrilous humor of the comic poets), he was universally admired and revered by the Greeks of the centuries that followed his death (406 B.C.).

It is significant that what little biographical information we have for Euripides makes no mention of military service or political office; unlike Aeschylus, who fought in the ranks at Marathon, and Sophocles, who took an active part in public affairs from youth to advanced old age, Euripides seems to have lived a private, an intellectual life. Younger than Sophocles (though they died in the same year), he was more receptive to the critical theories and the rhetorical techniques offered by the Sophist teachers; his plays often subject received ideas to fundamental questioning, expressed in vivid dramatic debate. His *Medea* is typical of his iconoclastic approach; his choice of subject and of central characters is in itself a challenge to established canons. He still dramatizes myth, but the myth he chooses is exotic and disturbing, and the protagonist is not a man but a woman. Medea is both woman and foreigner; that is to say, in terms of the audience's prejudice and practice she is a representative of the two free-born groups in Athenian society which had almost no rights at all (though the male foreign resident had more rights than the native woman). The tragic hero is no longer a king, "one who is highly renowned and prosperous such as Oedipus," but a woman, who, because she finds no redress for her wrongs in society, is driven by her passion to violate that society's most sacred laws in a rebellion against its typical representative, Jason, her husband. She is not just a woman and a foreigner; she is also a person of great intellectual power. Compared to her the credulous king and her complacent husband are children, and once her mind is made up, she moves them like pawns to their proper places in her barbaric game. The myth is used for new purposes, to shock the members of the audience, attack their deepest prejudices, and shake them out of their complacent pride in the superiority of Greek masculinity.

But the play is more than a feminist melodrama. Before it is over, our sympathies have come full circle; the contempt with which we regard the Jason of the opening scenes turns to pity as we feel the measure of his loss and the ferocity of Medea's revenge. Medea's passion has carried her too far; the death of Creon and his daughter we might have accepted, but the murder of the children is too much. It was, of course, meant to be. Euripides' theme, like Homer's, is violence, but this is the unspeakable violence of the oppressed, which is greater than the violence of the oppressor and which, because it has been long pent up, cannot be controlled.

In this, as in the other plays, the gods have their place. In the *Oresteia* the will of Zeus is manifested in every action and implied in every word; in *Oedipus the King* the gods bide their time and watch Oedipus fulfill the truth of their prophecy, but in *Medea*, the divine will, which is revealed at the end, is enigmatic and, far from bringing harmony, concludes the play with a terrifying discord. All through *Medea* the human beings involved call on the gods; two especially are singled out for attention, Earth and Sun. It is by these two gods that Medea makes Aegeus swear to give her refuge in Athens, the chorus invokes them to prevent Medea's violence against her sons, and Jason wonders how Medea can look upon earth and sun after she has killed her own children. These emphatic appeals clearly raise the question of the attitude of the gods, and the answer to the question is a shock.

We are not told what Earth does, but Sun sends the magic chariot on which Medea makes her escape. His reason, too, is stated; it is not any concern for justice, but the fact that Medea is his granddaughter. Euripides is here using the letter of the myth for his own purposes. This jarring detail emphasizes the significance of the whole. The play creates a world in which there is no relation whatsoever between the powers which rule the universe and the fundamental laws of human morality. It dramatizes disorder, not just the disorder of the family of Jason and Medea, but the disorder of the universe as a whole. It is the nightmare in which the dream of the fifth century was to end, the senseless fury and degradation of permanent violence. "Flow backward to your sources, sacred rivers," the chorus sings, "And let the world's great order be reversed."

G. M. A. Grube, *The Drama of Euripides* (1941), deals with the whole range of Euripidean drama and includes biographical and historical background. *Euripides, A Collection of Critical Essays*, edited by E. Segal (1968), contains perceptive analysis of *Medea*. B. M. W. Knox, "The *Medea* of Euripides," and P. E. Easterling, "The Infanticide in Euripides' *Medea*," both in *Yale Classical Studies* 24 (1977), will be helpful to students.

Medea[1]

Characters

MEDEA, *princess of Colchis and wife of Jason*
JASON, *son of Aeson, king of Iolcos*
TWO CHILDREN *of Medea and Jason*
KREON, *king of Corinth*
AIGEUS, *king of Athens*
NURSE *to Medea*
TUTOR *to Medea's children*
MESSENGER
CHORUS OF CORINTHIAN WOMEN

SCENE—*In front of Medea's house in Corinth. Enter from the house Medea's* NURSE.

NURSE. How I wish the Argo[2] never had reached the land
Of Colchis, skimming through the blue Symplegades,[3]
Nor ever had fallen in the glades of Pelion[4]
The smitten fir-tree to furnish oars for the hands
Of heroes who in Pelias' name attempted
The Golden Fleece![5] For then my mistress Medea
Would not have sailed for the towers of the land of Iolcos,
Her heart on fire with passionate love for Jason;

1. Translated by Rex Warner. 2. The ship in which Jason and his companions sailed on the quest for the Golden Fleece. 3. Clashing rocks, which crushed ships endeavoring to pass between them. They were supposed to be located at the Hellespont, the passage between the Mediterranean and the Black sea. 4. A mountain in the north of Greece near Iolcos, the place from which Jason sailed. 5. Pelias seized the kingdom of Iolcos, expelling Aeson, Jason's father. When Jason came to claim his rights, Pelias sent him to get the Golden Fleece.

Nor would she have persuaded the daughters of Pelias
To kill their father,[6] and now be living here
In Corinth with her husband and children. She gave
Pleasure to the people of her land of exile,
And she herself helped Jason in every way.
This is indeed the greatest salvation of all,—
For the wife not to stand apart from the husband.
But now there's hatred everywhere. Love is diseased.
For, deserting his own children and my mistress,
Jason has taken a royal wife to his bed,
The daughter of the ruler of this land, Kreon.
And poor Medea is slighted, and cries aloud on the
Vows they made to each other, the right hands clasped
In eternal promise. She calls upon the gods to witness
What sort of return Jason has made to her love.
She lies without food and gives herself up to suffering,
Wasting away every moment of the day in tears.
So it has gone since she knew herself slighted by him.
Not stirring an eye, not moving her face from the ground,
No more than either a rock or surging sea water
She listens when she is given friendly advice.
Except that sometimes she twists back her white neck and
Moans to herself, calling out on her father's name,
And her land, and her home betrayed[7] when she came away with
A man who now is determined to dishonor her.
Poor creature, she has discovered by her sufferings
What it means to one not to have lost one's own country.
She has turned from the children and does not like to see them.
I am afraid she may think of some dreadful thing,
For her heart is violent. She will never put up with
The treatment she is getting. I know and fear her
Lest she may sharpen a sword and thrust to the heart,
Stealing into the palace where the bed is made,
Or even kill the king and the new-wedded groom,
And thus bring a greater misfortune on herself.
She's a strange woman. I know it won't be easy
To make an enemy of her and come off best.
But here the children come. They have finished playing.
They have no thought at all of their mother's trouble.

6. After Jason returned to Iolcos with the Fleece and Medea, Pelias' daughters were persuaded by Medea, who had a reputation as a sorceress, to cut Pelias up and boil the pieces, in order to restore him to youth. The experiment was, of course, unsuccessful, but the son of Pelias expelled Jason and Medea from the kingdom, and they took refuge in Corinth on the isthmus between the Peloponnese and Attica. In Euripides' time it was a wealthy trading city, a commercial rival of Athens. 7. Medea, daughter of the king of Colchis, fell in love with Jason and helped him to take the Golden Fleece away from her own country.

Indeed it is not usual for the young to grieve.

[*Enter from the right the slave who is the* TUTOR *to Medea's two small children. The* CHILDREN *follow him.*]

TUTOR. You old retainer of my mistress's household,
Why are you standing here all alone in front of the
Gates and moaning to yourself over your misfortune?
Medea could not wish you to leave her alone.

NURSE. Old man, and guardian of the children of Jason,
If one is a good servant, it's a terrible thing
When one's master's luck is out; it goes to one's heart.
So I myself have got into such a state of grief
That a longing stole over me to come outside here
And tell the earth and air of my mistress's sorrows.

TUTOR. Has the poor lady not yet given up her crying?

NURSE. Given up? She's at the start, not halfway through her tears.

TUTOR. Poor fool,—if I may call my mistress such a name,—
How ignorant she is of trouble more to come.

NURSE. What do you mean, old man? You needn't fear to speak.

TUTOR. Nothing. I take back the words which I used just now.

NURSE. Don't, by your beard, hide this from me, your fellow-servant.
If need be, I'll keep quiet about what you tell me.

TUTOR. I heard a person saying, while I myself seemed
Not to be paying attention, when I was at the place
Where the old draught-players[8] sit, by the holy fountain,
That Kreon, ruler of the land, intends to drive
These children and their mother in exile from Corinth.
But whether what he said is really true or not
I do not know. I pray that it may not be true.

NURSE. And will Jason put up with it that his children
Should suffer so, though he's no friend to their mother?

TUTOR. Old ties give place to new ones. As for Jason, he
No longer has a feeling for this house of ours.

NURSE. It's black indeed for us, when we add new to old
Sorrows before even the present sky has cleared.

TUTOR. But you be silent, and keep all this to yourself.
It is not the right time to tell our mistress of it.

NURSE. Do you hear, children, what a father he is to you?
I wish he were dead,—but no, he is still my master.
Yet certainly he has proved unkind to his dear ones.

TUTOR. What's strange in that? Have you only just discovered
That everyone loves himself more than his neighbor?

8. Checker-players.

Some have good reason, others get something out of it.
So Jason neglects his children for the new bride.
NURSE. Go indoors, children. That will be the best thing.
And you, keep them to themselves as much as possible.
Don't bring them near their mother in her angry mood.
For I've seen her already blazing her eyes at them
As though she meant some mischief and I am sure that
She'll not stop raging until she has struck at someone.
May it be an enemy and not a friend she hurts!
[MEDEA *is heard inside the house.*]
MEDEA. Ah, wretch! Ah, lost in my sufferings,
I wish, I wish I might die.
NURSE. What did I say, dear children? Your mother
Frets her heart and frets it to anger.
Run away quickly into the house,
And keep well out of her sight.
Don't go anywhere near, but be careful
Of the wildness and bitter nature
Of that proud mind.
Go now! Run quickly indoors.
It is clear that she soon will put lightning
In that cloud of her cries that is rising
With a passion increasing. Oh, what will she do,
Proud-hearted and not to be checked on her course,
A soul bitten into with wrong?
[*The* TUTOR *takes the children into the house.*]
MEDEA. Ah, I have suffered
What should be wept for bitterly. I hate you,
Children of a hateful mother. I curse you
And your father. Let the whole house crash.
NURSE. Ah, I pity you, you poor creature.
How can your children share in their father's
Wickedness? Why do you hate them? Oh children,
How much I fear that something may happen!
Great people's tempers are terrible, always
Having their own way, seldom checked,
Dangerous they shift from mood to mood.
How much better to have been accustomed
To live on equal terms with one's neighbours.
I would like to be safe and grow old in a
Humble way. What is moderate sounds best,
Also in practice *is* best for everyone.
Greatness brings no profit to people.
God indeed, when in anger, brings
Greater ruin to great men's houses.

[*Enter, on the right, a* CHORUS OF CORINTHIAN WOMEN. *They have come to enquire about* MEDEA *and to attempt to console her.*]

CHORUS. I heard the voice, I heard the cry
Of Colchis' wretched daughter.
Tell me, mother, is she not yet
At rest? Within the double gates
Of the court I heard her cry. I am sorry
For the sorrow of this home. O, say, what has happened?

NURSE. There is no home. It's over and done with.
Her husband holds fast to his royal wedding,
While she, my mistress, cries out her eyes
There in her room, and takes no warmth from
Any word of any friend.

MEDEA. Oh, I wish
That lightning from heaven would split my head open.
Oh, what use have I now for life?
I would find my release in death
And leave hateful existence behind me.

CHOR. O God and Earth and Heaven!
Did you hear what a cry was that
Which the sad wife sings?
Poor foolish one, why should you long
For that appalling rest?
The final end of death comes fast.
No need to pray for that.
Suppose your man gives honor
To another woman's bed.
It often happens. Don't be hurt.
God will be your friend in this.
You must not waste away
Grieving too much for him who shared your bed.

MEDEA. Great Themis, lady Artemis,[9] behold
The things I suffer, though I made him promise,
My hateful husband. I pray that I may see him,
Him and his bride and all their palace shattered
For the wrong they dare to do me without cause.
Oh, my father! Oh, my country! In what dishonor
I left you, killing my own brother for it.[1]

NURSE. Do you hear what she says, and how she cries
On Themis, the goddess of Promises, and on Zeus,
Whom we believe to be the Keeper of Oaths?

9. The protector of women in pain and distress. *Themis:* justice.

1. Medea killed him to delay the pursuit when she escaped with Jason.

Of this I am sure, that no small thing
Will appease my mistress's anger.
CHOR. Will she come into our presence?
Will she listen when we are speaking
To the words we say?
I wish she might relax her rage
And temper of her heart.
My willingness to help will never
Be wanting to my friends.
But go inside and bring her
Out of the house to us,
And speak kindly to her: hurry,
Before she wrongs her own.
This passion of hers moves to something great.
NURSE. I will, but I doubt if I'll manage
To win my mistress over.
But still I'll attempt it to please you.
Such a look she will flash on her servants
If any comes near with a message,
Like a lioness guarding her cubs.
It is right, I think, to consider
Both stupid and lacking in foresight
Those poets of old who wrote songs
For revels and dinners and banquets,
Pleasant sounds for men living at ease;
But none of them all has discovered
How to put an end with their singing
Or musical instruments grief,
Bitter grief, from which death and disaster
Cheat the hopes of a house. Yet how good
If music could cure men of this! But why raise
To no purpose the voice at a banquet? For *there* is
Already abundance of pleasure for men
With a joy of its own.
[*The* NURSE *goes into the house.*]
CHOR. I heard a shriek that is laden with sorrow.
Shrilling out her hard grief she cries out
Upon him who betrayed both her bed and her marriage.
Wronged, she calls on the gods,
On the justice of Zeus, the oath sworn,
Which brought her away
To the opposite shore of the Greeks
Through the gloomy salt straits to the gateway
Of the salty unlimited sea.
[MEDEA, *attended by servants, comes out of the house.*]

MEDEA. Women of Corinth, I have come outside to you
Lest you should be indignant with me; for I know
That many people are overproud, some when alone,
And others when in company. And those who live
Quietly, as I do, get a bad reputation.
For a just judgment is not evident in the eyes
When a man at first sight hates another, before
Learning his character, being in no way injured;
And a foreigner especially must adapt himself.[2]
I'd not approve of even a fellow-countryman
Who by pride and want of manners offends his neighbors.
But on me this thing has fallen so unexpectedly,
It has broken my heart. I am finished. I let go
All my life's joy. My friends, I only want to die.
It was everything to me to think well of one man,
And he, my own husband, has turned out wholly vile.
Of all things which are living and can form a judgment
We women are the most unfortunate creatures.[3]
Firstly, with an excess of wealth it is required
For us to buy a husband and take for our bodies
A master; for not to take one is even worse.
And now the question is serious whether we take
A good or bad one; for there is no easy escape
For a woman, nor can she say no to her marriage.
She arrives among new modes of behaviour and manners,
And needs prophetic power, unless she has learnt at home,
How best to manage him who shares the bed with her.
And if we work out all this well and carefully,
And the husband lives with us and lightly bears his yoke,
Then life is enviable. If not, I'd rather die.
A man, when he's tired of the company in his home,
Goes out of the house and puts an end to his boredom
And turns to a friend or companion of his own age.
But we are forced to keep our eyes on one alone.
What they say of us is that we have a peaceful time
Living at home, while they do the fighting in war.
How wrong they are! I would very much rather stand
Three times in the front of battle than bear one child.
Yet what applies to me does not apply to you.
You have a country. Your family home is here.
You enjoy life and the company of your friends.

2. Foreign residents were encouraged to come to Athens, but were rarely admitted to the rights of full citizenship, which was a jealously guarded privilege. 3. Athenian rights and institutions were made for men; the women had few privileges and almost no legal rights. The following two lines refer to the dowry which had to be provided for the bride.

But I am deserted, a refugee, thought nothing of
By my husband,—something he won in a foreign land.
I have no mother or brother, nor any relation
With whom I can take refuge in this sea of woe.
This much then is the service I would beg from you:
If I can find the means or devise any scheme
To pay my husband back for what he has done to me,—
Him and his father-in-law and the girl who married him,—
Just to keep silent. For in other ways a woman
Is full of fear, defenseless, dreads the sight of cold
Steel; but, when once she is wronged in the matter of love,
No other soul can hold so many thoughts of blood.
CHOR. This I will promise. You are in the right, Medea,
In paying your husband back. I am not surprised at you
For being sad. But look! I see our king Kreon
Approaching. He will tell us of some new plan.
[Enter, from the right, KREON, *with attendants.]*
KREON. You, with that angry look, so set against your husband,
Medea, I order you to leave my territories
An exile, and take along with you your two children,
And not to waste time doing it. It is my decree,
And I will see it done. I will not return home
Until you are cast from the boundaries of my land.
MEDEA. Oh, this is the end for me. I am utterly lost.
Now I am in the full force of the storm of hate
And have no harbor from ruin to reach easily.
Yet still, in spite of it all, I'll ask the question:
What is your reason, Kreon, for banishing me?
KREON. I am afraid of you,—why should I dissemble it?—
Afraid that you may injure my daughter mortally.
Many things accumulate to support my feeling.
You are a clever woman, versed in evil arts,
And are angry at having lost your husband's love.
I hear that you are threatening, so they tell me,
To do something against my daughter and Jason
And me, too. I shall take my precautions first.
I tell you, I prefer to earn your hatred now
Than to be soft-hearted and afterwards regret it.
MEDEA. This is not the first time, Kreon. Often previously
Through being considered clever I have suffered much.
A person of sense ought never to have his children
Brought up to be more clever than the average.
For, apart from cleverness bringing them no profit,
It will make them objects of envy and ill-will.
If you put new ideas before the eyes of fools

They'll think you foolish and worthless into the bargain;
And if you are thought superior to those who have
Some reputation for learning, you will become hated.
I have some knowledge myself of how this happens;
For being clever, I find that some will envy me,
Others object to me. Yet all my cleverness
Is not so much. Well, then, are you frightened, Kreon,
That I should harm you? There is no need. It is not
My way to transgress the authority of a king.
How have you injured me? You gave your daughter away
To the man you wanted. O, certainly I hate
My husband, but you, I think, have acted wisely;
Nor do I grudge it you that your affairs go well.
May the marriage be a lucky one! Only let me
Live in this land. For even though I have been wronged,
I will not raise my voice, but submit to my betters.

KREON. What you say sounds gentle enough. Still in my heart
I greatly dread that you are plotting some evil,
And therefore I trust you even less than before.
A sharp-tempered woman, or for that matter a man,
Is easier to deal with than the clever type
Who holds her tongue. No. You must go. No need for more
Speeches. The thing is fixed. By no manner of means
Shall you, an enemy of mine, stay in my country.

MEDEA. I beg you. By your knees, by your new-wedded girl.

KREON. Your words are wasted. You will never persuade me.

MEDEA. Will you drive me out, and give no heed to my prayers?

KREON. I will, for I love my family more than you.

MEDEA. O my country! How bitterly now I remember you!

KREON. I love my country too,—next after my children.

MEDEA. O what an evil to men is passionate love!

KREON. That would depend on the luck that goes along with it.

MEDEA. O God, do not forget who is the cause of this!

KREON. Go. It is no use. Spare me the pain of forcing you.

MEDEA. I'm spared no pain. I lack no pain to be spared me.

KREON. Then you'll be removed by force by one of my men.

MEDEA. No, Kreon, not that! But do listen, I beg you.

KREON. Woman, you seem to want to create a disturbance.

MEDEA. I *will* go into exile. *This* is not what I beg for.

KREON. Why then this violence and clinging to my hand?

MEDEA. Allow me to remain here just for this one day,
So I may consider where to live in my exile,
And look for support for my children, since their father
Chooses to make no kind of provision for them.
Have pity on them! You have children of your own.

It is natural for you to look kindly on them.
For myself I do not mind if I go into exile.
It is the children being in trouble that I mind.
KREON. There is nothing tyrannical about my nature,
And by showing mercy I have often been the loser.
Even now I know that I am making a mistake.
All the same you shall have your will. But this I tell you,
That if the light of heaven tomorrow shall see you,
You and your children in the confines of my land,
You die. This word I have spoken is firmly fixed.
But now, if you must stay, stay for this day alone.
For in it you can do none of the things I fear.
[Exit KREON *with his attendants.]*
CHOR. Oh, unfortunate one! Oh, cruel!
Where will you turn? Who will help you?
What house or what land to preserve you
From ill can you find?
Medea, a god has thrown suffering
Upon you in waves of despair.
MEDEA. Things have gone badly every way. No doubt of that.
But not these things this far, and don't imagine so.
There are still trials to come for the new-wedded pair,
And for their relations pain that will mean something.
Do you think that I would ever have fawned on that man
Unless I had some end to gain or profit in it?
I would not even have spoken or touched him with my hands.
But he has got to such a pitch of foolishness
That, though he could have made nothing of all my plans
By exiling me, he has given me this one day
To stay here, and in this I will make dead bodies
Of three of my enemies,—father, the girl and my husband.
I have many ways of death which I might suit to them,
And do not know, friends, which one to take in hand;
Whether to set fire underneath their bridal mansion,
Or sharpen a sword and thrust it to the heart,
Stealing into the palace where the bed is made.
There is just one obstacle to this. If I am caught
Breaking into the house and scheming against it,
I shall die, and give my enemies cause for laughter.
It is best to go by the straight road, the one in which
I am most skilled, and make away with them by poison.
So be it then.
And now suppose them dead. What town will receive me?
What friend will offer me a refuge in his land,
Or the guarantee of his house and save my own life?

There is none. So I must wait a little time yet,
And if some sure defense should then appear for me,
In craft and silence I will set about this murder.
But if my fate should drive me on without help,
Even though death is certain, I will take the sword
Myself and kill, and steadfastly advance to crime.
It shall not be,—I swear it by her, my mistress,
Whom most I honor and have chosen as partner,
Hecate,[4] who dwells in the recesses of my hearth,—
That any man shall be glad to have injured me.
Bitter I will make their marriage for them and mournful,
Bitter the alliance and the driving me out of the land.
Ah, come, Medea, in your plotting and scheming
Leave nothing untried of all those things which you know.
Go forward to the dreadful act. The test has come
For resolution. You see how you are treated. Never
Shall you be mocked by Jason's Corinthian wedding,
Whose father was noble, whose grandfather Helios.[5]
You have the skill. What is more, you were born a woman,
And women, though most helpless in doing good deeds,
Are of every evil the cleverest of contrivers.

CHOR. Flow backward to your sources, sacred rivers,
And let the world's great order be reversed.
It is the thoughts of *men* that are deceitful,
Their pledges that are loose.
Story shall now turn my condition to a fair one,
Women are paid their due.
No more shall evil-sounding fame be theirs.

Cease now, you muses of the ancient singers,
To tell the tale of my unfaithfulness;
For not on us did Phoebus,[6] lord of music,
Bestow the lyre's divine
Power, for otherwise I should have sung an answer
To the other sex. Long time
Has much to tell of us, and much of them.

You sailed away from your father's home,
With a heart on fire you passed
The double rocks of the sea.
And now in a foreign country
You have lost your rest in a widowed bed,
And are driven forth, a refugee
In dishonor from the land.

4. The patron of witchcraft, sometimes identified with Artemis. Medea has a statue and shrine of Hecate in the house. 5. The sun, father of Medea's father, Aeëtes. 6. Apollo.

Good faith has gone, and no more remains
In great Greece a sense of shame.
It has flown away to the sky.
No father's house for a haven
Is at hand for you now, and another queen
Of your bed has dispossessed you and
Is mistress of your home.
[Enter JASON, *with attendants.]*
JASON. This is not the first occasion that I have noticed
How hopeless it is to deal with a stubborn temper.
For, with reasonable submission to our ruler's will,
You might have lived in this land and kept your home.
As it is you are going to be exiled for your loose speaking.
Not that I mind myself. You are free to continue
Telling everyone that Jason is a worthless man.
But as to your talk about the king, consider
Yourself most lucky that exile is your punishment.
I, for my part, have always tried to calm down
The anger of the king, and wished you to remain.
But you will not give up your folly, continually
Speaking ill of him, and so you are going to be banished.
All the same, and in spite of your conduct, I'll not desert
My friends, but have come to make some provision for you,
So that you and the children may not be penniless
Or in need of anything in exile. Certainly
Exile brings many troubles with it. And even
If you hate me, I cannot think badly of you.
MEDEA. O coward in every way,—that is what I call you,
With bitterest reproach for your lack of manliness,
You have come, you, my worst enemy, have come to me!
It is not an example of over-confidence
Or of boldness thus to look your friends in the face,
Friends you have injured,—no, it is the worst of all
Human diseases, shamelessness. But you did well
To come, for I can speak ill of you and lighten
My heart, and you will suffer while you are listening.
And first I will begin from what happened first.
I saved your life, and every Greek knows I saved it
Who was a ship-mate of yours aboard the Argo,
When you were sent to control the bulls that breathed fire[7]
And yoke them, and when you would sow that deadly field.
Also that snake, who encircled with his many folds

7. This and the following lines refer to ordeals through which Jason had to pass to win the Fleece, and in which Medea helped him. He had to yoke a team of firebreathing bulls, then sow a field which immediately sprouted armed warriors, then deal with the snake which guarded the Fleece.

The Golden Fleece and guarded it and never slept,
I killed, and so gave you the safety of the light.
And I myself betrayed my father and my home,
And came with you to Pelias' land of Iolcos.
And then, showing more willingness to help than wisdom,
I killed him, Pelias, with a most dreadful death
At his own daughters' hands, and took away your fear.
This is how I behaved to you, you wretched man,
And you forsook me, took another bride to bed
Though you had children; for, if that had not been,
You would have had an excuse for another wedding.
Faith in your word has gone. Indeed I cannot tell
Whether you think the gods whose names you swore by then
Have ceased to rule and that new standards are set up,
Since you must know you have broken your word to me.
O my right hand, and the knees which you often clasped
In supplication, how senselessly I am treated
By this bad man, and how my hopes have missed their mark!
Come, I will share my thoughts as though you were a friend,—
You! Can I think that you would ever treat me well?
But I will do it, and these questions will make you
Appear the baser. Where am I to go? To my father's?
Him I betrayed and his land when I came with you.
To Pelias' wretched daughters? What a fine welcome
They would prepare for me who murdered their father!
For this is my position,—hated by my friends
At home, I have, in kindness to you, made enemies
Of others whom there was no need to have injured.
And how happy among Greek women you have made me
On your side for all this! A distinguished husband
I have,—for breaking promises. When in misery
I am cast out of the land and go into exile,
Quite without friends and all alone with my children,
That will be a fine shame for the new-wedded groom,
For his children to wander as beggars and she who saved him.
O God, you have given to mortals a sure method
Of telling the gold that is pure from the counterfeit;
Why is there no mark engraved upon men's bodies,
By which we could know the true ones from the false ones?

CHOR. It is a strange form of anger, difficult to cure
When two friends turn upon each other in hatred.

JASON. As for me, it seems I must be no bad speaker.
But, like a man who has a good grip of the tiller,
Reef up his sail, and so run away from under
This mouthing tempest, woman, of your bitter tongue.

Since you insist on building up your kindness to me,
My view is that Cypris[8] was alone responsible
Of men and gods for the preserving of my life.
You are clever enough,—but really I need not enter
Into the story of how it was love's inescapable
Power that compelled you to keep my person safe.
On this I will not go into too much detail.
In so far as you helped me, you did well enough.
But on this question of saving me, I can prove
You have certainly got from me more than you gave.
Firstly, instead of living among barbarians,
You inhabit a Greek land and understand our ways,
How to live by law instead of the sweet will of force.
And all the Greeks considered you a clever woman.
You were honored for it; while, if you were living at
The ends of the earth, nobody would have heard of you.
For my part, rather than stores of gold in my house
Or power to sing even sweeter songs than Orpheus,
I'd choose the fate that made me a distinguished man.
There is my reply to your story of my labors.
Remember it was you who started the argument.
Next for your attack on my wedding with the princess:
Here I will prove that, first, it was a clever move,
Secondly, a wise one, and, finally, that I made it
In your best interests and the children's. Please keep calm.
When I arrived here from the land of Iolcos,
Involved, as I was, in every kind of difficulty,
What luckier chance could I have come across than this,
An exile to marry the daughter of the king?
It was not,—the point that seems to upset you—that I
Grew tired of your bed and felt the need of a new bride;
Nor with any wish to outdo your number of children.
We have enough already. I am quite content.
But —this was the main reason—that we might live well,
And not be short of anything. I know that all
A man's friends leave him stone-cold if he becomes poor.
Also that I might bring my children up worthily
Of my position, and, by producing more of them
To be brothers of yours, we would draw the families
Together and all be happy. You need no children.
And it pays me to do good to those I have now
By having others. Do you think this a bad plan?
You wouldn't if the love question hadn't upset you.

This is Jason's plan + reason for leaving Medea

8. Aphrodite, goddess of love.

But you women have got into such a state of mind
That, if your life at night is good, you think you have
Everything; but, if in that quarter things go wrong,
You will consider your best and truest interests
Most hateful. It would have been better far for men
To have got their children in some other way, and women
Not to have existed. Then life would have been good.
CHOR. Jason, though you have made this speech of yours look well,
Still I think, even though others do not agree,
You have betrayed your wife and are acting badly.
MEDEA. Surely in many ways I hold different views
From others, for I think that the plausible speaker
Who is a villain deserves the greatest punishment.
Confident in his tongue's power to adorn evil,
He stops at nothing. Yet he is not really wise.
As in your case. There is no need to put on the airs
Of a clever speaker, for one word will lay you flat.
If you were not a coward, you would not have married
Behind my back, but discussed it with me first.
JASON. And you, no doubt, would have furthered the proposal,
If I had told you of it, you who even now
Are incapable of controlling your bitter temper.
MEDEA. It was not that. No, you thought it was not respectable
As you got on in years to have a foreign wife.
JASON. Make sure of this: it was not because of a woman
I made the royal alliance in which I now live,
But, as I said before, I wished to preserve you
And breed a royal progeny to be brothers
To the children I have now, a sure defense to us.
MEDEA. Let me have no happy fortune that brings pain with it,
Or prosperity which is upsetting to the mind!
JASON. Change your ideas of what you want, and show more sense.
Do not consider painful what is good for you,
Nor, when you are lucky, think yourself unfortunate.
MEDEA. You can insult me. You have somewhere to turn to.
But I shall go from this land into exile, friendless.
JASON. It was what you chose yourself. Don't blame others for it.
MEDEA. And how did I choose it? Did I betray my husband?
JASON. You called down wicked curses on the king's family.
MEDEA. A curse, that is what I am become to your house too.
JASON. I do not propose to go into all the rest of it;
But, if you wish for the children or for yourself
In exile to have some of my money to help you,
Say so, for I am prepared to give with open hand,
Or to provide you with introductions to my friends

Who will treat you well. You are a fool if you do not
Accept this. Cease your anger and you will profit.
MEDEA. I shall never accept the favors of friends of yours,
Nor take a thing from you, so you need not offer it.
There is no benefit in the gifts of a bad man.
JASON. Then, in any case, I call the gods to witness that
I wish to help you and the children in every way,
But you refuse what is good for you. Obstinately
You push away your friends. You are sure to suffer for it.
MEDEA. Go! No doubt you hanker for your virginal bride,
And are guilty of lingering too long out of her house.
Enjoy your wedding. But perhaps,—with the help of God—
You will make the kind of marriage that you will regret.
[JASON *goes out with his attendants.*]
CHOR. When love is in excess
It brings a man no honor
Nor any worthiness.
But if in moderation Cypris comes,
There is no other power at all so gracious.
O goddess, never on me let loose the unerring
Shaft of your bow in the poison of desire.

Let my heart be wise.
It is the gods' best gift.
On me let mighty Cypris
Inflict no wordy wars or restless anger
To urge my passion to a different love.
But with discernment may she guide women's weddings,
Honoring most what is peaceful in the bed.

O country and home,
Never, never may I be without you,
Living the hopeless life,
Hard to pass through and painful,
Most pitiable of all.
Let death first lay me low and death
Free me from this daylight.
There is no sorrow above
The loss of a native land.

I have seen it myself,
Do not tell of a secondhand story.
Neither city nor friend
Pitied you when you suffered
The worst of sufferings.

O let him die ungraced whose heart
Will not reward his friends,
Who cannot open an honest mind
No friend will he be of mine.

[*Enter* AIGEUS, *king of Athens, an old friend of* MEDEA.]

AIGEUS. Medea, greeting! This is the best introduction
Of which men know for conversation between friends.
MEDEA. Greeting to you too, Aigeus, son of King Pandion,
Where have you come from to visit this country's soil?
AIGEUS. I have just left the ancient oracle of Phoebus.
MEDEA. And why did you go to earth's prophetic center?
AIGEUS. I went to inquire how children might be born to me.
MEDEA. Is it so? Your life still up to this point childless?
AIGEUS. Yes. By the fate of some power we have no children.
MEDEA. Have you a wife, or is there none to share your bed?
AIGEUS. There is. Yes, I am joined to my wife in marriage.
MEDEA. And what did Phoebus say to you about children?
AIGEUS. Words too wise for a mere man to guess their meaning.
MEDEA. Is it proper for me to be told the God's reply?
AIGEUS. It is. For sure what is needed is cleverness.
MEDEA. Then what was his message? Tell me, if I may hear.
AIGEUS. I am not to loosen the hanging foot of the wine-skin . . .[9]
MEDEA. Until you have done something, or reached some country?
AIGEUS. Until I return again to my hearth and house.
MEDEA. And for what purpose have you journeyed to this land?
AIGEUS. There is a man called Pittheus,[1] king of Troezen.
MEDEA. A son of Pelops, they say, a most righteous man.
AIGEUS. With him I wish to discuss the reply of the god.
MEDEA. Yes. He is wise and experienced in such matters.
AIGEUS. And to me also the dearest of all my spear-friends.[2]
MEDEA. Well, I hope you have good luck, and achieve your will.
AIGEUS. But why this downcast eye of yours, and this pale cheek?
MEDEA. O Aigeus, my husband has been the worst of all to me.
AIGEUS. What do you mean? Say clearly what has caused this grief.
MEDEA. Jason wrongs me, though I have never injured him.
AIGEUS. What has he done? Tell me about it in clearer words.
MEDEA. He has taken a wife to his house, supplanting me.
AIGEUS. Surely he would not dare to do a thing like that.
MEDEA. Be sure he has. Once dear, I now am slighted by him.
AIGEUS. Did he fall in love? Or is he tired of your love?
MEDEA. He was greatly in love, this traitor to his friends.

9. This cryptic phrase probably means "not to have intercourse." 1. Aigeus' father-in-law. *Troezen:* in the Peloponnese. Corinth was on the way from Delphi to Troezen. 2. Allies in war, companions in fighting.

AIGEUS. Then let him go, if, as you say, he is so bad.
MEDEA. A passionate love,—for an alliance with the king.
AIGEUS. And who gave him his wife? Tell me the rest of it.
MEDEA. It was Kreon, he who rules this land of Corinth.
AIGEUS. Indeed, Medea, your grief was understandable.
MEDEA. I am ruined. And there is more to come: I am banished.
AIGEUS. Banished? By whom? Here you tell me of a new wrong.
MEDEA. Kreon drives me an exile from the land of Corinth.
AIGEUS. Does Jason consent? I cannot approve of this.
MEDEA. He pretends not to, but he will put up with it.
Ah, Aigeus, I beg and beseech you, by your beard
And by your knees I am making myself your suppliant,
Have pity on me, have pity on your poor friend,
And do not let me go into exile desolate,
But receive me in your land and at your very hearth.
So may your love, with God's help, lead to the bearing
Of children, and so may you yourself die happy.
You do not know what a chance you have come on here.
I will end your childlessness, and I will make you able
To beget children. The drugs I know can do this.
AIGEUS. For many reasons, woman, I am anxious to do
This favor for you. First, for the sake of the gods,
And then for the birth of children which you promise,
For in that respect I am entirely at my wits' end.
But this is my position: if you reach my land,
I, being in my rights, will try to befriend you.
But this much I must warn you of beforehand:
I shall not agree to take you out of this country;
But if you by yourself can reach my house, then you
Shall stay there safely. To none will I give you up.
But from this land you must make your escape yourself,
For I do not wish to incur blame from my friends.
MEDEA. It shall be so. But, if I might have a pledge from you
For this, then I would have from you all I desire.
AIGEUS. Do you not trust me? What is it rankles with you?
MEDEA. I trust you, yes. But the house of Pelias hates me,
And so does Kreon. If you are bound by this oath,
When they try to drag me from your land, you will not
Abandon me; but if our pact is only words,
With no oath to the gods, you will be lightly armed,
Unable to resist their summons. I am weak,
While they have wealth to help them and a royal house.
AIGEUS. You show much foresight for such negotiations.
Well, if you will have it so, I will not refuse.
For, both on my side this will be the safest way

To have some excuse to put forward to your enemies,
And for you it is more certain. You may name the gods.
MEDEA. Swear by the plain of Earth, and Helios, father
Of my father, and name together all the gods. . . .
AIGEUS. That I will act or not act in what way? Speak.
MEDEA. That you yourself will never cast me from your land,
Nor, if any of my enemies should demand me,
Will you, in your life, willingly hand me over.
AIGEUS. I swear by the Earth, by the holy light of Helios,
By all the gods, I will abide by this you say.
MEDEA. Enough. And, if you fail, what shall happen to you?
AIGEUS. What comes to those who have no regard for heaven.
MEDEA. Go on your way. Farewell. For I am satisfied,
And I will reach your city as soon as I can,
Having done the deed I have to do and gained my end.
[AIGEUS *goes out.*]
CHOR. May Hermes, god of travellers,
Escort you, Aigeus, to your home!
And may you have the things you wish
So eagerly; for you
Appear to me to be a generous man.
MEDEA. God, and God's daughter, justice, and light of Helios!
Now, friends, has come the time of my triumph over
My enemies, and now my foot is on the road.
Now I am confident they will pay the penalty.
For this man, Aigeus, has been like a harbor to me
In all my plans just where I was most distressed.
To him I can fasten the cable of my safety
When I have reached the town and fortress of Pallas.[3]
And now I shall tell to you the whole of my plan.
Listen to these words that are not spoken idly.
I shall send one of my servants to find Jason
And request him to come once more into my sight.
And when he comes, the words I'll say will be soft ones.
I'll say that I agree with him, that I approve
The royal wedding he has made, betraying me.
I'll say it was profitable, an excellent idea.
But I shall beg that my children may remain here:
Not that I would leave in a country that hates me
Children of mine to feel their enemies' insults,
But that by a trick I may kill the king's daughter.
For I will send the children with gifts in their hands
To carry to the bride, so as not to be banished,—
A finely woven dress and a golden diadem.

Medea's plan

3. Athens, city of Pallas Athene.

And if she takes them and wears them upon her skin
She and all who touch the girl will die in agony;
Such poison will I lay upon the gifts I send.
But there, however, I must leave that account paid.
I weep to think of what a deed I have to do
Next after that; for I shall kill my own children.
My children, there is none who can give them safety.
And when I have ruined the whole of Jason's house,
I shall leave the land and flee from the murder of my
Dear children, and I shall have done a dreadful deed.
For it is not bearable to be mocked by enemies.
So it must happen. What profit have I in life?
I have no land, no home, no refuge from my pain.
My mistake was made the time I left behind me
My father's house, and trusted the words of a Greek,
Who, with heaven's help, will pay me the price for that.
For those children he had from me he will never
See alive again, nor will he on his new bride
Beget another child, for she is to be forced
To die a most terrible death by these my poisons.
Let no one think me a weak one, feeble-spirited,
A stay-at-home, but rather just the opposite,
One who can hurt my enemies and help my friends;
For the lives of such persons are most remembered.

CHOR. Since you have shared the knowledge of your plan with us,
I both wish to help you and support the normal
Ways of mankind, and tell you not to do this thing.

MEDEA. I can do no other thing. It is understandable
For you to speak thus. You have not suffered as I have.

CHOR. But can you have the heart to kill your flesh and blood?

MEDEA. Yes, for this is the best way to wound my husband.

CHOR. And you too. Of women you will be most unhappy.

MEDEA. So it must be. No compromise is possible.
[*She turns to the* NURSE.]
Go, you, at once, and tell Jason to come to me.
You I employ on all affairs of greatest trust.
Say nothing of these decisions which I have made,
If you love your mistress, if you were born a woman.

CHOR. From of old the children of Erechtheus[4] are
Splendid, the sons of blessed gods. They dwell
In Athens' holy and unconquered land,[5]
Where famous Wisdom feeds them and they pass gaily

4. An early king of Athens, a son of Hephaestus. 5. It was the Athenians' boast that their descent from the original settlers was uninterrupted by an invasion. There is a topical reference here, for the play was produced in 431 B.C., in a time of imminent war.

Always through that most brilliant air where once, they say,
That golden Harmony gave birth to the nine
Pure Muses of Pieria.[6]

And beside the sweet flow of Cephisos' stream,[7]
Where Cypris sailed, they say, to draw the water,
And mild soft breezes breathed along her path,
And on her hair were flung the sweet-smelling garlands
Of flowers of roses by the Lovers, the companions
Of Wisdom, her escort, the helpers of men
In every kind of excellence.

How then can these holy rivers
Or this holy land love you,
Or the city find you a home,
You, who will kill your children,
You, not pure with the rest?
O think of the blow at your children
And think of the blood that you shed.
O, over and over I beg you,
By your knees I beg you do not
Be the murderess of your babes!

O where will you find the courage
Or the skill of hand and heart,
When you set yourself to attempt
A deed so dreadful to do?
How, when you look upon them,
Can you tearlessly hold the decision
For murder? You will not be able,
When your children fall down and implore you,
You will not be able to dip
Steadfast your hand in their blood.

[Enter JASON *with attendants.]*

JASON. I have come at your request. Indeed, although you are
Bitter against me, this you shall have: I will listen
To what new thing you want, woman, to get from me.

MEDEA. Jason, I beg you to be forgiving towards me
For what I said. It is natural for you to bear with
My temper, since we have had much love together.
I have talked with myself about this and I have
Reproached myself. "Fool" I said, "why am I so mad?

6. A fountain in Boeotia where the Muses were supposed to live. The sentence means that the fortunate balance ("Harmony") of the elements and the genius of the people produced the cultivation of the arts ("the nine pure Muses"). 7. Athenian river. Cypris, mentioned in the next line, is the goddess of love and therefore of the principle of fertility.

Why am I set against those who have planned wisely?
Why make myself an enemy of the authorities
And of my husband, who does the best thing for me
By marrying royalty and having children who
Will be as brothers to my own? What is wrong with me?
Let me give up anger, for the gods are kind to me.
Have I not children, and do I not know that we
In exile from our country must be short of friends?"
When I considered this I saw that I had shown
Great lack of sense, and that my anger was foolish.
Now I agree with you. I think that you are wise
In having this other wife as well as me, and I
Was mad. I should have helped you in these plans of yours,
Have joined in the wedding, stood by the marriage bed,
Have taken pleasure in attendance on your bride.
But we women are what we are,—perhaps a little
Worthless; and you men must not be like us in this,
Nor be foolish in return when we are foolish.
Now I give in, and admit that then I was wrong.
I have come to a better understanding now.
[She turns towards the house.]
Children, come here, my children, come outdoors to us!
Welcome your father with me, and say goodbye to him,
And with your mother, who just now was his enemy,
Join again in making friends with him who loves us.
[*Enter the* CHILDREN, *attended by the* TUTOR.]
We have made peace, and all our anger is over.
Take hold of his right hand,—O God, I am thinking
Of something which may happen in the secret future.
O children, will you just so, after a long life,
Hold out your loving arms at the grave? O children,
How ready to cry I am, how full of foreboding!
I am ending at last this quarrel with your father,
And, look, my soft eyes have suddenly filled with tears.

CHOR. And the pale tears have started also in my eyes.
O may the trouble not grow worse than now it is!

JASON. I approve of what you say. And I cannot blame you
Even for what you said before. It is natural
For a woman to be wild with her husband when he
Goes in for secret love. But now your mind has turned
To better reasoning. In the end you have come to
The right decision, like the clever woman you are.
And of you, children, your father is taking care.
He has made, with God's help, ample provision for you.
For I think that a time will come when you will be

The leading people in Corinth with your brothers.
You must grow up. As to the future, your father
And those of the gods who love him will deal with that.
I want to see you, when you have become young men,
Healthy and strong, better men than my enemies.
Medea, why are your eyes all wet with pale tears?
Why is your cheek so white and turned away from me?
Are not these words of mine pleasing for you to hear?
MEDEA. It is nothing. I was thinking about these children.
JASON. You must be cheerful. I shall look after them well.
MEDEA. I will be. It is not that I distrust your words,
But a woman is a frail thing, prone to crying.
JASON. But why then should you grieve so much for these children?
MEDEA. I am their mother. When you prayed that they might live
I felt unhappy to think that these things will be.
But come, I have said something of the things I meant
To say to you, and now I will tell you the rest.
Since it is the king's will to banish me from here,—
And for me too I know that this is the best thing,
Not to be in your way by living here or in
The king's way, since they think me ill-disposed to them,—
I then am going into exile from this land;
But do you, so that you may have the care of them,
Beg Kreon that the children may not be banished.
JASON. I doubt if I'll succeed, but still I'll attempt it.
MEDEA. Then you must tell your wife to beg from her father
That the children may be reprieved from banishment.
JASON. I will, and with her I shall certainly succeed.
MEDEA. If she is like the rest of us women, you will.
And I too will take a hand with you in this business,
For I will send her some gifts which are far fairer,
I am sure of it, than those which now are in fashion,
A finely-woven dress and a golden diadem,
And the children shall present them. Quick, let one of you
Servants bring here to me that beautiful dress.
[One of her attendants goes into the house.]
She will be happy not in one way, but in a hundred,
Having so fine a man as you to share her bed,
And with this beautiful dress which Helios of old,
My father's father, bestowed on his descendants.
[Enter attendant carrying the poisoned dress and diadem.]
There, children, take these wedding presents in your hands.
Take them to the royal princess, the happy bride,
And give them to her. She will not think little of them.

JASON. No, don't be foolish, and empty your hands of these.
Do you think the palace is short of dresses to wear?
Do you think there is no gold there? Keep them, don't give them
Away. If my wife considers me of any value,
She will think more of me than money, I am sure of it.
MEDEA. No, let me have my way. They say the gods themselves
Are moved by gifts, and gold does more with men than words.
Hers is the luck, her fortune that which god blesses;
She is young and a princess; but for my children's reprieve
I would give my very life, and not gold only.
Go children, go together to that rich palace,
Be suppliants to the new wife of your father,
My lady, beg her not to let you be banished.
And give her the dress,—for this is of great importance,
That she should take the gift into her hand from yours.
Go, quick as you can. And bring your mother good news
By your success of those things which she longs to gain.
[JASON *goes out with his attendants, followed by the* TUTOR *and the* CHILDREN *carrying the poisoned gifts.*]
CHOR. Now there is no hope left for the children's lives.
Now there is none. They are walking already to murder.
The bride, poor bride, will accept the curse of the gold,
Will accept the bright diadem.
Around her yellow hair she will set that dress
Of death with her own hands.
The grace and the perfume and glow of the golden robe
Will charm her to put them upon her and wear the wreath,
And now her wedding will be with the dead below,
Into such a trap she will fall,
Poor thing, into such a fate of death and never
Escape from under that curse.

You too, O wretched bridegroom, making your match with kings,
You do not see that you bring
Destruction on your children and on her,
Your wife, a fearful death.
Poor soul, what a fall is yours!

In your grief too I weep, mother of little children,
You who will murder your own,
In vengeance for the loss of married love
Which Jason has betrayed
As he lives with another wife.
[*Enter the* TUTOR *with the* CHILDREN.]
TUTOR. Mistress, I tell you that these children are reprieved,

And the royal bride has been pleased to take in her hands
Your gifts. In that quarter the children are secure.
But come,
Why do you stand confused when you are fortunate?
Why have you turned round with your cheek away from me?
Are not these words of mine pleasing for you to hear?

MEDEA. Oh! I am lost!

TUTOR. That word is not in harmony with my tidings.

MEDEA. I am lost, I am lost!

TUTOR. Am I in ignorance telling you
Of some disaster, and not the good news I thought?

MEDEA. You have told what you have told. I do not blame you.

TUTOR. Why then this downcast eye, and this weeping of tears?

MEDEA. Oh, I am forced to weep, old man. The gods and I,
I in a kind of madness have contrived all this.

TUTOR. Courage! You too will be brought home by your children.

MEDEA. Ah, before that happens I shall bring others home.

TUTOR. Others before you have been parted from their children.
Mortals must bear in resignation their ill luck.

MEDEA. That is what I shall do. But go inside the house,
And do for the children your usual daily work.

[*The* TUTOR *goes into the house.* MEDEA *turns to her* CHILDREN.]

O children, O my children, you have a city,
You have a home, and you can leave me behind you,
And without your mother you may live there for ever.
But I am going in exile to another land
Before I have seen you happy and taken pleasure in you,
Before I have dressed your brides and made your marriage beds
And held up the torch at the ceremony of wedding.
Oh, what a wretch I am in this my self-willed thought!
What was the purpose, children, for which I reared you?
For all my travail and wearing myself away?
They were sterile, those pains I had in the bearing of you.
O surely once the hopes in you I had, poor me,
Were high ones: you would look after me in old age,
And when I died would deck me well with your own hands;
A thing which all would have done. O but now it is gone,
That lovely thought. For, once I am left without you,
Sad will be the life I'll lead and sorrowful for me.
And you will never see your mother again with
Your dear eyes, gone to another mode of living.
Why, children, do you look upon me with your eyes?
Why do you smile so sweetly that last smile of all?
Oh, Oh, what can I do? My spirit has gone from me,
Friends, when I saw that bright look in the children's eyes.

I cannot bear to do it. I renounce my plans
I had before. I'll take my children away from
This land. Why should I hurt their father with the pain
They feel, and suffer twice as much of pain myself?
No, no, I will not do it. I renounce my plans.
Ah, what is wrong with me? Do I want to let go
My enemies unhurt and be laughed at for it?
I must face this thing. Oh, but what a weak woman
Even to admit to my mind these soft arguments.
Children, go into the house. And he whom law forbids
To stand in attendance at my sacrifices,
Let him see to it. I shall not mar my handiwork.
Oh! Oh!
Do not, O my heart, you must not do these things!
Poor heart, let them go, have pity upon the children.
If they live with you in Athens they will cheer you.
No! By Hell's avenging furies it shall not be,—
This shall never be, that I should suffer my children
To be the prey of my enemies' insolence.
Every way is it fixed. The bride will not escape.
No, the diadem is now upon her head, and she,
The royal princess, is dying in the dress, I know it.
But,—for it is the most dreadful of roads for me
To tread, and them I shall send on a more dreadful still—
I wish to speak to the children.

[She calls the CHILDREN *to her.]*

Come, children, give
Me your hands, give your mother your hands to kiss them.
O the dear hands, and O how dear are these lips to me,
And the generous eyes and the bearing of my children!
I wish you happiness, but not here in this world.
What is here your father took. O how good to hold you!
How delicate the skin, how sweet the breath of children!
Go, go! I am no longer able, no longer
To look upon you. I am overcome by sorrow.

[The CHILDREN *go into the house.]*

I know indeed what evil I intend to do,
But stronger than all my afterthoughts is my fury,
Fury that brings upon mortals the greatest evils.

[She goes out to the right, towards the royal palace.]

CHOR. Often before
I have gone through more subtle reasons,
And have come upon questionings greater
Than a woman should strive to search out.
But we too have a goddess to help us

And accompany us into wisdom.
Not all of us. Still you will find
Among many women a few,
And our sex is not without learning.
This I say, that those who have never
Had children, who know nothing of it,
In happiness have the advantage
Over those who are parents.
The childless, who never discover
Whether children turn out as a good thing
Or as something to cause pain, are spared
Many troubles in lacking this knowledge:
And those who have in their homes
The sweet presence of children, I see that their lives
Are all wasted away by their worries.
First they must think how to bring them up well and
How to leave them something to live on.
And then after this whether all their toil
Is for those who will turn out good or bad,
Is still an unanswered question.
And of one more trouble, the last of all,
That is common to mortals I tell.
For suppose you have found them enough for their living,
Suppose that the children have grown into youth
And have turned out good, still, if God so wills it,
Death will away with your children's bodies,
And carry them off into Hades.
What is our profit, then, that for the sake of
Children the gods should pile upon mortals
After all else
This most terrible grief of all?

[Enter MEDEA, *from the spectators' right.]*

MEDEA. Friends, I can tell you that for long I have waited
For the event. I stare towards the place from where
The news will come. And now, see one of Jason's servants
Is on his way here, and that labored breath of his
Shows he has tidings for us, and evil tidings.

[Enter, also from the right, the MESSENGER.]

MESSENGER. Medea, you who have done such a dreadful thing,
So outrageous, run for your life, take what you can,
A ship to bear you hence or chariot on land.

MEDEA. And what is the reason deserves such flight as this?

MESS. She is dead, only just now, the royal princess,
And Kreon dead too, her father, by your poisons.

MEDEA. The finest words you have spoken. Now and hereafter
I shall count you among my benefactors and friends.
MESS. What! Are you right in the mind? Are you not mad,
Woman? The house of the king is outraged by you.
Do you enjoy it? Not afraid of such doings?
MEDEA. To what you say I on my side have something too
To say in answer. Do not be in a hurry, friend,
But speak. How did they die? You will delight me twice
As much again if you say they died in agony.
MESS. When those two children, born of you, had entered in,
Their father with them, and passed into the bride's house,
We were pleased, we slaves who were distressed by your wrongs.
All through the house we were talking of but one thing,
How you and your husband had made up your quarrel.
Some kissed the children's hands and some their yellow hair,
And I myself was so full of my joy that I
Followed the children into the women's quarters.
Our mistress, whom we honor now instead of you,
Before she noticed that your two children were there,
Was keeping her eye fixed eagerly on Jason.
Afterwards however she covered up her eyes,
Her cheek paled and she turned herself away from him,
So disgusted was she at the children's coming there.
But your husband tried to end the girl's bad temper,
And said "You must not look unkindly on your friends.
Cease to be angry. Turn your head to me again.
Have as your friends the same ones as your husband has.
And take these gifts, and beg your father to reprieve
These children from their exile. Do it for my sake."
She, when she saw the dress, could not restrain herself.
She agreed with all her husband said, and before
He and the children had gone far from the palace,
She took the gorgeous robe and dressed herself in it,
And put the golden crown around her curly locks,
And arranged the set of the hair in a shining mirror,
And smiled at the lifeless image of herself in it.
Then she rose from her chair and walked about the room,
With her gleaming feet stepping most soft and delicate,
All overjoyed with the present. Often and often
She would stretch her foot out straight and look along it.
But after that it was a fearful thing to see.
The color of her face changed, and she staggered back,
She ran, and her legs trembled, and she only just
Managed to reach a chair without falling flat down.

An aged woman servant who, I take it, thought
This was some seizure of Pan[8] or another god,
Cried out "God bless us," but that was before she saw
The white foam breaking through her lips and her rolling
The pupils of her eyes and her face all bloodless.
Then she raised a different cry from that "God bless us,"
A huge shriek, and the women ran, one to the king,
One to the newly wedded husband to tell him
What had happened to his bride; and with frequent sound
The whole of the palace rang as they went running.
One walking quickly round the course of a race-track
Would now have turned the bend and be close to the goal,
When she, poor girl, opened her shut and speechless eye,
And with a terrible groan she came to herself.
For a two-fold pain was moving up against her.
The wreath of gold that was resting around her head
Let forth a fearful stream of all-devouring fire,
And the finely-woven dress your children gave to her,
Was fastening on the unhappy girl's fine flesh.
She leapt up from the chair, and all on fire she ran,
Shaking her hair now this way and now that, trying
To hurl the diadem away; but fixedly
The gold preserved its grip, and, when she shook her hair,
Then more and twice as fiercely the fire blazed out.
Till, beaten by her fate, she fell down to the ground,
Hard to be recognised except by a parent.
Neither the setting of her eyes was plain to see,
Nor the shapeliness of her face. From the top of
Her head there oozed out blood and fire mixed together.
Like the drops on pine-bark, so the flesh from her bones
Dropped away, torn by the hidden fang of the poison.
It was a fearful sight; and terror held us all
From touching the corpse. We had learned from what had happened.
But her wretched father, knowing nothing of the event,
Came suddenly to the house, and fell upon the corpse,
And at once cried out and folded his arms about her,
And kissed her and spoke to her, saying, "O my poor child,
What heavenly power has so shamefully destroyed you?
And who has set me here like an ancient sepulchre,
Deprived of you? O let me die with you, my child!"
And when he had made an end of his wailing and crying,

8. As the god of wild nature he was supposed to be the source of the sudden, apparently causeless terror which solitude in wild surroundings may produce, and thence of all kinds of sudden madness. (Compare our word "panic.")

Then the old man wished to raise himself to his feet;
But, as the ivy clings to the twigs of the laurel,
So he stuck to the fine dress, and he struggled fearfully.
For he was trying to lift himself to his knee,
And she was pulling him down, and when he tugged hard
He would be ripping his aged flesh from his bones.
At last his life was quenched and the unhappy man
Gave up the ghost, no longer could hold up his head.
There they lie close, the daughter and the old father,
Dead bodies, an event he prayed for in his tears.
As for your interests, I will say nothing of them,
For you will find your own escape from punishment.
Our human life I think and have thought a shadow,
And I do not fear to say that those who are held
Wise amongst men and who search the reasons of things
Are those who bring the most sorrow on themselves.
For of mortals there is no one who is happy.
If wealth flows in upon one, one may be perhaps
Luckier than one's neighbor, but still not happy.
[*Exit.*]

CHOR. Heaven, it seems, on this day has fastened many
Evils on Jason, and Jason has deserved them.
Poor girl, the daughter of Kreon, how I pity you
And your misfortunes, you who have gone quite away
To the house of Hades because of marrying Jason.

MEDEA. Women, my task is fixed: as quickly as I may
To kill my children, and start away from this land,
And not, by wasting time, to suffer my children
To be slain by another hand less kindly to them.
Force every way will have it they must die, and since
This must be so, then I, their mother, shall kill them.
O arm yourself in steel, my heart! Do not hang back
From doing this fearful and necessary wrong.
O come, my hand, poor wretched hand, and take the sword,
Take it, step forward to this bitter starting point,
And do not be a coward, do not think of them,
How sweet they are, and how you are their mother. Just for
This one short day be forgetful of your children,
Afterwards weep; for even though you will kill them,
They were very dear,— O, I am an unhappy woman!
[*With a cry she rushes into the house.*]

CHOR. O Earth, and the far shining
Ray of the sun, look down, look down upon
This poor lost woman, look, before she raises
The hand of murder against her flesh and blood.

Yours was the golden birth from which
She sprang, and now I fear divine
Blood may be shed by men.
O heavenly light, hold back her hand,
Check her, and drive from out the house
The bloody Fury raised by fiends of Hell.

Vain waste, your care of children;
Was it in vain you bore the babes you loved,
After you passed the inhospitable strait
Between the dark blue rocks, Symplegades?
O wretched one, how has it come,
This heavy anger on your heart,
This cruel bloody mind?
For God from mortals asks a stern
Price for the stain of kindred blood
In like disaster falling on their homes.

[*A cry from one of the* CHILDREN *is heard.*]

CHOR. Do you hear the cry, do you hear the children's cry?
O you hard heart, O woman fated for evil!

ONE OF THE CHILDREN. [*From within*] What can I do and how escape my mother's hands?

ONE OF THE CHILDREN. [*From within*] O my dear brother, I cannot tell.
We are lost.

CHOR. Shall I enter the house? O surely I should
Defend the children from murder.

A CHILD. [*From within*] O help us, in God's name, for now we need your help.
Now, now we are close to it. We are trapped by the sword.

CHOR. O your heart must have been made of rock or steel,
You who can kill
With your own hand the fruit of your own womb.
Of one alone I have heard, one woman alone
Of those of old who laid her hands on her children,
Ino, sent mad by heaven when the wife of Zeus
Drove her out from her home and made her wander;
And because of the wicked shedding of blood
Of her own children she threw
Herself, poor wretch, into the sea and stepped away
Over the sea-cliff to die with her two children.
What horror more can be? O women's love,
So full of trouble,
How many evils have you caused already!

[*Enter* JASON, *with attendants.*]

JASON. You women, standing close in front of this dwelling,
Is she, Medea, she who did this dreadful deed,
Still in the house, or has she run away in flight?
For she will have to hide herself beneath the earth,
Or raise herself on wings into the height of air,
If she wishes to escape the royal vengeance.
Does she imagine that, having killed our rulers,
She will herself escape uninjured from this house?
But I am thinking not so much of her as for
The children,—her the king's friends will make to suffer
For what she did. So I have come to save the lives
Of my boys, in case the royal house should harm them
While taking vengeance for their mother's wicked deed.
CHOR. O Jason, if you but knew how deeply you are
Involved in sorrow, you would not have spoken so.
JASON. What is it? That she is planning to kill me also?
CHOR. Your children are dead, and by their own mother's hand.
JASON. What! This is it? O woman, you have destroyed me.
CHOR. You must make up your mind your children are no more.
JASON. Where did she kill them? Was it here or in the house?
CHOR. Open the gates and there you will see them murdered.
JASON. Quick as you can unlock the doors, men, and undo
The fastenings and let me see this double evil,
My children dead and her,—O her I will repay.

[*His attendants rush to the door.* MEDEA *appears above the house in a chariot drawn by dragons. She has the dead bodies of the children with her.*]

MEDEA. Why do you batter these gates and try to unbar them,
Seeking the corpses and for me who did the deed?
You may cease your trouble, and, if you have need of me,
Speak, if you wish. You will never touch me with your hand,
Such a chariot has Helios, my father's father,
Given me to defend me from my enemies.
JASON. You hateful thing, you woman most utterly loathed
By the gods and me and by all the race of mankind,
You who have had the heart to raise a sword against
Your children, you, their mother, and left me childless,—
You have done this, and do you still look at the sun
And at the earth, after these most fearful doings?
I wish you dead. Now I see it plain, though at that time
I did not, when I took you from your foreign home
And brought you to a Greek house, you, an evil thing,
A traitress to your father and your native land.
The gods hurled the avenging curse of yours on me.
For your own brother you slew at your own hearthside,

And then came aboard that beautiful ship, the Argo.
And that was your beginning. When you were married
To me, your husband, and had borne children to me,
For the sake of pleasure in the bed you killed them.
There is no Greek woman who would have dared such deeds,
Out of all those whom I passed over and chose you
To marry instead, a bitter destructive match,
A monster not a woman, having a nature
Wilder than that of Scylla[9] in the Tuscan sea.
Ah! no, not if I had ten thousand words of shame
Could I sting you. You are naturally so brazen.
Go, worker in evil, stained with your children's blood.
For me remains to cry aloud upon my fate,
Who will get no pleasure from my newly-wedded love,
And the boys whom I begot and brought up, never
Shall I speak to them alive. Oh, my life is over!

MEDEA. Long would be the answer which I might have made to
These words of yours, if Zeus the father did not know
How I have treated you and what you did to me.
No, it was not to be that you should scorn my love,
And pleasantly live your life through, laughing at me;
Nor would the princess, nor he who offered the match,
Kreon, drive me away without paying for it.
So now you may call me a monster, if you wish,
O Scylla housed in the caves of the Tuscan sea
I too, as I had to, have taken hold of your heart.

JASON. You feel the pain yourself. You share in my sorrow.
MEDEA. Yes, and my grief is gain when you cannot mock it.
JASON. O children, what a wicked mother she was to you!
MEDEA. They died from a disease they caught from their father.
JASON. I tell you it was not my hand that destroyed them.
MEDEA. But it was your insolence, and your virgin wedding.
JASON. And just for the sake of that you chose to kill them.
MEDEA. Is love so small a pain, do you think, for a woman?
JASON. For a wise one, certainly. But you are wholly evil.
MEDEA. The children are dead. I say this to make you suffer.
JASON. The children, I think, will bring down curses on you.
MEDEA. The gods know who was the author of this sorrow.
JASON. Yes, the gods know indeed, they know your loathsome heart.
MEDEA. Hate me. But I tire of your barking bitterness.
JASON. And I of yours. It is easier to leave you.
MEDEA. How then? What shall I do? I long to leave you too.
JASON. Give me the bodies to bury and to mourn them.

9. A monster located in the straits between Italy and Sicily, who snatched sailors off passing ships and devoured them.

MEDEA. No, that I will not. I will bury them myself,
Bearing them to Hera's temple on the promontory;
So that no enemy may evilly treat them
By tearing up their grave. In this land of Corinth
I shall establish a holy feast and sacrifice[1]
Each year for ever to atone for the blood guilt.
And I myself go to the land of Erechtheus
To dwell in Aigeus' house, the son of Pandion.
While you, as is right, will die without distinction,
Struck on the head by a piece of the Argo's timber,
And you will have seen the bitter end of my love.
JASON. May a Fury for the children's sake destroy you,
And justice, requitor of blood.
MEDEA. What heavenly power lends an ear
To a breaker of oaths, a deceiver?
JASON. O, I hate you, murderess of children.
MEDEA. Go to your palace. Bury your bride.
JASON. I go, with two children to mourn for.
MEDEA. Not yet do you feel it. Wait for the future.
JASON. Oh, children I loved!
MEDEA. I loved them, you did not
JASON. You loved them, and killed them.
MEDEA. To make you feel pain.
JASON. Oh, wretch that I am, how I long
To kiss the dear lips of my children!
MEDEA. Now you would speak to them, now you would kiss them.
Then you rejected them.
JASON. Let me, I beg you,
Touch my boys' delicate flesh.
MEDEA. I will not. Your words are all wasted.
JASON. O God, do you hear it, this persecution,
These my sufferings from this hateful
Woman, this monster, murderess of children?
Still what I can do that I will do:
I will lament and cry upon heaven,
Calling the gods to bear me witness
How you have killed my boys and prevent me from
Touching their bodies or giving them burial.
I wish I had never begot them to see them
Afterwards slaughtered by you.
CHOR. Zeus in Olympus is the overseer
Of many doings. Many things the gods

1. Some such ceremony was still performed at Corinth in Euripides' time.

Achieve beyond our judgment. What we thought
Is not confirmed and what we thought not god
Contrives. And so it happens in this story.

1395

ARISTOPHANES

450?–385? B.C.

By the fifth century both tragedy and comedy were regularly produced at the winter festivals of the god Dionysus in Athens. Comedy, like tragedy, employed a chorus, that is to say, a group of dancers (who also sang) and actors, who wore masks; its tone was burlesque and parodic, though there was often a serious theme emphasized by the crude clowning and the free play of wit. The only comic poet of the fifth century whose work has survived is Aristophanes; in his thirteen extant comedies, produced over the years 425–388 B.C., the institutions and personalities of his time are caricatured and criticized in a brilliant combination of poetry and obscenity, of farce and wit, which has no parallel in European literature. It can be described only in terms of itself, by the adjective "Aristophanic."

He was born sometime in the middle of the fifth century and died in the next, around 385 B.C. The earliest of his plays to survive, *The Acharnians*, was produced in 425 B.C. and the bulk of his extant work dates from the years of the Peloponnesian War, 431–404 B.C. The war, in fact, is one of his comic targets; in *The Acharnians*, an Athenian citizen, fed up with the privations caused by the Spartan invasions which shut the Athenians inside their walls, makes a separate peace for himself and his family, defends his decision against an irate chorus of patriots (the Acharnians of the title), and proceeds to enjoy all the benefits of peace while his fellow citizens suffer as before. In the *Peace* (421 B.C.) another Athenian flies up to heaven on a gigantic dung-beetle (a parody of a Euripidean play in which a hero flew up on a winged horse); once arrived, he petitions Zeus to stop the war. Euripedes is another favorite target and was held up to ridicule in play after play; and Socrates was the "hero" of a play, the *Clouds* (423 B.C.), which held him up to ridicule as a sophistic charlatan. (Socrates refers to this play in his speech in court, p. 433). In the *Birds* (414 B.C.) two Athenians, tired of the war and taxes, go off to found a new city; they organize the birds, who cut off the smoke of sacrifice which the gods live on, and force Zeus to surrender the government of the universe to the birds. These plays are all excellent fooling; they are also sexually and scatologically explicit. But coarse humor and exquisite wit combine with lyric poetry of a high quality and comic plots of startling audacity to produce a mixture unlike anything that went before or has come after it.

Lysistrata, which is outstanding among the Aristophanic comedies in its coherence of structure and underlying seriousness of theme, was first produced in 411 B.C. In 413 the news of the total destruction of the Athenian fleet in Sicily had reached Athens, and though heroic efforts to carry on the

war were under way, the confidence in victory with which Athens had begun the war had gone forever. It is a recurring feature of Aristophanic comedy that the comic hero upsets the *status quo*, to produce a series of extraordinary results which are exploited to the full for their comic potential. In this play the Athenian women, who had no political rights, seize the Acropolis and leave the men without women. At the same time similar revolutions take place in all the Greek cities according to a coordinated plan. The men are eventually "starved" into submission and the Spartans come to Athens to end the war.

Aristophanes does not miss a trick in his exploitation of the possibilities for ribald humor inherent in this situation, a female sex-strike against war; Myrrhine's teasing game with her husband Cinesias, for example, is rare fooling and the final appearance of the uncomfortably rigid Spartan ambassadors and their equally tense Athenian hosts is a visual and verbal climax of astonishing brilliance. But underneath all the fooling real issues are pursued, and they come to the surface with telling effect in the argument between Lysistrata and the magistrate who has been sent to suppress the revolt. Reversing the words of Hector to Andromache, which had become proverbial, Lysistrata claims that "War shall be the concern of Women!"—it is too important a matter to be left to men, for women are its real victims. And when asked what the women will do, she explains that they will treat politics just as they do wool in their household tasks: "when it's confused and snarled . . . draw out a thread here and a thread there . . . we'll unsnarl this war. . . ."

We do not know how the Athenians welcomed the play. All we know is that they were not impressed by its serious undertone; the war continued for seven more exhausting years, until Athens' last fleet was defeated, the city laid open to the enemy, the empire lost.

K. J. Dover, *Aristophanic Comedy* (1972), is a general survey of the years and the whole range of Aristophanic comedy.

Lysistrata[1]

Characters in the Play[2]

LYSISTRATA
CALONICE } *Athenian women*
MYRRHINE

LAMPITO, *a Spartan woman*
LEADER *of the Chorus of Old Men*
CHORUS *of Old Men*
LEADER *of the Chorus of Old Women*

1. Translated by Charles T. Murphy. 2. As is usual in ancient comedy, the leading characters have significant names. *Lysistrata* is "She who disbands the armies"; Lampito is a celebrated Spartan name; *Cinesias*, although a real name in Athens, is chosen to suggest a Greek verb *kinein*, *to move*, then *to make love*, *to have intercourse*, and the name of his deme, *Paionidai*, suggests the verb *paiein*, which has about the same significance.

CHORUS *of Old Women*
ATHENIAN MAGISTRATE
THREE ATHENIAN WOMEN
CINESIAS, *an Athenian, husband of Myrrhine*
SPARTAN HERALD
SPARTAN AMBASSADORS
ATHENIAN AMBASSADORS
TWO ATHENIAN CITIZENS
CHORUS *of Athenians*
CHORUS *of Spartans*

SCENE: *In Athens, beneath the Acropolis. In the center of the stage is the Propylaea, or gate-way to the Acropolis; to one side is a small grotto, sacred to Pan. The Orchestra represents a slope leading up to the gate-way.*

It is early in the morning. LYSISTRATA *is pacing impatiently up and down.*

LYSISTRATA. If they'd been summoned to worship the God of Wine, or Pan, or to visit the Queen of Love, why, you couldn't have pushed your way through the streets for all the timbrels.[3] But now there's not a single woman here—except my neighbor; here she comes.

[*Enter* CALONICE.]

Good day to you, Calonice.

CALONICE. And to you, Lysistrata. [*Noticing* LYSISTRATA'S *impatient air*] But what ails you? Don't scowl, my dear; it's not becoming to you to knit your brows like that.

LYSISTRATA. [*Sadly*] Ah, Calonice, my heart aches; I'm so annoyed at us women. For among men we have a reputation for sly trickery—

CALONICE. And rightly too, on my word!

LYSISTRATA. —but when they were told to meet here to consider a matter of no small importance, they lie abed and don't come.

CALONICE. Oh, they'll come all right, my dear. It's not easy for a woman to get out, you know. One is working on her husband, another is getting up the maid, another has to put the baby to bed, or wash and feed it.

LYSISTRATA. But after all, there are other matters more important than all that.

CALONICE. My dear Lysistrata, just what is this matter you've summoned us women to consider? What's up? Something big?

LYSISTRATA. Very big.

3. These instruments were used in most orgiastic cults, especially in the worship of Dionysus, the "God of Wine."

CALONICE. [*Interested*] Is it stout, too?

LYSISTRATA. [*Smiling*] Yes indeed—both big and stout.

CALONICE. What? And the women still haven't come?

LYSISTRATA. It's not what you suppose; they'd have come soon enough for *that*. But I've worked up something, and for many a sleepless night I've turned it this way and that.

CALONICE. [*In mock disappointment*] Oh, I guess it's pretty fine and slender, if you've turned it this way and that.

LYSISTRATA. So fine that the safety of the whole of Greece lies in us women.

CALONICE. In us women? It depends on a very slender reed then.

LYSISTRATA. Our country's fortunes are in our hands; and whether the Spartans shall perish—

CALONICE. Good! Let them perish, by all means.

LYSISTRATA. —and the Boeotians shall be completely annihilated.

CALONICE. Not completely! Please spare the eels.[4]

LYSISTRATA. As for Athens, I won't use any such unpleasant words. But you understand what I mean. But if the women will meet here—the Spartans, the Boeotians, and we Athenians—then all together we will save Greece.

CALONICE. But what could women do that's clever or distinguished? We just sit around all dolled up in silk robes, looking pretty in our sheer gowns and evening slippers.

LYSISTRATA. These are just the things I hope will save us: these silk robes, perfumes, evening slippers, rouge, and our chiffon blouses.

CALONICE. How so?

LYSISTRATA. So never a man alive will lift a spear against the foe—

CALONICE. I'll get a silk gown at once.

LYSISTRATA. —or take up his shield—

CALONICE. I'll put on my sheerest gown!

LYSISTRATA. —or sword.

CALONICE. I'll buy a pair of evening slippers.

LYSISTRATA. Well then, shouldn't the women have come?

CALONICE. Come? Why, they should have *flown* here.

LYSISTRATA. Well, my dear, just watch: they'll act in true Athenian fashion—everything too late! And now there's not a woman here from the shore or from Salamis.[5]

CALONICE. They're coming. I'm sure; at daybreak they were laying—to their oars to cross the straits.

LYSISTRATA. And those I expected would be the first to come—the women of Acharnae[6]—they haven't arrived.

CALONICE. Yet the wife of Theagenes[7] means to come: she consulted

4. A favorite Athenian delicacy from the Boeotian lakes, eels were then very rare in Athens because of the war. 5. Just across the bay from Piraeus, the port of Athens. 6. A large village a few miles northwest of Athens. 7. A very superstitious Athenian (perhaps he was sitting in the audience) who never went out without consulting the shrine of Hecate at his doorstep.

Hecate about it. [*Seeing a group of women approaching*] But look! Here come a few. And there are some more over here. Hurrah! Where do they come from?

LYSISTRATA. From Anagyra.[8]

CALONICE. Yes indeed! We've raised up quite a stink from Anagyra anyway.

[*Enter* MYRRHINE *in haste, followed by several other women.*]

MYRRHINE. [*Breathlessly*] Have we come in time, Lysistrata? What do you say? Why so quiet?

LYSISTRATA. I can't say much for you, Myrrhine, coming at this hour on such important business.

MYRRHINE. Why, I had trouble finding my girdle in the dark. But if it's so important, we're here now; tell us.

LYSISTRATA. No. Let's wait a little for the women from Boeotia and the Peloponnesus.

MYRRHINE. That's a much better suggestion. Look! Here comes Lampito now.

[*Enter* LAMPITO *with two other women.*]

LYSISTRATA. Greetings, my dear Spartan friend. How pretty you look, my dear. What a smooth complexion and well-developed figure! You could throttle an ox.

LAMPITO. Faith, yes, I think I could. I take exercises and kick my heels against my bum. [*She demonstrates with a few steps of the Spartan "bottom-kicking" dance.*]

LYSISTRATA. And what splendid breasts you have.

LAMPITO. La! You handle me like a prize steer.

LYSISTRATA. And who is this young lady with you?

LAMPITO. Faith, she's an Ambassadress from Boeotia.

LYSISTRATA. Oh yes, a Boeotian, and blooming like a garden too.

CALONICE. [*Lifting up her skirt*] My word! How neatly her garden's weeded!

LYSISTRATA. And who is the other girl?

LAMPITO. Oh, she's a Corinthian swell.

MYRRHINE. [*After a rapid examination*] Yes indeed. She swells very nicely [*Pointing*] here and here.

LAMPITO. Who has gathered together this company of women?

LYSISTRATA. I have.

LAMPITO. Speak up, then. What do you want?

MYRRHINE. Yes, my dear, tell us what this important matter is.

LYSISTRATA. Very well, I'll tell you. But before I speak, let me ask you a little question.

MYRRHINE. Anything you like.

8. A district south of Athens. It was also the name of a bad-smelling shrub and the phrase "to stir up the anagyra" was proverbially used to describe people who brought trouble on themselves by interfering.

LYSISTRATA. [*Earnestly*] Tell me: don't you yearn for the fathers of your children, who are away at the wars? I know you all have husbands abroad.

CALONICE. Why, yes; mercy me! my husband's been away for five months in Thrace keeping guard on—Eucrates.[9]

MYRRHINE. And mine for seven whole months in Pylus.[1]

LAMPITO. And mine, as soon as ever he returns from the fray, readjusts his shield and flies out of the house again.

LYSISTRATA. And as for lovers, there's not even a ghost of one left. Since the Milesians revolted from us,[2] I've not even seen an eight-inch dingus to be a leather consolation for us widows. Are you willing, if I can find a way, to help me end the war?

MYRRHINE. Goodness, yes! I'd do it, even if I had to pawn my dress and—get drunk on the spot!

CALONICE. And I, even if I had to let myself be split in two like a flounder.

LAMPITO. I'd climb up Mt. Taygetus[3] if I could catch a glimpse of peace.

LYSISTRATA. I'll tell you, then, in plain and simple words. My friends, if we are going to force our men to make peace, we must do without—

MYRRHINE. Without what? Tell us.

LYSISTRATA. Will you do it?

MYRRHINE. We'll do it, if it kills us.

LYSISTRATA. Well, then we must do without sex altogether. [*General consternation*] Why do you turn away? Where go you? Why turn so pale? Why those tears? Will you do it or not? What means this hestitation?

MYRRHINE. I won't do it! Let the war go on.

CALONICE. Nor I! Let the war go on.

LYSISTRATA. So, my little flounder? Didn't you say just now you'd split yourself in half?

CALONICE. Anything else you like. I'm willing, even if I have to walk through fire. Anything rather than sex. There's nothing like it, my dear.

LYSISTRATA. [*To* MYRRHINE] What about you?

MYRRHINE. [*Sullenly*] I'm willing to walk through fire, too.

LYSISTRATA. Oh vile and cursed breed! No wonder they make tragedies about us: we're naught but "love-affairs and bassinets."[4] But you, my dear Spartan friend, if you alone are with me, our enter-

9. We have no details on this campaign in Thrace. 1. A point on the west coast of the Peloponnese held by an Athenian garrison. 2. The city of Miletus, an Athenian ally ever since the Persian war, had deserted the Athenian cause in the previous year. The objects Lysistrata speaks of were supposed to be manufactured there. 3. The mountain which towers over Sparta. 4. In the *Tyro* of Sophocles, which had recently been produced, the heroine, who had borne twin sons to the god Poseidon, left them exposed in a bassinet.

prise might yet succeed. Will you vote with me?

LAMPITO. 'Tis cruel hard, by my faith, for a woman to sleep alone without her nooky; but for all that, we certainly do need peace.

LYSISTRATA. O my dearest friend! You're the only real woman here.

CALONICE. [*Wavering*] Well, if we do refrain from—[*Shuddering*] what you say (God forbid!), would that bring peace?

LYSISTRATA. My goodness, yes! If we sit at home all rouged and powdered, dressed in our sheerest gowns, and neatly depilated, our men will get excited and want to take us; but if you don't come to them and keep away, they'll soon make a truce.

LAMPITO. Aye; Menelaus caught sight of Helen's naked breast and dropped his sword, they say.

CALONICE. What if the men give us up?

LYSISTRATA. "Flay a skinned dog,"[5] as Pherecrates says.

CALONICE. Rubbish! These make-shifts are no good. But suppose they grab us and drag us into the bedroom?

LYSISTRATA. Hold on to the door.

CALONICE. And if they beat us?

LYSISTRATA. Give in with a bad grace. There's no pleasure in it for them when they have to use violence. And you must torment them in every possible way. They'll give up soon enough; a man gets no joy if he doesn't get along with his wife.

MYRRHINE. If this is your opinion, we agree.

LAMPITO. As for our own men, we can persuade them to make a just and fair peace; but what about the Athenian rabble? Who will persuade them not to start any more monkey-shines?

LYSISTRATA. Don't worry. We guarantee to convince them.

LAMPITO. Not while their ships are rigged so well and they have that mighty treasure in the temple of Athene.

LYSISTRATA. We've taken good care for that too: we shall seize the Acropolis today. The older women have orders to do this, and while we are making our arrangements, they are to pretend to make a sacrifice and occupy the Acropolis.

LAMPITO. All will be well then. That's a very fine idea.

LYSISTRATA. Let's ratify this, Lampito, with the most solemn oath.

LAMPITO. Tell us what oath we shall swear.

LYSISTRATA. Well said. Where's our Policewoman? [*To a Scythian slave*] What are you gaping at? Set a shield upside-down here in front of me, and give me the sacred meats.

CALONICE. Lysistrata, what sort of an oath are we to take?

LYSISTRATA. What oath? I'm going to slaughter a sheep over the shield, as they do in Aeschylus.[6]

5. A proverb for useless activity. *Pherecrates*: a fifth-century comic poet. 6. In Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes*, the enemy champions are described as swearing loyalty to each other and slaughtering a bull so that the blood flowed into the hollow of a shield.

CALONICE. Don't, Lysistrata! No oaths about peace over a shield.
LYSISTRATA. What shall the oath be, then?
CALONICE. How about getting a white horse somewhere and cutting out its entrails for the sacrifice?
LYSISTRATA. White horse indeed!
CALONICE. Well then, how shall we swear?
MYRRHINE. I'll tell you: let's place a large black bowl upside-down and then slaughter—a flask of Thasian wine.[7] And then let's swear—not to pour in a single drop of water.
LAMPITO. Lord! How I like that oath!
LYSISTRATA. Someone bring out a bowl and a flask.

[*A slave brings the utensils for the sacrifice.*]

CALONICE. Look, my friends! What a big jar! Here's a cup that 'twould give me joy to handle. [*She picks up the bowl.*]
LYSISTRATA. Set it down and put your hands on our victim.

[*As* CALONICE *places her hands on the flask*] O Lady of Persuasion and dear Loving Cup, graciously vouchsafe to receive this sacrifice from us women. [*She pours the wine into the bowl.*]

CALONICE. The blood has a good colour and spurts out nicely.
LAMPITO. Faith, it has a pleasant smell, too.
MYRRHINE. Oh, let me be the first to swear, ladies!
CALONICE. No, by our Lady! Not unless you're allotted the first turn.
LYSISTRATA. Place all your hands on the cup, and one of you repeat on behalf of all what I say. Then all will swear and ratify the oath.
I will suffer no man, be he husband or lover,
CALONICE. *I will suffer no man, be he husband or lover,*
LYSISTRATA. *To approach me all hot and horny.* [As CALONICE *hesitates*] Say it!
CALONICE. [*Slowly and painfully*] *To approach me all hot and horny.* O Lysistrata, I feel so weak in the knees!
LYSISTRATA. *I will remain at home unmated,*
CALONICE. *I will remain at home unmated,*
LYSISTRATA. *Wearing my sheerest gown and carefully adorned,*
CALONICE. *Wearing my sheerest gown and carefully adorned,*
LYSISTRATA. *That my husband may burn with desire for me.*
CALONICE. *That my husband may burn with desire for me.*
LYSISTRATA. *And if he takes me by force against my will,*
CALONICE. *And if he takes me by force against my will,*
LYSISTRATA. *I shall do it badly and keep from moving.*
CALONICE. *I shall do it badly and keep from moving.*
LYSISTRATA. *I will not stretch my slippers toward the ceiling,*
CALONICE. *I will not stretch my slippers toward the ceiling,*

7. Strong wine from the island of Thasos in the northern Aegean. In Athens the wife was in charge of the household supplies and it is a frequent Aristophanic joke to present her as addicted to the bottle.

LYSISTRATA. *Nor will I take the posture of the lioness on the knife-handle.*

CALONICE. *Nor will I take the posture of the lioness on the knife-handle.*

LYSISTRATA. *If I keep this oath, may I be permitted to drink from this cup,*

CALONICE. *If I keep this oath, may I be permitted to drink from this cup,*

LYSISTRATA. *But if I break it, may the cup be filled with water.*

CALONICE. *But if I break it, may the cup be filled with water.*

LYSISTRATA. Do you all swear to this?

ALL. I do, so help me!

LYSISTRATA. Come then, I'll just consummate this offering.

[*She takes a long drink from the cup.*]

CALONICE. [*Snatching the cup away*] Shares, my dear! Let's drink to our continued friendship.

[*A shout is heard from off-stage.*]

LAMPITO. What's that shouting?

LYSISTRATA. That's what I was telling you: the women have just seized the Acropolis. Now, Lampito, go home and arrange matters in Sparta; and leave these two ladies here as hostages. We'll enter the Acropolis to join our friends and help them lock the gates.

CALONICE. Don't you suppose the men will come to attack us?

LYSISTRATA. Don't worry about them. Neither threats nor fire will suffice to open the gates, except on the terms we've stated.

CALONICE. I should say not! Else we'd belie our reputation as unmanageable pests.

[LAMPITO *leaves the stage. The other women retire and enter the Acropolis through the Propylaea.*]

[*Enter the* CHORUS OF OLD MEN, *carrying fire-pots and a load of heavy sticks.*]

LEADER OF MEN. Onward, Draces, step by step, though your shoulder's aching.
Cursèd logs of olive-wood, what a load you're making!

FIRST SEMI-CHORUS OF OLD MEN. [*Singing*]
Aye, many surprises await a man who lives to a ripe old age;
For who could suppose, Strymodorus my lad, that the women we've nourished (alas!),
Who sat at home to vex our days,
Would seize the holy image here
And occupy this sacred shrine,
With bolts and bars, with fell design,
To lock the Propylaea?

LEADER OF MEN. Come with speed, Philourgus, come! to the temple hast'ning.

There we'll heap these logs about in a circle round them,
And whoever has conspired, raising this rebellion,
Shall be roasted, scorched, and burnt, all without exception,
Doomed by one unanimous vote—but first the wife of Lycon.[8]

SECOND SEMI-CHORUS. [*Singing*]

No, no! by Demeter, while I'm alive, no woman shall mock at me.
Not even the Spartan Cleomenes,[9] our citadel first to seize,
Got off unscathed; for all his pride
And haughty Spartan arrogance,
He left his arms and sneaked away,
Stripped to his shirt, unkempt, unshav'd,
With six years' filth still on him.

LEADER OF MEN. I besieged that hero bold, sleeping at my station,
Marshalled at these holy gates sixteen deep against him.
Shall I not these cursèd pests punish for their daring,
Burning these Euripides-and-God-detested women?[1]
Aye! or else may Marathon overturn my trophy.[2]

FIRST SEMI-CHORUS. [*Singing*]

There remains of my road
Just this brow of the hill;
There I speed on my way.
Drag the logs up the hill, though we're got no ass to help.
(God! my shoulder's bruised and sore!)
Onward still must we go
Blow the fire! Don't let it go out
Now we're near the end of our road.

ALL. [*Blowing on the fire-pots*]

Whew! Whew! Drat the smoke!

SECOND SEMI-CHORUS. [*Singing*]

Lord, what smoke rushing forth
From the pot, like a dog
Running mad, bites my eyes!
This must be Lemnos-fire.[3] What a sharp and stinging smoke!
Rushing onward to the shrine
Aid the gods. Once for all

8. The ancient commentaries tell us that she was called Rhodia and was not too careful about her reputation. 9. In 508 B.C., the Athenians expelled the tyrant Hippias and were about to install a democratic regime under the leadership of Cleisthenes when the oligarchic party appealed to Sparta for help. The Spartan king Cleomenes invaded Attica, seized the city, and began a purge of the democrats. A popular uprising, however, forced him into the Acropolis, where he was besieged; after two days he was allowed to withdraw with his troops and Cleisthenes began the reforms which established the democracy. 1. Euripides is always presented in Aristophanic comedy as a misogynist and hence hated by women in return. There does not seem to be any foundation for Aristophanes' view, though Euripides' realistic (if sympathetic) presentation of women may possibly have enraged Athenian society ladies. 2. If the chorus really fought at Marathon, they are very old men. The trophy was on a high mound which covered the Athenian dead and is still in place. 3. Lemnos is a volcanic island in the Aegean.

Show your mettle, Laches my boy!
To the rescue hastening all!

ALL. [*Blowing on the fire-pots*] Whew! Whew! Drat the smoke!
[*The chorus has now reached the edge of the Orchestra nearest the stage, in front of the Propylaea. They begin laying their logs and fire-pots on the ground.*]

LEADER OF MEN. Thank heaven, this fire is still alive. Now let's first put down these logs here and place our torches in the pots to catch; then let's make a rush for the gates with a battering-ram. If the women don't unbar the gate at our summons, we'll have to smoke them out.

Let me put down my load. Ouch! That hurts! [*To the audience*] Would any of the generals in Samos[4] like to lend a hand with this log? [*Throwing down a log*] Well, *that* won't break my back any more, at any rate. [*Turning to his fire-pot*] Your job, my little pot, is to keep those coals alive and furnish me shortly with a red-hot torch.

O mistress Victory, be my ally and grant me to rout these audacious women in the Acropolis.

[*While the men are busy with their logs and fires, the* CHORUS OF OLD WOMEN *enters, carrying pitchers of water.*]

LEADER OF WOMEN. What's this I see? Smoke and flames? Is that a fire ablazing?
Let's rush upon them. Hurry up! They'll find us women ready.

FIRST SEMI-CHORUS OF OLD WOMEN. [*Singing*]

With wingèd foot onward I fly,
Ere the flames consume Neodice;
Lest Critylla be overwhelmed
By a lawless, accurst herd of old men.
I shudder with fear. Am I too late to aid them?
At break of the day filled we our jars with water
Fresh from the spring, pushing our way straight through the crowds.
Oh, what a din!
Mid crockery crashing, jostled by slave-girls,
Sped we to save them, aiding our neighbors,
Bearing this water to put out the flames.

SECOND SEMI-CHORUS OF OLD WOMEN. [*Singing*]

Such news I've heard: doddering fools
Come with logs, like furnace-attendants,
Loaded down with three hundred pounds,
Breathing many a vain, blustering threat,
That all these abhorred sluts will be burnt to charcoal.
O goddess, I pray never may they be kindled;

4. At this time, the headquarters of the Athenian fleet.

Grant them to save Greece and our men; madness and war help them to end.
With this as our purpose, golden-plumed Maiden,
Guardian of Athens, seized we thy precinct.
Be my ally, Warrior-maiden,
'Gainst these old men, bearing water with me.
[*The women have now reached their position in the Orchestra, and their* LEADER *advances toward the* LEADER OF THE MEN.]

LEADER OF WOMEN. Hold on there! What's this, you utter scoundrels? No decent, God-fearing citizens would act like this.

LEADER OF MEN. Oho! Here's something unexpected: a swarm of women have come out to attack us.

LEADER OF WOMEN. What, do we frighten you? Surely you don't think we're too many for you. And yet there are ten thousand times more of us whom you haven't even seen.

LEADER OF MEN. What say, Phaedria?[5] Shall we let these women wag their tongues? Shan't we take our sticks and break them over their backs?

LEADER OF WOMEN. Let's set our pitchers on the ground; then if anyone lays a hand on us, they won't get in our way.

LEADER OF MEN. By God! If someone gave them two or three smacks on the jaw, like Bupalus,[6] they wouldn't talk so much!

LEADER OF WOMEN. Go on, hit me, somebody! Here's my jaw! But no other bitch will bite a piece out of you before me.

LEADER OF MEN. Silence! or I'll knock out your—senility!

LEADER OF WOMEN. Just lay one finger on Stratyllis, I dare you!

LEADER OF MEN. Suppose I dust you off with this fist? What will you do?

LEADER OF WOMEN. I'll tear the living guts out of you with my teeth.

LEADER OF MEN. No poet is more clever than Euripides: "There is no beast so shameless as a woman."

LEADER OF WOMEN. Let's pick up our jars of water, Rhodippe.

LEADER OF MEN. Why have you come here with water, you detestable slut?

LEADER OF WOMEN. And why have you come with fire, you funeral vault? To cremate yourself?

LEADER OF MEN. To light a fire and singe your friends.

LEADER OF WOMEN. And I've brought water to put out your fire.

LEADER OF MEN. What? You'll put out my fire?

LEADER OF WOMEN. Just try and see!

LEADER OF MEN. I wonder: shall I scorch you with this torch of mine?

LEADER OF WOMEN. If you've got any soap, I'll give you a bath.

LEADER OF MEN. Give *me* a bath, you stinking hag?

5. A man's name; the remark is addressed to another member of the male chorus. 6. A sixth-century sculptor, the target of the poet Hipponax's satirical attracks.

LEADER OF WOMEN. Yes—a bridal bath!

LEADER OF MEN. Just listen to her! What crust!

LEADER OF WOMEN. Well, I'm a free citizen.

LEADER OF MEN. I'll put an end to your bawling. [*The men pick up their torches.*]

LEADER OF WOMEN. You'll never do jury-duty[7] again. [*The women pick up their pitchers.*]

LEADER OF MEN. Singe her hair for her!

LEADER OF WOMEN. Do your duty, water! [*The women empty their pitchers on the men.*]

LEADER OF MEN. Ow! Ow! For heaven's sake!

LEADER OF WOMEN. Is it too hot?

LEADER OF MEN. What do you mean "hot"? Stop! What are you doing?

LEADER OF WOMEN. I'm watering you, so you'll be fresh and green.

LEADER OF MEN. But I'm all withered up with shaking.

LEADER OF WOMEN. Well, you've got a fire; why don't you dry yourself?

[*Enter an Athenian* MAGISTRATE, *accompanied by four Scythian policemen.*[8]]

MAGISTRATE. Have these wanton women flared up again with their timbrels and their continual worship of Sabazius?[9] Is this another Adonis-dirge[1] upon the roof-tops—which we heard not long ago in the Assembly? That confounded Demostratus was urging us to sail to Sicily, and the whirling women shouted, "Woe for Adonis!" And then Demostratus said we'd best enroll the infantry from Zacynthus, and a tipsy woman on the roof shrieked, "Beat your breasts for Adonis!" And that vile and filthy lunatic forced his measure through. Such license do our women take.

LEADER OF MEN. What if you heard of the insolence of these women here? Besides their other violent acts, they threw water all over us, and we have to shake out our clothes just as if we'd leaked in them.

MAGISTRATE. And rightly, too, by God! For we ourselves lead the women astray and teach them to play the wanton; from these roots such notions blossom forth. A man goes into the jeweler's shop and says, "About that necklace you made for my wife, goldsmith: last night, while she was dancing, the fastening-bolt slipped out of the hole. I have to sail over to Salamis today; if you're free, do

7. Paid attendance at the courts, the usual source of income for older Athenians. 8. The regular police of Athens. They carried bows and arrows. 9. The cult of the oriental deity Sabazius had been recently introduced in Athens. It was considered somewhat disorderly and immoral by religious conservatives. 1. The lament of the women for Adonis (Tammuz), another oriental cult. When the great expedition to Sicily set sail, the women were mourning the death of Adonis—a bad omen which proved all too true. Demostratus was one of the supporters of the expedition (the most prominent was Alcibiades) and he proposed to enroll heavy armed infantry from the island of Zacynthus, off the west coast of Greece, on the way to Sicily.

come around tonight and fit in a new bolt for her." Another goes to the shoe-maker, a strapping young fellow with manly parts, and says, "See here, cobbler, the sandal-strap chafes my wife's little—toe; it's so tender. Come around during the siesta and stretch it a little, so she'll be more comfortable." Now we see the results of such treatment: here I'm a special Councillor and need money to procure oars for the galleys; and I'm locked out of the Treasury by these women.

But this is no time to stand around. Bring up crow-bars there! I'll put an end to their insolence. [*To one of the policemen*] What are you gaping at, you wretch? What are you staring at? Got an eye out for a tavern, eh? Set your crow-bars here to the gates and force them open. [*Retiring to safe distance*] I'll help from over here.

[*The gates are thrown open and* LYSISTRATA *comes out followed by several other women.*]

LYSISTRATA. Don't force the gates; I'm coming out of my own accord. We don't need crow-bars here; what we need is good sound common-sense.

MAGISTRATE. Is that so, you strumpet? Where's my policeman? Officer, arrest her and tie her arms behind her back.

LYSISTRATA. By Artemis, if he lays a finger on me, he'll pay for it, even if he is a public servant.

[*The policeman retires in terror.*]

MAGISTRATE. You there, are you afraid? Seize her round the waist—and you, too. Tie her up, both of you!

FIRST WOMAN. [*As the second policeman approaches* LYSISTRATA] By Pandrosus,[2] if you but touch her with your hand, I'll kick the stuffings out of you.

[*The second policeman retires in terror.*]

MAGISTRATE. Just listen to that: "kick the stuffings out." Where's another policeman? Tie *her* up first, for her chatter.

SECOND WOMAN. By the Goddess of the Light, if you lay the tip of your finger on her, you'll soon need a doctor.

[*The third policeman retires in terror.*]

MAGISTRATE. What's this? Where's my policeman? Seize *her* too. I'll soon stop your sallies.

THIRD WOMAN. By the Goddess to Tauros,[3] if you go near her, I'll tear out your hair until it shrieks with pain.

[*The fourth policeman retires in terror.*]

MAGISTRATE. Oh, damn it all! I've run out of policemen. But women must never defeat us. Officers, let's charge them all together. Close up your ranks!

2. A mythical Athenian princess. 3. Artemis.

[*The policemen rally for a mass attack.*]

LYSISTRATA. By heaven, you'll soon find out that we have four companies of warrior-women, all fully equipped within!

MAGISTRATE. [*Advancing*] Twist their arms off, men!

LYSISTRATA. [*Shouting*] To the rescue, my valiant women!
O sellers-of-barley-green-stuffs-and-eggs,
O sellers-of-garlic, ye keepers-of-taverns, and vendors-of-bread,
Grapple! Smite! Smash!
Won't you heap filth on them? Give them a tongue-lashing!
[*The women beat off the policemen.*]
Halt! Withdraw! No looting on the field.

MAGISTRATE. Damn it! My police-force has put up a very poor show.

LYSISTRATA. What did you expect? Did you think you were attacking slaves? Didn't you know that women are filled with passion?

MAGISTRATE. Aye, passion enough—for a good strong drink!

LEADER OF MEN. O chief and leader of this land, why spend your words in vain?
Don't argue with these shameless beasts. You know not how we've fared:
A soapless bath they've given us; our clothes are soundly soaked.

LEADER OF WOMEN. Poor fool! You never should attack or strike a peaceful girl.
But if you do, your eyes must swell. For I am quite content
To sit unmoved, like modest maids, in peace and cause no pain;
But let a man stir up my hive, he'll find me like a wasp.

CHORUS OF MEN. [*Singing*]
O God, whatever shall we do with creatures like Womankind?
This can't be endured by any man alive. Question them!
Let us try to find out what this means.
To what end have they seized on this shrine,
This steep and rugged, high and holy,
Undefiled Acropolis?

LEADER OF MEN. Come, put your questions; don't give in, and probe her every statement.
For base and shameful it would be to leave this plot untested.

MAGISTRATE. Well then, first of all I wish to ask her this: for what purpose have you barred us from the Acropolis?

LYSISTRATA. To keep the treasure safe, so you won't make war on account of it.

MAGISTRATE. What? Do we make war on account of the treasure?

LYSISTRATA. Yes, and you cause all our other troubles for it, too. Peisander[4] and those greedy office-seekers keep things stirred up

4. A leader of the war party.

so they can find occasions to steal. Now let them do what they like: they'll never again make off with any of this money.

MAGISTRATE. What will you do?

LYSISTRATA. What a question! We'll administer it ourselves.

MAGISTRATE. *You* will administer the treasure?

LYSISTRATA. What's so strange in that? Don't we administer the household money for you?

MAGISTRATE. That's different.

LYSISTRATA. How is it different?

MAGISTRATE. We've got to make war with this money.

LYSISTRATA. But that's the very first thing: you mustn't make war.

MAGISTRATE. How else can we be saved?

LYSISTRATA. We'll save you.

MAGISTRATE. *You?*

LYSISTRATA. Yes, we!

MAGISTRATE. God forbid!

LYSISTRATA. We'll save you, whether you want it or not.

MAGISTRATE. Oh! This is terrible!

LYSISTRATA. You don't like it, but we're going to do it none the less.

MAGISTRATE. Good God! it's illegal!

LYSISTRATA. We *will* save you, my little man!

MAGISTRATE. Suppose I don't want you to?

LYSISTRATA. That's all the more reason.

MAGISTRATE. What business have you with war and peace?

LYSISTRATA. I'll explain.

MAGISTRATE. [*Shaking his fist*] Speak up, or you'll smart for it.

LYSISTRATA. Just listen, and try to keep your hands still.

MAGISTRATE. I can't. I'm so mad I can't stop them.

FIRST WOMAN. Then you'll be the one to smart for it.

MAGISTRATE. Croak to yourself, old hag! [*To* LYSISTRATA] Now then, speak up.

LYSISTRATA. Very well. Formerly we endured the war for a good long time with our usual restraint, no matter what you men did. You wouldn't let us say "boo," although nothing you did suited us. But we watched you well, and though we stayed at home we'd often hear of some terribly stupid measure you'd proposed. Then, though grieving at heart, we'd smile sweetly and say, "What was passed in the Assembly today about writing on the treaty-stone?"[5] "What's that to you?" my husband would say. "Hold your tongue!" And I held my tongue.

FIRST WOMAN. But I wouldn't have—not I!

MAGISTRATE. You'd have been soundly smacked, if you hadn't kept still.

LYSISTRATA. So I kept still at home. Then we'd hear of some plan

5. The text of a treaty was inscribed on a stone which was set up in a public place.

still worse than the first; we'd say, "Husband, how could you pass such a stupid proposal?" He'd scowl at me and say, "If you don't mind your spinning, your head will be sore for weeks. *War shall be the concern of Men.*"[6]

MAGISTRATE. And he was right, upon my word!

LYSISTRATA. Why right, you confounded fool, when your proposals were so stupid and we weren't allowed to make suggestions?

"There's not a *man* left in the country," says one. "No, not one," says another. Therefore all we women have decided in council to make a common effort to save Greece. How long should we have waited? Now, if you're willing to listen to our excellent proposals and keep silence for us in your turn, we still may save you.

MAGISTRATE. We men keep silence for you? That's terrible; I won't endure it!

LYSISTRATA. Silence!

MAGISTRATE. Silence for *you,* you wench, when you're wearing a snood? I'd rather die!

LYSISTRATA. Well, if that's all that bothers you—here! take my snood and tie it round your head. [*During the following words the women dress up the* MAGISTRATE *in women's garments.*] And *now* keep quiet! Here, take this spinning-basket, too, and card your wool with robes tucked up, munching on beans. *War shall be the concern of Women!*

LEADER OF WOMEN. Arise and leave your pitchers, girls; no time is this to falter.
We too must aid our loyal friends; our turn has come for action.

CHORUS OF WOMEN. [*Singing*]
I'll never tire of aiding them with song and dance; never may
Faintness keep my legs from moving to and fro endlessly.
For I yearn to do all for my friends;
They have charm, they have wit, they have grace,
With courage, brains, and best of virtues—
Patriotic sapience.

LEADER OF WOMEN. Come, child of manliest ancient dames, offspring of stinging nettles,
Advance with rage unsoftened; for fair breezes speed you onward.

LYSISTRATA. If only sweet Eros and the Cyprian Queen of Love shed charm over our breasts and limbs and inspire our men with amorous longing and priapic spasms, I think we may soon be called Peacemakers among the Greeks.

MAGISTRATE. What will you do?

6. Hector to Andromache, *Iliad* VI, 492.

LYSISTRATA. First of all, we'll stop those fellows who run madly about the Marketplace in arms.

FIRST WOMAN. Indeed we shall, by the Queen of Paphos.[7]

LYSISTRATA. For now they roam about the market, amid the pots and greenstuffs, armed to the teeth like Corybantes.[8]

MAGISTRATE. That's what manly fellows ought to do!

LYSISTRATA. But it's so silly: a chap with a Gorgon-emblazoned shield buying pickled herring.

FIRST WOMAN. Why, just the other day I saw one of those long-haired dandies who command our cavalry ride up on horseback and pour into his bronze helmet the egg-broth he'd bought from an old dame. And there was a Thracian slinger too, shaking his lance like Tereus;[9] he'd scared the life out of the poor fig-peddler and was gulping down all her ripest fruit.

MAGISTRATE. How can you stop all the confusion in the various states and bring them together?

LYSISTRATA. Very easily.

MAGISTRATE. Tell me how.

LYSISTRATA. Just like a ball of wool, when it's confused and snarled: we take it thus, and draw out a thread here and a thread there with our spindles; thus we'll unsnarl this war, if no one prevents us, and draw together the various states with embassies here and embassies there.

MAGISTRATE. Do you suppose you can stop this dreadful business with balls of wool and spindles, you nit-wits?

LYSISTRATA. Why, if *you* had any wits, you'd manage all affairs of state like our wool-working.

MAGISTRATE. How so?

LYSISTRATA. First you ought to treat the city as we do when we wash the dirt out of a fleece: stretch it out and pluck and thrash out of the city all those prickly scoundrels; aye, and card out those who conspire and stick together to gain office, pulling off their heads. Then card the wool, all of it, into one fair basket of goodwill, mingling in the aliens residing here, any loyal foreigners, and anyone who's in debt to the Treasury; and consider that all our colonies lie scattered round about like remnants; from all of these collect the wool and gather it together here, wind up a great ball, and then weave a good stout cloak for the democracy.

MAGISTRATE. Dreadful! Talking about thrashing and winding balls of wool, when you haven't the slightest share in the war!

LYSISTRATA. Why, you dirty scoundrel, we bear more than twice as much as you. First, we bear children and send off our sons as soldiers.

7. Aphrodite. 8. The armed priests of the goddess Cybele. 9. A mythical king of Thrace. Thracian mercenaries had served in the Athenian ranks during the war.

MAGISTRATE. Hush! Let bygones be bygones!

LYSISTRATA. Then, when we ought to be happy and enjoy our youth, we sleep alone because of your expeditions abroad. But never mind us married women: I grieve most for the maids who grow old at home unwed.

MAGISTRATE. Don't men grow old, too?

LYSISTRATA. For heaven's sake! That's not the same thing. When a man comes home, no matter how grey he is, he soon finds a girl to marry. But woman's bloom is short and fleeting; if she doesn't grasp her chance, no man is willing to marry her and she sits at home a prey to every fortune-teller.

MAGISTRATE. [*Coarsely*] But if a man can still get it up—

LYSISTRATA. See here, you: what's the matter? Aren't you dead yet? There's plenty of room for you. Buy yourself a shroud and I'll bake you a honey-cake.[1] [*Handing him a copper coin for his passage across the Styx*] Here's your fare! Now get yourself a wreath.

[*During the following dialogue the women dress up the* MAGISTRATE *as a corpse.*]

FIRST WOMAN. Here, take these fillets.

SECOND WOMAN. Here, take this wreath.

LYSISTRATA. What do you want? What's lacking? Get moving; off to the ferry! Charon is calling you; don't keep him from sailing.

MAGISTRATE. Am I to endure these insults? By God! I'm going straight to the magistrates to show them how I've been treated.

LYSISTRATA. Are you grumbling that you haven't been properly laid out? Well, the day after tomorrow we'll send around all the usual offerings early in the morning.

[*The* MAGISTRATE *goes out still wearing his funeral decorations.* LYSISTRATA *and the women retire into the Acropolis.*]

LEADER OF MEN. Wake, ye sons of freedom, wake! 'Tis no time for sleeping. Up and at them, like a man! Let us strip for action.

[*The* CHORUS OF MEN *remove their outer cloaks.*]

CHORUS OF MEN. [*Singing*]

Surely there is something here greater than meets the eye;
For without a doubt I smell Hippias' tyranny.[2]
Dreadful fear assails me lest certain bands of Spartan men,
Meeting here with Cleisthenes,[3] have inspired through treachery
All these god-detested women secretly to seize
Athens' treasure in the temple, and to stop that pay
Whence I live at my ease.

1. The dead were provided with a honey cake to throw to Cerberus, the three-headed dog which guarded the entry to the underworld. The copper coin was to pay the fare required by Charon, the ferryman over the river Styx. 2. The last tyrant of Athens, driven out in 510 B.C. 3. Not the great reformer who set up the democracy, but a contemporary of Aristophanes, notorious for his effeminacy (and therefore suspect as a fellow-conspirator of the women).

LEADER OF MEN. Now isn't it terrible for them to advise the state and chatter about shields, being mere women?

And they think to reconcile us with the Spartans—men who hold nothing sacred any more than hungry wolves. Surely this is a web of deceit, my friends, to conceal an attempt at tyranny. But they'll never lord it over me; I'll be on my guard and from now on,

"The blade I bear A myrtle spray shall wear."

I'll occupy the market under arms and stand next to Aristogeiton.[4]

Thus I'll stand beside him. [*He strikes the pose of the famous statue of the tyrannicides, with one arm raised.*] And here's my chance to take this accurst old hag and—[*Striking the* LEADER OF WOMEN] smack her on the jaw!

LEADER OF WOMEN. You'll go home in such a state your Ma won't recognize you!

Ladies all, upon the ground let us place these garments.

[*The* CHORUS OF WOMEN *remove their outer garments.*]

CHORUS OF WOMEN. [*Singing*]

Citizens of Athens, hear useful words for the state.
Rightly; for it nurtured me in my youth royally.
As a child of seven years carried I the sacred box;[5]
Then I was a Miller-maid, grinding at Athene's shrine;
Next I wore the saffron robe and played Brauronia's Bear;
And I walked as Basket-bearer, wearing chains of figs,
As a sweet maiden fair.

LEADER OF WOMEN. Therefore, am I not bound to give good advice to the city?

Don't take it ill that I was born a woman, if I contribute something better than our present troubles. I pay my share; for I contribute MEN. But you miserable old fools contribute nothing, and after squandering our ancestral treasure, the fruit of the Persian Wars, you make no contribution in return. And now, all on account of you, we're facing ruin.

What, muttering, are you? If you annoy me, I'll take this hard, rough slipper and—[*Striking the* LEADER OF MEN] smack you on the jaw!

4. One of the two heroes of the democracy who assassinated Hipparchus, the brother of the tyrant Hippias. A drinking song which was frequently heard at Athenian banquets ran: "In a branch of myrtle, I'll hide my sword, like Harmodius and Aristogeiton, who killed the tyrant, and made Athens free." 5. This and the next four lines describe the religious duties of a well-born Athenian girl. The sacred box contained religious objects connected with the worship of Athena in the Erechtheum. The miller-maids ground flour for sacred cakes. At Brauron in Attica, young girls who represented themselves as bears (the saffron robe was a substitute for a more primitive bearskin) worshipped Artemis. In the Panathenaic procession certain selected girls carried baskets on their heads.

CHORUS OF MEN. [*Singing*]

This is outright insolence! Things go from bad to worse.
If you're men with any guts, prepare to meet the foe.
Let us strip our tunics off! We need the smell of male
Vigor. And we cannot fight all swaddled up in clothes.
[*They strip off their tunics.*]
Come then, my comrades, on to the battle, ye who once to Leipsydrion[6] came;
Then ye were MEN. Now call back your youthful vigor.
With light, wingèd footstep advance,
Shaking old age from your frame.

LEADER OF MEN. If any of us give these wenches the slightest hold, they'll stop at nothing: such is their cunning.

They will even build ships and sail against us, like Artemisia.[7] Or if they turn to mounting, I count our Knights as done for: a woman's such a tricky jockey when she gets astraddle, with a good firm seat for trotting. Just look at those Amazons that Micon[8] painted, fighting on horseback against men!

But we must throw them all in the pillory—[*Seizing and choking the* LEADER OF WOMEN] grabbing hold of yonder neck!

CHORUS OF WOMEN. [*Singing*]

'Ware my anger! Like a boar 'twill rush upon you men.
Soon you'll bawl aloud for help, you'll be so soundly trimmed!
Come, my friends, let's strip with speed, and lay aside these robes;
Catch the scent of women's rage. Attack with tooth and nail!
[*They strip off their tunics.*]
Now then, come near me, you miserable man! you'll never eat garlic or black beans again.
And if you utter a single hard word, in rage I will "nurse" you as once
The beetle[9] requited her foe.

LEADER OF WOMEN. For you don't worry me; no, not so long as my Lampito lives and our Theban friend, the noble Ismenia.

You can't do anything, not even if you pass a dozen—decrees! You miserable fool, all our neighbours hate you. Why, just the other day when I was holding a festival for Hecate, I invited as playmate from our neighbours the Boeotians a charming, well-bred Copaic—eel. But they refused to send me one on account of your decrees.

And you'll never stop passing decrees until I grab your foot and—

6. The base of the aristocratic family of the Almaeonidae (the family of Pericles) in their first attempt to overthrow Hippias. 7. Queen of Halicarnassus in Asia Minor. She played a prominent part in Xerxes' invasion of Greece and her ships fought at Salamis. 8. A painter who had lately decorated several public buildings with frescos. The battles of the Greeks and Amazons were favorite subjects of sculptors and painters all through the fifth century. 9. In a fable of Aesop the beetle revenges itself on the eagle by breaking its eggs.

[*Tripping up the* LEADER OF MEN] toss you down and break your neck!

[*Here an interval of five days is supposed to elapse.* LYSISTRATA *comes out from the Acropolis.*]

LEADER OF WOMEN. [*Dramatically*] Empress[1] of this great emprise and undertaking,
Why come you forth, I pray, with frowning brow?

LYSISTRATA. Ah, these cursèd women! Their deeds and female notions make me pace up and down in utter despair.

LEADER OF WOMEN. Ah, what sayest thou?

LYSISTRATA. The truth, alas! the truth.

LEADER OF WOMEN. What dreadful tale hast thou to tell thy friends?

LYSISTRATA. 'Tis shame to speak, and not to speak is hard.

LEADER OF WOMEN. Hide not from me whatever woes we suffer.

LYSISTRATA. Well then, to put it briefly, we want—laying!

LEADER OF WOMEN. O Zeus, Zeus!

LYSISTRATA. Why call on Zeus? That's the way things are. I can no longer keep them away from the men, and they're all deserting. I caught one wriggling through a hole near the grotto of Pan, another sliding down a rope, another deserting her post; and yesterday I found one getting on a sparrow's back to fly off to Orsilochus,[2] and had to pull her back by the hair. They're digging up all sorts of excuses to get home. Look, here comes one of them now. [*A woman comes hastily out of the Acropolis.*] Here you! Where are you off to in such a hurry?

FIRST WOMAN. I want to go home. My very best wool is being devoured by moths.

LYSISTRATA. Moths? Nonsense! Go back inside.

FIRST WOMAN. I'll come right back; I swear it. I just want to lay it out on the bed.

LYSISTRATA. Well, you won't lay it out, and you won't go home, either.

FIRST WOMAN. Shall I let my wool be ruined?

LYSISTRATA. If necessary, yes. [*Another woman comes out.*]

SECOND WOMAN. Oh dear! Oh dear! My precious flax! I left it at home all unpeeled.

LYSISTRATA. Here's another one, going home for her "flax." Come back here!

SECOND WOMAN. But I just want to work it up a little and then I'll be right back.

LYSISTRATA. No indeed! If you start this, all the other women will want to do the same. [*A third woman comes out.*]

1. The tone of the following passage is mock-tragic. 2. The sparrow, Aphrodite's bird, pulled her chariot. *Orsilochus* ran a house of ill-frame.

THIRD WOMAN. O Eilithyia, goddess of travail, stop my labor till I come to a lawful spot![3]

LYSISTRATA. What's this nonsense?

THIRD WOMAN. I'm going to have a baby—right now!

LYSISTRATA. But you weren't even pregnant yesterday.

THIRD WOMAN. Well, I am today. O Lysistrata, do send me home to see a midwife, right away.

LYSISTRATA. What are you talking about? [*Putting her hand on her stomach*] What's this hard lump here?

THIRD WOMAN. A little boy.

LYSISTRATA. My goodness, what have you got there? It seems hollow; I'll just find out. [*Pulling aside her robe*] Why, you silly goose, you've got Athene's sacred helmet there. And you said you were having a baby!

THIRD WOMAN. Well, I *am* having one, I swear!

LYSISTRATA. Then what's this helmet for?

THIRD WOMAN. If the baby starts coming while I'm still in the Acropolis, I'll creep into this like a pigeon and give birth to it there.

LYSISTRATA. Stuff and nonsense! It's plain enough what you're up to. You just wait here for the christening of this—helmet.

THIRD WOMAN. But I can't sleep in the Acropolis since I saw the sacred snake.[4]

FIRST WOMAN. And I'm dying for lack of sleep: the hooting of the owls[5] keeps me awake.

LYSISTRATA. Enough of these shams, you wretched creatures. You want your husbands, I suppose. Well, don't you think they want us? I'm sure they're spending miserable nights. Hold out, my friends, and endure for just a little while. There's an oracle that we shall conquer, if we don't split up. [*Producing a roll of paper*] Here it is.

FIRST WOMAN. Tell us what it says.

LYSISTRATA. Listen.

"When in the length of time the Swallows shall gather together,
Fleeing the Hoopoe's amorous flight and the Cockatoo shunning,
Then shall your woes be ended and Zeus who thunders in heaven
Set what's below on top—"

FIRST WOMAN. What? Are we going to be on top?

LYSISTRATA. "But if the Swallows rebel and flutter away from the temple,
Never a bird in the world shall seem more wanton and worthless."

FIRST WOMAN. That's clear enough, upon my word!

LYSISTRATA. By all that's holy, let's not give up the struggle now. Let's go back inside. It would be a shame, my dear friends, to disobey the oracle.

3. The Acropolis was holy ground, and would be polluted by either birth or death. 4. A snake was kept in the Erechtheum. 5. The sacred bird of Athene.

[*The women all retire to the Acropolis again.*]

CHORUS OF MEN. [*Singing*]

I have a tale to tell,
Which I know full well.
It was told me
In the nursery.

Once there was a likely lad,
Melanion they name him;
The thought of marriage made him mad,
For which I cannot blame him.[6]

So off he went to mountains fair;
(No women to unbraid him!)
A mighty hunter of the hare,
He had a dog to aid him.

He never came back home to see
Detested women's faces.
He showed a shrewd mentality.
With him I'd fain change places!

ONE OF THE MEN. [*To one of the women*] Come here, old dame, give me a kiss.

WOMAN. You'll ne'er eat garlic, if you dare!

MAN. I want to kick you—just like this!

WOMAN. Oh, there's a leg with bushy hair!

MAN. Myronides and Phormio[7]
Were hairy—and they thrashed the foe.

CHORUS OF WOMEN. [*Singing*]

I have another tale,
With which to assail
Your contention
'Bout Melanion.

Once upon a time a man
Named Timon[8] left our city,
To live in some deserted land.
(We thought him rather witty.)

6. The chorus of men here recasts a well-known myth for its own purposes. In the myth it was Atalanta who avoided marriage, challenging her suitors to a foot race which she always won; Melanion threw a golden apple in front of her; when she stopped to pick it up, she lost the race to him. 7. Successful Athenian generals. 8. The famous misanthrope, the subject of Shakespeare's play. There is no evidence that he "befriended" women; his hatred seems to have been directed at the whole human race.

He dwelt alone amidst the thorn;
In solitude he brooded.
From some grim Fury he was born:
Such hatred he exuded.

He cursed you men, as scoundrels through
And through, till life he ended.
He couldn't stand the sight of YOU!
But women he befriended.

WOMAN. [*To one of the men*] I'll smash your face in, if you like.
MAN. Oh no, please don't! You frighten me.
WOMAN. I'll lift my foot—and thus I'll strike.
MAN. Aha! Look there! What's that I see?
WOMAN. Whate'er you see, you cannot say
That I'm not neatly trimmed today.
[LYSISTRATA *appears on the wall of the Acropolis.*]
LYSISTRATA. Hello! Hello! Girls, come here quick!
[*Several women appear beside her.*]
WOMAN. What is it? Why are you calling?
LYSISTRATA. I see a man coming: he's in a dreadful state. He's mad with passion. O Queen of Cyprus, Cythera, and Paphos, just keep on this way!
WOMAN. Where is the fellow?
LYSISTRATA. There, beside the shrine of Demeter.
WOMAN. Oh yes, so he is. Who is he?
LYSISTRATA. Let's see. Do any of you know him?
MYRRHINE. Yes indeed. That's my husband, Cinesias.
LYSISTRATA. It's up to you, now: roast him, rack him, fool him, love him—and leave him! Do everything, except what our oath forbids.
MYRRHINE. Don't worry; I'll do it.
LYSISTRATA. I'll stay here to tease him and warm him up a bit. Off with you.
[*The other women retire from the wall. Enter* CINESIAS *followed by a slave carrying a baby.* CINESIAS *is obviously in great pain and distress.*]
CINESIAS. [*Groaning*] Oh-h! Oh-h-h! This is killing me! O God, what tortures I'm suffering!
LYSISTRATA. [*From the wall*] Who's that within our lines?
CINESIAS. Me.
LYSISTRATA. A *man?*
CINESIAS. [*Pointing*] A *man,* indeed!
LYSISTRATA. Well, go away!
CINESIAS. Who are you to send me away?

LYSISTRATA. The captain of the guard.
CINESIAS. Oh, for heaven's sake, call out Myrrhine for me.
LYSISTRATA. Call Myrrhine? Nonsense! Who are you?
CINESIAS. Her husband, Cinesias of Paionidai.
LYSISTRATA. [*Appearing much impressed*] Oh, greetings, friend. Your name is not without honor here among us. Your wife is always talking about you, and whenever she takes an egg or an apple, she says, "Here's to my dear Cinesias!"
CINESIAS. [*Quivering with excitement*] Oh, ye gods in heaven!
LYSISTRATA. Indeed she does! And whenever our conversations turn to men, your wife immediately says, "All others are mere rubbish compared with Cinesias."
CINESIAS. [*Groaning*] Oh! Do call her for me.
LYSISTRATA. Why should I? What will you give me?
CINESIAS. Whatever you want. All I have is yours—and you see what I've got.
LYSISTRATA. Well then, I'll go down and call her. [*She descends.*]
CINESIAS. And hurry up! I've had no joy of life ever since she left home. When I go in the house, I feel awful: everything seems so empty and I can't enjoy my dinner. I'm in such a state all the time!
MYRRHINE. [*From behind the wall*] I *do* love him so. But he won't let me love him. No, no! Don't ask me to see him!
CINESIAS. O my darling, O Myrrhine honey, why do you do this to me? [MYRRHINE *appears on the wall.*] Come down here!
MYRRHINE. No, I won't come down.
CINESIAS. Won't you come, Myrrhine, when *I* call you?
MYRRHINE. No; you don't want me.
CINESIAS. *Don't want you?* I'm in agony!
MYRRHINE. I'm going now.
CINESIAS. Please don't! At least, listen to your baby. [*To the baby*] Here you, call your mamma! [*Pinching the baby*]
BABY. Ma-ma! Ma-ma! Ma-ma!
CINESIAS. [*To* MYRRHINE] What's the matter with you? Have you no pity for your child, who hasn't been washed or fed for five whole days?
MYRRHINE. Oh, poor child; your father pays no attention to you.
CINESIAS. Come down then, you heartless wretch, for the baby's sake.
MYRRHINE. Oh, what it is to be a mother! I've got to come down, I suppose. [*She leaves the wall and shortly reappears at the gate.*]
CINESIAS. [*To himself*] She seems much younger, and she has such a sweet look about her. Oh, the way she teases me! And her pretty, provoking ways make me burn with longing
MYRRHINE. [*Coming out of the gate and taking the baby*] O my sweet little angel. Naughty papa! Here, let Mummy kiss you, Mamma's

little sweetheart! [*She fondles the baby lovingly.*]

CINESIAS. [*In despair*] You heartless creature, why do you do this? Why follow these other women and make both of us suffer so? [*He tries to embrace her.*]

MYRRHINE. Don't touch me!

CINESIAS. You're letting all our things at home go to wrack and ruin.

MYRRHINE. I don't care.

CINESIAS. You don't care that your wool is being plucked to pieces by the chickens?

MYRRHINE. Not in the least.

CINESIAS. And you haven't celebrated the rites of Aphrodite for ever so long. Won't you come home?

MYRRHINE. Not on your life, unless you men make a truce and stop the war.

CINESIAS. Well then, if that pleases you, we'll do it.

MYRRHINE. Well then, if that pleases *you*, I'll come home—afterwards! Right now I'm on oath not to.

CINESIAS. Then just lie down here with me for a moment.

MYRRHINE. No—[*In a teasing voice*] and yet, I won't say I don't love you.

CINESIAS. You love me? Oh, do lie down here, Myrrhine dear!

MYRRHINE. What, you silly fool! in front of the baby?

CINESIAS. [*Hastily thrusting the baby at the slave*] Of course not. Here—home! Take him Manes! [*The slave goes off with the baby.*] See, the baby's out of the way. Now won't you lie down?

MYRRHINE. But where, my dear?

CINESIAS. Where? The grotto of Pan's a lovely spot.

MYRRHINE. How could I purify myself before returning to the shrine?

CINESIAS. Easily: just wash here in the Clepsydra.[9]

MYRRHINE. And then, shall I go back on my oath?

CINESIAS. On my head be it! Don't worry about the oath.

MYRRHINE. All right, then. Just let me bring out a bed.

CINESIAS. No, don't. The ground's all right.

MYRRHINE. Heavens, no! Bad as you are, I won't let you lie on the bare ground. [*She goes into the Acropolis.*]

CINESIAS. Why, she really loves me; it's plain to see.

MYRRHINE. [*Returning with a bed*] There! Now hurry up and lie down. I'll just slip off this dress. But—let's see: oh yes, I must fetch a mattress.

CINESIAS. Nonsense! No mattress for me.

MYRRHINE. Yes indeed! It's not nice on the bare springs.

CINESIAS. Give me a kiss.

MYRRHINE. [*Giving him a hasty kiss*] There! [*She goes.*]

9. A spring on the Acropolis.

CINESIAS. [*In mingled distress and delight*] Oh-h! Hurry back!
MYRRHINE. [*Returning with a mattress*] Here's the mattress; lie down on it. I'm taking my things off now—but—let's see: you have no pillow.
CINESIAS. I don't *want* a pillow!
MYRRHINE. But I do. [*She goes.*]
CINESIAS. Cheated again, just like Heracles and his dinner![1]
MYRRHINE. [*Returning with a pillow*] Here, lift your head. [*To herself, wondering how else to tease him*] Is that all?
CINESIAS. Surely that's all! Do come here, precious!
MYRRHINE. I'm taking off my girdle. But remember: don't go back on your promise about the truce.
CINESIAS. Hope to die, if I do.
MYRRHINE. You don't have a blanket.
CINESIAS. [*Shouting in exasperation*] *I don't want one!* I want to—
MYRRHINE. Sh-h! There, there, I'll be back in a minute. [*She goes.*]
CINESIAS. She'll be the death of me with these bed-clothes.
MYRRHINE. [*Returning with a blanket*] Here, get up.
CINESIAS. I've got *this* up!
MYRRHINE. Would you like some perfume?
CINESIAS. Good heavens, no! I won't have it!
MYRRHINE. Yes, you shall, whether you want it or not. [*She goes.*]
CINESIAS. O lord! Confound all perfumes anyway!
MYRRHINE. [*Returning with a flask*] Stretch out your hand and put some on.
CINESIAS. [*Suspiciously*] By God, I don't much like this perfume. It smells of shilly-shallying, and has no scent of the marriage-bed.
MYRRHINE. Oh dear! This is Rhodian perfume I've brought.
CINESIAS. It's quite all right dear. Never mind.
MYRRHINE. Don't be silly! [*She goes out with the flask.*]
CINESIAS. Damn the man who first concocted perfumes!
MYRRHINE. [*Returning with another flask*] Here, try this flask.
CINESIAS. I've got another one all ready for you. Come, you wretch, lie down and stop bringing me things.
MYRRHINE. All right; I'm taking off my shoes. But, my dear, see that you vote for peace.
CINESIAS. [*Absently*] I'll consider it. [MYRRHINE *runs away to the Acropolis.*] I'm ruined! The wretch has skinned me and run away! [*Chanting, in tragic style*] Alas! Alas! Deceived, deserted by this fairest of women, whom shall I—lay? Ah, my poor little child, how shall I nurture thee? Where's Cynalopex?[2] I needs must hire a nurse!
LEADER OF MEN. [*Chanting*] Ah, wretched man, in dreadful wise

1. The point of this proverb seems to be that the hero is such a glutton that his hosts are never quick enough with their entertainment. 2. A local brothel-keeper.

beguiled, bewrayed, thy soul is sore distressed. I pity thee, alas! alas! What soul, what loins, what liver could stand this strain? How firm and unyielding he stands, with naught to aid him of a morning.

CINESIAS. O lord! O Zeus! What tortures I endure!

LEADER OF MEN. This is the way she's treated you, that vile and cursèd wanton.

LEADER OF WOMEN. Nay, not vile and cursèd, but sweet and dear.

LEADER OF MEN. Sweet, you say? Nay, hateful, hateful!

CINESIAS. Hateful indeed! O Zeus, Zeus!
Seize her and snatch her away,
Like a handful of dust, in a mighty,
Fiery tempest! Whirl her aloft, then let her drop
Down to the earth, with a crash, as she falls—
On the point of this waiting
Thingummybob! [*He goes out.*]

[*Enter a Spartan* HERALD, *in an obvious state of excitement, which he is doing his best to conceal.*]

HERALD. Where can I find the Senate or the Prytanes?[3] I've got an important message.

[*The Athenian* MAGISTRATE *enters.*]

MAGISTRATE. Say there, are you a man or Priapus?[4]

HERALD. [*In annoyance*] I'm a herald, you lout! I've come from Sparta about the truce.

MAGISTRATE. Is that a spear you've got under your cloak?

HERALD. No, of course not!

MAGISTRATE. Why do you twist and turn so? Why hold your cloak in front of you? Did you rupture yourself on the trip?

HERALD. By gum, the fellow's an old fool.

MAGISTRATE. [*Pointing*] Why, you dirty rascal, you're all excited.

HERALD. Not at all. Stop this tom-foolery.

MAGISTRATE. Well, what's that I see?

HERALD. A Spartan message-staff.[5]

MAGISTRATE. Oh, certainly! That's just the kind of message-staff I've got. But tell me the honest truth: How are things going in Sparta?

HERALD. All the land of Sparta is up in arms—and our allies are up, too. We need Pellene.[6]

MAGISTRATE. What brought this trouble on you? A sudden Panic?

HERALD. No, Lampito started it and then all the other women in Sparta with one account chased their husbands out of their beds.

MAGISTRATE. How do you feel?

3. The permanent committee of the Council (Senate). 4. A god whose grossly phallic statue was set to guard orchards and gardens. 5. An encoding device. The papyrus was wrapped round the staff on a spiral and the message could be read only when the papyrus was wound round an exactly similar staff. 6. A city held by the Athenians and claimed by the Spartans; also the name of a famous Athenian prostitute.

HERALD. Terrible. We walk around the city bent over like men lighting matches in a wind. For our women won't let us touch them until we all agree and make peace throughout Greece.

MAGISTRATE. This is a general conspiracy of the women; I see it now. Well, hurry back and tell the Spartans to send ambassadors here with full powers to arrange a truce. And I'll go tell the Council to choose ambassadors from here; I've got a little something here that will soon persuade them!

HERALD. I'll fly there; for you've made an excellent suggestion.

[*The* HERALD *and the* MAGISTRATE *depart on opposite sides of the stage.*]

LEADER OF MEN. No beast or fire is harder than womankind to tame.
Nor is the spotted leopard so devoid of shame.

LEADER OF WOMEN. Knowing this, you dare provoke us to attack?
I'd be your steady friend, if you'd but take us back.

LEADER OF MEN. I'll never cease my hatred keen of womankind.

LEADER OF WOMEN. Just as you will. But now just let me help you find
That cloak you threw aside. You look so silly there
Without your clothes. Here, put it on and don't go bare.

LEADER OF MEN. That's very kind, and shows you're not entirely bad.
But I threw off my things when I was good and mad.

LEADER OF WOMEN. At last you seem a man, and won't be mocked, my lad.
If you'd been nice to me, I'd take this little gnat
That's in your eye and pluck it out for you, like that.

LEADER OF MEN. So that's what's bothered me and bit my eye so long!
Please dig it out for me. I own that I've been wrong.

LEADER OF WOMEN. I'll do so, though you've been a most ill-natured brat.
Ye gods! See here! A huge and monstrous little gnat!

LEADER OF MEN. Oh, how that helps! For it was digging wells in me.
And now it's out, my tears can roll down hard and free.

LEADER OF WOMEN. Here, let me wipe them off, although you're such a knave
And kiss me.

LEADER OF MEN. No!

LEADER OF WOMEN. Whate'er you say, a kiss I'll have. [*She kisses him.*]

LEADER OF MEN. Oh, confound these women! They've a coaxing way about them.
He was wise and never spoke a truer word, who said,
"We can't live with women, but we cannot live without them."
Now I'll make a truce with you. We'll fight no more: instead,
I will not injure you if you do me no wrong.

And now let's join our ranks and then begin a song.

COMBINED CHORUS. [*Singing*]

Athenians, we're not prepared,
To say a single ugly word
About our fellow-citizens.
Quite the contrary: we desire but to say and to do
Naught but good. Quite enough are the ills now on hand.

Men and women, be advised:
If anyone requires
Money—minae two or three—
We've got what he desires.

My purse is yours, on easy terms:
When Peace shall reappear,
Whate'er you've borrowed will be due.
So speak up without fear.

You needn't pay me back, you see,
If you can get a cent from me!

We're about to entertain
Some foreign gentlemen;
We've soup and tender, fresh-killed pork.
Come round to dine at ten.

Come early; wash and dress with care,
And bring the children, too.
Then step right in, no "by your leave."
We'll be expecting you.

Walk in as if you owned the place.
You'll find the door—shut in your face!

[*Enter a group of Spartan Ambassadors; they are in the same desperate condition as the Herald in the previous scene.*]

LEADER OF CHORUS. Here come the envoys from Sparta, sprouting long beards and looking for all the world as if they were carrying pig-pens in front of them.

Greetings, gentlemen of Sparta. Tell me, in what state have you come?

SPARTAN. Why waste words? You can plainly see what state we're come in!

LEADER OF CHORUS. Wow! You're in a pretty high-strung condition, and it seems to be getting worse.

SPARTAN. It's indescribable. Won't someone please arrange a peace for us—in any way you like.

LEADER OF CHORUS. Here come our own, native ambassadors, crouching like wrestlers and holding their clothes in front of them; this seems an athletic kind of malady.

[*Enter several Athenian Ambassadors.*]

ATHENIAN. Can anyone tell us where Lysistrata is? You see our condition.

LEADER OF CHORUS. Here's another case of the same complaint. Tell me, are the attacks worse in the morning?

ATHENIAN. No, we're always afflicted this way. If someone doesn't soon arrange this truce, you'd better not let me get my hands on—Cleisthenes!

LEADER OF CHORUS. If you're smart, you'll arrange your cloaks so none of the fellows who smashed the Hermae[7] can see you.

SPARTAN. Right you are; a very good suggestion.

ATHENIAN. Greetings, Spartan. We've suffered dreadful things.

SPARTAN. My dear fellow, we'd have suffered still worse if one of those fellows had seen us in this condition.

ATHENIAN. Well, gentlemen, we must get down to business. What's your errand here?

SPARTAN. We're ambassadors about peace.

ATHENIAN. Excellent; so are we. Only Lysistrata can arrange things for us; shall we summon her?

SPARTAN. Aye, and Lysistratus too, if you like.

LEADER OF CHORUS. No need to summon her, it seems. She's coming out of her own accord.

[*Enter* LYSISTRATA *accompanied by a statue of a nude female figure, which represents Reconciliation.*]

Hail, noblest of women; now must thou be
A judge shrewd and subtle, mild and severe,
Be sweet yet majestic: all manners employ.
The leaders of Hellas, caught by thy love-charms
Have come to thy judgment, their charges submitting.

LYSISTRATA. This is no difficult task, if one catch them still in amorous passion, before they've resorted to each other. But I'll soon find out. Where's Reconciliation? Go, first bring the Spartans here, and don't seize them rudely and violently, as our tactless husbands used to do, but as befits a woman, like an old, familiar friend; if they won't give you their hands, take them however you can. Then go fetch these Athenians here, taking hold of whatever they offer

7. Small statue of the god Hermes equipped with phalluses, which stood at the door of most Athenian houses. Just before the great expedition left for Sicily, rioters (probably oligarchic conspirators opposed to the expedition) smashed many of these statues.

you. Now then, men of Sparta, stand here beside me, and you Athenians on the other side, and listen to my words.

I am a woman, it is true, but I have a mind; I'm not badly off in native wit, and by listening to my father and my elders, I've had a decent schooling.

Now I intend to give you a scolding which you both deserve. With one common font you worship at the same altars, just like brothers, at Olympia, at Thermopylae, at Delphi—how many more might I name, if time permitted;—and the Barbarians stand by waiting with their armies; yet you are destroying the men and towns of Greece.

ATHENIAN. Oh, this tension is killing me!

LYSISTRATA. And now, men of Sparta,—to turn to you—don't you remember how the Spartan Pericleidas came here once as a suppliant, and sitting at our altar, all pale with fear in his crimson cloak, begged us for an army?[8] For all Messene had attacked you and the god sent an earthquake too? Then Cimon went forth with four thousand hoplites and saved all Lacedaemon. Such was the aid you received from Athens, and now you lay waste the country which once treated you so well.

ATHENIAN. [*Hotly*] They're in the wrong, Lysistrata, upon my word, they are!

SPARTAN. [*Absently, looking at the statue of Reconciliation*] We're in the wrong. What hips! How lovely they are!

LYSISTRATA. Don't think I'm going to let you Athenians off. Don't you remember how the Spartans came in arms when you were wearing the rough, sheepskin cloak of slaves and slew the host of Thessalians, the comrades and allies of Hippias?[9] Fighting with you on that day, alone of all the Greeks, they set you free and instead of a sheepskin gave your folk a handsome robe to wear.

SPARTAN. [*Looking at* LYSISTRATA] I've never seen a more distinguished woman.

ATHENIAN. [*Looking at Reconciliation*] I've never seen a more voluptuous body!

LYSISTRATA. Why then, with these many noble deeds to think of, do you fight each other? Why don't you stop this villainy? Why not make peace? Tell me, what prevents it?

SPARTAN. [*Waving vaguely at Reconciliation*] We're willing, if you're willing to give up your position on yonder flank.

LYSISTRATA. What position, my good man?

8. After a disastrous earthquake the Spartans were in great danger as a result of a rebellion of their serfs, the Helots. The Athenians under Cimon sent a large force of soldiers to help them (464 B.C.). 9. Hippias the tyrant had allowed exiled democrats to return to Attica but they had to stay outside the city and wear sheepskins so that they could readily be identified. With the help of Spartan soldiers the exiles and the people of Attica finally defeated the Thessalian troops of Hippias.

SPARTAN. Pylus; we've been panting for it for ever so long.
ATHENIAN. No, by God! You shan't have it!
LYSISTRATA. Let them have it, my friend.
ATHENIAN. Then, what shall we have to rouse things up?
LYSISTRATA. Ask for another place in exchange.
ATHENIAN. Well, let's see: first of all [*Pointing to various parts of Reconciliation's anatomy*] give us Echinus[1] here, this Maliac Inlet in back there, and these two Megarian legs.
SPARTAN. No, by heavens! You can't have *everything*, you crazy fool!
LYSISTRATA. Let it go. Don't fight over a pair of legs.
ATHENIAN [*Taking off his cloak*] I think I'll strip and do a little planting now.
SPARTAN. [*Following suit*] And I'll just do a little fertilizing, by gosh!
LYSISTRATA. Wait until the truce is concluded. Now if you've decided on this course, hold a conference and discuss the matter with your allies.
ATHENIAN. Allies? Don't be ridiculous! They're in the same state we are. Won't all our allies want the same thing we do—to jump in bed with their women?
SPARTAN. Ours will, I know.
ATHENIAN. Especially the Carystians,[2] by God!
LYSISTRATA. Very well. Now purify yourselves, that your wives may feast and entertain you in the Acropolis; we've provisions by the basketful. Exchange your oaths and pledges there, and then each of you may take his wife and go home.
ATHENIAN. Let's go at once.
SPARTAN. Come on, where you will.
ATHENIAN. For God's sake, let's hurry!
[*They all go into the Acropolis.*]

CHORUS. [*Singing.*]
Whate'er I have of coverlets
And robes of varied hue
And golden trinkets,—without stint
I offer them to you.

Take what you will and bear it home,
Your children to delight,
Or if your girl's a Basket-maid;
Just choose whate'er's in sight.

1. Like Pylus (on the "flank" of the Peloponnese), these names are all double-barrelled references to territories in dispute in the war and salient portions of the anatomy of Reconciliation.
2. The people of Carystus on the island of Euboea were supposed to be of pre-Hellenic stock and therefore primitive and savage.

There's naught within so well secured
You cannot break the seal
And bear it off; just help yourselves;
No hesitation feel.

But you'll see nothing, though you try,
Unless you've sharper eyes than I!

If anyone needs bread to feed
A growing family,
I've lots of wheat and full-grown loaves;
So just apply to me.

Let every poor man who desires
Come round and bring a sack
To fetch the grain; my slave is there
To load it on his back.

But don't come near my door, I say.
Beware the dog, and stay away!

[*An* ATHENIAN *enters carrying a torch; he knocks at the gate.*]

ATHENIAN. Open the door! [*To the* CHORUS, *which is clustered around the gate*] Make way, won't you! What are you hanging around for? Want me to singe you with this torch? [*To himself*] No; it's a stale trick, I won't do it! [*To the audience*] Still, if I've got to do it to please *you*, I suppose I'll have to take the trouble.

[*A* SECOND ATHENIAN *comes out of the gate.*]

SECOND ATHENIAN. And I'll help you.

FIRST ATHENIAN. [*Waving his torch at the* CHORUS] Get out! Go bawl your heads off! Move on there, so the Spartans can leave in peace when the banquet's over.

[*They brandish their torches until the* CHORUS *leaves the Orchestra.*]

SECOND ATHENIAN. I've never seen such a pleasant banquet: the Spartans are charming fellows, indeed they are! And we Athenians are very witty in our cups.

FIRST ATHENIAN. Naturally: for when we're sober we're never at our best. If the Athenians would listen to me, we'd always get a little tipsy on our embassies. As things are now, we go to Sparta when we're sober and look around to stir up trouble. And then we don't hear what they say—and as for what they *don't* say, we have all sorts of suspicions. And then we bring back varying reports about the mission. But this time everything is pleasant; even if a man

should sing the Telamon-song when he ought to sing "Cleitagoras,"[3] we'd praise him and swear it was excellent.

[*The two* CHORUSES *return, as a* CHORUS OF ATHENIANS *and a* CHORUS OF SPARTANS.]

Here they come back again. Go to the devil, you scoundrels!

SECOND ATHENIAN. Get out, I say! They're coming out from the feast.

[*Enter the Spartan and Athenian envoys, followed by* LYSISTRATA *and all the women.*]

SPARTAN. [*To one of his fellow-envoys*] My good fellow, take up your pipes; I want to do a fancy two-step and sing a jolly song for the Athenians.

ATHENIAN. Yes, do take your pipes, by all means. I'd love to see you dance.

SPARTAN. [*Singing and dancing with the* CHORUS OF SPARTANS]

These youths inspire
To song and dance, O Memory;
Stir up my Muse, to tell how we
And Athens' men, in our galleys clashing
At Artemisium,[4] 'gainst foemen dashing
In godlike ire,
Conquered the Persian and set Greece free.

Leonidas
Led on his valiant warriors
Whetting their teeth like angry boars.
Abundant foam on their lips was flow'ring,
A stream of sweat from their limbs was show'ring.
The Persian was
Numberless as the sand on the shores.

O Huntress[5] who slayest the beasts in the glade,
O Virgin divine, hither come to our truce,
Unite us in bonds which all time will not loose.
Grant us to find in this treaty, we pray,
An unfailing source of true friendship today,
And all of our days, helping us to refrain
From weaseling tricks which bring war in their train.
Then hither, come hither! O huntress maid.

LYSISTRATA. Come then, since all is fairly done, men of Sparta, lead

3. At an Athenian banquet each guest in turn, when the time came to sing, was supposed to cap the singer before him by choosing an appropriate drinking song. 4. The indecisive naval battle which took place off the coast while Leonidas held the pass at Thermopylae. 5. Artemis.

away your wives, and you, Athenians, take yours. Let every man stand beside his wife, and every wife beside her man, and then, to celebrate our fortune, let's dance. And in the future, let's take care to avoid these misunderstandings.

CHORUS OF ATHENIANS. [*Singing and dancing*]

Lead on the dances, your graces revealing.
Call Artemis hither, call Artemis' twin,
Leader of dances, Apollo the Healing,
Kindly God—hither! let's summon him in!

Nysian Bacchus call,
Who with his Maenads, his eyes flashing fire,
Dances, and last of all
Zeus of the thunderbolt flaming, the Sire.
And Hera in majesty,
Queen of prosperity.

Come, ye Powers who dwell above
Unforgetting, our witnesses be
Of Peace with bonds of harmonious love—
The Peace which Cypris has wrought for me.
Alleluia! Io Paean!
Leap in joy—hurrah! hurrah!
'Tis victory—hurrah! hurrah!
Euoi! Euoi! Euai! Euai!

LYSISTRATA. [*To the Spartans*] Come now, sing a new song to cap ours.

CHORUS OF SPARTANS. [*Singing and dancing*]

Leaving Taygetus fair and renown'd,
Muse of Laconia,[6] hither come:
Amyclae's god in hymns resound,
Athene of the Brazen Home,[7]
And Castor and Pollux, Tyndareus' sons,
Who sport where Eurotas[8] murmuring runs.

On with the dance! Heia! Ho!
All leaping along,
Mantles a-swinging as we go!
Of Sparta our song.
There the holy chorus ever gladdens,
There the beat of stamping feet,
As our winsome fillies, lovely maidens,
Dance, beside Eurotas' banks a-skipping,—

6. The Spartan region. *Amyclae*: Part of Sparta. 7. The bronze-plated temple of Athena in Sparta. 8. The river of Sparta.

Nimbly go to and fro
Hast'ning, leaping feet in measures tripping,
Like the Bacchae's revels, hair a-streaming.
Leda's child, divine and mild,
Leads the holy dance, her fair face beaming.
On with the dance! as your hand
Presses the hair
Streaming away unconfined.
Leap in the air
Light as the deer; footsteps resound
Aiding our dance, beating the ground.
Praise Athene, Maid divine, unrivalled in her might,
Dweller in the Brazen Home, unconquered in the fight.
[*All go out singing and dancing.*]

PLATO

429–347 B.C.

Socrates himself (see pp. 8–9) wrote nothing; we know what we do about him mainly from the writings of his pupil Plato, a philosophical and literary genius of the first rank. It is very difficult to distinguish between what Socrates actually said and what Plato put into his mouth, but there is general agreement that the *Apology*, which Plato wrote as a representation of what Socrates said at his trial, is the clearest picture we have of the historical Socrates. He is on trial for impiety and "corrupting the youth." He deals with these charges, but he also takes the opportunity to present a defense and explanation of the mission to which his life has been devoted.

The *Apology* is a defiant speech; Socrates rides roughshod over legal forms and seems to neglect no opportunity of outraging his hearers. But this defiance is not stupidity (as he hints himself, he could, if he had wished, have made a speech to please the court), nor is it a deliberate courting of martyrdom. It is the only course possible for him in the circumstances if he is not to betray his life's work, for Socrates knows as well as his accusers that what the Athenians really want is to silence him without having to take his life. What Socrates is making clear is that there is no such easy way out; he will have no part of any compromise that would restrict his freedom of speech or undermine his moral position. The speech is a sample of what the Athenians will have to put up with if they allow him to live; he will continue to be the gadfly which stings the sluggish horse. He will go on persuading them not to be concerned for their persons or their property, but first and chiefly to care about the improvement of the soul. He has spent his life denying the validity of worldly standards, and he will not accept them now.

He was declared guilty, and condemned to death. Though influential friends offered means of escape (and there is reason to think the Athenians would have been glad to see him go) Socrates refused to disobey the laws: in

any case he had already, in his court speech, rejected the possibility of living in some foreign city.

The sentence was duly carried out. And in Plato's account of the execution we can see the calmness and kindness of a man who has led a useful life and who is secure in his faith that, contrary to appearances, "no evil can happen to a good man, either in life or after death."

The form of the *Apology* is dramatic: Plato re-creates the personality of his beloved teacher by presenting him as speaking directly to the reader. In most of the many books which he wrote in the course of a long life (429–347 B.C.) he continued to feature Socrates as the principal speaker in philosophical dialogues which explored the ethical and political problems of the age: these dialogues (the *Republic* the most famous) were preserved in their entirety and have exerted an enormous influence on Western thought ever since. Plato also founded a philosophical school, the Academy, in 385 B.C., and it remained active as a center of philosophical training and research until it was suppressed by the Roman emperor Justinian in A.D. 529. Plato came from an aristocratic Athenian family and as a young man thought of a political career; the execution of Socrates by the courts of democratic Athens disgusted him with politics and prompted his famous remark that there was no hope for the cities until the rulers became philosophers or the philosophers rulers. His attempts, however, to influence real rulers, the tyrant Dionysius of Syracuse in Sicily and, later, his son, ended in failure.

A. E. Taylor, *Plato, The Man and His Work* (1927), is a detailed analysis of the whole corpus of Platonic dialogues. G. M. A. Grube, *Plato's Thought* (1935), studies six principal themes of Platonic philosophy. R. S. Brumbaugh, *Plato for the Modern Age* (1962), presents a general introduction with stress on the historical background and an emphasis on the scientific and mathematical aspects of Plato's thought.

The Apology of Socrates[1]

How you, O Athenians, have been affected by my accusers, I cannot tell; but I know that they almost made me forget who I was—so persuasively did they speak; and yet they have hardly uttered a word of truth. But of the many falsehoods told by them, there was one which quite amazed me;—I mean when they said that you should be upon your guard and not allow yourselves to be deceived by the force of my eloquence. To say this, when they were certain to be detected as soon as I opened my lips and proved myself to be anything but a great speaker, did indeed appear to me most shameless—unless by the force of eloquence they mean the force of truth; for if such is their meaning, I admit that I am eloquent. But in how different a way from theirs! Well, as I was saying, they have scarcely spoken the truth at all; but from me you shall hear the whole truth: not, however, delivered after their manner in a set oration duly orna-

1. Translated by Benjamin Jowett. "Apology" means "defense."

mented with words and phrases. No, by heaven! but I shall use the words and arguments which occur to me at the moment; for I am confident in the justice of my cause: at my time of life I ought not to be appearing before you, O men of Athens, in the character of a juvenile orator—let no one expect it of me. And I must beg of you to grant me a favour:—If I defend myself in my accustomed manner, and you hear me using the words which I have been in the habit of using in the agora,[2] at the tables of the money-changers, or anywhere else, I would ask you not to be surprised, and not to interrupt me on this account. For I am more than seventy years of age, and appearing now for the first time in a court of law, I am quite a stranger to the language of the place; and therefore I would have you regard me as if I were really a stranger, whom you would excuse if he spoke in his native tongue, and after the fashion of his country:—Am I making an unfair request of you? Never mind the manner, which may or may not be good; but think only of the truth of my words, and give heed to that: let the speaker speak truly and the judge decide justly.

And first, I have to reply to the older charges[3] and to my first accusers, and then I will go on to the later ones. For of old I have had many accusers, who have accused me falsely to you during many years; and I am more afraid of them than of Anytus and his associates, who are dangerous, too, in their own way. But far more dangerous are the others, who began when you were children, and took possession of your minds with their falsehoods, telling of one Socrates, a wise man, who speculated about the heaven above, and searched into the earth beneath, and made the worse appear the better cause.[4] The disseminators of this tale are the accusers whom I dread; for their hearers are apt to fancy that such enquirers do not believe in the existence of the gods. And they are many, and their charges against me are of ancient date, and they were made by them in the days when you were more impressible than you are now—in childhood, or it may have been in youth—and the cause when heard went by default, for there was none to answer. And hardest of all, I do not know and cannot tell the names of my accusers; unless in the chance case of a Comic poet.[5] All who from envy and malice have persuaded you—some of them having first convinced themselves—

2. The market place. 3. Socrates had been the object of much criticism and satire for many years before the trial. He here disregards legal forms and announces that he will deal first with the prejudices that lie behind the formal charge that has been brought against him. 4. He was accused by some of his enemies of being a materialist philosopher who speculated about the physical nature of the universe, and by others of being one of the Sophists, professional teachers of rhetoric and other subjects, many of whom taught methods which were more effective than honest. 5. He is referring to the poet Aristophanes, whose play *The Clouds* (produced in 423 B.C.) is a broad satire on Socrates and his associates, and a good example of the prejudice Socrates is dealing with, for it presents him propounding fantastic theories about matter and religion, and teaching students how to avoid payment of debts.

all this class of men are most difficult to deal with; for I cannot have them up here, and cross-examine them, and therefore I must simply fight with shadows in my own defence, and argue when there is no one who answers. I will ask you then to assume with me, as I was saying, that my opponents are of two kinds; one recent, the other ancient: and I hope that you will see the propriety[6] of my answering the latter first, for these accusations you heard long before the others, and much oftener.

Well, then, I must make my defence, and endeavor to clear away in a short time, a slander which has lasted a long time. May I succeed, if to succeed be for my good and yours, or likely to avail me in my cause! The task is not an easy one; I quite understand the nature of it. And so leaving the event with God, in obedience to the law I will now make my defence.

I will begin at the beginning, and ask what is the accusation which has given rise to the slander of me, and in fact has encouraged Meletus to prefer this charge against me. Well, what do the slanderers say? They shall be my prosecutors, and I will sum up their words in an affidavit: 'Socrates is an evil-doer, and a curious person, who searches into things under the earth, and in heaven, and he makes the worse appear the better cause; and he teaches the aforesaid doctrines to others.' Such is the nature of the accusation: it is just what you have yourselves seen in the comedy of Aristophanes, who has introduced a man whom he calls Socrates, going about and saying that he walks in air,[7] and talking a deal of nonsense concerning matters of which I do not pretend to know either much or little—not that I mean to speak disparagingly of any one who is a student of natural philosophy. I should be very sorry if Meletus could bring so grave a charge against me. But the simple truth is, O Athenians, that I have nothing to do with physical speculations. Very many of those here present are witnesses to the truth of this, and to them I appeal. Speak then, you who have heard me, and tell your neighbours whether any of you have ever known me hold forth in few words or in many upon such matters. . . . You hear their answer. And from what they say of this part of the charge you will be able to judge of the truth of the rest.

As little foundation is there for the report that I am a teacher, and take money;[8] this accusation has no more truth in it than the other.

6. He says this with his tongue in his cheek, for he is actually paying no attention to legal propriety. This becomes clearer below, where he goes so far as to paraphrase the actual terms of the indictment and put into the mouths of his accusers the prejudice he claims is the basis of their action. 7. In the comedy of Aristophanes Socrates first appears suspended in a basket, and when asked what he is doing replies, "I walk in air and contemplate the sun." He explains that only by suspending his intelligence can he investigate celestial matters. 8. Unlike Socrates, who beggared himself in the quest for truth, the professional teachers made great fortunes. The wealth of Protagoras, the first of the Sophists who demanded fees, was proverbial.

Although, if a man were really able to instruct mankind, to receive money for giving instruction would, in my opinion, be an honour to him. There is Gorgias of Leontium, and Prodicus of Ceos, and Hippias of Elis,[9] who go the round of the cities, and are able to persuade the young men to leave their own citizens by whom they might be taught for nothing, and come to them whom they not only pay, but are thankful if they may be allowed to pay them. There is at this time a Parian philosopher[1] residing in Athens, of whom I have heard; and I came to hear of him in this way:—I came across a man who has spent a world of money on the Sophists, Callias, the son of Hipponicus, and knowing that he had sons, I asked him: 'Callias,' I said, 'if your two sons were foals or calves, there would be no difficulty in finding some one to put over them; we should hire a trainer of horses, or a farmer probably, who would improve and perfect them in their own proper virtue and excellence; but as they are human beings, whom are you thinking of placing over them? Is there any one who understands human and political virtue? You must have thought about the matter, for you have sons; is there any one?' 'There is,' he said. 'Who is he?' said I; 'and of what country? and what does he charge?' 'Evenus the Parian,' he replied; 'he is the man, and his charge is five minae.'[2] Happy is Evenus, I said to myself; if he really has this wisdom, and teaches at such a moderate charge. Had I the same, I should have been very proud and conceited; but the truth is that I have no knowledge of the kind.

I dare say, Athenians, that some one among you will reply, 'Yes, Socrates, but what is the origin of these accusations which are brought against you; there must have been something strange which you have been doing? All these rumours and this talk about you would never have arisen if you had been like other men: tell us, then, what is the cause of them, for we should be sorry to judge hastily of you.' Now I regard this as a fair challenge, and I will endeavour to explain to you the reason why I am called wise and have such an evil fame. Please to attend then. And although some of you may think that I am joking, I declare that I will tell you the entire truth. Men of Athens, this reputation of mine has come of a certain sort of wisdom which I possess. If you ask me what kind of wisdom, I reply, wisdom such as may perhaps be attained by man, for to that extent I am inclined to believe that I am wise; whereas the persons of whom I was speaking have a superhuman wisdom, which I may fail to describe, because I have it not myself; and he who says that I have, speaks

9. From Elis, in the Peloponnese; he claimed to be able to teach any and all subjects, including handicrafts. *Gorgias:* From Leontium in Sicily; he was famous as the originator of an antithetical, ornate prose style which had great influence. *Prodicus:* From Ceos, an island in the Aegean; he taught rhetoric and was well-known for his pioneering grammatical studies. 1. From Paros, a small island in the Aegean. 2. A relatively moderate sum; Protagoras is said to have charged a hundred minae for a course of instruction.

falsely, and is taking away my character. And here, O men of Athens, I must beg you not to interrupt me, even if I seem to say something extravagant. For the word which I will speak is not mine. I will refer you to a witness who is worthy of credit; that witness shall be the God of Delphi[3]—he will tell you about my wisdom, if I have any, and of what sort it is. You must have known Chaerephon; he was early a friend of mine, and also a friend of yours, for he shared in the recent exile of the people, and returned with you.[4] Well, Chaerephon, as you know, was very impetuous in all his doings, and he went to Delphi and boldly asked the oracle to tell him whether—as I was saying, I must beg you not to interrupt—he asked the oracle to tell him whether any one was wiser than I was, and the Pythian prophetess answered, that there was no man wiser. Chaerephon is dead himself; but his brother, who is in court, will confirm the truth of what I am saying.

Why do I mention this? Because I am going to explain to you why I have such an evil name. When I heard the answer, I said to myself, What can the god mean? and what is the interpretation of his riddle? for I know that I have no wisdom, small or great. What then can he mean when he says that I am the wisest of men? And yet he is a god, and cannot lie; that would be against his nature. After long consideration, I thought of a method of trying the question. I reflected that if I could only find a man wiser than myself, then I might go to the god with a refutation in my hand. I should say to him, 'Here is a man who is wiser than I am; but you said that I was the wisest.' Accordingly I went to one who had the reputation of wisdom, and observed him—his name I need not mention; he was a politician whom I selected for examination—and the result was as follows: When I began to talk with him, I could not help thinking that he was not really wise, although he was thought wise by many, and still wiser by himself; and thereupon I tried to explain to him that he thought himself wise, but was not really wise; and the consequence was that he hated me, and his enmity was shared by several who were present and heard me. So I left him, saying to myself, as I went away: Well, although I do not suppose that either of us knows anything really beautiful and good, I am better off than he is,—for he knows nothing, and thinks that he knows; I neither know nor think that I know. In this latter particular, then, I seem to have slightly the advantage of him. Then I went to another who had still higher pretensions to wisdom, and my conclusion was exactly the same. Whereupon I made another enemy of him, and of many others besides him.

3. The oracle of Apollo at Delphi. 4. One of Socrates' closest associates; he appears in Aristophanes' comedy. Chaerephon was an enthusiastic enough partisan of the democratic regime to have to go into exile in 404 B.C. when the Thirty Tyrants carried on an oligarchic reign of terror. The phrase "the recent exile of the people" refers to the exile into which all known champions of democracy were forced until the democracy was restored.

Then I went to one man after another, being not unconscious of the enmity which I provoked, and I lamented and feared this: But necessity was laid upon me,—the word of God, I thought, ought to be considered first. And I said to myself, Go I must to all who appear to know, and find out the meaning of the oracle. And I swear to you, Athenians, by the dog I swear![5]—for I must tell you the truth—the result of my mission was just this: I found that the men most in repute were all but the most foolish; and that others less esteemed were really wiser and better. I will tell you the tale of my wanderings and of the 'Herculean' labours, as I may call them, which I endured only to find at last the oracle irrefutable. After the politicians, I went to the poets; tragic, dithyrambic,[6] and all sorts. And there, I said to myself, you will be instantly detected; now you will find out that you are more ignorant than they are. Accordingly, I took them some of the most elaborate passages in their own writings, and asked what was the meaning of them—thinking that they would teach me something. Will you believe me? I am almost ashamed to confess the truth, but I must say that there is hardly a person present who would not have talked better about their poetry than they did themselves. Then I knew that not by wisdom do poets write poetry, but by a sort of genius and inspiration; they are like diviners or soothsayers who also say many fine things, but do not understand the meaning of them.[7] The poets appeared to me to be much in the same case; and I further observed that upon the strength of their poetry they believed themselves to be the wisest of men in other things in which they were not wise. So I departed, conceiving myself to be superior to them for the same reason that I was superior to the politicians.

At last I went to the artisans, for I was conscious that I knew nothing at all, as I may say, and I was sure that they knew many fine things; and here I was not mistaken, for they did know many things of which I was ignorant, and in this they certainly were wiser than I was. But I observed that even the good artisans fell into the same error as the poets;—because they were good workmen they thought that they also knew all sorts of high matters, and this defect in them overshadowed their wisdom; and therefore I asked myself on behalf of the oracle, whether I would like to be as I was, neither having their knowledge nor their ignorance, or like them in both; and I made answer to myself and to the oracle that I was better off as I was.

This inquisition has led to my having many enemies of the worst and most dangerous kind, and has given occasion also to many calumnies. And I am called wise, for my hearers always imagine that I myself possess the wisdom which I find wanting in others: but the

5. A euphemistic oath (compare, "by George"). 6. The dithyramb was a short performance by a chorus, produced, like tragedy, at state expense and at a public festival. 7. For a fuller exposition of this famous theory of poetic inspiration see Plato's *Ion*.

truth is, O men of Athens, that God only is wise; and by his answer he intends to show that the wisdom of men is worth little or nothing; he is not speaking of Socrates, he is only using my name by way of illustration, as if he said, He, O men, is the wisest, who, like Socrates, knows that his wisdom is in truth worth nothing. And so I go about the world, obedient to the god, and search and make enquiry into the wisdom of any one, whether citizen or stranger, who appears to be wise; and if he is not wise, then in vindication of the oracle I show him that he is not wise; and my occupation quite absorbs me, and I have no time to give either to any public matter of interest or to any concern of my own, but I am in utter poverty by reason of my devotion to the god.

There is another thing:—young men of the richer classes, who have not much to do, come about me of their own accord; they like to hear the pretenders examined, and they often imitate me, and proceed to examine others; there are plenty of persons, as they quickly discover, who think that they know something, but really know little or nothing; and then those who are examined by them instead of being angry with themselves are angry with me: This confounded Socrates, they say; this villainous misleader of youth!—and then if somebody asks them, Why, what evil does he practice or teach? they do not know, and cannot tell; but in order that they may not appear to be at a loss, they repeat the ready-made charges which are used against all philosophers about teaching things up in the clouds and under the earth, and having no gods, and making the worse appear the better cause; for they do not like to confess that their pretence of knowledge has been detected—which is the truth; and as they are numerous and ambitious and energetic, and are drawn up in battle array and have persuasive tongues, they have filled your ears with their loud and inveterate calumnies. And this is the reason why my three accusers, Meletus and Anytus and Lycon, have set upon me; Meletus, who has a quarrel with me on behalf of the poets; Anytus, on behalf of the craftsmen and politicians; Lycon, on behalf of the rhetoricians[8]: and as I said at the beginning, I cannot expect to get rid of such a mass of calumny all in a moment. And this, O men of Athens, is the truth and the whole truth; I have concealed nothing, I have dissembled nothing. And yet, I know that my plainness of speech makes them hate me, and what is their hatred but a proof that I am speaking the truth?—Hence has arisen the prejudice against me; and this is the reason of it, as you will find out either in this or in any future enquiry.

I have said enough in my defence against the first class of my

8. The three accusers. Anytus was a prominent politician; the connection of Meletus with poetry and of Lycon with rhetoric is known only from this passage.

accusers; I turn to the second class. They are headed by Meletus, that good man and true lover of his country, as he calls himself. Against these, too, I must try to make a defence:—Let their affidavit be read: it contains something of this kind: It says that Socrates is a doer of evil, who corrupts the youth; and who does not believe in the gods of the state, but has other new divinities of his own.[9] Such is the charge; and now let us examine the particular counts. He says that I am a doer of evil, and corrupt the youth; but I say, O men of Athens, that Meletus is a doer of evil, in that he pretends to be in earnest when he is only in jest, and is so eager to bring men to trial from a pretended zeal and interest about matters in which he really never had the smallest interest. And the truth of this I will endeavour to prove to you.

Come hither, Meletus, and let me ask a question of you.[1] You think a great deal about the improvement of youth?

Yes, I do.

Tell the judges, then, who is their improver; for you must know, as you have taken the pains to discover their corrupter, and are citing and accusing me before them. Speak, then, and tell the judges who their improver is.—Observe, Meletus, that you are silent, and have nothing to say. But is not this rather disgraceful, and a very considerable proof of what I was saying, that you have no interest in the matter? Speak up, friend, and tell us who their improver is.

The laws.

But that, my good sir, is not my meaning. I want to know who the person is, who, in the first place, knows the laws.

The judges,[2] Socrates, who are present in court.

What, do you mean to say, Meletus, that they are able to instruct and improve youth?

Certainly they are.

What, all of them, or some only and not others?

All of them.

By the goddess Here,[3] that is good news! There are plenty of

9. The precise meaning of the charge is not clear. As this translation indicates, the Greek words may mean "new divinities," with a reference to Socrates' famous inner voice, which from time to time warned him against action on which he had decided. Or the words may mean "practicing strange rites," though this charge is difficult to understand. In any case, the importance of the phrase is that it implies religious belief of some sort and can later be used against Meletus when he loses his head and accuses Socrates of atheism. 1. Socrates avails himself of his right to interrogate the accuser. He is, of course, a master in this type of examination, for he has spent his life in the practice of puncturing inflated pretensions and exposing logical contradictions in the arguments of his adversaries. He is here fulfilling his earlier promise to defend himself in the manner to which he has been accustomed and use the words which he has been in the habit of using in the agora (p. 816). 2. The jury. There was no judge in the Athenian law court. The Athenian jury was large; in this trial it probably consisted of five hundred citizens. In the following questions Socrates forces Meletus to extend the capacity to improve the youth to successively greater numbers, until it appears that the entire citizen body is a good influence and Socrates the only bad one. Meletus is caught in the trap of his own demagogic appeal. 3. Hera.

improvers, then. And what do you say of the audience,—do they improve them?

Yes, they do.

And the senators?[4]

Yes, the senators improve them.

But perhaps the members of the assembly[5] corrupt them?— or do they too improve them?

They improve them.

Then every Athenian improves and elevates them; all with the exception of myself; and I alone am their corrupter? Is that what you affirm?

That is what I stoutly affirm.

I am very unfortunate if you are right. But suppose I ask you a question: How about horses?[6] Does one man do them harm and all the world good? Is not the exact opposite the truth? One man is able to do them good, or at least not many;—the trainer of horses, that is to say, does them good, and others who have to do with them rather injure them? Is not that true, Meletus, of horses, or any other animals? Most assuredly it is; whether you and Anytus say yes or no. Happy indeed would be the condition of youth if they had one corrupter only, and all the rest of the world were their improvers. But you, Meletus, have sufficiently shown that you never had a thought about the young: your carelessness is seen in your not caring about the very things which you bring against me.

And now, Meletus, I will ask you another question—by Zeus I will: Which is better, to live among bad citizens, or among good ones? Answer, friend, I say; the question is one which may be easily answered. Do not the good do their neighbours good, and the bad do them evil?

Certainly.

And is there any one who would rather be injured than benefited by those who live with him? Answer, my good friend, the law requires you to answer—does any one like to be injured?

Certainly not.

And when you accuse me of corrupting and deteriorating the youth, do you allege that I corrupt them intentionally or unintentionally?

Intentionally, I say.

But you have just admitted that the good do their neighbours good, and evil do them evil. Now, is that a truth which your superior wisdom has recognized thus early in life, and am I, at my age, in such darkness and ignorance as not to know that if a man with whom

4. The members of the standing council of the assembly, five hundred in number. 5. The sovereign body in the Athenian constitution, theoretically an assembly of the whole citizen body. 6. This simple analogy is typical of the Socratic method; he is still defending himself in his accustomed manner.

I have to live is corrupted by me, I am very likely to be harmed by him; and yet I corrupt him, and intentionally, too—so you say, although neither I nor any other human being is ever likely to be convinced by you. But either I do not corrupt them, or I corrupt them unintentionally; and on either view of the case you lie. If my offence is unintentional, the law has no cognizance of unintentional offences: you ought to have taken me privately, and warned and admonished me; for if I had been better advised, I should have left off doing what I only did unintentionally—no doubt I should; but you would have nothing to say to me and refused to teach me. And now you bring me up in this court, which is not a place of instruction, but of punishment.

It will be very clear to you, Athenians, as I was saying, that Meletus has no care at all, great or small, about the matter. But still I should like to know, Meletus, in what I am affirmed to corrupt the young. I suppose you mean, as I infer from your indictment, that I teach them not to acknowledge the gods which the state acknowledges, but some other new divinities or spiritual agencies in their stead. These are the lessons by which I corrupt the youth, as you say.

Yes, that I say emphatically.

Then, by the gods, Meletus, of whom we are speaking, tell me and the court, in somewhat plainer terms, what you mean! for I do not as yet understand whether you affirm that I teach other men to acknowledge some gods, and therefore that I do believe in gods, and am not an entire atheist—this you do not lay to my charge,—but only you say that they are not the same gods which the city recognizes—the charge is that they are different gods. Or, do you mean that I am an atheist simply, and a teacher of atheism?

I mean the latter—that you are a complete atheist.[7]

What an extraordinary statement! Why do you think so, Meletus? Do you mean that I do not believe in the godhead of the sun or moon, like other men?

I assure you, judges, that he does not: for he says that the sun is stone, and the moon earth.[8]

Friend Meletus, you think that you are accusing Anaxagoras: and you have but a bad opinion of the judges, if you fancy them illiterate to such a degree as not to know that these doctrines are found in the books of Anaxagoras the Clazomenian,[9] which are full of them. And

7. Meletus jumps at the most damaging charge, and falls into the trap. 8. Meletus falls back on the old prejudices which Socrates claims are the real indictment against him. 9. A fifth-century philosopher from Clazomenae in Asia Minor. He was an intimate friend of Pericles, but this did not save him from indictment for impiety. He was condemned, and forced to leave Athens. He is famous for his doctrine that matter was set in motion and ordered by Intelligence (Nous), which, however, did not create it. He also declared that the sun was a mass of red-hot metal larger than the Peloponnese, and that there were hills and ravines on the moon.

so, forsooth, the youth are said to be taught them by Socrates, when there are not unfrequently exhibitions of them at the theatre[1] (price of admission one drachma at the most); and they might pay their money, and laugh at Socrates if he pretends to father these extraordinary views. And so, Meletus, you really think that I do not believe in any god?

I swear by Zeus that you believe absolutely in none at all.

Nobody will believe you, Meletus, and I am pretty sure that you do not believe yourself. I cannot help thinking, men of Athens, that Meletus is reckless and impudent, and that he has written this indictment in a spirit of mere wantonness and youthful bravado. Has he not compounded a riddle, thinking to try me? He said to himself:—I shall see whether the wise Socrates will discover my facetious contradiction, or whether I shall be able to deceive him and the rest of them. For he certainly does appear to me to contradict himself in the indictment as much as if he said that Socrates is guilty of not believing in the gods, and yet of believing in them—but this is not like a person who is in earnest.

I should like you, O men of Athens, to join me in examining what I conceive to be his inconsistency; and do you, Meletus, answer. And I must remind the audience of my request that they would not make a disturbance[2] if I speak in my accustomed manner:

Did ever man, Meletus, believe in the existence of human things, and not of human beings? . . . I wish, men of Athens, that he would answer, and not be always trying to get up an interruption. Did ever any man believe in horsemanship, and not in horses? or in flute-playing, and not in flute-players? No, my friend; I will answer to you and to the court, as you refuse to answer for yourself. There is no man who ever did. But now please to answer the next question: Can a man believe in spiritual and divine agencies, and not in spirits or demigods?

He cannot.

How lucky I am to have extracted that answer, by the assistance of the court! But then you swear in the indictment that I teach and believe in divine or spiritual agencies (new or old, no matter for that); at any rate, I believe in spiritual agencies,—so you say and swear in the affidavit; and yet if I believe in divine beings, how can I help believing in spirits or demigods;—must I not? To be sure I must; and therefore I may assume that your silence gives consent. Now what are spirits or demigods? are they not either gods or the sons of gods?

Certainly they are.

1. I.e., the doctrines of Anaxagoras are reflected in the works of the tragic poets; or the words may mean simply that Anaxagoras' book was on sale at the theater. 2. The disturbance is presumably due to the frustration of the enemies of Socrates, who see him assuming complete control of the proceedings and turning them into a street-corner argument of the type in which he is invincible.

But this is what I call the facetious riddle invented by you: the demigods or spirits are gods, and you say first that I do not believe in gods, and then again that I do believe in gods; that is, if I believe in demigods. For if the demigods are the illegitimate sons of gods, whether by the nymphs or by any other mothers, of whom they are said to be the sons—what human being will ever believe that there are no gods if they are the sons of gods? You might as well affirm the existence of mules, and deny that of horses and asses. Such nonsense, Meletus, could only have been intended by you to make trial of me. You have put this into the indictment because you had nothing real of which to accuse me. But no one who has a particle of understanding will ever be convinced by you that the same men can believe in divine and superhuman things, and yet not believe that there are gods and demigods and heroes.

I have said enough in answer to the charge of Meletus: any elaborate defence is unnecessary; but I know only too well how many are the enmities which I have incurred, and this is what will be my destruction if I am destroyed;—not Meletus, nor yet Anytus, but the envy and detraction of the world, which has been the death of many good men, and will probably be the death of many more; there is no danger of my being the last of them.

Some one will say: And are you not ashamed, Socrates, of a course of life which is likely to bring you to an untimely end? To him I may fairly answer: There you are mistaken: a man who is good for anything ought not to calculate the chance of living or dying; he ought only to consider whether in doing anything he is doing right or wrong—acting the part of a good man or of a bad. Whereas, upon your view, the heroes who fell at Troy were not good for much, and the son of Thetis[3] above all, who altogether despised danger in comparison with disgrace; and when he was so eager to slay Hector, his goddess mother said to him, that if he avenged his companion Patroclus, and slew Hector, he would die himself—'Fate,' she said, in these or the like words, 'waits for you next after Hector'; he, receiving this warning, utterly despised danger and death, and instead of fearing them, feared rather to live in dishonour, and not to avenge his friend. 'Let me die forthwith,' he replies, 'and be avenged of my enemy, rather than abide here by the beaked ships, a laughing-stock and a burden of the earth.' Had Achilles any thought of death and danger? For wherever a man's place is, whether the place which he has chosen or that in which he has been placed by a commander, there he ought to remain in hour of danger; he should not think of death or of anything but of disgrace. And this, O men of Athens, is a true saying.

Strange, indeed, would be my conduct, O men of Athens, if I

3. Achilles. See the *Iliad*, Book XVIII, 11. 94 ff.

who, when I was ordered by the generals whom you chose to command me at Potidaea and Amphipolis and Delium,[4] remained where they placed me, like any other man, facing death—if now, when, as I conceive and imagine, God orders me to fulfil the philosopher's mission of searching into myself and other men, I were to desert my post through fear of death, or any other fear; that would indeed be strange, and I might justly be arraigned in court for denying the existence of the gods, if I disobeyed the oracle because I was afraid of death, fancying that I was wise when I was not wise. For the fear of death is indeed the pretence of wisdom, and not real wisdom, being a pretence of knowing the unknown; and no one knows whether death, which men in their fear apprehend to be the greatest evil, may not be the greatest good. Is not this ignorance of a disgraceful sort, the ignorance which is the conceit that man knows what he does not know? And in this respect only I believe myself to differ from men in general, and may perhaps claim to be wiser than they are:—that whereas I know but little of the world below,[5] I do not suppose that I know: but I do know that injustice and disobedience to a better, whether God or man, is evil and dishonourable, and I will never fear or avoid a possible good rather than a certain evil. And therefore if you let me go now, and are not convinced by Anytus, who said that since I had been prosecuted I must be put to death (or if not that I ought never to have been prosecuted at all); and that if I escape now, your sons will all be utterly ruined by listening to my words—if you say to me, Socrates, this time we will not mind Anytus, and you shall be let off, but upon one condition, that you are not to enquire and speculate in this way any more, and that if you are caught doing so again you shall die:—if this was the condition on which you let me go, I should reply: Men of Athens, I honour and love you; but I shall obey God rather than you, and while I have life and strength I shall never cease from the practice and teaching of philosophy, exhorting any one whom I meet and saying to him after my manner: You, my friend,—a citizen of the great and mighty and wise city of Athens,—are you not ashamed of heaping up the greatest amount of money and honour and reputation, and caring so little about wisdom and truth and the greatest improvement of the soul, which you never regard or heed at all? And if the person with whom I am arguing, says: Yes, but I do care; then I do not leave him or let him go at once; but I proceed to interrogate and examine and cross-examine him, and if I think that he has no virtue in him, but only says that he has, I reproach him with undervaluing the

4. Three of the battles in the Peloponnesian War in which Socrates had fought as an infantryman. The battle at Potidaea (in northern Greece) occurred in 432 B.C. (For a fuller account of Socrates' conduct there see Plato's *Symposium*.) The date of the battle at Amphipolis (in northern Greece) is uncertain. The battle at Delium (in central Greece) took place in 424 B.C. 5. The next world. The dead were supposed to carry on a sort of existence below the earth.

greater, and overvaluing the less. And I shall repeat the same words to every one whom I meet, young and old, citizen and alien, but especially to the citizens, inasmuch as they are my brethren. For know that this is the command of God; and I believe that no greater good has ever happened in the state than my service to the God. For I do nothing but go about persuading you all, old and young alike, not to take thought for your persons or your properties, but first and chiefly to care about the greatest improvement of the soul. I tell you that virtue is not given by money, but that from virtue comes money and every other good of man, public as well as private. This is my teaching, and if this is the doctrine which corrupts the youth, I am a mischievous person. But if any one says that this is not my teaching, he is speaking an untruth. Wherefore, O men of Athens, I say to you, do as Anytus bids or not as Anytus bids, and either acquit me or not; but whichever you do, understand that I shall never alter my ways, not even if I have to die many times.

Men of Athens, do not interrupt,[6] but hear me; there was an understanding between us that you should hear me to the end: I have something more to say, at which you may be inclined to cry out; but I believe that to hear me will be good for you, and therefore I beg that you will not cry out. I would have you know, that if you kill such an one as I am, you will injure yourselves more than you will injure me. Nothing will injure me, not Meletus nor yet Anytus—they cannot, for a bad man is not permitted to injure a better than himself. I do not deny that Anytus may, perhaps, kill him, or drive him into exile, or deprive him of civil rights; and he may imagine, and others may imagine, that he is inflicting a great injury upon him: but there I do not agree. For the evil of doing as he is doing—the evil of unjustly taking away the life of another—is greater far.

And now, Athenians, I am not going to argue for my own sake, as you may think, but for yours, that you may not sin against the God by condemning me, who am his gift to you. For if you kill me you will not easily find a successor to me, who, if I may use such a ludicrous figure of speech, am a sort of gadfly, given to the state by God; and the state is a great and noble steed who is tardy in his motions owing to his very size, and requires to be stirred into life. I am that gadfly which God has attached to the state, and all day long and in all places am always fastening upon you, arousing and persuading and reproaching you. You will not easily find another like me, and therefore I would advise you to spare me. I dare say that you may feel out of temper (like a person who is suddenly awakened from sleep), and you think that you might easily strike me dead as Anytus advises, and then you would sleep on for the remainder of

6. The disturbance this time is presumably more general, for Socrates is defying the court and the people.

your lives, unless God in his care of you sent you another gadfly. When I say that I am given to you by God, the proof of my mission is this:—if I had been like other men, I should not have neglected all my own concerns or patiently seen the neglect of them during all these years, and have been doing yours, coming to you individually like a father or elder brother, exhorting you to regard virtue; such conduct, I say, would be unlike human nature. If I had gained anything, or if my exhortations had been paid, there would have been some sense in my doing so; but now, as you will perceive, not even the impudence of my accusers dares to say that I have ever exacted or sought pay of any one; of that they have no witness. And I have a sufficient witness to the truth of what I say—my poverty.

Some one may wonder why I go about in private giving advice and busying myself with the concerns of others, but do not venture to come forward in public and advise the state. I will tell you why. You have heard me speak at sundry times and in divers places of an oracle or sign which comes to me, and is the divinity which Meletus ridicules in the indictment. This sign, which is a kind of voice, first began to come to me when I was a child; it always forbids but never commands me to do anything which I am going to do. This is what deters me from being a politician. And rightly, as I think. For I am certain, O men of Athens, that if I had engaged in politics, I should have perished long ago, and done no good either to you or to myself. And do not be offended at my telling you the truth: for the truth is, that no man who goes to war with you or any other multitude, honestly striving against the many lawless and unrighteous deeds which are done in a state, will save his life; he who will fight for the right, if he would live even for a brief space, must have a private station and not a public one.

I can give you convincing evidence of what I say, not words only, but what you value far more—actions. Let me relate to you a passage of my own life which will prove to you that I should never have yielded to injustice from any fear of death, and that 'as I should have refused to yield' I must have died at once. I will tell you a tale of the courts, not very interesting perhaps, but nevertheless true. The only office of state which I ever held, O men of Athens, was that of senator: the tribe Antiochis,[7] which is my tribe, had the presidency at the trial of the generals who had not taken up the bodies of the slain after the battle of Arginusae;[8] and you proposed to try them in a

7. The Council of the Five Hundred consisted of fifty members of each of the ten tribes into which the population was divided. (Socrates' tribe, like the other nine, was named after a mythical hero, in this case Antiochus.) Each tribal delegation acted as a standing committee of the whole body for a part of the year. The members of this standing committee were called Prytanes. In acting as a member of the council Socrates was not "engaging in politics" but simply fulfilling his duty as a citizen when called upon. 8. An Athenian naval victory over Sparta, in 406 B.C. The Athenian commanders failed to pick up the bodies of a large number of Athenians whose ships had been destroyed. Whether they were prevented from doing so by the wind or simply neglected

body, contrary to law, as you all thought afterwards; but at the time I was the only one of the Prytanes who was opposed to the illegality, and I gave my vote against you; and when the orators threatened to impeach and arrest me, and you called and shouted, I made up my mind that I would run the risk, having law and justice with me, rather than take part in your injustice because I feared imprisonment and death. This happened in the days of the democracy.[9] But when the oligarchy of the Thirty was in power,[1] they sent for me and four others into the rotunda, and bade us bring Leon the Salaminian from Salamis,[2] as they wanted to put him to death. This was a specimen of the sort of commands which they were always giving with the view of implicating as many as possible in their crimes; and then I showed, not in word only but in deed, that, if I may be allowed to use such an expression, I cared not a straw for death, and that my great and only care was lest I should do an unrighteous or unholy thing. For the strong arm of that oppressive power did not frighten me into doing wrong; and when we came out of the rotunda the other four went to Salamis and fetched Leon, but I went quietly home. For which I might have lost my life, had not the power of the Thirty shortly afterwards come to an end. And many will witness to my words.

Now do you really imagine that I could have survived all these years, if I had led a public life, supposing that like a good man I had always maintained the right and had made justice, as I ought, the first thing? No indeed, men of Athens, neither I nor any other man. But I have been always the same in all my actions, public as well as private, and never have I yielded any base compliance to those who are slanderously termed my disciples, or to any other. Not that I have any regular disciples. But if any one likes to come and hear me while I am pursuing my mission, whether he be young or old, he is not excluded. Nor do I converse only with those who pay; but any one, whether he be rich or poor, may ask and answer me and listen to my words; and whether he turns out to be a bad man or a good one, neither result can be justly imputed to me; for I never taught or professed to teach him anything. And if any one says that he has ever learned or heard anything from me in private which all the world has not heard, let me tell you that he is lying.

this duty in the excitement of victory is not known; in any case, the Athenian population suspected the worst and put all ten generals on trial, not in a court of law but before the assembly. The generals were tried not individually, but in a group, and condemned to death. The six who had returned to Athens were executed, among them a son of Pericles. 9. Socrates gives two instances of his political actions, one under the democracy and one under the Thirty Tyrants. In both cases, he was in opposition to the government. 1. In 404 B.C., with Spartan backing the Thirty Tyrants (as they were known to their enemies) ruled for eight months over a defeated Athens. Prominent among them was Critias, who had been one of the rich young men who listened eagerly to Socrates. 2. Athenian territory, an island off Piraeus, the port of Athens. *Rotunda:* The circular building in which the Prytanes held their meetings.

But I shall be asked, Why do people delight in continually conversing with you? I have told you already, Athenians, the whole truth about this matter: they like to hear the cross-examination of the pretenders to wisdom; there is amusement in it. Now this duty of cross-examining other men has been imposed upon me by God; and has been signified to me by oracles, visions, and in every way in which the will of divine power was ever intimated to any one. This is true, O Athenians; or, if not true, would be soon refuted. If I am or have been corrupting the youth, those of them who are now grown up and become sensible that I gave them bad advice in the days of their youth should come forward as accusers, and take their revenge; or if they do not like to come themselves, some of their relatives, fathers, brothers, or other kinsmen, should say what evil their families have suffered at my hands. Now is their time. Many of them I see in the court. There is Crito,[3] who is of the same age and of the same deme with myself, and there is Critobulus his son, whom I also see. Then again there is Lysanias of Sphettus, who is the father of Aeschines—he is present; and also there is Antiphon of Cephisus, who is the father of Epigenes; and there are the brothers of several who have associated with me. There is Nicostratus the son of Theosdotides, and the brother of Theodotus (now Theodotus himself is dead, and therefore he, at any rate, will not seek to stop him); and there is Paralus the son of Demodocus, who had a brother Theages; and Adeimantus the son of Ariston, whose brother Plato[4] is present; and Aeantodorus, who is the brother of Apollodorus, whom I also see. I might mention a great many others, some of whom Meletus should have produced as witnesses in the course of his speech; and let him still produce them, if he has forgotten—I will make way for him. And let him say, if he has any testimony of the sort which he can produce. Nay, Athenians, the very opposite is the truth. For all these are ready to witness on behalf of the corrupter, of the injurer of their kindred, as Meletus and Anytus call me; not the corrupted youth only—there might have been a motive for that—but their uncorrupted elder relatives. Why should they too support me with their testimony? Why, indeed, except for the sake of truth and justice, and because they know that I am speaking the truth, and that Meletus is a liar.

Well, Athenians, this and the like of this is all the defence which I have to offer. Yet a word more. Perhaps there may be some one who is offended at me, when he calls to mind how he himself on a similar, or even a less serious occasion, prayed and entreated the judges with many tears, and how he produced his children in court, which was a moving spectacle, together with a host of relations and

3. A friend of Socrates who later tried to persuade him to escape from prison. *Deme:* Precinct; the local unit of Athenian administration. 4. The writer of the *Apology*.

friends;[5] whereas I, who am probably in danger of my life, will do none of these things. The contrast may occur to his mind, and he may be set against me, and vote in anger because he is displeased at me on this account. Now if there be such a person among you,—mind, I do not say that there is,—to him I may fairly reply: My friend, I am a man, and like other men, a creature of flesh and blood, and not 'of wood or stone,' as Homer says;[6] and I have a family, yes, and sons, O Athenians, three in number, one almost a man, and two others who are still young; and yet I will not bring any of them hither in order to petition you for an acquittal. And why not? Not from any self-assertion or want of respect for you. Whether I am or am not afraid of death is another question, of which I will not now speak. But, having regard to public opinion, I feel that such conduct would be discreditable to myself, and to you, and to the whole state. One who has reached my years, and who has a name for wisdom, ought not to demean himself. Whether this opinion of me be deserved or not, at any rate the world has decided that Socrates is in some way superior to other men. And if those among you who are said to be superior in wisdom and courage, and any other virtue, demean themselves in this way, how shameful is their conduct! I have seen men of reputation, when they have been condemned, behaving in the strangest manner: they seemed to fancy that they were going to suffer something dreadful if they died, and that they could be immortal if you only allowed them to live; and I think that such are a dishonour to the state, and that any stranger coming in would have said of them that the most eminent men of Athens, to whom the Athenians themselves give honour and command, are no better than women. And I say that these things ought not to be done by those of us who have a reputation; and if they are done, you ought not to permit them; you ought rather to show that you are far more disposed to condemn the man who gets up a doleful scene and makes the city ridiculous, than him who holds his peace.

But, setting aside the question of public opinion, there seems to be something wrong in asking a favour of a judge, and thus procuring an acquittal, instead of informing and convincing him. For his duty is, not to make a present of justice, but to give judgment; and he has sworn that he will judge according to the laws, and not according to his own good pleasure; and we ought not to encourage you, nor should you allow yourself to be encouraged, in this habit of perjury—there can be no piety in that. Do not then require me to do what I consider dishonourable and impious and wrong, especially

5. The accepted ending of the speech for the defense was an unrestrained appeal to the pity of the jury. Socrates' refusal to make it is another shock for the prejudices of the audience. 6. In the Odyssey, Book XIX, 11. 162–163, Penelope says to her husband Odysseus (who is disguised as a beggar), "Tell me of your family and where you come from. For you did not spring from an oak or a rock, as the old saying goes."

now, when I am being tried for impiety on the indictment of Meletus. For if, O men of Athens, by force of persuasion and entreaty I could overpower your oaths, then I should be teaching you to believe that there are no gods, and in defending should simply convict myself of the charge of not believing in them. But that is not so—far otherwise. For I do believe that there are gods, and in a sense higher than that in which any of my accusers believe in them. And to you and to God I commit my cause, to be determined by you as is best for you and me.[7]

There are many reasons why I am not grieved, O men of Athens, at the vote of condemnation. I expected it, and am only surprised that the votes are so nearly equal; for I had thought that the majority against me would have been far larger; but now, had thirty votes gone over to the other side, I should have been acquitted. And I may say, I think, that I have escaped Meletus. I may say more; for without the assistance of Anytus and Lycon, any one may see that he would not have had a fifth part of the votes,[8] as the law requires, in which case he would have incurred a fine of a thousand drachmae.

And so he proposes death as the penalty. And what shall I propose on my part, O men of Athens? Clearly that which is my due. And what is my due? What return shall be made to the man who has never had the wit to be idle during his whole life; but has been careless of what the many care for—wealth, and family interests, and military offices, and speaking in the assembly, and magistracies, and plots, and parties. Reflecting that I was really too honest a man to be a politician and live, I did not go where I could do no good to you or to myself; but where I could do the greatest good privately to every one of you, thither I went, and sought to persuade every man among you that he must look to himself, and seek virtue and wisdom before he looks to his private interests, and look to the state before he looks to the interests of the state; and that this should be the order which he observes in all his actions. What shall be done to such an one? Doubtless some good thing, O men of Athens, if he has his reward; and the good should be of a kind suitable to him. What would be a reward suitable to a poor man who is your benefactor, and who desires leisure that he may instruct you? There can be no reward so fitting as maintenance in the Prytaneum,[9] O men of Athens, a reward which

7. The jury reaches a verdict of guilty. It appears from what Socrates says later that the jury was split, 280 for this verdict and 220 against it. The penalty is to be settled by the jury's choice between the penalty proposed by the prosecution and that offered by the defense. The jury itself cannot propose a penalty. Meletus demands death. Socrates must propose the lightest sentence he thinks he can get away with, but one heavy enough to satisfy the majority of the jury who voted him guilty. The prosecution probably expects him to propose exile from Athens, but Socrates surprises them. 8. Socrates jokingly divides the votes against him into three parts, one for each of his three accusers, and points out that Meletus' votes fall below the minimum necessary to justify the trial. 9. The place in which the Prytanes, as representatives of the city, entertained distinguished visitors and winners at the athletic contests at Olympia.

he deserves far more than the citizen who has won the prize at Olympia in the horse or chariot race, whether the chariots were drawn by two horses or by many. For I am in want, and he has enough; and he only gives you the appearance of happiness, and I give you the reality. And if I am to estimate the penalty fairly, I should say that maintenance in the Prytaneum is the just return.

Perhaps you think that I am braving you in what I am saying now, as in what I said before about the tears and prayers. But this is not so. I speak rather because I am convinced that I never intentionally wronged any one, although I cannot convince you—the time has been too short; if there were a law at Athens, as there is in other cities, that a capital cause should not be decided in one day,[1] then I believe that I should have convinced you. But I cannot in a moment refute great slander; and, as I am convinced that I never wronged another, I will assuredly not wrong myself. I will not say of myself that I deserve any evil, or propose any penalty. Why should I? Because I am afraid of the penalty of death which Meletus proposes? When I do not know whether death is a good or an evil, why should I propose a penalty which would certainly be an evil? Shall I say imprisonment? And why should I live in prison, and be the slave of the magistrates of the year—of the Eleven?[2] Or shall the penalty be a fine, and imprisonment until the fine is paid? There is the same objection. I should have to lie in prison, for money I have none, and cannot pay. And if I say exile (and this may possibly be the penalty which you will affix), I must indeed be blinded by the love of life, if I am so irrational as to expect that when you, who are my own citizens, cannot endure my discourses and words, and have found them so grievous and odious that you will have no more of them, others are likely to endure me. No indeed, men of Athens, that is not very likely. And what a life should I lead, at my age, wandering from city to city, ever changing my place of exile, and always being driven out! For I am quite sure that wherever I go, there, as here, the young men will flock to me; and if I drive them away, their elders will drive me out at their request; and if I let them come, their fathers and friends will drive me out for their sakes.

Some one will say: Yes, Socrates, but cannot you hold your tongue, and then you may go into a foreign city, and no one will interfere with you? Now I have great difficulty in making you understand my answer to this. For if I tell you that to do as you say would be a disobedience to the God, and therefore that I cannot hold my tongue, you will not believe that I am serious; and if I say again that daily to discourse about virtue, and of those other things about which you hear me examining myself and others, is the greatest good of man, and that the unexamined life is not worth living, you are still less

1. There was such a law in Sparta. 2. A committee which had charge of prisons and of public executions.

likely to believe me. Yet I say what is true, although a thing of which it is hard for me to persuade you. Also, I have never been accustomed to think that I deserve to suffer any harm. Had I money I might have estimated the offence at what I was able to pay, and not have been much the worse. But I have none, and therefore I must ask you to proportion the fine to my means. Well, perhaps I could afford a mina,[3] and therefore I propose that penalty: Plato, Crito, Critobulus, and Appollodorus, my friends here, bid me say thirty minae, and they will be the sureties. Let thirty minae be the penalty; for which sum they will be ample security to you.[4]

Not much time will be gained, O Athenians, in return for the evil name which you will get from the detractors of the city, who will say that you killed Socrates, a wise man; for they will call me wise, even although I am not wise, when they want to reproach you. If you had waited a little while, your desire would have been fulfilled in the course of nature. For I am far advanced in years, as you may perceive, and not far from death. I am speaking now not to all of you, but only to those who have condemned me to death. And I have another thing to say to them: You think that I was convicted because I had no words of the sort which would have procured my acquittal—I mean, if I had thought fit to leave nothing undone or unsaid. Not so; the deficiency which led to my conviction was not of words—certainly not. But I had not the boldness or impudence or inclination to address you as you would have liked me to do, weeping and wailing and lamenting, and saying and doing many things which you have been accustomed to hear from others, and which, as I maintain, are unworthy of me. I thought at the time that I ought not to do anything common or mean when in danger: nor do I now repent of the style of my defence; I would rather die having spoken after my manner, than speak in your manner and live. For neither in war nor yet at law ought I or any man to use every way of escaping death. Often in battle there can be no doubt that if a man will throw away his arms, and fall on his knees before his pursuers, he may escape death; and in other dangers there are other ways of escaping death, if a man is willing to say and do anything. The difficulty, my friends, is not to avoid death, but to avoid unrighteousness; for that runs faster than death. I am old and move slowly, and the slower runner has overtaken me, and my accusers are keen and quick, and the faster runner, who is unrighteousness, has overtaken them. And now I depart hence condemned by you to suffer the penalty of death,—they too go their ways condemned by the truth to suffer the penalty

3. It is almost impossible to express the value of ancient money in modern terms. A mina was a considerable sum; in Aristotle's time (fourth century B.C.) one mina was recognized as a fair ransom for a prisoner of war. 4. The jury decides for death (according to a much later source, the vote this time was 300 to 200). The decision is not surprising in view of Socrates' intransigence. Socrates now makes a final statement to the court.

of villainy and wrong; and I must abide by my award—let them abide by theirs. I suppose that these things may be regarded as fated,—and I think that they are well.

And now, O men who have condemned me, I would fain prophesy to you; for I am about to die, and in the hour of death men are gifted with prophetic power.[5] And I prophesy to you who are my murderers, that immediately after my departure punishment far heavier than you have inflicted on me will surely await you. Me you have killed because you wanted to escape the accuser, and not to give an account of your lives. But that will not be as you suppose: far otherwise. For I say that there will be more accusers of you than there are now;[6] accusers whom hitherto I have restrained: and as they are younger they will be more inconsiderate with you, and you will be more offended at them. If you think that by killing men you can prevent some one from censuring your evil lives, you are mistaken; that is not a way of escape which is either possible or honourable; the easiest and the noblest way is not to be disabling others, but to be improving yourselves. This is the prophecy which I utter before my departure to the judges who have condemned me.

Friends, who would have acquitted me, I would like also to talk with you about the thing which has come to pass, while the magistrates are busy, and before I go to the place at which I must die. Stay then a little, for we may as well talk with one another while there is time. You are my friends, and I should like to show you the meaning of this event which has happened to me. O my judges—for you I may truly call judges—I should like to tell you of a wonderful circumstance. Hitherto the divine faculty of which the internal oracle is the source has constantly been in the habit of opposing me even about trifles, if I was going to make a slip or error in any matter; and now as you see there has come upon me that which may be thought, and is generally believed to be, the last and worst evil. But the oracle made no sign of opposition, either when I was leaving my house in the morning, or when I was on my way to the court, or while I was speaking, at anything which I was going to say; and yet I have often been stopped in the middle of a speech, but now in nothing I either said or did touching the matter in hand has the oracle opposed me. What do I take to be the explanation of this silence? I will tell you. It is an intimation that what has happened to me is a good, and that those of us who think that death is an evil are in error. For the customary sign would surely have opposed me had I been going to evil and not to good.

Let us reflect in another way, and we shall see that there is great

5. As the dying Hector foretells the death of Achilles; see the *Iliad*, Book XXII, ll. 355–360.
6. Socrates' prophecy was fulfilled, for all of the many different philosophical schools of the early fourth century claimed descent from Socrates and developed one or another aspect of his teachings.

reason to hope that death is a good; for one of two things—either death is a state of nothingness and utter unconsciousness, or, as men say, there is a change and migration of the soul from this world to another. Now if you suppose that there is no consciousness, but a sleep like the sleep of him who is undisturbed even by dreams, death will be an unspeakable gain. For if a person were to select the night in which his sleep was undisturbed even by dreams, and were to compare with this the other days and nights of his life, and then were to tell us how many days and nights he had passed in the course of his life better and more pleasantly than this one, I think that any man, I will not say a private man, but even the great king will not find many such days or nights, when compared with the others. Now if death be of such a nature, I say that to die is gain; for eternity is then only a single night. But if death is the journey to another place, and there, as men say, all the dead abide, what good, O my friends and judges, can be greater than this? If indeed when the pilgrim arrives in the world below, he is delivered from the professors of justice in this world, and finds the true judges who are said to give judgment there, Minos and Rhadamanthus and Aeacus and Triptolemus,[7] and other sons of God who were righteous in their own life, that pilgrimage will be worth making. What would not a man give if he might converse with Orpheus and Musaeus[8] and Hesiod and Homer? Nay, if this be true, let me die again and again. I myself, too, shall have a wonderful interest in there meeting and conversing with Palamedes, and Ajax the son of Telamon,[9] and any other ancient hero who has suffered death through an unjust judgment; and there will be no small pleasure, as I think, in comparing my own sufferings with theirs. Above all, I shall then be able to continue my search into true and false knowledge; as in this world, so also in the next and I shall find out who is wise, and who pretends to be wise, and is not. What would not a man give, O judges, to be able to examine the leader of the great Trojan expedition; or Odysseus or Sisyphus,[1] or numberless others, men and women too! What infinite delight would there be in conversing with them and asking them questions! In another world they do not put a man to death for asking questions: assuredly not. For besides being happier than we are, they will be immortal, if what is said is true.

7. Minos appears as a judge of the dead in Homer's *Odyssey*, Book XI; Rhadamanthus and Aeacus, like Minos, were models of just judges in life and after death; Triptolemus, the mythical inventor of agriculture, is associated with judgment in the next world only in this passage. The first three are sons of Zeus. 8. Legendary poets and religious teachers. *Hesiod:* Early Greek poet (eighth century B.C.?) who wrote *The Works and Days*, a didactic poem containing precepts for the farmer. 9. Both victims of unjust trials. Palamedes, one of the Greek chieftains at Troy, was unjustly executed for treason on the false evidence of his enemy Odysseus, and Ajax committed suicide after the arms of the dead Achilles were adjudged to his enemy Odysseus as the bravest warrior on the Greek side. 1. Odysseus was the most cunning of the Greek chieftains at Troy, the hero of Homer's *Odyssey*; Sisyphus was famous for his unscrupulousness and cunning. Each is presumably an example of the man who "pretends to be wise and is not."

Wherefore, O judges, be of good cheer about death, and know of a certainty, that no evil can happen to a good man, either in life or after death. He and his are not neglected by the gods; nor has my own approaching end happened by mere chance. But I see clearly that the time had arrived when it was better for me to die and be released from trouble; wherefore the oracle gave no sign. For which reason, also, I am not angry with my condemners, or with my accusers; they have done me no harm, although they did not mean to do me any good; and for this I may gently blame them.

Still I have a favour to ask of them. When my sons are grown up, I would ask you, O my friends, to punish them; and I would have you trouble them, as I have troubled you, if they seem to care about riches, or anything more than about virtue; or if they pretend to be something when they are really nothing,—then reprove them, as I have reproved you, for not caring about that for which they ought to care, and thinking that they are something when they are really nothing. And if you do this, both I and my sons will have received justice at your hands.

The hour of departure has arrived, and we go our ways—I to die, and you to live. Which is better God only knows.

Phaedo[2]

[The Death of Socrates]

[The narrator, Phaedo, who was present at the execution of Socrates, gives his friend Echecrates an account of Socrates' last hours. Many of his friends were with him on that day, among them Crito and two Theban philosophers, Simmias and Cebes. These two engaged him in an argument about the immortality of the soul, which Socrates succeeded in proving to their satisfaction. He concluded with an account of the next world, describing the place of reward for the virtuous and of punishment for the wicked. The opening words of the following selection are his conclusion of the argument.]

A man of sense ought not to say, nor will I be very confident, that the description which I have given of the soul and her mansions is exactly true. But I do say that, inasmuch as the soul is shown to be immortal, he may venture to think, not improperly or unworthily, that something of the kind is true. The venture is a glorious one, and he ought to comfort himself with words like these, which is the reason why I lengthen out the tale. Wherefore, I say, let a man be of good cheer about his soul, who having cast away the pleasures and

2. Translated by Benjamin Jowett.

ornaments of the body as alien to him and working harm rather than good, has sought after the pleasures of knowledge; and has arrayed the soul, not in some foreign attire, but in her own proper jewels, temperance, and justice, and courage, and nobility, and truth—in these adorned she is ready to go on her journey to the world below, when her hour comes. You, Simmias and Cebes, and all other men, will depart at some time or other. Me already, as a tragic poet would say, the voice of fate calls. Soon I must drink the poison;[3] and I think that I had better repair to the bath first, in order that the women may not have the trouble of washing my body after I am dead.

When he had done speaking, Crito said: And have you any commands for us, Socrates—anything to say about your children, or any other matter in which we can serve you?

Nothing particular, Crito, he replied: only, as I have always told you, take care of yourselves; that is a service which you may be ever rendering to me and mine and to all of us, whether you promise to do so or not. But if you have no thought for yourselves, and care not to walk according to the rule which I have prescribed for you, not now for the first time, however much you may profess or promise at the moment, it will be of no avail.

We will do our best, said Crito: And in what way shall we bury you?

In any way that you like; but you must get hold of me, and take care that I do not run away from you. Then he turned to us, and added with a smile:—I cannot make Crito believe that I am the same Socrates who have been talking and conducting the argument; he fancies that I am the other Socrates whom he will soon see, a dead body—and he asks, How shall he bury me? And though I have spoken many words in the endeavour to show that when I have drunk the poison I shall leave you and go to the joys of the blessed,—these words of mine, with which I was comforting you and myself, have had, as I perceive, no effect upon Crito. And therefore I want you to be surety for me to him now, as at the trial he was surety to the judges for me: but let the promise be of another sort; for he was surety for me to the judges that I would remain, and you must be my surety to him that I shall not remain, but go away and depart; and then he will suffer less at my death, and not be grieved when he sees my body being burned or buried. I would not have him sorrow at my hard lot, or say at the burial, Thus we lay out Socrates, or, Thus we follow him to the grave or bury him; for false words are not only evil in themselves, but they inflict the soul with evil. Be of good cheer then, my dear Crito, and say that you are burying my body only, and do with that whatever is usual, and what you think best.

3. Hemlock. This was the regular method of execution at Athens. The action of the poison is described below.

When he had spoken these words, he arose and went into a chamber to bathe; Crito followed him and told us to wait. So we remained behind, talking and thinking of the subject of discourse, and also of the greatness of our sorrow; he was like a father of whom we were being bereaved, and we were about to pass the rest of our lives as orphans. When he had taken the bath his children were brought to him (he had two young sons and an elder one); and the women of his family also came, and he talked to them and gave them a few directions in the presence of Crito; then he dismissed them and returned to us.

Now the hour of sunset was near, for a good deal of time had passed while he was within. When he came out, he sat down with us again after his bath, but not much was said. Soon the jailer, who was the servant of the Eleven, entered and stood by him, saying:—To you, Socrates, whom I know to be the noblest and gentlest and best of all who ever came to this place, I will not impute the angry feeling of other men, who rage and swear at me, when, in obedience to the authorities, I bid them drink the poison—indeed, I am sure that you will not be angry with me; for others, as you are aware, and not I, are to blame. And so fare you well, and try to bear lightly what must needs be—you know my errand. Then bursting into tears he turned away and went out.

Socrates looked at him and said: I return your good wishes, and will do as you bid. Then turning to us, he said, How charming the man is: since I have been in prison he has always been coming to see me, and at times he would talk to me, and was as good to me as could be, and now see how generously he sorrows on my account. We must do as he says, Crito; and therefore let the cup be brought, if the poison is prepared: if not, let the attendant prepare some.

Yet, said Crito, the sun is still upon the hill-tops, and I know that many a one has taken the draught late, and after the announcement has been made to him, he has eaten and drunk, and enjoyed the society of his beloved: do not hurry—there is time enough.

Socrates said: Yes, Crito, and they of whom you speak are right in so acting, for they think that they will be gainers by the delay; but I am right in not following their example, for I do not think that I should gain anything by drinking the poison a little later; I should only be ridiculous in my own eyes for sparing and saving a life which is already forfeit. Please then to do as I say, and not to refuse me.

Crito made a sign to the servant, who was standing by; and he went out, and having been absent for some time, returned with the jailer carrying the cup of poison. Socrates said: You, my good friend, who are experienced in these matters, shall give me directions how I am to proceed. The man answered: You have only to walk about until your legs are heavy, and then to lie down, and the poison will

act. At the same time he handed the cup to Socrates, who in the easiest and gentlest manner, without the least fear or change of colour or feature, looking at the man with all his eyes, Echecrates, as his manner was,[4] took the cup and said: What do you say about making a libation[5] out of this cup to any god? May I, or not? The man answered: We only prepare, Socrates, just so much as we deem enough. I understand, he said: but I may and must ask the gods to prosper my journey from this to the other world—even so— and so be it according to my prayer. Then raising the cup to his lips, quite readily and cheerfully he drank off the poison. And hitherto most of us had been able to control our sorrow; but now when we saw him drinking, and saw too that he had finished the draught, we could no longer forbear, and in spite of myself my own tears were flowing fast; so that I covered my face and wept, not for him, but at the thought of my own calamity in having to part from such a friend. Nor was I the first; for Crito, when he found himself unable to restrain his tears, had got up, and I followed; and at that moment, Apollodorus, who had been weeping all the time, broke out in a loud and passionate cry which made cowards of us all. Socrates alone retained his calmness: What is this strange outcry? he said. I sent away the women mainly in order that they might not misbehave in this way, for I have been told that a man should die in peace. Be quiet then, and have patience. When we heard his words we were ashamed, and refrained our tears; and he walked about until, as he said, his legs began to fail, and then he lay on his back, according to directions, and the man who gave him the poison now and then looked at his feet and legs; and after a while he pressed his foot hard, and asked him if he could feel; and he said, No; and then his leg, and so upwards and upwards, and showed us that he was cold and stiff. And he felt them himself, and said: When the poison reaches the heart, that will be the end. He was beginning to grow cold about the groin, when he uncovered his face, for he had covered himself up, and said—they were his last words—he said: Crito, I owe a cock to Asclepius;[6] will you remember to pay the debt? The debt shall be paid, said Crito; is there anything else? There was no answer to this question; but in a minute or two a movement was heard, and the attendants uncovered him; his eyes were set, and Crito closed his eyes and mouth.

Such was the end, Echecrates, of our friend; concerning whom I may truly say, that of all men of his time whom I have known, he was the wisest and justest and best.

4. Socrates was famous for his projecting eyes and his intent stare. 5. He asks if he may pour a little of it out in honor of the gods, as if it were wine. 6. A sacrifice to the god of healing, perhaps as a thank offering for the painlessness of his death.

ARISTOTLE

384–322 B.C.

One member of Plato's Academy, Aristotle (384–322 B.C.), was to become as celebrated and influential as his teacher.

He was not, like Plato, a native Athenian; he was born in the north of Greece, at Stagira, close to the kingdom of Macedonia, which was eventually to become the dominant power in the Greek world. Aristotle entered the Academy at the age of 17 but left it when Plato died (348). He carried on his researches (he was especially interested in zoology) at various places on the Aegean, served as tutor to the young Alexander, son of Philip II of Macedon, and returned to Athens in 355, to found his own philosophical school, the Lyceum. Here he established the world's first research library and at the Lyceum he and his pupils carried on research in zoology, botany, biology, physics, political science, ethics, logic, music, and mathematics. He left Athens when Alexander died in Babylon (323 B.C.) and the Athenians, for a while, were able to demonstrate their hatred of Macedon and everything connected with it; he died a year later.

The scope of his written work, philosophical and scientific, is immense; he is represented here by some excerpts from the *Poetics*, the first systematic work of literary criticism in our tradition.

Aristotle's Poetics, translated, with an introduction and notes by James Hutton (1982), is the best source for the student.

Poetics[1]

. . . Thus, Tragedy is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and possessing magnitude; in embellished language, each kind of which is used separately in the different parts; in the mode of action and not narrated; and effecting through pity and fear [what we call] the *catharsis*[2] of such emotions. By "embellished language" I mean language having rhythm and melody, and by "separately in different parts" I mean that some parts of a play are carried on solely in metrical speech while others again are sung.

The constituent parts of tragedy. Since the imitation is carried out in the dramatic mode by the personages themselves, it necessarily fol-

1. Selected passages. Translated by James Hutton. 2. This is probably the most disputed passage in European literary criticism. There are two main schools of interpretation; they differ in their understanding of the metaphor implied in the word *katharsis*. Some critics take the word to mean "purification" implying a metaphor from the religious process of purification from guilt; the passions are "purified" by the tragic performance since the excitement of these passions by the performance weakens them and reduces them to just proportions in the individual. (This theory was supported by the German critic Lessing.) Others take the metaphor to be medical, reading the word as "purging" and interpreting the phrase to mean that the tragic performance excites the emotions only to allay them, thus ridding the spectator of the disquieting emotions from which he suffers in everyday life; tragedy thus has a therapeutic effect.

lows, first, that the arrangement of Spectacle will be a part of tragedy, and next, that Melody and Language will be parts, since these are the media in which they effect the imitation. By "language" I mean precisely the composition of the verses, by "melody" only that which is perfectly obvious. And since tragedy is the imitation of an action and is enacted by men in action, these persons must necessarily possess certain qualities of Character and Thought, since these are the basis for our ascribing qualities to the actions themselves—character and thought are two natural causes of actions—and it is in their actions that men universally meet with success or failure. The imitation of the action is the Plot. By plot I here mean the combination of the events; Character is that in virtue of which we say that the personages are of such and such a quality; and Thought is present in everything in their utterances that aims to prove a point or that expresses an opinion. Necessarily, therefore, there are in tragedy as a whole, considered as a special form, six constituent elements, viz. Plot, Character, Language, Thought, Spectacle, and Melody. Of these elements, two [Language and Melody] are the *media* in which they effect the imitation, one [Spectacle] is the *manner*, and three [Plot, Character, Thought] are the *objects* they imitate; and besides these there are no other parts. So then they employ these six forms, not just some of them so to speak; for every drama has spectacle, character, plot, language, melody, and thought in the same sense, but the most important of them is the organization of the events [the plot].

Plot and character. For tragedy is not an imitation of men but of actions and of life. It is in action that happiness and unhappiness are found, and the end[3] we aim at is a kind of activity, not a quality; in accordance with their characters men are of such and such a quality, in accordance with their actions they are fortunate or the reverse. Consequently, it is not the purpose of presenting their characters that the agents engage in action, but rather it is for the sake of their actions that they take on the characters they have. Thus, what happens—that is, the plot—is the end for which a tragedy exists, and the end or purpose is the most important thing of all. What is more, without action there could not be a tragedy, but there could be without characterization. . . .

Now that the parts are established, let us next discuss what qualities the plot should have, since plot is the primary and most important part of tragedy. I have posited that tragedy is an imitation of an action that is a whole and complete in itself and of a certain magnitude—for a thing may be a whole, and yet have no magnitude to

3. Purpose.

speak of. Now a thing is a whole if it has a beginning, a middle, and an end. A beginning is that which does not come necessarily after something else, but after which it is natural for another thing to exist or come to be. An end, on the contrary, is that which naturally comes after something else, either as its necessary sequel or as its usual [and hence probable] sequel, but itself has nothing after it. A middle is that which both comes after something else and has another thing following it. A well-constructed plot, therefore, will neither begin at some chance point nor end at some chance point, but will observe the principles here stated.

Contrary to what some people think, a plot is not ipso facto a unity if it revolves about one man. Many things, indeed an endless number of things, happen to any one man some of which do not go together to form a unity, and similarly among the actions one man performs there are many that do not go together to produce a single unified action. Those poets seem all to have erred, therefore, who have composed a *Heracleid*, a *Theseid*, and other such poems, it being their idea evidently that since Heracles was one man, their plot was bound to be unified. . . .

From what has already been said, it will be evident that the poet's function is not to report things that have happened, but rather to tell of such things as might happen, things that are possibilities by virtue of being in themselves inevitable or probable. Thus the difference between the historian and the poet is not that the historian employs prose and the poet verse—the work of Herodotus[4] could be put into verse, and it would be no less a history with verses than without them; rather the difference is that the one tells of things that have been and the other of such things as might be. Poetry, therefore, is a more philosophical and a higher thing than history, in that poetry tends rather to express the universal, history rather the particular fact. A universal is: The sort of thing that (in the circumstances) a certain kind of person will say or do either probably or necessarily, which in fact is the universal that poetry aims for (with the addition of names for the persons); a particular, on the other hand is: What Alcibiades[5] did or had done to him. . . .

Among plots and actions of the simple type, the episodic form is the worst. I call episodic a plot in which the episodes follow one another in no probable or inevitable sequence. Plots of this kind are constructed by bad poets on their own account, and by good poets on account of the actors; since they are composing entries for a competitive exhibition, they stretch the plot beyond what it can bear and are often compelled, therefore, to dislocate the natural order. . . .

Some plots are simple, others complex; indeed the actions of which

4. The historian of the Persian wars, a contemporary of Sophocles.

5. A brilliant but unscrupulous Athenian statesman of the fifth century B.C.

the plots are imitation are at once so differentiated to begin with. Assuming the action to be continuous and unified, as already defined, I call that action simple in which the change of fortune takes place without a reversal or recognition, and that action complex in which the change of fortune involves a recognition or a reversal or both. These events [recognitions and reversals] ought to be so rooted in the very structure of the plot that they follow from the preceding events as their inevitable or probable outcome; for there is a vast difference between following from and merely following after. . . .

Reversal (Peripety) is, as aforesaid, a change from one state of affairs to its exact opposite, and this, too, as I say, should be in conformance with probability or necessity. For example, in *Oedipus*, the messenger[6] comes to cheer Oedipus by relieving him of fear with regard to his mother, but by revealing his true identity, does just the opposite of this. . . .

Recognition, as the word itself indicates, is a change from ignorance to knowledge, leading either to friendship or to hostility on the part of those persons who are marked for good fortune or bad. The best form of recognition is that which is accompanied by a reversal, as in the example from *Oedipus*. . . .

Next in order after the points I have just dealt with, it would seem necessary to specify what one should aim at and what avoid in the construction of plots, and what it is that will produce the effect proper to tragedy.

Now since in the finest kind of tragedy the structure should be complex and not simple, and since it should also be a representation of terrible and piteous events (that being the special mark of this type of imitation) in the first place, it is evident that good men ought not to be shown passing from prosperity to misfortune, for this does not inspire either pity or fear, but only revulsion; nor evil men rising from ill fortune to prosperity, for this is the most untragic plot of all—it lacks every requirement, in that it neither elicits human sympathy nor stirs pity or fear. And again, neither should an extremely wicked man be seen falling from prosperity into misfortune, for a plot so constructed might indeed call forth human sympathy, but would not excite pity or fear, since the first is felt for a person whose misfortune is undeserved and the second for someone like ourselves—pity for the man suffering undeservedly, fear for the man like ourselves—and hence neither pity nor fear would be aroused in this case. We are left with the man whose place is between these extremes. Such is the man who on the one hand is not pre-eminent in virtue and justice, and yet on the other hand does not fall into misfortune

6. The Corinthian herdsman.

through vice or depravity, but falls because of some mistake;[7] one among the number of the highly renowned and prosperous, such as Oedipus and Thyestes and other famous men from families like theirs.

It follows that the plot which achieves excellence will necessarily be single in outcome and not, as some contend, double and will consist in a change of fortune, not from misfortune to prosperity, but the opposite from prosperity to misfortune, occasioned not by depravity, but by some great mistake on the part of one who is either such as I have described or better than this rather than worse. (What actually has taken place confirms this; for though at first the poets accepted whatever myths came to hand, today the finest tragedies are founded upon the stories of only a few houses, being concerned, for example, with Alcmeon, Oedipus, Orestes, Meleager, Thyestes, Telephus, and such others as have chanced to suffer terrible things or to do them.) So, then, tragedy having this construction is the finest kind of tragedy from an artistic point of view. And consequently, those persons fall into the same error who bring it as a charge against Euripides that this is what he does in his tragedies and that most of his plays have unhappy endings. For this is in fact the right procedure, as I have said; and the best proof is that on the stage and in the dramatic contests, plays of this kind seem the most tragic, provided they are successfully worked out, and Euripides, even if in everything else his management is faulty, seems at any rate the most tragic of the poets. . . .

In the characters and the plot construction alike, one must strive for that which is either necessary or probable, so that whatever a character of any kind says or does may be the sort of thing such a character will inevitably or probably say or do and the events of the plot may follow one after another either inevitably or with probability. (Obviously, then, the denouement of the plot should arise from the plot itself and not be brought about "from the machine,"[8] as it is in *Medea* and in the embarkation scene in the *Iliad*.[9] The machine is to be used for matters lying outside the drama, either antecedents of the action which a human being cannot know, or things subsequent to the action that have to be prophesied and announced; for we accept it that the gods see everything. Within the events of the plot itself, however, there should be nothing unreasonable, or if there

7. The Greek word is *hamartia*. It has sometimes been translated as "flaw" (hence the expression "tragic flaw") and thought of as a moral defect, but comparison with Aristotle's use of the word in other contexts suggests strongly that he means by it "mistake" or "error" (of judgment).

8. Literally the machine which was employed in the theater to show the gods flying in space. It has come to mean any implausible way of solving the complications of the plot. Medea escapes from Corinth "on the machine" in her magic chariot. 9. Aristotle refers to an incident in the second book of the *Iliad*; an attempt of the Greek rank and file to return home and abandon the siege is arrested by the intervention of Athena. (If it were a drama she would appear "on the machine.")

is, it should be kept outside the play proper, as is done in the *Oedipus* of Sophocles.) . . .

The chorus in tragedy. The chorus ought to be regarded as one of the actors, and as being part of the whole and integrated into performance, not in Euripides' way but in that of Sophocles. In the other poets, the choral songs have no more relevance to the plot than if they belonged to some other play. And so nowadays, following the practice introduced by Agathon,[1] the chorus merely sings interludes. But what difference is there between the singing of interludes and taking a speech or even an entire episode from one play and inserting it into another?

1. A younger contemporary of Euripides; most of his plays were produced in the fourth century B.C.

CATULLUS

84?–54? B.C.

Gaius Valerius Catullus, born in the North Italian city of Verona around 84 B.C., lived out his short life of some thirty years in the last violent century of the Roman republic—a time of political upheaval which broke out more than once into civil war and which culminated in the establishment of imperial authority by Augustus (see the general introduction, p. 11). The one hundred and sixteen of his poems that have come down to us present a rich variety: imitations of Greek poets (including a brilliant translation of one of Sappho's most passionate lyrics—number two in our selection, p. 248) and long poems on Greek mythological themes as well as scurrilous personal attacks on contemporary politicians and private individuals, lighthearted verses designed to amuse his friends, a magnificent marriage hymn, and, above all, a series of poems (our selection represents them) which deal with his love affair, at first ecstatically happy, then despairing, with a Roman lady he calls Lesbia but who was probably Clodia, the enchanting but viciously corrupt sister of one of Rome's most cynical and violent aristocrats turned political gangster. These poems present all the phases of the liaison, from the unalloyed happiness of the first encounters through doubt and hesitation to despair and virulent accusation, ending in heartbroken resignation to the bitter fact. They express both the joy of passionate love requited and the torment of betrayal in language so direct and simple, so charged with ecstasy and fury, that they have been the despair of translators ever since.

For a sensitive appreciation of Catullus's poetry see E. A. Havelock, *The Lyric Genius of Catullus* (1932, reprinted 1967). For a brief but masterly assessment see J. W. Mackail, *Latin Literature* (1895, reprinted 1962).

1[1]

Come, Lesbia, let us live and love,
nor give a damn what sour old men say.
The sun that sets may rise again
but when our light has sunk into the earth,
it is gone forever.
    Give me a thousand kisses,
then a hundred, another thousand,
another hundred
    and in one breath
still kiss another thousand,
another hundred.
    O then with lips and bodies joined
many deep thousands;
    confuse
their number,
    so that poor fools and cuckolds (envious
even now) shall never
learn our wealth and curse us
with their
evil eyes.

2

There are many who think of Quintia in terms of beauty,
but to me she is merely tall and golden white, erect,
and I admit each of these separate distinctions in her favour,
yet I object, deny,
that the word "beauty" describes her person;
for she has no charm, not even a grain of salt in her whole body
to give you appetite—
now Lesbia has beauty, she is everything
that's handsome, glorious,
and she has captured all that Venus has to offer
in ways of love.

3

No woman, if she is honest, can say that she's
been blessed with greater love, my Lesbia,
than I have given you;
nor has any man held to a contract made
with more fidelity

1. Our selection (15 poems out of 116) are translated by Horace Gregory. The numbers of the poems in the original text are: 5, 86, 87, 107, 109, 83, 70, 72, 60, 85, 75, 8, 58, 11, 76.

than I have shown, my dear,
in loving you.

4

When at last after long despair, our hopes ring true again
and long-starved desire eats, O then the mind leaps in the sunlight—
Lesbia
so it was with me when you returned. Here was a treasure
more valuable than gold; you, whom I love beyond hope, giving
yourself
to me again. That hour, a year of holidays, radiant,
where is the man more fortunate than I,
where can he find anything in life more glorious
than the sight of all his wealth restored?

5

My life, my love, you say our love will last forever;
O gods remember
her pledge, convert the words of her avowal into a prophecy.
Now let her blood speak, let sincerity govern each syllable fallen
from her lips, so that the long years of our lives shall be
a contract of true love inviolate
against time itself, a symbol of eternity.

6

Lesbia speaks evil of me with her husband near and he (damned
idiot) loves to hear her.
Chuckling, the fool is happy, seeing nothing, understanding noth-
ing.
If she forgetting me fell silent, her heart would be his alone, content
and peaceful;
but she raves, spitting hatred upon me, all of which carries this
meaning:
I am never out of her mind, and what is more, she rises in fury
against me
with words that make her burn, her blood passionate for me.

7

My woman says that she would rather wear the wedding-veil for me
than anyone: even if Jupiter himself came storming after her;
that's what she says, but when a woman talks to a hungry,
ravenous lover, her words should be written upon the wind
and engraved in rapid waters.

8

There was a time, O Lesbia, when you said Catullus was the only
man on earth who could understand you,
who could twine his arms round you, even Jove himself less welcome.
And when I thought of you, my dear, you were not the mere flesh and
the means by which a lover finds momentary rapture.
My love was half paternal, as a father greets his son or
smiles at his daughter's husband.

Although I know you well (too well), my love now turns to fire
and you are small and shallow.
Is this a miracle? Your wounds in love's own battle
have made me your companion, perhaps, a greater lover,
but O, my dear, I'll never be
the modest boy who saw you as a lady, delicate and sweet,
a paragon of virtue.

9

Were you born of a lioness in the Libyan Mountains,
or that half-woman monster, Scylla,[2]
screaming in the lowest chambers of her womb,
sent forth already merciless and hard,
one who could never hear the cries of a man, even in his mortal agony,
O heart made bitter and cruel beyond all measure.

10

I hate and love.
And if you ask me why,
I have no answer, but I discern,
can feel, my senses rooted in eternal torture.

11

You are the cause of this destruction, Lesbia,
that has fallen upon my mind;
this mind that has ruined itself
by fatal constancy.
And now it cannot rise from its own misery
to wish that you become
best of women, nor can it fail

2. A sea monster who snatched sailors from their ships and devoured them. She was woman above the waist and a pack of ravenous hounds below.

to love you even though all is lost and you destroy
all hope.

12

Poor damned Catullus, here's no time for nonsense,
open your eyes, O idiot, innocent boy, look at what has happened:
once there were sunlit days when you followed after
where ever a girl would go, she loved with greater
love than any woman knew.
Then you took your pleasure
and the girl was not unwilling. Those were the bright days, gone;
now she's no longer yielding; you must be, poor idiot,
more like a man! not running after
her your mind all tears; stand firm, insensitive.
Say with a smile, voice steady, "Good-bye, my girl," Catullus
strong and manly no longer follows you, nor comes when you are
calling
him at night and you shall need him.
You whore! Where's your man to cling to, who will praise your
beauty,
where's the man that you love and who will call you his,
and when you fall to kissing, whose lips will you devour?
But always, your Catullus will be as firm as rock is.

13

Caelius, my Lesbia, that one, that only Lesbia,
Lesbia whom Catullus loved more than himself and all things
he ever owned or treasured.
Now her body's given up in alley-ways,
on highroads to these fine Roman gentlemen,
fathered centuries ago by the noble Remus.[3]

14

Furius, Aurelius, bound to Catullus
though he marches piercing farthest India
where echoing waves of the Eastern Oceans
break up the shores:

Under Caspian seas, to mild Arabia,
east of Parthia, dark with savage bowmen,
or where the Nile, sevenfold and uprising,
stains its leveled sands,—

3. Brother of Romulus, founder of Rome.

Even though he marches over Alps to gaze on
great Caesar's monuments:[4] the Gallic Rhine and
Britons who live beyond torn seas, remotest
men of distant lands—

Friends who defy with me all things, whatever
gods may send us, go now, friends, deliver
these words to my lady, nor sweet—flattering,
nor kind nor gentle:

Live well and sleep with adulterous lovers,
three hundred men between your thighs, embracing
all love turned false, again, again, and breaking
their strength, now sterile.

She will not find my love (once hers) returning;
she it was who caused love, this lonely flower,
tossed aside, to fall by the plough dividing
blossoming meadows.

15

If man can find rich consolation, remembering his good deeds and all he has done,
if he remembers his loyalty to others, nor abuses his religion by heartless betrayal
of friends to the anger of powerful gods,
then, my Catullus, the long years before you shall not sink in darkness with all hope gone,
wandering, dismayed, through the ruins of love.
All the devotion that man gives to man, you have given, Catullus,
your heart and your brain flowed into a love that was desolate, wasted, nor can it return.
But why, why do you crucify love and yourself through the years?
Take what the gods have to offer and standing serene, rise forth as a rock against darkening skies;
and yet you do nothing but grieve, sunken deep in your sorrow, Catullus,
for it is hard, hard to throw aside years lived in poisonous love that has tainted your brain
and must end.
If this seems impossible now, you must rise
to salvation. O gods of pity and mercy, descend and witness my sorrow, if ever

4. Julius Caesar began the conquest of Gaul in 58 B.C. and in 55 B.C. made an expedition to Britain.

you have looked upon man in his hour of death, see me now in
despair.
Tear this loathsome disease from my brain. Look, a subtle corruption has entered my bones,
no longer shall happiness flow through my veins like a river.
No longer I pray
that she love me again, that her body be chaste, mine forever.
Cleanse my soul of this sickness of love, give me power to rise, resurrected, to thrust love aside,
I have given my heart to the gods, O hear me, omnipotent heaven,
and ease me of love and its pain.

VIRGIL

70–19 B.C.

Publius Virgilius Maro was born in 70 B.C. in the north of Italy. Very little is known about his life. The earliest work which is certainly his is the *Bucolics*, a collection of poems in the pastoral genre which have had enormous influence. These were followed by the *Georgics*, a didactic poem on farming, in four books, which many critics consider his finest work. The *Aeneid*, the Roman epic, was left unfinished at his early death in 19 B.C.

Like all the Latin poets, Virgil built on the solid foundations of his Greek predecessors. The story of Aeneas, the Trojan prince who came to Italy and whose descendants founded Rome, combines the themes of the *Odyssey* (the wanderer in search of home) and the *Iliad* (the hero in battle). Virgil borrows Homeric turns of phrase, similes, sentiments, whole incidents: his Aeneas, like Achilles, sacrifices prisoners to the shade of a friend and, like Odysseus, descends alive to the world of the dead. But unlike Achilles, Aeneas does not satisfy the great passion of his life, nor, like Odysseus, does he find a home in which to end his days in peace. The personal objectives of both of Homer's heroes are sacrificed by Aeneas for a greater objective. There is something greater than himself. His mission, imposed on him by the gods, is to found a city, from which, in the fullness of time, will spring the Roman state.

Homer presents us in the *Iliad* with the tragic pattern of the individual will, Achilles' wrath. But Aeneas is more than an individual. He is the prototype of the ideal Roman ruler; his qualities are the devotion to duty and the seriousness of purpose which were to give the Mediterranean world two centuries of ordered government. Aeneas' mission begins in disorder in the burning city of Troy, but he leaves it carrying his father on his shoulders and leading his little son by the hand. This famous picture emphasizes the fact that, unlike Achilles, he is securely set in a continuity of generations, the immortality of the family group, just as his mission to found a city, a home for the gods of Troy whose statues he carries with him, places him in a political and religious continuity. Achilles has no future. When he men-

tions his father and son, neither of whom he will see again, he emphasizes for us the loneliness of his short career; the brilliance of his life is that of a meteor which burns itself out to darkness. Odysseus has a father, wife, and son, and his heroic efforts are directed toward re-establishing himself in his proper context, that home in which he will be no longer man in a world of magic and terror, but man in an organized and continuous community. But he fights for himself. Aeneas, on the other hand, suffers and fights, not for himself but for the future; his own life is unhappy and his death miserable. Yet he can console himself with the glory of his sons to come, the pageant of Roman achievement which he is shown by his father in the world below and which he carries on his shield. Aeneas' future is Virgil's present; the consolidation of the Roman peace under Augustus is the reward of Aeneas' unhappy life of effort and suffering.

Summarized like this, the *Aeneid* sounds like propaganda, which, in one sense of the word, it is. What saves it from the besetting fault of even the best propaganda—the partial concealment of the truth—is the fact that Virgil maintains an independence of the power which he is celebrating and sees his hero in the round. He knows that the Roman ideal of devotion to duty has another side, the suppression of many aspects of the personality; that the man who wins and uses power must sacrifice much of himself, must live a life which, compared with that of Achilles or Odysseus, is constricted. In Virgil's poem Aeneas betrays the great passion of his life, his love for Dido, queen of Carthage. He does it reluctantly, but nevertheless he leaves her, and the full realization of what he has lost comes to him only when he meets her ghost in the world below. He weeps (as he did not at Carthage) and he pleads, in stronger terms than he did then, the overriding power which forced him to depart: "I left your land against my will, my queen." She leaves him without a word, her silence as impervious to pleas and tears as his at Carthage once, and he follows her weeping as she goes back to join her first love, her husband Sychaeus. He has sacrificed his love to something greater, but this does not insulate him from unhappiness. The limitations upon the dedicated man are emphasized by the contrasting figure of Dido, who follows her own impulse always, even in death. By her death, Virgil tells us expressly, she forestalls fate, breaks loose from the pattern in which Aeneas remains to the bitter end.

The angry reactions which this part of the poem has produced in many critics are the true measure of Virgil's success. Aeneas does act in such a way that he forfeits much of our sympathy, but this is surely exactly what Virgil intended. The Dido episode is not, as many critics have supposed, a flaw in the great design, a case of Virgil's sympathy outrunning his admiration for Aeneas; it is Virgil's emphatic statement of the sacrifice which the Roman ideal of duty demands. Aeneas' sacrifice is so great that few of us could make it ourselves, and none of us can contemplate it in another without a feeling of loss. It is an expression of the famous Virgilian sadness which informs every line of the *Aeneid* and which makes a poem that was in its historical context a command performance into the great epic which has dominated Western literature ever since.

W. A. Camps, *An Introduction to Virgil's Aeneid* (1969), is a short and simply written discussion of all aspects of the poem. *Virgil: A Collection of*

Critical Essays, edited by Steele Commager (1966), contains essays by various hands, ten of them on the *Aeneid*.

Virgil in Latin

Conticuere omnes intentique ora tenebant;
inde toro pater Aeneas sic orsus ab alto:
  Infandum, regina, iubes renouare dolorem,
Troianas ut opes et lamentabile regnum
eruerint Danai, quaeque ipse miserrima uidi
et quorum pars magna fui. quis talia fando
Myrmidonum Dolopomue aut duri miles Ulixi
temperet a lacrimis? et iam nox umida caelo
praecipitat suadentque cadentia sidera somnos.
sed si tantus amor casus cognoscere nostros
et breuiter Troiae supremum audire laborem,
quamquam animus meminisse horret luctuque refugit,
incipiam.

This is the beginning of Book II of the *Aeneid;* Aeneas, at the banquet in Carthage, tells the story of the fall of Troy. The long lines do not employ rhyme but they have a regular rhythmic pattern based not on stress, as in English verse, but on length of syllable, i.e., the time taken to pronounce it. Some vowels are naturally long and others naturally short; but a short vowel may be made long by position, i.e., if it is followed by two consonants it takes just as much time to pronounce as if it were naturally long. The line consists of six feet, either dactyl – ∪∪ or spondee – –. In the first four feet various combinations are employed, but the last two feet, except in cases where a special effect is sought, are always dactyl plus spondee.

This hexameter (six foot) line is capable of great variety, contained always in the formal pattern. Unfortunately, attempts to reproduce its disciplined variety in English-stressed verse (Longfellow's "This is the forest primeval . . ." for example) have not proved successful and our translator has used a modern adaptation of the basic English line, the iambic pentameter of Shakespeare and Milton.

The subtle variation of the rhythm is not the only problem faced by the translator; he must also try to compensate for the loss of effects which depend on the flexibility of Latin word order. In English, syntactical relationship is determined by that order: "man bites dog" means the opposite of "dog bites man." In Latin, since the tèrminations of the nouns show who does what to whom, "man bites dog" is *vir mórdet canem* and "dog bites man" *canis mordet virum*. Consequently the words can be arranged in any order with no change of meaning. *Vírum canis mordet, canis virum mordet*, and any other combination of these three elements all mean the same thing: "dog bites man." But the word order is not without its force: it can indicate emphasis. Normal order—subject, object, verb (for the Latin verb tends towards the

end of the sentence)—would be *canis virum mordet*. But putting *virum*, the object, first—*virum canis mordet*—would draw attention to the word: "it was a *man* the dog bit."

This is a simple example; much more complicated effects are available to a poet in extended sentences. Line 3 of the passage quoted above, for example—*Infandum, regina, iubes renovare dolorem*—uses the flexibility of word order not only for emphasis but also to explore the possibilities of ambiguity and surprise offered by a highly inflected language. *Infandum*—"unspeakable, something that cannot be said"—is the first word and we do not know from its termination whether it is subject or object nor whether it is to be understood as a noun—"an unspeakable thing"—or an adjective for which a noun will be supplied later. *Regina* ("queen") could, according to its termination, be the subject of the sentence, but the context, Aeneas' reply to the Queen's request for his story, suggests strongly that it is a form of address: "Unspeakable, oh Queen. . . ." The subject comes with the next word, the verb *iubes*; its termination shows that this is the second person, the "you" form—"you command." She has commanded something unspeakable; is the reader being prepared for a refusal on the part of Aeneas to tell his story? *Renovare* defines the Queen's order—"to renew"—and *dolorem* tells us what he is to renew—"sorrow." And the termination of this word suggests that the first word of the line, *infandum*, is in fact an adjective defining *dolorem*. The line, at this last word, re-forms itself into an unexpected pattern: "Unspeakable, oh Queen, is the sorrow you command me to renew." The line is enclosed between the two most important words in Aeneas' statement, *infandum* and *dolorem*; its last word imposes upon us a slight change in our understanding of its first and so redirects attention to that solemn opening word of Aeneas' evocation of the fall of Troy, three long syllables heavy with grief for the lost splendor of a city that is now ash and rubble.

The Aeneid[1]

Book I

I sing of warfare and a man at war.[2]
From the sea-coast of Troy in early days
He came to Italy by destiny,
To our Lavinian western shore,[3]
A fugitive, this captain, buffeted
Cruelly on land as on the sea
By blows from powers of the air—behind them
Baleful Juno[4] in her sleepless rage.

1. Abridged. Translated by Robert Fitzgerald. 2. Aeneas, one of the Trojan champions in the fight for Troy, son of Aphrodite (Venus) and Anchises, a member of the royal house of Troy. Aeneas survived the fall of the city and set off in search of another home. After years of wandering he settled in Italy, and from his line sprang, in the fullness of time, the founders of Rome. 3. The west coast of Italy in the vicinity of Rome, named after the nearby city of Lavinium. Lavinia is the name of the Italian princess whom Aeneas is eventually to marry. 4. The Latin equivalent of Hera, wife of the ruler of the gods. As in the *Iliad*, she is a bitter enemy of the Trojans.

And cruel losses were his lot in war,
Till he could found a city and bring home
His gods to Latium,[5] land of the Latin race,
The Alban lords,[6] and the high walls of Rome.
Tell me the causes now, O Muse, how galled
In her divine pride, and how sore at heart
From her old wound, the queen of gods compelled him—
A man apart, devoted to his mission—
To undergo so many perilous days
And enter on so many trials. Can anger
Black as this prey on the minds of heaven?
Tyrian[7] settlers in that ancient time
Held Carthage,[8] on the far shore of the sea,
Set against Italy and Tiber's[9] mouth,
A rich new town, warlike and trained for war.
And Juno, we are told, cared more for Carthage
Than for any walled city of the earth,
More than for Samos,[1] even. There her armor
And chariot were kept, and, fate permitting,
Carthage would be the ruler of the world.
So she intended, and so nursed that power.
But she had heard long since
That generations born of Trojan blood
Would one day overthrow her Tyrian walls,
And from that blood a race would come in time
With ample kingdoms, arrogant in war,
For Libya's ruin: so the Parcae[2] spun.
In fear of this, and holding in memory
The old war she had carried on at Troy
For Argos'[3] sake (the origins of that anger,
That suffering, still rankled: deep within her,
Hidden away, the judgment Paris gave,[4]
Snubbing her loveliness; the race she hated;
The honors given ravished Ganymede),

5. The coastal plain on which Rome is situated. 6. The city of Alba Longa was to be founded by Aeneas' son Ascanius, and from it were to come Romulus and Remus, the builders of Rome. 7. From Tyre, the principal city of the Phoenicians, a seafaring people, located on the coast of Palestine. 8. On the coast of North Africa, opposite Sicily. Originally a Tyrian colony, it became a rich commercial center, controlling traffic in the Western Mediterranean. In the third and second centuries B.C. Carthage fought a series of bitter wars against Rome for the domination of the area. Carthage was captured and destroyed by the Romans in 146 B.C. 9. The river that flows through Rome. 1. A large island off the coast of Asia Minor, famous for its cult of Hera (Juno). 2. The Fates, who were imagined as female divinities, who spun human destinies. *Libya:* An inclusive name for the North African coast. 3. Home city of the Achaean Kings Agamemnon and Menelaus; Menelaus' wife Helen ran off to Troy with Paris and the Achaeans laid siege to Troy. The goddess Hera (Juno) supported the Achaean side. 4. Paris, son to King Priam of Troy, was chosen to judge which was the most beautiful goddess—Hera, Aphrodite, or Athena. All three attempted to bribe him, but Aphrodite's promise, the love of Helen, prevailed and he awarded her the prize.

Saturnian Juno,[5] burning for it all,
Buffeted on the waste of sea those Trojans
Left by the Greeks and pitiless Achilles,
Keeping them far from Latium. For years
They wandered as their destiny drove them on
From one sea to the next: so hard and huge
A task it was to found the Roman people.

[AENEAS ARRIVES IN CARTHAGE]

[The story opens with a storm, provoked by Juno's agency, which scatters Aeneas' fleet off Sicily and separates him from his companions. He lands on the African coast near Carthage. Setting out with his friend Achates to explore the country, he meets his mother, Venus (Aphrodite), who tells him that the rest of his ships are safe and directs him to the city just founded by Dido, the queen of Carthage. Venus surrounds Aeneas and Achates with a cloud so that they can see without being seen.]

Meanwhile
The two men pressed on where the pathway led,
Soon climbing a long ridge that gave a view
Down over the city and facing towers.
Aeneas found, where lately huts had been,
Marvelous buildings, gateways, cobbled ways,
And din of wagons. There the Tyrians
Were hard at work: laying courses for walls,
Rolling up stones to build the citadel,
While others picked out building sites and plowed
A boundary furrow. Laws were being enacted,
Magistrates and a sacred senate chosen.
Here men were dredging harbors, there they laid
The deep foundation of a theater,
And quarried massive pillars to enhance
The future stage—as bees in early summer
In sunlight in the flowering fields
Hum at their work, and bring along the young
Full-grown to beehood; as they cram their combs
With honey, brimming all the cells with nectar,
Or take newcomers' plunder, or like troops
Alerted, drive away the lazy drones,
And labor thrives and sweet thyme scents the honey.
Aeneas said: "How fortunate these are
Whose city walls are rising here and now!"

5. Juno's father was Saturn (Greek Kronos). *Ganymede*: A beautiful Trojan boy taken up into heaven by Jupiter.

He looked up at the roofs, for he had entered,
Swathed in cloud—strange to relate—among them,
Mingling with men, yet visible to none.
In mid-town stood a grove that cast sweet shade
Where the Phoenicians, shaken by wind and sea,
Had first dug up that symbol Juno showed them,
A proud warhorse's head: this meant for Carthage
Prowess in war and ease[6] of life through ages.
Here being built by the Sidonian[7] queen
Was a great temple planned in Juno's honor,
Rich in offerings and the godhead there.
Steps led up to a sill of bronze, with brazen
Lintel, and bronze doors on groaning pins.
Here in this grove new things that met his eyes
Calmed Aeneas' fear for the first time.
Here for the first time he took heart to hope
For safety, and to trust his destiny more
Even in affliction. It was while he walked
From one to another wall of the great temple
And waited for the queen, staring amazed
At Carthaginian promise, at the handiwork
Of artificers and the toil they spent upon it:
He found before his eyes the Trojan battles
In the old war, now known throughout the world—
The great Atridae, Priam, and Achilles,[8]
Fierce in his rage at both sides. Here Aeneas
Halted, and tears came.
"What spot on earth,"
He said, "what region of the earth, Achatës,
Is not full of the story of our sorrow?
Look, here is Priam. Even so far away
Great valor has due honor; they weep here
For how the world goes, and our life that passes
Touches their hearts. Throw off your fear. This fame
Insures some kind of refuge."
He broke off
To feast his eyes and mind on a mere image,
Sighing often, cheeks grown wet with tears,
To see again how, fighting around Troy,
The Greeks broke here, and ran before the Trojans,
And there the Phrygians[9] ran, as plumed Achilles

6. Because they would have a land fertile enough to support horses. 7. From Sidon, another city of the Phoenicians. 8. The greatest warrior on the Achaean side; he quarreled with Agamemnon (hence "rage at both sides"). *Atridae*: Sons of Atreus: Agamemnon and Menelaus. 9. Trojans.

Harried them in his warcar. Nearby, then,
He recognized the snowy canvas tents
Of Rhesus,[1] and more tears came: these, betrayed
In first sleep, Diomedes devastated,
Swording many, till he reeked with blood,
Then turned the mettlesome horses toward the beachhead
Before they tasted Trojan grass or drank
At Xanthus ford.
And on another panel
Troilus,[2] without his armor, luckless boy,
No match for his antagonist, Achilles,
Appeared pulled onward by his team: he clung
To his warcar, though fallen backward, hanging
On to the reins still, head dragged on the ground,
His javelin scribbling S's in the dust.
Meanwhile to hostile Pallas'[3] shrine
The Trojan women walked with hair unbound,
Bearing the robe of offering, in sorrow,
Entreating her, beating their breasts. But she,
Her face averted, would not raise her eyes.
And there was Hector, dragged around Troy walls
Three times, and there for gold Achilles sold him,
Bloodless and lifeless. Now indeed Aeneas
Heaved a mighty sigh from deep within him,
Seeing the spoils, the chariot, and the corpse
Of his great friend, and Priam, all unarmed,
Stretching his hands out.
He himself he saw
In combat with the first of the Achaeans,
And saw the ranks of Dawn, black Memnon's[4] arms;
Then, leading the battalion of Amazons
With half-moon shields, he saw Penthesilëa[5]
Fiery amid her host, buckling a golden
Girdle beneath her bare and arrogant breast,
A girl who dared fight men, a warrior queen.
Now, while these wonders were being surveyed
By Aeneas of Dardania,[6] while he stood
Enthralled, devouring all in one long gaze,
The queen paced toward the temple in her beauty,
Dido, with a throng of men behind.

1. King of Thrace, who came to the help of Troy just before the end of the war. An oracle proclaimed that if his horses ate Trojan grass and drank the water of the river Xanthus, Troy would not fall. Odysseus and Diomedes went into the Trojan lines at night, killed the king, and stole the horses. 2. A young son of Priam, killed by Achilles. 3. Athena (cf. *Iliad*, VI. 297 ff.). 4. King of the Aethiopians, who fought on the Trojan side. *Achaeans*: Greeks. 5. Queen of the Amazons, killed by Achilles. 6. Another name for the kingdom of Troy.

As on Eurotas bank or Cynthus[7] ridge
Diana trains her dancers, and behind her
On every hand the mountain nymphs appear,
A myriad converging; with her quiver
Slung on her shoulders, in her stride she seems
The tallest, taller by a head than any,
And joy pervades Latona's[8] quiet heart:
So Dido seemed, in such delight she moved
Amid her people, cheering on the toil
Of a kingdom in the making. At the door
Of the goddess' shrine, under the temple dome,
All hedged about with guards on her high throne,
She took her seat. Then she began to give them
Judgments and rulings, to apportion work
With fairness, or assign some tasks by lot,
When suddenly Aeneas saw approaching,
Accompanied by a crowd, Antheus and Sergestus
And brave Cloanthus,[9] with a few companions,
Whom the black hurricane had driven far
Over the sea and brought to other coasts.
He was astounded, and Achatës too
Felt thrilled by joy and fear: both of them longed
To take their friends' hands, but uncertainty
Hampered them. So, in their cloudy mantle,
They hid their eagerness, waiting to learn
What luck these men had had, where on the coast
They left their ships, and why they came. It seemed
Spokesmen for all the ships were now arriving,
Entering the hall, calling for leave to speak.
When all were in, and full permission given
To make their plea before the queen, their eldest,
Ilioneus, with composure said:

"Your majesty,
Granted by great Jupiter freedom to found
Your new town here and govern fighting tribes
With justice—we poor Trojans, worn by winds
On every sea, entreat you: keep away
Calamity of fire from our ships!
Let a godfearing people live, and look
More closely at our troubles. Not to ravage
Libyan hearths or turn with plunder seaward

7. A mountain on the island of Delos, birthplace of Diana (Artemis), virgin goddess of the hunt. *Eurotas:* A river near Sparta where Artemis was worshipped. 8. Leto, mother of Diana. 9. Ship captains of Aeneas' fleet from whom he had been separated in the storm.

Have we come; that force and that audacity
Are not for beaten men.
There is a country
Called by the Greeks Hesperia,[1] very old,
Potent in warfare and in wealth of earth;
Oenotrians[2] farmed it; younger settlers now,
The tale goes, call it by their chief's[3] name, Italy.
We laid our course for this.
But stormy Orion[4] and a high sea rising
Deflected us on shoals and drove us far,
With winds against us, into whelming waters,
Unchanneled reefs. We kept afloat, we few,
To reach your coast. What race of men is this?
What primitive state could sanction this behavior?
Even on beaches we are denied a landing,
Harried by outcry and attack, forbidden
To set foot on the outskirts of your country.
If you care nothing for humanity
And merely mortal arms, respect the gods
Who are mindful of good actions and of evil!

We had a king, Aeneas—none more just,
More zealous, greater in warfare and in arms.
If fate preserves him, if he does not yet
Lie spent amid the insensible shades but still
Takes nourishment of air, we need fear nothing;
Neither need you repent of being first
In courtesy, to outdo us. Sicily too
Has towns and plowlands and a famous king
Of Trojan blood, Acestës.[5] May we be
Permitted here to beach our damaged ships,
Hew timbers in your forest, cut new oars,
And either sail again for Latium, happily,
If we recover shipmates and our king,
Or else, if that security is lost,
If Libyan waters hold you, Lord Aeneas,
Best of Trojans, hope of Iulus[6] gone,
We may at least cross over to Sicily
From which we came, to homesteads ready there,
And take Acestës for our king."

1. Italy, literally "the western country." 2. The original inhabitants of Italy. 3. Italus. 4. The setting of this constellation in November signaled the onset of stormy weather at sea. 5. A Sicilian king. His mother was a Trojan and he had offered Aeneas and his men a home in his dominions. 6. Ascanius, Aeneas' son.

Ilioneus
Finished, and all the sons of Dardanus[7]
Murmured assent. Dido with eyes downcast
Replied in a brief speech:
"Cast off your fear,
You Teucrians,[8] put anxiety aside.
Severe conditions and the kingdom's youth
Constrain me to these measures, to protect
Our long frontiers with guards.
Who has not heard
Of the people of Aeneas, of Troy city,
Her valors and her heroes, and the fires
Of the great war? We are not so oblivious,
We Phoenicians. The sun yokes his team
Within our range[9] at Carthage. Whether you choose
Hesperia Magna and the land of Saturn
Or Eryx[1] in the west and King Acestës,
I shall dispatch you safely with an escort,
Provisioned from my stores. Or would you care
To join us in this realm on equal terms?
The city I build is yours; haul up your ships;
Trojan and Tyrian will be all one to me.
If only he were here, your king himself,
Caught by the same easterly, Aeneas!
Indeed, let me send out trustworthy men
Along the coast, with orders to comb it all
From one end of Libya to the other,
In case the sea cast the man up and now
He wanders lost, in town or wilderness."

Elated at Dido's words, both staunch Achatës
And father Aeneas had by this time longed
To break out of the cloud. Achatës spoke
With urgency:
"My lord, born to the goddess,
What do you feel, what is your judgment now?
You see all safe, our ships and friends recovered.
One is lost;[2] we saw that one go down
Ourselves, amid the waves. Everything else
Bears out your mother's own account of it."

7. Ancestor of the Trojans. 8. Another name for Trojans. 9. This sentence seems to mean: "we are not outside the circuit of the sun, we are part of the civilized world and hear the news."
1. On the West coast of Sicily. *Hesperia Magna:* 'Great' Westland, i.e., Italy as opposed to Sicily. *Land of Saturn:* An old legend connected Italy with Saturn (Cronos), the father of Jupiter (Zeus). The "age of Saturn" was the Golden Age. 2. One ship, captained by Orontes, was sunk in the storm in sight of Aeneas.

He barely finished when the cloud around them
Parted suddenly and thinned away
Into transparent air. Princely Aeneas
Stood and shone in the bright light, head and shoulders
Noble as a god's. For she who bore him[3]
Breathed upon him beauty of hair and bloom
Of youth and kindled brilliance in his eyes,
As an artist's hand gives style to ivory,
Or sets pure silver, or white stone of Paros,[4]
In framing yellow gold. Then to the queen
He spoke as suddenly as, to them all,
He had just appeared:
"Before your eyes I stand,
Aeneas the Trojan, that same one you look for,
Saved from the sea off Libya.
You alone,
Moved by the untold ordeals of old Troy,
Seeing us few whom the Greeks left alive,
Worn out by faring ill on land and sea,
Needy of everything—you'd give these few
A home and city, allied with yourselves.
Fit thanks for this are not within our power,
Not to be had from Trojans anywhere
Dispersed in the great world.
May the gods—
And surely there are powers that care for goodness,
Surely somewhere justice counts—may they
And your own consciousness of acting well
Reward you as they should. What age so happy
Brought you to birth? How splendid were your parents
To have conceived a being like yourself!
So long as brooks flow seaward, and the shadows
Play over mountain slopes, and highest heaven
Feeds the stars, your name and your distinction
Go with me, whatever lands may call me."

With this he gave his right hand to his friend
Ilioneus, greeting Serestus with his left,
Then took the hands of those brave men, Cloanthus,
Gyas, and the rest.
Sidonian Dido
Stood in astonishment, first at the sight
Of such a captain, then at his misfortune,

3. Venus (Aphrodite). 4. The marble of the island of Paros was famous.

Presently saying:
"Born of an immortal
Mother though you are, what adverse destiny
Dogs you through these many kinds of dangers?
What rough power brings you from sea to land
In savage places? Are you truly he,
Aeneas, whom kind Venus bore
To the Dardanian, the young Anchisës,
Near to the stream of Phrygian[5] Simoïs?
I remember the Greek, Teucer,[6] came to Sidon,
Exiled, and in search of a new kingdom.
Belus, my father, helped him. In those days
Belus campaigned with fire and sword on Cyprus
And won that island's wealth. Since then, the fall
Of Troy, your name, and the Pelasgian[7] kings
Have been familiar to me. Teucer, your enemy,
Spoke often with admiration of the Teucrians[8]
And traced his own descent from Teucrian stock.
Come, then, soldiers, be our guests. My life
Was one of hardship and forced wandering
Like your own, till in this land at length
Fortune would have me rest. Through pain I've learned
To comfort suffering men."
She led Aeneas
Into the royal house, but not before
Declaring a festal day in the gods' temples.
As for the ships' companies, she sent
Twenty bulls to the shore, a hundred swine,
Huge ones, with bristling backs, and fatted lambs,
A hundred of them, and their mother ewes—
All gifts for happy feasting on that day.

Now the queen's household made her great hall glow
As they prepared a banquet in the kitchens.
Embroidered table cloths, proud crimson-dyed,
Were spread, and set with massive silver plate,
Or gold, engraved with brave deeds of her fathers,
A sequence carried down through many captains
In a long line from the founding of the race.

[At the banquet which Dido gives for Aeneas, he relates, at her request, the story of the fall of Troy.]

5. Trojan. 6. A Greek warrior who fought at Troy and afterward was exiled from his home. He founded a city on the island of Cyprus. (Not to be confused with the Trojan king, Teucer.)
7. Greek. 8. Trojans.

Book II

[THE FALL OF TROY]

The room fell silent, and all eyes were on him,
As Father Aeneas from his high couch began:

"Sorrow too deep to tell, your majesty,
You order me to feel and tell once more:
How the Danaans[9] leveled in the dust
The splendor of our mourned-forever kingdom—
Heartbreaking things I saw with my own eyes
And was myself a part of. Who could tell them,
Even a Myrmidon or Dolopian[1]
Or ruffian of Ulysses, without tears?
Now, too, the night is well along, with dewfall
Out of heaven, and setting stars weigh down
Our heads toward sleep. But if so great desire
Moves you to hear the tale of our disasters,
Briefly recalled, the final throes of Troy,
However I may shudder at the memory
And shrink again in grief, let me begin.

Knowing their strength broken in warfare, turned
Back by the fates, and years—so many years—
Already slipped away, the Danaan captains
By the divine handicraft of Pallas built
A horse of timber, tall as a hill,
And sheathed its ribs with planking of cut pine.
This they gave out to be an offering
For a safe return by sea, and the word went round.
But on the sly they shut inside a company
Chosen from their picked soldiery by lot,
Crowding the vaulted caverns in the dark—
The horse's belly—with men fully armed.

Offshore there's a long island, Tenedos,
Famous and rich while Priam's kingdom lasted,
A treacherous anchorage now, and nothing more.
They crossed to this and hid their ships behind it
On the bare shore beyond. We thought they'd gone,
Sailing home to Mycenae before the wind,
So Teucer's town is freed of her long anguish,
Gates thrown wide! And out we go in joy

9. Greeks. 1. Soldiers of Achilles. *Ulysses:* Odysseus.

To see the Dorian[2] campsites, all deserted,
The beach they left behind. Here the Dolopians
Pitched their tents, here cruel Achilles lodged,
There lay the ships, and there, formed up in ranks,
They came inland to fight us. Of our men
One group stood marveling, gaping up to see
The dire gift of the cold unbedded goddess,[3]
The sheer mass of the horse.
Thymoetes shouts
It should be hauled inside the walls and moored
High on the citadel—whether by treason
Or just because Troy's fate went that way now.
Capys opposed him; so did the wiser heads:
'Into the sea with it,' they said, 'or burn it,
Build up a bonfire under it,
This trick of the Greeks, a gift no one can trust,
Or cut it open, search the hollow belly!'

Contrary notions pulled the crowd apart.
Next thing we knew, in front of everyone,
Laocoön with a great company
Came furiously running from the Height,[4]
And still far off cried out: 'O my poor people,
Men of Troy, what madness has come over you?
Can you believe the enemy truly gone?
A gift from the Danaans, and no ruse?
Is that Ulysses' way, as you have known him?
Achaeans must be hiding in this timber,
Or it was built to butt against our walls,
Peer over them into our houses, pelt
The city from the sky. Some crookedness
Is in this thing. Have no faith in the horse!
Whatever it is, even when Greeks bring gifts
I fear them, gifts and all.'
He broke off then
And rifled his big spear with all his might
Against the horse's flank, the curve of belly.
It stuck there trembling, and the rounded hull
Reverberated groaning at the blow.
If the gods' will had not been sinister,
If our own minds had not been crazed,
He would have made us foul that Argive den

2. Another name for the Greeks. 3. Athena (Minerva) was a virgin goddess. 4. The citadel, the acropolis.

With bloody steel, and Troy would stand today—
O citadel of Priam, towering still!

But now look: hillmen, shepherds of Dardania,
Raising a shout, dragged in before the king
An unknown fellow with hands tied behind—
This all as he himself had planned,
Volunteering, letting them come across him,
So he could open Troy to the Achaeans.
Sure of himself this man was, braced for it
Either way, to work his trick or die.
From every quarter Trojans run to see him,
Ring the prisoner round, and make a game
Of jeering at him. Be instructed now
In Greek deceptive arts: one barefaced deed
Can tell you of them all.
As the man stood there, shaken and defenceless,
Looking around at ranks of Phrygians,
'Oh god,' he said, 'what land on earth, what seas
Can take me in? What's left me in the end,
Outcast that I am from the Danaans,
Now the Dardanians will have my blood?'

The whimpering speech brought us up short; we felt
A twinge for him. Let him speak up, we said,
Tell us where he was born, what news he brought,
What he could hope for as a prisoner.
Taking his time, slow to discard his fright,
He said:
'I'll tell you the whole truth, my lord,
No matter what may come of it. Argive
I am by birth, and will not say I'm not.
That first of all: Fortune has made a derelict
Of Sinon, but the bitch
Won't make an empty liar of him, too.
Report of Palamedes[5] may have reached you,
Scion of Belus' line, a famous man
Who gave commands against the war. For this,
On a trumped-up charge, on perjured testimony,
The Greeks put him to death—but now they mourn him,
Now he has lost the light. Being kin to him,
In my first years I joined him as companion,

5. A Greek warrior who advised Agamemnon to abandon the war against Troy; his downfall was engineered by Ulysses (Odysseus), who planted forged proofs of dealings with the enemy in his tent.

Sent by my poor old father on this campaign,
And while he held high rank and influence
In royal councils, we did well, with honor.
Then by the guile and envy of Ulysses—
Nothing unheard of there!—he left this world,
And I lived on, but under a cloud, in sorrow,
Raging for my blameless friend's downfall.
Demented, too, I could not hold my peace
But said if I had luck, if I won through
Again to Argos, I'd avenge him there.
And I roused hatred with my talk; I fell
Afoul now of that man. From that time on,
Day in, day out, Ulysses
Found new ways to bait and terrify me,
Putting out shady rumors among the troops,
Looking for weapons he could use against me.
He could not rest till Calchas[6] served his turn—
But why go on? The tale's unwelcome, useless,
If Achaeans are all one,
And it's enough I'm called Achaean, then
Exact the punishment, long overdue;
The Ithacan[7] desires it; the Atridae
Would pay well for it.'
Burning with curiosity,
We questioned him, called on him to explain—
Unable to conceive such a performance,
The art of the Pelasgian. He went on,
Atremble, as though he feared us:
'Many times
The Danaans wished to organize retreat,
To leave Troy and the long war, tired out.
If only they had done it! Heavy weather
At sea closed down on them, for a fresh gale
From the Southwest would keep them from embarking,
Most of all after this figure here,
This horse they put together with maple beams,
Reached its full height. Then wind and thunderstorms
Rumbled in heaven. So in our quandary
We sent Eurypylus to Phoebus'[8] oracle,
And he brought back this grim reply:

'Blood and a virgin slain[9]
You gave to appease the winds, for your first voyage

6. The prophet of the Greek army. 7. Ulysses. 8. Apollo. *Eurypylus:* A minor Greek chieftain. 9. Iphigenia, Agamemnon's daughter.

Troyward, O Danaans. Blood again
And Argive blood, one life, wins your return.'

When this got round among the soldiers, gloom
Came over them, and a cold chill that ran
To the very marrow. Who had death in store?
Whom did Apollo call for? Now the man
Of Ithaca haled Calchas out among us
In tumult, calling on the seer to tell
The true will of the gods. Ah, there were many
Able to divine the crookedness
And cruelty afoot for me, but they
Looked on in silence. For ten days the seer
Kept still, kept under cover, would not speak
Of anyone, or name a man for death,
Till driven to it at last by Ulysses' cries—
By prearrangement—he broke silence, barely
Enough to designate me for the altar.
Every last man agreed. The torments each
Had feared for himself, now shifted to another,
All could endure. And the infamous day came,
The ritual, the salted meal,[1] the fillets . . .
I broke free, I confess it, broke my chains,
Hid myself all night in a muddy marsh,
Concealed by reeds, waiting for them to sail
If they were going to.
Now no hope is left me
Of seeing my home country ever again,
My sweet children, my father, missed for years.
Perhaps the army will demand they pay
For my escape, my crime here, and their death,
Poor things, will be my punishment. Ah, sir,
I beg you by the gods above, the powers
In whom truth lives, and by what faith remains
Uncontaminated to men, take pity
On pain so great and so unmerited!'

For tears we gave him life, and pity, too.
Priam himself ordered the gyves removed
And the tight chain between. In kindness then
He said to him:
'Whoever you may be,
The Greeks are gone; forget them from now on;

1. The paraphernalia of animal sacrifice. *Fillets* are tufts of wool attached to the victim.

You shall be ours. And answer me these questions:
Who put this huge thing up, this horse?
Who designed it? What do they want with it?
Is it religious or a means of war?'

These were his questions. Then the captive, trained
In trickery, in the stagecraft of Achaea,
Lifted his hands unfettered to the stars.
'Eternal fires of heaven,' he began,
'Powers inviolable, I swear by thee,
As by the altars and blaspheming swords
I got away from, and the gods' white bands[2]
I wore as one chosen for sacrifice,
This is justice, I am justified
In dropping all allegiance to the Greeks—
As I had cause to hate them; I may bring
Into the open what they would keep dark.
No laws of my own country bind me now.
Only be sure you keep your promises
And keep faith, Troy, as you are kept from harm
If what I say proves true, if what I give
Is great and valuable.
The whole hope
Of the Danaans, and their confidence
In the war they started, rested all along
In help from Pallas. Then the night came
When Diomedes and that criminal,
Ulysses, dared to raid her holy shrine.
They killed the guards on the high citadel
And ripped away the statue, the Palladium,[3]
Desecrating with bloody hands the virginal
Chaplets of the goddess. After that,
Danaan hopes waned and were undermined,
Ebbing away, their strength in battle broken,
The goddess now against them. This she made
Evident to them all with signs and portents.
Just as they set her statue up in camp,
The eyes, cast upward, glowed with crackling flames,
And salty sweat ran down the body. Then—
I say it in awe—three times, up from the ground,
The apparition of the goddess rose
In a lightning flash, with shield and spear atremble.
Calchas divined at once that the sea crossing

2. Fillets. 3. A statue of Pallas, kept in her shrine at Troy. There was an oracle which stated that Troy could not be captured as long as it remained in place.

Must be attempted in retreat—that Pergamum[4]
Cannot be torn apart by Argive swords
Unless at Argos first they beg new omens,
Carrying homeward the divine power
Brought overseas in ships. Now they are gone
Before the wind to the fatherland, Mycenae,
Gone to enlist new troops and gods. They'll cross
The water again and be here, unforeseen.
So Calchas read the portents. Warned by him,
They set this figure up in reparation
For the Palladium stolen, to appease
The offended power and expiate the crime.
Enormous, though, he made them build the thing
With timber braces, towering to the sky,
Too big for the gates, not to be hauled inside
And give the people back their ancient guardian.
If any hand here violates this gift
To great Minerva, then extinction waits,
Not for one only—would god it were so—
But for the realm of Priam and all Phrygians.
If this proud offering, drawn by your hands,
Should mount into your city, then so far
As the walls of Pelops' town[5] the tide of Asia
Surges in war: that doom awaits our children.'

This fraud of Sinon, his accomplished lying,
Won us over; a tall tale and fake tears
Had captured us, whom neither Diomedes
Nor Larisaean Achilles[6] overpowered,
Nor ten long years, nor all their thousand ships.

And now another sign, more fearful still,
Broke on our blind miserable people,
Filling us all with dread. Laocoön,
Acting as Neptune's[7] priest that day by lot,
Was on the point of putting to the knife
A massive bull before the appointed altar,
When ah—look there!
From Tenedos, on the calm sea, twin snakes—
I shiver to recall it—endlessly
Coiling, uncoiling, swam abreast for shore,
Their underbellies showing as their crests
Reared red as blood above the swell; behind

4. The name of the citadel of Troy. 5. Argos. Pelops was the father of Atreus. 6. So called after Larissa, a town in his homeland of Thessaly. 7. Poseidon.

They glided with great undulating backs.
Now came the sound of thrashed seawater foaming;
Now they were on dry land, and we could see
Their burning eyes, fiery and suffused with blood,
Their tongues a-flicker out of hissing maws.
We scattered, pale with fright. But straight ahead
They slid until they reached Laocoön.
Each snake enveloped one of his two boys,
Twining about and feeding on the body.
Next they ensnared the man as he ran up
With weapons: coils like cables looped and bound him
Twice round the middle; twice about his throat
They whipped their back-scales, and their heads towered,
While with both hands he fought to break the knots,
Drenched in slime, his head-bands black with venom,
Sending to heaven his appalling cries
Like a slashed bull escaping from an altar,
The fumbled axe shrugged off. The pair of snakes
Now flowed away and made for the highest shrines,
The citadel of pitiless Minerva,
Where coiling they took cover at her feet
Under the rondure of her shield. New terrors
Ran in the shaken crowd: the word went round
Laocoön had paid, and rightfully,
For profanation of the sacred hulk
With his offending spear hurled at its flank.

'The offering must be hauled to its true home,'
They clamored. 'Votive prayers to the goddess
Must be said there!'
So we breached the walls
And laid the city open. Everyone
Pitched in to get the figure underpinned
With rollers, hempen lines around the neck.
Deadly, pregnant with enemies, the horse
Crawled upward to the breach. And boys and girls
Sang hymns around the towrope as for joy
They touched it. Rolling on, it cast a shadow
Over the city's heart. O Fatherland,
O Ilium, home of gods! Defensive wall
Renowned in war for Dardanus's people!
There on the very threshold of the breach
It jarred to a halt four times, four times the arms
In the belly thrown together made a sound—
Yet on we strove unmindful, deaf and blind,

To place the monster on our blessed height.
Then, even then, Cassandra's[8] lips unsealed
The doom to come: lips by a god's command
Never believed or heeded by the Trojans.
So pitiably we, for whom that day
Would be the last, made all our temples green
With leafy festal boughs throughout the city.

As heaven turned, Night from the Ocean stream
Came on, profound in gloom on earth and sky
And Myrmidons in hiding. In their homes
The Teucrians lay silent, wearied out,
And sleep enfolded them. The Argive fleet,
Drawn up in line abreast, left Tenedos
Through the aloof moon's friendly stillnesses
And made for the familiar shore. Flame signals
Shone from the command ship. Sinon, favored
By what the gods unjustly had decreed,
Stole out to tap the pine walls and set free
The Danaans in the belly. Opened wide,
The horse emitted men; gladly they dropped
Out of the cavern, captains first, Thessandrus,
Sthenelus and the man of iron, Ulysses;
Hand over hand upon the rope, Acamas, Thoas,
Neoptolemus[9] and Prince Machaon,
Menelaus and then the master builder,
Epeos, who designed the horse decoy.
Into the darkened city, buried deep
In sleep and wine, they made their way,
Cut the few sentries down,
Let in their fellow soldiers at the gate,
And joined their combat companies as planned.

That time of night it was when the first sleep,
Gift of the gods, begins for ill mankind,
Arriving gradually, delicious rest.
In sleep, in dream, Hector appeared to me,
Gaunt with sorrow, streaming tears, all torn—
As by the violent car on his death day—
And black with bloody dust,
His puffed-out feet cut by the rawhide thongs.
Ah god, the look of him! How changed
From that proud Hector who returned to Troy

8. A prophetess, daughter of Priam, King of Troy. She foretold the future correctly, but no one believed what she said (cf. Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, ll. 1206 ff). 9. Son of Achilles.

Wearing Achilles' armor,[1] or that one
Who pitched the torches on Danaan ships;
His beard all filth, his hair matted with blood,
Showing the wounds, the many wounds, received
Outside his father's city walls. I seemed
Myself to weep and call upon the man
In grieving speech, brought from the depth of me:

'Light of Dardania, best hope of Troy,
What kept you from us for so long, and where?
From what far place, O Hector, have you come,
Long, long awaited? After so many deaths
Of friends and brothers, after a world of pain
For all our folk and all our town, at last,
Boneweary, we behold you! What has happened
To ravage your serene face? Why these wounds?'

He wasted no reply on my poor questions
But heaved a great sigh from his chest and said:
'Ai! Give up and go, child of the goddess,
Save yourself, out of these flames. The enemy
Holds the city walls, and from her height
Troy falls in ruin. Fatherland and Priam
Have their due; if by one hand our towers
Could be defended, by this hand, my own,
They would have been. Her holy things, her gods
Of hearth and household[2] Troy commends to you.
Accept them as companions of your days;
Go find for them the great walls that one day
You'll dedicate, when you have roamed the sea.'

As he said this, he brought out from the sanctuary
Chaplets and Vesta, Lady of the Hearth,
With her eternal fire.[3]
While I dreamed,
The turmoil rose, with anguish, in the city.
More and more, although Anchises'[4] house
Lay in seclusion, muffled among trees,
The din at the grim onset grew; and now
I shook off sleep, I climbed to the roof top
To cup my ears and listen. And the sound

1. He stripped it from the corpse of Patroclus, Achilles' close friend, whom Hector killed in battle. Achilles revenged Patroclus by killing Hector. 2. The Romans kept images of household gods, the Penates, in a shrine in the home. The custom is here transferred, unhistorically, to Troy. 3. Vesta was the goddess of the hearth and fire, which, in the temple, was never allowed to go out. 4. Aeneas' father.

Was like the sound a grassfire makes in grain,
Whipped by a Southwind, or a torrent foaming
Out of a mountainside to strew in ruin
Fields, happy crops, the yield of plowing teams,
Or woodlands borne off in the flood; in wonder
The shepherd listens on a rocky peak.
I knew then what our trust had won for us,
Knew the Danaan fraud: Deïphobus'[5]
Great house in flames, already caving in
Under the overpowering god of fire;
Ucalegon's already caught nearby;
The glare lighting the straits beyond Sigeum;[6]
The cries of men, the wild calls of the trumpets.

To arm was my first maddened impulse—not
That anyone had a fighting chance in arms;
Only I burned to gather up some force
For combat, and to man some high redoubt.
So fury drove me, and it came to me
That meeting death was beautiful in arms.
Then here, eluding the Achaean spears,
Came Panthus, Orthrys' son, priest of Apollo,
Carrying holy things, our conquered gods,
And pulling a small grandchild along: he ran
Despairing to my doorway.
'Where's the crux,
Panthus,' I said. 'What strongpoint shall we hold?'

Before I could say more, he groaned and answered:
'The last day for Dardania has come,
The hour not to be fought off any longer.
Trojans we have been; Ilium has been;
The glory of the Teucrians is no more;
Black Jupiter has passed it on to Argos.
Greeks are the masters in our burning city.
Tall as a cliff, set in the heart of town,
Their horse pours out armed men. The conqueror,
Gloating Sinon, brews new conflagrations.
Troops hold the gates—as many thousand men
As ever came from great Mycenae; others
Block the lanes with crossed spears; glittering
In a combat line, swordblades are drawn for slaughter.

5. A son of Priam. 6. A promontory overlooking the straits which connect the Aegean with the Black Sea.

Even the first guards at the gates can barely
Offer battle, or blindly make a stand.'

Impelled by these words, by the powers of heaven,
Into the flames I go, into the fight,
Where the harsh Fury, and the din and shouting,
Skyward rising, calls. Crossing my path
In moonlight, five fell in with me, companions:
Ripheus, and Epytus, a great soldier,
Hypanis, Dymas, cleaving to my side
With young Coroebus, Mygdon's son. It happened
That in those very days this man had come
To Troy, aflame with passion for Cassandra,
Bringing to Priam and the Phrygians
A son-in-law's right hand. Unlucky one,
To have been deaf to what his bride foretold!
Now when I saw them grouped, on edge for battle,
I took it all in and said briefly,
'Soldiers,
Brave as you are to no end, if you crave
To face the last fight with me, and no doubt of it,
How matters stand for us each one can see.
The gods by whom this kingdom stood are gone,
Gone from the shrines and altars. You defend
A city lost in flames. Come, let us die,
We'll make a rush into the thick of it.
The conquered have one safety: hope for none.'

The desperate odds doubled their fighting spirit:
From that time on, like predatory wolves
In fog and darkness, when a savage hunger
Drives them blindly on, and cubs in lairs
Lie waiting with dry famished jaws—just so
Through arrow flights and enemies we ran
Toward our sure death, straight for the city's heart,
Cavernous black night over and around us.
Who can describe the havoc of that night
Or tell the deaths, or tally wounds with tears?
The ancient city falls, after dominion
Many long years. In windrows on the streets,
In homes, on solemn porches of the gods,
Dead bodies lie. And not alone the Trojans
Pay the price with their heart's blood; at times
Manhood returns to fire even the conquered

And Danaan conquerors fall. Grief everywhere,
Everywhere terror, and all shapes of death.

Androgeos was the first to cross our path
Leading a crowd of Greeks; he took for granted
That we were friends, and hailed us cheerfully:

'Men, get a move on! Are you made of lead
To be so late and slow? The rest are busy
Carrying plunder from the fires and towers.
Are you just landed from the ships?'
His words
Were barely out, and no reply forthcoming
Credible to him, when he knew himself
Fallen among enemies. Thunderstruck,
He halted, foot and voice, and then recoiled
Like one who steps down on a lurking snake
In a briar patch and jerks back, terrified,
As the angry thing rears up, all puffed and blue.
So backward went Androgeos in panic.
We were all over them in a moment, cut
And thrust, and as they fought on unknown ground,
Startled, unnerved, we killed them everywhere.
So Fortune filled our sails at first. Coroebus,
Elated at our feat and his own courage,
Said:
'Friends, come follow Fortune. She has shown
The way to safety, shown she's on our side.
We'll take their shields and put on their insignia!
Trickery, bravery: who asks, in war?
The enemy will arm us.'
He put on
The plumed helm of Androgeos, took the shield
With blazon and the Greek sword to his side.
Ripheus, Dymas—all were pleased to do it,
Making the still fresh trophies our equipment.
Then we went on, passing among the Greeks,
Protected by our own gods now no longer;
Many a combat, hand to hand, we fought
In the black night, and many a Greek we sent
To Orcus.[7] There were some who turned and ran
Back to the ships and shore; some shamefully

7. The abode of the dead.

Clambered again into the horse, to hide
In the familiar paunch.
When gods are contrary
They stand by no one. Here before us came
Cassandra, Priam's virgin daughter, dragged
By her long hair out of Minerva's shrine,
Lifting her brilliant eyes in vain to heaven—
Her eyes alone, as her white hands were bound.
Coroebus, infuriated, could not bear it,
But plunged into the midst to find his death.
We all went after him, our swords at play,
But here, here first, from the temple gable's height,
We met a hail of missiles from our friends,
Pitiful execution, by their error,
Who thought us Greek from our Greek plumes and shields.
Then with a groan of anger, seeing the virgin
Wrested from them, Danaans from all sides
Rallied and attacked us: fiery Ajax,[8]
Atreus' sons, Dolopians in a mass—
As, when a cyclone breaks, conflicting winds
Will come together, Westwind, Southwind, Eastwind
Riding high out of the Dawnland; forests
Bend and roar, and raging all in spume
Nereus[9] with his trident churns the deep.
Then some whom we had taken by surprise
Under cover of night throughout the city
And driven off, came back again: they knew
Our shields and arms for liars now, our speech
Alien to their own. They overwhelmed us.
Coroebus fell at the warrior goddess' altar,
Killed by Peneleus; and Ripheus fell,
A man uniquely just among the Trojans,
The soul of equity; but the gods would have it
Differently. Hypanis, Dymas died,
Shot down by friends; nor did your piety,
Panthus, nor Apollo's fillets shield you
As you went down.
Ashes of Ilium!
Flames that consumed my people! Here I swear
That in your downfall I did not avoid
One weapon, one exchange with the Danaans,

8. Not the great Ajax, son of Telamon (who had killed himself before Troy fell—see *Odyssey*, Book XI), but the lesser Ajax, son of Oileus. His rape of Cassandra after dragging her away from Athena's temple was eventually punished: he was drowned on his way home. 9. An old sea-god, father of the sea-nymphs, the Nereids.

And if it had been fated, my own hand
Had earned my death. But we were torn away
From that place—Iphitus and Pelias too,
One slow with age, one wounded by Ulysses,
Called by a clamor at the hall of Priam.
Truly we found here a prodigious fight,
As though there were none elsewhere, not a death
In the whole city: Mars[1] gone berserk, Danaans
In a rush to scale the roof; the gate besieged
By a tortoise shell of overlapping shields.[2]
Ladders clung to the wall, and men strove upward
Before the very doorposts, on the rungs,
Left hand putting the shield up, and the right
Reaching for the cornice. The defenders
Wrenched out upperworks and rooftiles: these
For missiles, as they saw the end, preparing
To fight back even on the edge of death.
And gilded beams, ancestral ornaments,
They rolled down on the heads below. In hall
Others with swords drawn held the entrance way,
Packed there, waiting. Now we plucked up heart
To help the royal house, to give our men
A respite, and to add our strength to theirs,
Though all were beaten. And we had for entrance
A rear door, secret, giving on a passage
Between the palace halls; in other days
Andromachë, poor lady, often used it,
Going alone to see her husband's parents
Or taking Astyanax[3] to his grandfather.
I climbed high on the roof, where hopeless men
Were picking up and throwing futile missiles.
Here was a tower like a promontory
Rising toward the stars above the roof:
All Troy, the Danaan ships, the Achaean camp,
Were visible from this. Now close beside it
With crowbars, where the flooring made loose joints,
We pried it from its bed and pushed it over.
Down with a rending crash in sudden ruin
Wide over the Danaan lines it fell;
But fresh troops moved up, and the rain of stones
With every kind of missile never ceased.

1. The Roman war-god (Ares). 2. Roman soldiers, when attacking a walled position, shielded their heads from missiles from above by a roof of interlocking shields—like the plates of a tortoise shell. 3. Son of Hector and Andromache.

Just at the outer doors of the vestibule
Sprang Pyrrhus[4] all in bronze and glittering,
As a serpent, hidden swollen underground
By a cold winter, writhes into the light,
On vile grass fed, his old skin cast away,
Renewed and glossy, rolling slippery coils,
With lifted underbelly rearing sunward
And triple tongue a-flicker. Close beside him
Giant Periphas and Automedon,
His armor-bearer, once Achilles' driver,
Besieged the place with all the young of Scyros,[5]
Hurling their torches at the palace roof.
Pyrrhus shouldering forward with an axe
Broke down the stony threshold, forced apart
Hinges and brazen door-jambs, and chopped through
One panel of the door, splitting the oak,
To make a window, a great breach. And there
Before their eyes the inner halls lay open,
The courts of Priam and the ancient kings,
With men-at-arms ranked in the vestibule.
From the interior came sounds of weeping,
Pitiful commotion, wails of women
High-pitched, rising in the formal chambers
To ring against the silent golden stars;
And, through the palace, mothers wild with fright
Ran to and fro or clung to doors and kissed them.
Pyrrhus with his father's brawn stormed on,
No bolts or bars or men availed to stop him:
Under his battering the double doors
Were torn out of their sockets and fell inward.
Sheer force cleared the way: the Greeks broke through
Into the vestibule, cut down the guards,
And made the wide hall seethe with men-at-arms—
A tumult greater than when dykes are burst
And a foaming river, swirling out in flood,
Whelms every parapet and races on
Through fields and over all the lowland plains,
Bearing off pens and cattle. I myself
Saw Neoptolemus furious with blood
In the entrance way, and saw the two Atridae;
Hecuba[6] I saw, and her hundred daughters,
Priam before the altars, with his blood

4. Another name of Neoptolemus, the son of Achilles. 5. Island in the North Aegean where Neoptolemus grew up. 6. Wife of Priam and mother of Hector.

Drenching the fires that he himself had blessed.
Those fifty bridal chambers, hope of a line
So flourishing; those doorways high and proud,
Adorned with takings of barbaric gold,
Were all brought low: fire had them, or the Greeks.

What was the fate of Priam, you may ask.
Seeing his city captive, seeing his own
Royal portals rent apart, his enemies
In the inner rooms, the old man uselessly
Put on his shoulders, shaking with old age,
Armor unused for years, belted a sword on,
And made for the massed enemy to die.
Under the open sky in a central court
Stood a big altar; near it, a laurel tree
Of great age, leaning over, in deep shade
Embowered the Penatës.[7] At this altar
Hecuba and her daughters, like white doves
Blown down in a black storm, clung together,
Enfolding holy images in their arms.
Now, seeing Priam in a young man's gear,
She called out:
'My poor husband, what mad thought
Drove you to buckle on these weapons?
Where are you trying to go? The time is past
For help like this, for this kind of defending,
Even if my own Hector could be here.
Come to me now: the altar will protect us,
Or else you'll die with us.'
She drew him close,
Heavy with years, and made a place for him
To rest on the consecrated stone.
Now see
Politës, one of Priam's sons, escaped
From Pyrrhus' butchery and on the run
Through enemies and spears, down colonnades,
Through empty courtyards, wounded. Close behind
Comes Pyrrhus burning for the death-stroke: has him,
Catches him now, and lunges with the spear.
The boy has reached his parents, and before them
Goes down, pouring out his life with blood.
Now Priam, in the very midst of death,
Would neither hold his peace nor spare his anger.

7. The (Roman) gods of the household.

'For what you've done, for what you've dared,' he said,
'If there is care in heaven for atrocity,
May the gods render fitting thanks, reward you
As you deserve. You forced me to look on
At the destruction of my son: defiled
A father's eyes with death. That great Achilles
You claim to be the son of—and you lie—
Was not like you to Priam, his enemy;
To me who threw myself upon his mercy
He showed compunction, gave me back for burial
The bloodless corpse of Hector, and returned me
To my own realm.'
The old man threw his spear
With feeble impact; blocked by the ringing bronze,
It hung there harmless from the jutting boss.
Then Pyrrhus answered:
'You'll report the news
To Pelidës,[8] my father; don't forget
My sad behavior, the degeneracy
Of Neoptolemus. Now die.'
With this,
To the altar step itself he dragged him trembling,
Slipping in the pooled blood of his son,
And took him by the hair with his left hand.
The sword flashed in his right; up to the hilt
He thrust it in his body.
That was the end
Of Priam's age, the doom that took him off,
With Troy in flames before his eyes, his towers
Headlong fallen—he that in other days
Had ruled in pride so many lands and peoples,
The power of Asia.
On the distant shore
The vast trunk headless lies without a name.

For the first time that night, inhuman shuddering
Took me, head to foot. I stood unmanned,
And my dear father's image came to mind
As our king, just his age, mortally wounded,
Gasped his life away before my eyes.
Creusa[9] came to mind, too, left alone;
The house plundered; danger to little Iulus.
I looked around to take stock of my men,

8. Achilles, son of Peleus. 9. Aeneas' wife. *Iulus:* his son, also known as Ascanius.

But all had left me, utterly played out,
Giving their beaten bodies to the fire
Or plunging from the roof.
It came to this,
That I stood there alone. And then I saw
Lurking beyond the doorsill of the Vesta,
In hiding, silent, in that place reserved,
The daughter of Tyndareus.[1] Glare of fires
Lighted my steps this way and that, my eyes
Glancing over the whole scene, everywhere.
That woman, terrified of the Trojans' hate
For the city overthrown, terrified too
Of Danaan vengeance, her abandoned husband's
Anger after years—Helen, that Fury
Both to her own homeland and Troy, had gone
To earth, a hated thing, before the altars.
Now fires blazed up in my own spirit—
A passion to avenge my fallen town
And punish Helen's whorishness.
'Shall this one
Look untouched on Sparta and Mycenae
After her triumph, going like a queen,
And see her home and husband, kin and children,
With Trojan girls for escort, Phrygian slaves?
Must Priam perish by the sword for this?
Troy burn, for this? Dardania's littoral
Be soaked in blood, so many times, for this?
Not by my leave. I know
No glory comes of punishing a woman,
The feat can bring no honor. Still, I'll be
Approved for snuffing out a monstrous life,
For a just sentence carried out. My heart
Will teem with joy in this avenging fire,
And the ashes of my kin will be appeased.'

So ran my thoughts. I turned wildly upon her,
But at that moment, clear, before my eyes—
Never before so clear—in a pure light
Stepping before me, radiant through the night,
My loving mother[2] came: immortal, tall,
And lovely as the lords of heaven know her.
Catching me by the hand, she held me back,
Then with her rose-red mouth reproved me:

1. Helen. 2. Venus (Aphrodite).

'Son,
Why let such suffering goad you on to fury
Past control? Where is your thoughtfulness
For me, for us? Will you not first revisit
The place you left your father, worn and old,
Or find out if your wife, Creusa, lives,
And the young boy, Ascanius—all these
Cut off by Greek troops foraging everywhere?
Had I not cared for them, fire would by now
Have taken them, their blood glutted the sword.
You must not hold the woman of Laconia,[3]
That hated face, the cause of this, nor Paris.
The harsh will of the gods it is, the gods,
That overthrows the splendor of this place
And brings Troy from her height into the dust.
Look over there: I'll tear away the cloud
That curtains you, and films your mortal sight,
The fog around you.—Have no fear of doing
Your mother's will, or balk at obeying her.—
Look: where you see high masonry thrown down,
Stone torn from stone, with billowing smoke and dust,
Neptune is shaking from their beds the walls
That his great trident pried up, undermining,
Toppling the whole city down. And look:
Juno in all her savagery holds
The Scaean Gates,[4] and raging in steel armor
Calls her allied army from the ships.
Up on the citadel—turn, look—Pallas Tritonia[5]
Couched in a stormcloud, lightening, with her Gorgon![6]
The Father himself empowers the Danaans,
Urges assaulting gods on the defenders.
Away, child; put an end to toiling so.
I shall be near, to see you safely home.'

She hid herself in the deep gloom of night,
And now the dire forms appeared to me
Of great immortals, enemies of Troy.
I knew the end then: Ilium was going down
In fire, the Troy of Neptune[7] going down,
As in high mountains when the countrymen

3. Sparta; she means Helen. 4. One of the principal entrances to Troy. 5. Athena (Minerva). The significance of the adjective Tritonia is not known; perhaps a reference to her birthplace, Lake Tritonis, in North Africa. (But the birthplace legend may have been invented to explain the title.) 6. Monster whose appearance turned men to stone. Athena had a Gorgon face on her shield. 7. Although Neptune (Poseidon) is now one of the powers hostile to Troy, he helped to build it.

Have notched an ancient ash, then make their axes
Ring with might and main, chopping away
To fell the tree—ever on the point of falling,
Shaken through all its foliage, and the treetop
Nodding; bit by bit the strokes prevail
Until it gives a final groan at last
And crashes down in ruin from the height.

Now I descended where the goddess guided,
Clear of the flames, and clear of enemies,
For both retired; so gained my father's door,
My ancient home. I looked for him at once,
My first wish being to help him to the mountains;
But with Troy gone he set his face against it,
Not to prolong his life, or suffer exile.

'The rest of you, all in your prime,' he said,
'Make your escape; you are still hale and strong.
If heaven's lords had wished me a longer span
They would have saved this home for me. I call it
More than enough that once before I saw
My city taken and wrecked,[8] and went on living.
Here is my death bed, here. Take leave of me.
Depart now. I'll find death with my sword arm.
The enemy will oblige; they'll come for spoils.
Burial can be dispensed with. All these years
I've lingered in my impotence,[9] at odds
With heaven, since the Father of gods and men
Breathed high winds of thunderbolt upon me
And touched me with his fire.'
He spoke on
In the same vein, inflexible. The rest of us,
Creusa and Ascanius and the servants,
Begged him in tears not to pull down with him
Our lives as well, adding his own dead weight
To the fates' pressure. But he would not budge,
He held to his resolve and to his chair.
I felt swept off again to fight, in misery
Longing for death. What choices now were open,
What chance had I?
'Did you suppose, my father,
That I could tear myself away and leave you?

8. Troy had been captured and sacked once before, by the hero Heracles. 9. Anchises was punished by Jupiter (Zeus) for being the lover of Venus (Aphrodite), the mother of his son Aeneas. Anchises was struck by a thunderbolt and crippled.

Unthinkable; how could a father say it?
Now if it please the powers above that nothing
Stand of this great city; if your heart
Is set on adding your own death and ours
To that of Troy, the door's wide open for it:
Pyrrhus will be here, splashed with Priam's blood;
He kills the son before his father's eyes,
The father at the altars.
My dear mother,
Was it for this, through spears and fire, you brought me,
To see the enemy deep in my house,
To see my son, Ascanius, my father,
And near them both, Creusa,
Butchered in one another's blood? My gear,
Men, bring my gear. The last light calls the conquered.
Give me back to the Greeks. Let me take up
The combat once again. We shall not all
Die this day unavenged.'
I buckled on
Swordbelt and blade and slid my left forearm
Into the shield-strap, turning to go out,
But at the door Creusa hugged my knees,
Then held up little Iulus to his father.

'If you are going out to die, take us
To face the whole thing with you. If experience
Leads you to put some hope in weaponry
Such as you now take, guard your own house here.
When you have gone, to whom is Iulus left?
Your father? Wife?—one called that long ago.'

She went on, and her wailing filled the house,
But then a sudden portent came, a marvel:
Amid his parents' hands and their sad faces
A point on Iulus' head seemed to cast light,
A tongue of flame that touched but did not burn him,
Licking his fine hair, playing round his temples.
We, in panic, beat at the flaming hair
And put the sacred fire out with water;
Father Anchises lifted his eyes to heaven
And lifted up his hands, his voice, in joy:

'Omnipotent Jupiter, if prayers affect you,
Look down upon us, that is all I ask,
If by devotion to the gods we earn it,

Grant us a new sign, and confirm this portent!'
The old man barely finished when it thundered
A loud crack on the left. Out of the sky
Through depths of night a star fell trailing flame
And glided on, turning the night to day.
We watched it pass above the roof and go
To hide its glare, its trace, in Ida's[1] wood;
But still, behind, the luminous furrow shone
And wide zones fumed with sulphur.
Now indeed
My father, overcome, addressed the gods,
And rose in worship of the blessed star.

'Now, now, no more delay. I'll follow you.
Where you conduct me, there I'll be.
Gods of my fathers,
Preserve this house, preserve my grandson. Yours
This portent was. Troy's life is in your power.
I yield. I go as your companion, son.'
Then he was still. We heard the blazing town
Crackle more loudly, felt the scorching heat.

'Then come, dear father. Arms around my neck:
I'll take you on my shoulders, no great weight.
Whatever happens, both will face one danger,
Find one safety. Iulus will come with me,
My wife at a good interval behind.
Servants, give our attention to what I say.
At the gate inland there's a funeral mound
And an old shrine of Ceres the Bereft;[2]
Near it an ancient cypress, kept alive
For many years by our fathers' piety.
By various routes we'll come to that one place.
Father, carry our hearthgods, our Penatës.
It would be wrong for me to handle them—
Just come from such hard fighting, bloody work—
Until I wash myself in running water.'

When I had said this, over my breadth of shoulder
And bent neck, I spread out a lion skin
For tawny cloak and stooped to take his weight.
Then little Iulus put his hand in mine
And came with shorter steps beside his father.

1. The mountain range near Troy. 2. Ceres (Demeter) mourning the loss of her daughter Proserpina (Persephone).

My wife fell in behind. Through shadowed places
On we went, and I, lately unmoved
By any spears thrown, any squads of Greeks,
Felt terror now at every eddy of wind,
Alarm at every sound, alert and worried
Alike for my companion and my burden.
I had got near the gate, and now I thought
We had made it all the way, when suddenly
A noise of running feet came near at hand,
And peering through the gloom ahead, my father
Cried out:
'Run, boy; here they come; I see
Flame light on shields, bronze shining.'
I took fright,
And some unfriendly power, I know not what,
Stole all my addled wits—for as I turned
Aside from the known way, entering a maze
Of pathless places on the run—
Alas,
Creusa, taken from us by grim fate, did she
Linger, or stray, or sink in weariness?
There is no telling. Never would she be
Restored to us. Never did I look back
Or think to look for her, lost as she was,
Until we reached the funeral mound and shrine
Of venerable Ceres. Here at last
All came together, but she was not there;
She alone failed her friends, her child, her husband.
Out of my mind, whom did I not accuse,
What man or god? What crueller loss had I
Beheld, that night the city fell? Ascanius,
My father, and the Teucrian Penates,
I left in my friends' charge, and hid them well
In a hollow valley.
I turned back alone
Into the city, cinching my bright harness.
Nothing for it but to run the risks
Again, go back again, comb all of Troy,
And put my life in danger as before:
First by the town wall, then the gate, all gloom,
Through which I had come out—and so on backward,
Tracing my own footsteps through the night;
And everywhere my heart misgave me: even
Stillness had its terror. Then to our house,
Thinking she might, just might, have wandered there.

Danaans had got in and filled the place,
And at that instant fire they had set,
Consuming it, went roofward in a blast;
Flames leaped and seethed in heat to the night sky.
I pressed on, to see Priam's hall and tower.
In the bare colonnades of Juno's shrine
Two chosen guards, Phoenix and hard Ulysses,
Kept watch over the plunder. Piled up here
Were treasures of old Troy from every quarter,
Torn out of burning temples: altar tables,
Robes, and golden bowls. Drawn up around them,
Boys and frightened mothers stood in line.
I even dared to call out in the night;
I filled the streets with calling; in my grief
Time after time I groaned and called Creusa,
Frantic, in endless quest from door to door.
Then to my vision her sad wraith appeared—
Creusa's ghost, larger than life, before me.
Chilled to the marrow, I could feel the hair
On my head rise, the voice clot in my throat;
But she spoke out to ease me of my fear:

'What's to be gained by giving way to grief
So madly, my sweet husband? Nothing here
Has come to pass except as heaven willed.
You may not take Creusa with you now;
It was not so ordained, nor does the lord
Of high Olympus give you leave. For you
Long exile waits, and long sea miles to plough.
You shall make landfall on Hesperia
Where Lydian Tiber[3] flows, with gentle pace,
Between rich farmlands, and the years will bear
Glad peace, a kingdom, and a queen for you.
Dismiss these tears for your beloved Creusa.
I shall not see the proud homelands of Myrmidons
Or of Dolopians, or go to serve
Greek ladies, Dardan lady that I am
And daughter-in-law of Venus the divine.
No: the great mother of the gods[4] detains me
Here on these shores. Farewell now; cherish still
Your son and mine.'

With this she left me weeping,

3. The Tiber River was the center of many Etruscan settlements and the Etruscans were supposed to be immigrants from Lydia, in Asia Minor. 4. Cybele, an Asiatic mother-goddess worshipped (according to Virgil) at Troy.

Wishing that I could say so many things,
And faded on the tenuous air. Three times
I tried to put my arms around her neck,
Three times enfolded nothing, as the wraith
Slipped through my fingers, bodiless as wind,
Or like a flitting dream.
So in the end
As night waned I rejoined my company.
And there to my astonishment I found
New refugees in a great crowd: men and women
Gathered for exile, young—pitiful people
Coming from every quarter, minds made up,
With their belongings, for whatever lands
I'd lead them to by sea.
The morning star
Now rose on Ida's ridges, bringing day.
Greeks had secured the city gates. No help
Or hope of help existed.
So I resigned myself, picked up my father,
And turned my face toward the mountain range."

[Aeneas goes on to tell the story of his wanderings in search of a new home. By the end of the evening, Dido, already falling in love with him before the banquet (through the intervention of Venus and Juno, who both promote the affair, each for different reasons), now feels the full force of her passion for Aeneas.]

Book IV

[AENEAS ABANDONS DIDO]

The queen, for her part, all that evening ached
With longing that her heart's blood fed, a wound
Or inward fire eating her away.
The manhood of the man, his pride of birth,
Came home to her time and again; his looks,
His words remained with her to haunt her mind,
And desire for him gave her no rest.
When Dawn
Swept earth with Phoebus' torch and burned away
Night-gloom and damp, this queen, far gone and ill,
Confided to the sister of her heart:
"My sister Anna, quandaries and dreams
Have come to frighten me—such dreams!

Think what a stranger
Yesterday found lodging in our house:
How princely, how courageous, what a soldier.
I can believe him in the line of gods,
And this is no delusion. Tell-tale fear
Betrays inferior souls. What scenes of war
Fought to the bitter end he pictured for us!
What buffetings awaited him at sea!
Had I not set my face against remarriage
After my first love died[5] and failed me, left me
Barren and bereaved—and sick to death
At the mere thought of torch and bridal bed—
I could perhaps give way in this one case
To frailty. I shall say it: since that time
Sychaeus, my poor husband, met his fate,
And blood my brother shed stained our hearth gods,
This man alone has wrought upon me so
And moved my soul to yield. I recognize
The signs of the old flame, of old desire.
But O chaste life, before I break your laws,
I pray that Earth may open, gape for me
Down to its depth, or the omnipotent
With one stroke blast me to the shades, pale shades
Of Erebus[6] and the deep world of night!
That man who took me to himself in youth
Has taken all my love; may that man keep it,
Hold it forever with him in the tomb."

At this she wept and wet her breast with tears.
But Anna answered:
"Dearer to your sister
Than daylight is, will you wear out your life,
Young as you are, in solitary mourning,
Never to know sweet children, or the crown
Of joy that Venus brings? Do you believe
This matters to the dust, to ghosts in tombs?
Granted no suitors up to now have moved you,
Neither in Libya nor before, in Tyre—
Iarbas[7] you rejected, and the others,
Chieftains bred by the land of Africa
Their triumphs have enriched—will you contend

5. Her first husband, Sychaeus, was murdered by Pygmalion, king of Tyre, Dido's brother. Her husband's ghost warned her in a dream to leave Tyre and seek a new home. 6. The lower depths of Hades. 7. The most prominent of Dido's African suitors.

Even against a welcome love? Have you
Considered in whose lands you settled here?
On one frontier the Gaetulans,[8] their cities,
People invincible in war—with wild
Numidian[9] horsemen, and the offshore banks,
The Syrtës; on the other, desert sands,
Bone-dry, where fierce Barcaean nomads[1] range.
Or need I speak of future wars brought on
From Tyre, and the menace of your brother?[2]
Surely by dispensation of the gods
And backed by Juno's will, the ships from Ilium
Held their course this way on the wind.
Sister,
What a great city you'll see rising here,
And what a kingdom, from this royal match!
With Trojan soldiers as companions in arms
By what exploits will Punic[3] glory grow!
Only ask the indulgence of the gods,
Win them with offerings, give your guests ease,
And contrive reasons for delay, while winter
Gales rage, drenched Orion storms at sea,
And their ships, damaged still, face iron skies."

This counsel fanned the flame, already kindled,
Giving her hesitant sister hope, and set her
Free of scruple. Visiting the shrines
They begged for grace at every altar first,
Then put choice rams and ewes to ritual death
For Ceres Giver of Laws,[4] Father Lyaeus,
Phoebus, and for Juno most of all
Who has the bonds of marriage in her keeping.
Dido herself, splendidly beautiful,
Holding a shallow cup, tips out the wine
On a white shining heifer, between the horns,
Or gravely in the shadow of the gods
Approaches opulent altars. Through the day
She brings new gifts, and when the breasts are opened

8. A savage African people living southwest of Carthage. 9. The most powerful of the local tribes. *Syrtes:* on the coast to the west. 1. To the East. 2. Pygmalion, King of Tyre, who had murdered Dido's husband. 3. Carthaginian. 4. Ceres (Demeter) the goddess who guarantees the growth of crops, Lyaeus (Dionysus-Bacchus) the wine god, and Phoebus (Apollo) are selected as deities especially connected with the founding of cities; one of Apollo's titles is "Founder," and Ceres and Dionysus (Bacchus) control the essential crops which will enable the colonists to live. Dido prays to these gods at the moment when she is about to abandon her responsibilities as founder of a city; a similar irony is present in her prayer to Juno, whose "business" is the marriage-bond, at the moment when she is about to break her long fidelity to the memory of Sychaeus.

Pores over organs,[5] living still, for signs.
Alas, what darkened minds have soothsayers!
What good are shrines and vows to maddened lovers?
The inward fire eats the soft marrow away,
And the internal wound bleeds on in silence.

Unlucky Dido, burning, in her madness
Roamed through all the city, like a doe
Hit by an arrow shot from far away
By a shepherd hunting in the Cretan woods—
Hit by surprise, nor could the hunter see
His flying steel had fixed itself in her;
But though she runs for life through copse and glade
The fatal shaft clings to her side.
Now Dido
Took Aeneas with her among her buildings,
Showed her Sidonian[6] wealth, her walls prepared,
And tried to speak, but in mid-speech grew still.
When the day waned she wanted to repeat
The banquet as before, to hear once more
In her wild need the throes of Ilium,
And once more hung on the narrator's words.
Afterward, when all the guests were gone,
And the dim moon in turn had quenched her light,
And setting stars weighed weariness to sleep,
Alone she mourned in the great empty hall
And pressed her body on the couch he left:
She heard him still, though absent—heard and saw him.
Or she would hold Ascanius in her lap,
Enthralled by him, the image of his father,
As though by this ruse to appease a love
Beyond all telling.
Towers, half-built, rose
No farther; men no longer trained in arms
Or toiled to make harbors and battlements
Impregnable. Projects were broken off,
Laid over, and the menacing huge walls
With cranes unmoving stood against the sky.

[Juno proposes to Venus that Dido and Aeneas be married, which would guarantee the unity of Carthage and Troy and peace between Juno and Venus. Her aim is of course to ensure that the imperial

5. An Etruscan and Roman practice was to inspect the entrails of the sacrificial victim and interpret irregular or unusual features as signs of what the future held in store. 6. Sidon is the Phoenician city from which Dido fled, to found Carthage.

destiny reserved for Rome be transferred to Carthage. Venus, confident of the future, which has been explained to her by Jupiter, consents to the scheme. Dido organizes a hunt, which is broken up by a storm, and Dido and Aeneas take shelter in a cave, where their love is consummated. There is no formal marriage, but Dido henceforth feels justified in assuming the dignity and rights of a wife. Their love is rumored abroad, and when the African prince Iarbas hears of it, he appeals to Jupiter for satisfaction.]

Pleas like this
From the man clinging to his altars reached
The ears of the Almighty. Now he turned
His eyes upon the queen's town and the lovers
Careless of their good name; then spoke to Mercury,[7]
Assigning him a mission:
"Son, bestir yourself,
Call up the Zephyrs,[8] take to your wings and glide.
Approach the Dardan captain where he tarries
Rapt in Tyrian Carthage, losing sight
Of future towns the fates ordain. Correct him,
Carry my speech to him on the running winds:
No son like this did his enchanting mother
Promise to us, nor such did she deliver
Twice from peril at the hands of Greeks.
He was to be the ruler of Italy,
Potential empire, armorer of war;
To father men from Teucer's[9] noble blood
And bring the whole world under law's dominion.
If glories to be won by deeds like these
Cannot arouse him, if he will not strive
For his own honor, does he begrudge his son,
Ascanius, the high strongholds of Rome?
What has he in mind? What hope, to make him stay
Amid a hostile race, and lose from view
Ausonian[1] progeny, Lavinian lands?
The man should sail: that is the whole point.
Let this be what you tell him, as from me."

He finished and fell silent. Mercury
Made ready to obey the great command
Of his great father, and he first tied on
The golden sandals, winged, that high in air

7. The Latin equivalent of the Greek Hermes, the divine messenger. 8. The west winds.
9. First of the Trojan Kings. 1. Italian.

Transport him over seas or over land
Abreast of gale winds; then he took the wand
With which he summons pale souls out of Orcus
And ushers others to the undergloom,
Lulls men to slumber or awakens them,
And opens dead men's eyes. This wand in hand,
He can drive winds before him, swimming down
Along the stormcloud. Now aloft, he saw
The craggy flanks and crown of patient Atlas,[2]
Giant Atlas, balancing the sky
Upon his peak—his pine-forested head
In vapor cowled, beaten by wind and rain.
Snow lay upon his shoulders, rills cascaded
Down his ancient chin and beard a-bristle,
Caked with ice. Here Mercury of Cyllenë[3]
Hovered first on even wings, then down
He plummeted to sea-level and flew on
Like a low-flying gull that skims the shallows
And rocky coasts where fish ply close inshore.
So, like a gull between the earth and sky,
The progeny of Cyllenë, on the wing
From his maternal grandsire, split the winds
To the sand bars of Libya.
Alighting tiptoe
On the first hutments, there he found Aeneas
Laying foundations for new towers and homes.
He noted well the swordhilt the man wore,
Adorned with yellow jasper; and the cloak
Aglow with Tyrian dye upon his shoulders—
Gifts of the wealthy queen, who had inwoven
Gold thread in the fabric. Mercury
Took him to task at once:
"Is it for you
To lay the stones for Carthage's high walls,
Tame husband that you are, and build their city?
Oblivious of your own world, your own kingdom!
From bright Olympus he that rules the gods
And turns the earth and heaven by his power—
He and no other sent me to you, told me
To bring this message on the running winds:
What have you in mind? What hope, wasting your days

2. A high mountain range in western North Africa. Virgil is referring, by the personification of the mountain, to the legend that the Titan Atlas was punished for his part in the revolt against Zeus (Jupiter) by being made to hold up the sky on his shoulders. 3. A mountain in Arcadia, birthplace of Hermes-Mercury.

In Libya? If future history's glories
Do not affect you, if you will not strive
For your own honor, think of Ascanius,
Think of the expectations of your heir,
Iulus, to whom the Italian realm, the land
Of Rome, are due."
And Mercury, as he spoke,
Departed from the visual field of mortals
To a great distance, ebbed in subtle air.
Amazed, and shocked to the bottom of his soul
By what his eyes had seen, Aeneas felt
His hackles rise, his voice choke in his throat.
As the sharp admonition and command
From heaven had shaken him awake, he now
Burned only to be gone, to leave that land
Of the sweet life behind. What can he do? How tell
The impassioned queen and hope to win her over?
What opening shall he choose? This way and that
He let his mind dart, testing alternatives,
Running through every one. And as he pondered
This seemed the better tactic: he called in
Mnestheus, Sergestus and stalwart Serestus,
Telling them:
"Get the fleet ready for sea,
But quietly, and collect the men on shore.
Lay in ship stores and gear."
As to the cause
For a change of plan, they were to keep it secret,
Seeing the excellent Dido had no notion,
No warning that such love could be cut short;
He would himself look for the right occasion,
The easiest time to speak, the way to do it.
The Trojans to a man gladly obeyed.

The queen, for her part, felt some plot afoot
Quite soon—for who deceives a woman in love?
She caught wind of a change, being in fear
Of what had seemed her safety. Evil Rumor,[4]
Shameless as before, brought word to her
In her distracted state of ships being rigged
In trim for sailing. Furious, at her wits' end,
She traversed the whole city, all aflame
With rage, like a Bacchantë[5] driven wild

4. Earlier, Rumor (personified as a semi-divine being) had spread the report of Dido's "marriage" which had incited Iarbas to make his indignant prayer to Jupiter. 5. A female devotee of the god Dionysus (Bacchus), in an ecstatic trance at the Dionysian festival, held every other year.

By emblems shaken, when the mountain revels
Of the odd year possess her, when the cry
Of Bacchus rises and Cithaeron[6] calls
All through the shouting night. Thus it turned out
She was the first to speak and charge Aeneas:

"You even hoped to keep me in the dark
As to this outrage, did you, two-faced man,
And slip away in silence? Can our love
Not hold you, can the pledge we gave not hold you,
Can Dido not, now sure to die in pain?
Even in winter weather must you toil
With ships, and fret to launch against high winds
For the open sea? Oh, heartless!
Tell me now,
If you were not in search of alien lands
And new strange homes, if ancient Troy remained,
Would ships put out for Troy on these big seas?
Do you go to get away from me? I beg you,
By these tears, by your own right hand,[7] since I
Have left my wretched self nothing but that—
Yes, by the marriage that we entered on,
If ever I did well and you were grateful
Or found some sweetness in a gift from me,
Have pity now on a declining house!
Put this plan by, I beg you, if a prayer
Is not yet out of place.
Because of you, Libyans and nomad kings
Detest me, my own Tyrians are hostile;
Because of you, I lost my integrity
And that admired name by which alone
I made my way once toward the stars.
To whom
Do you abandon me, a dying woman,
Guest that you are—the only name now left
From that of husband? Why do I live on?
Shall I, until my brother Pygmalion comes
To pull my walls down? Or the Gaetulan
Iarbas leads me captive? If at least
There were a child by you for me to care for,
A little one to play in my courtyard
And give me back Aeneas, in spite of all,
I should not feel so utterly defeated,
Utterly bereft."

6. Mountain near Thebes, sacred to Dionysus. 7. The handclasp with which he pledged his love and which Dido takes as an earnest of marriage.

She ended there.
The man by Jove's command held fast his eyes
And fought down the emotion in his heart.
At length he answered:
"As for myself, be sure
I never shall deny all you can say,
Your majesty, of what you meant to me.
Never will the memory of Elissa[8]
Stale for me, while I can still remember
My own life, and the spirit rules my body.
As to the event, a few words. Do not think
I meant to be deceitful and slip away.
I never held the torches of a bridegroom,
Never entered upon the pact of marriage.
If Fate permitted me to spend my days
By my own lights, and make the best of things
According to my wishes, first of all
I should look after Troy and the loved relics
Left me of my people. Priam's great hall
Should stand again; I should have restored the tower
Of Pergamum for Trojans in defeat.
But now it is the rich Italian land
Apollo tells me I must make for: Italy,
Named by his oracles. There is my love;
There is my country. If, as a Phoenician,
You are so given to the charms of Carthage,
Libyan city that it is, then tell me,
Why begrudge the Teucrian new lands
For homesteads in Ausonia? Are we not
Entitled, too, to look for realms abroad?
Night never veils the earth in damp and darkness,
Fiery stars never ascend the east,
But in my dreams my father's troubled ghost[9]
Admonishes and frightens me. Then, too,
Each night thoughts come of young Ascanius,
My dear boy wronged, defrauded of his kingdom,
Hesperian lands of destiny. And now
The gods' interpreter, sent by Jove himself—
I swear it by your head and mine—has brought
Commands down through the racing winds! I say
With my own eyes in full daylight I saw him
Entering the building! With my very ears
I drank his message in! So please, no more

8. Another name of Dido. 9. Anchises had died in Sicily just before Aeneas, leaving for Italy, was blown by the storm winds to Carthage.

Of these appeals that set us both afire.
I sail for Italy not of my own free will."

During all this she had been watching him
With face averted, looking him up and down
In silence, and she burst out raging now:

"No goddess was your mother. Dardanus
Was not the founder of your family.
Liar and cheat! Some rough Caucasian[1] cliff
Begot you on flint. Hyrcanian tigresses
Tendered their teats to you. Why should I palter?
Why still hold back for more indignity?
Sigh, did he, while I wept? Or look at me?
Or yield a tear, or pity her who loved him?
What shall I say first, with so much to say?
The time is past when either supreme Juno
Or the Saturnian father[2] viewed these things
With justice. Faith can never be secure.
I took the man in, thrown up on this coast
In dire need, and in my madness then
Contrived a place for him in my domain,
Rescued his lost fleet, saved his shipmates' lives.
Oh, I am swept away burning by furies!
Now the prophet Apollo, now his oracles,
Now the gods' interpreter, if you please,
Sent down by Jove[3] himself, brings through the air
His formidable commands! What fit employment
For heaven's high powers! What anxieties
To plague serene immortals![4] I shall not
Detain you or dispute your story. Go,
Go after Italy on the sailing winds,
Look for your kingdom, cross the deepsea swell!
If divine justice counts for anything,
I hope and pray that on some grinding reef
Midway at sea you'll drink your punishment
And call and call on Dido's name!
From far away I shall come after you
With my black fires, and when cold death has parted
Body from soul I shall be everywhere
A shade to haunt you! You will pay for this,

1. The Caucasus is a mountain range near the Caspian Sea. It had connotations of outlandishness and of cruelty. *Hyrcanian:* From the same general areas as the Caucasus. 2. Jupiter (son of Saturn). 3. Jupiter. 4. Dido is referring to the Epicurean idea that the gods are unaffected by human events.

Unconscionable! I shall hear! The news will reach me
Even among the lowest of the dead!"

At this abruptly she broke off and ran
In sickness from his sight and the light of day,
Leaving him at a loss, alarmed, and mute
With all he meant to say. The maids in waiting
Caught her as she swooned and carried her
To bed in her marble chamber.
Duty-bound,
Aeneas, though he struggled with desire
To calm and comfort her in all her pain,
To speak to her and turn her mind from grief,
And though he sighed his heart out, shaken still
With love of her, yet took the course heaven gave him
And went back to the fleet. Then with a will
The Teucrians fell to work and launched ships
Along the whole shore: slick with tar each hull
Took to the water. Eager to get away,
The sailors brought oar-boughs out of the woods
With leaves still on, and oaken logs unhewn.
Now you could see them issuing from the town
To the water's edge in streams, as when, aware
Of winter, ants will pillage a mound of spelt
To store it in their granary; over fields
The black battalion moves, and through the grass
On a narrow trail they carry off the spoil;
Some put their shoulders to the enormous weight
Of a trundled grain, while some pull stragglers in
And castigate delay; their to-and-fro
Of labor makes the whole track come alive.
At that sight, what were your emotions, Dido?
Sighing how deeply, looking out and down
From your high tower on the seething shore
Where all the harbor filled before your eyes
With bustle and shouts! Unconscionable Love,
To what extremes will you not drive our hearts!
She now felt driven to weep again, again
To move him, if she could, by supplication,
Humbling her pride before her love— to leave
Nothing untried, not to die needlessly.

"Anna, you see the arc of waterfront
All in commotion: they come crowding in
From everywhere. Spread canvas calls for wind,

The happy crews have garlanded the sterns.
If I could brace myself for this great sorrow,
Sister, I can endure it, too. One favor,
Even so, you may perform for me.
Since that deserter chose you for his friend
And trusted you, even with private thoughts,
Since you alone know when he may be reached,
Go, intercede with our proud enemy.
Remind him that I took no oath at Aulis[5]
With Danaans to destroy the Trojan race;
I sent no ship to Pergamum. Never did I
Profane his father Anchisës' dust and shade.
Why will he not allow my prayers to fall
On his unpitying ears? Where is he racing?
Let him bestow one last gift on his mistress:
This, to await fair winds and easier flight.
Now I no longer plead the bond he broke
Of our old marriage, nor do I ask that he
Should live without his dear love, Latium,
Or yield his kingdom. Time is all I beg,
Mere time, a respite and a breathing space
For madness to subside in, while my fortune
Teaches me how to take defeat and grieve.
Pity your sister. This is the end, this favor—
To be repaid with interest when I die."

She pleaded in such terms, and such, in tears,
Her sorrowing sister brought him, time and again.
But no tears moved him, no one's voice would he
Attend to tractably. The fates opposed it;
God's will blocked the man's once kindly ears.
And just as when the north winds from the Alps
This way and that contend among themselves
To tear away an oaktree hale with age,
The wind and tree cry, and the buffeted trunk
Showers high foliage to earth, but holds
On bedrock, for the roots go down as far
Into the underworld as cresting boughs
Go up in heaven's air: just so this captain,
Buffeted by a gale of pleas
This way and that way, dinned all the day long,
Felt their moving power in his great heart,
And yet his will stood fast; tears fell in vain.

5. The harbor from which the Greek fleet left for Troy.

On Dido in her desolation now
Terror grew at her fate. She prayed for death,
Being heartsick at the mere sight of heaven.
That she more surely would perform the act
And leave the daylight, now she saw before her
A thing one shudders to recall: on altars
Fuming with incense where she placed her gifts,
The holy water blackened, the spilt wine
Turned into blood and mire. Of this she spoke
To no one, not to her sister even. Then, too,
Within the palace was a marble shrine
Devoted to her onetime lord, a place
She held in wondrous honor, all festooned
With snowy fleeces and green festive boughs.
From this she now thought voices could be heard
And words could be made out, her husband's words,
Calling her, when midnight hushed the earth;
And lonely on the rooftops the night owl
Seemed to lament, in melancholy notes,
Prolonged to a doleful cry. And then, besides,
The riddling words of seers in ancient days,
Foreboding sayings, made her thrill with fear.
In nightmare, fevered, she was hunted down
By pitiless Aeneas, and she seemed
Deserted always, uncompanioned always,
On a long journey, looking for her Tyrians
In desolate landscapes
as Pentheus[6] gone mad
Sees the oncoming Eumenidës and sees
A double sun and double Thebes appear,
Or as when, hounded on the stage, Orestës[7]
Runs from a mother armed with burning brands,
With serpents hellish black,
And in the doorway squat the Avenging Ones.

So broken in mind by suffering, Dido caught
Her fatal madness and resolved to die.
She pondered time and means, then visiting

6. King of Thebes. He persecuted the worshippers of the new god Dionysus and imprisoned the god himself. He was later mocked by the god, who inspired him with the Dionysiac spirit (and perhaps with wine) so that he saw double. In this state he was led off to his death on Cithaeron. These events are dramatized in Euripides' play *The Bacchanals (Bacchae)* but the Eumenides (Furies) are not mentioned there. Perhaps Virgil is using them simply as a symbol for madness.
7. Another reference to Greek tragedy. In the *Choephoroe* (The Libation Bearers) of Aeschylus, Orestes kills his mother Clytemnestra, and is pursued by the Furies. In other tragic contexts he is represented as pursued by the ghost of his mother.

Her mournful sister, covered up her plan
With a calm look, a clear and hopeful brow.

"Sister, be glad for me! I've found a way
To bring him back or free me of desire.
Near to the Ocean boundary, near sundown,
The Aethiops' farthest territory lies,
Where giant Atlas turns the sphere of heaven
Studded with burning stars. From there
A priestess of Massylian[8] stock has come;
She had been pointed out to me: custodian
Of that shrine named for daughters of the west,
Hesperidës;[9] and it is she who fed
The dragon, guarding well the holy boughs
With honey dripping slow and drowsy poppy.
Chanting her spells she undertakes to free
What hearts she wills, but to inflict on others
Duress of sad desires; to arrest
The flow of rivers, make the stars move backward,
Call up the spirits of deep Night. You'll see
Earth shift and rumble underfoot and ash trees
Walk down mountainsides. Dearest, I swear
Before the gods and by your own sweet self,
It is against my will that I resort
For weaponry to magic powers. In secret
Build up a pyre in the inner court
Under the open sky, and place upon it
The arms that faithless man left in my chamber,
All his clothing, and the marriage bed
On which I came to grief—solace for me
To annihilate all vestige of the man,
Vile as he is: my priestess shows me this."

While she was speaking, cheek and brow grew pale.
But Anna could not think her sister cloaked
A suicide in these unheard-of rites;
She failed to see how great her madness was
And feared no consequence more grave
Than at Sychaeus' death. So, as commanded,
She made the preparations. For her part,
The queen, seeing the pyre in her inmost court
Erected huge with pitch-pine and sawn ilex,

8. From the African tribe. 9. The daughters of Hesperus, in the west, who lived in a garden which contained golden apples, guarded by a dragon.

Hung all the place under the sky with wreaths
And crowned it with funereal cypress boughs.
On the pyre's top she put a sword he left
With clothing, and an effigy on a couch,
Her mind fixed now ahead on what would come.
Around the pyre stood altars, and the priestess,
Hair unbound, called in a voice of thunder
Upon three hundred gods, on Erebus,[1]
On Chaos, and on triple Hecatë,
Three-faced Diana. Then she sprinkled drops
Purportedly from the fountain of Avernus.[2]
Rare herbs were brought out, reaped at the new moon
By scythes of bronze, and juicy with a milk
Of dusky venom; then the rare love-charm
Or caul torn from the brow of a birthing foal
And snatched away before the mother found it.
Dido herself with consecrated grain
In her pure hands, as she went near the altars,
Freed one foot from sandal straps, let fall
Her dress ungirdled, and, now sworn to death,
Called on the gods and stars that knew her fate.
She prayed then to whatever power may care
In comprehending justice for the grief
Of lovers bound unequally by love.

The night had come, and weary in every land
Men's bodies took the boon of peaceful sleep.
The woods and the wild seas had quieted
At that hour when the stars are in mid-course
And every field is still; cattle and birds
With vivid wings that haunt the limpid lakes
Or nest in thickets in the country places
All were asleep under the silent night.
Not, though, the agonized Phoenician queen:
She never slackened into sleep and never
Allowed the tranquil night to rest
Upon her eyelids or within her heart.
Her pain redoubled; love came on again,
Devouring her, and on her bed she tossed
In a great surge of anger.

1. The lowest depth of the underworld. *Chaos:* Greek personification of the disorder which preceded the creation of the universe. *Hecatë:* Title of Diana as goddess of sorcery; she is Hecatë, the moon, and Diana the virgin huntress. 2. A lake in southern Italy which was supposed to be the entrance to the lower world.

So awake,
She pressed these questions, musing to herself:

"Look now, what can I do? Turn once again
To the old suitors, only to be laughed at—
Begging a marriage with Numidians
Whom I disdained so often? Then what? Trail
The Ilian ships and follow like a slave
Commands of Trojans? Seeing them so agreeable,
In view of past assistance and relief,
So thoughtful their unshaken gratitude?
Suppose I wished it, who permits or takes
Aboard their proud ships one they so dislike?
Poor lost soul, do you not yet grasp or feel
The treachery of the line of Laömedon?[3]
What then? Am I to go alone, companion
Of the exultant sailors in their flight?
Or shall I set out in their wake, with Tyrians,
With all my crew close at my side, and send
The men I barely tore away from Tyre
To sea again, making them hoist their sails
To more sea-winds? No: die as you deserve,
Give pain quietus with a steel blade.
Sister,
You are the one who gave way to my tears
In the beginning, burdened a mad queen
With sufferings, and thrust me on my enemy.
It was not given me to lead my life
Without new passion, innocently, the way
Wild creatures live, and not to touch these depths.
The vow I took to the ashes of Sychaeus
Was not kept."
So she broke out afresh
In bitter mourning. On his high stern deck
Aeneas, now quite certain of departure,
Everything ready, took the boon of sleep.
In dream the figure of the god returned
With looks reproachful as before: he seemed
Again to warn him, being like Mercury
In every way, in voice, in golden hair,
And in the bloom of youth.

3. A king of Troy who twice broke his promise, once to Heracles and once to Apollo and Poseidon.

"Son of the goddess,
Sleep away this crisis, can you still?
Do you not see the dangers growing round you,
Madman, from now on? Can you not hear
The offshore westwind blow? The woman hatches
Plots and drastic actions in her heart,
Resolved on death now, whipping herself on
To heights of anger. Will you not be gone
In flight, while flight is still within your power?
Soon you will see the offing boil with ships
And glare with torches; soon again
The waterfront will be alive with fires,
If Dawn comes while you linger in this country.
Ha! Come, break the spell! Woman's a thing
Forever fitful and forever changing."

At this he merged into the darkness. Then
As the abrupt phantom filled him with fear,
Aeneas broke from sleep and roused his crewmen:
"Up, turn out now! Oarsmen, take your thwarts!
Shake out sail! Look here, for the second time
A god from heaven's high air is goading me
To hasten our break away, to cut the cables.
Holy one, whatever god you are,
We go with you, we act on your command
Most happily! Be near, graciously help us,
Make the stars in heaven propitious ones!"

He pulled his sword aflash out of its sheath
And struck at the stern hawser. All the men
Were gripped by his excitement to be gone,
And hauled and hustled. Ships cast off their moorings,
And an array of hulls hid inshore water
As oarsmen churned up foam and swept to sea.

Soon early Dawn, quitting the saffron bed
Of old Tithonus,[4] cast new light on earth,
And as air grew transparent, from her tower
The queen caught sight of ships on the seaward reach
With sails full and the wind astern. She knew
The waterfront now empty, bare of oarsmen.
Beating her lovely breast three times, four times,
And tearing her golden hair,

4. Human consort of Eos-Aurora, the dawn-goddess. He is "old" because although she made him immortal when she took him to her bed, she forgot to obtain for him the gift of eternal youth.

"O Jupiter,"
She said, "will this man go, will he have mocked
My kingdom, stranger that he was and is?
Will they not snatch up arms and follow him
From every quarter of the town? and dockhands
Tear out ships from moorings? On! Be quick
With torches! Give out arms! Unship the oars!
What am I saying? Where am I? What madness
Takes me out of myself? Dido, poor soul,
Your evil doing has come home to you.
Then was the right time, when you offered him
A royal scepter. See the good faith and honor
Of one they say bears with him everywhere
The hearthgods of his country! One who bore
His father, spent with age, upon his shoulders!
Could I not then have torn him limb from limb
And flung the pieces on the sea? His company,
Even Ascanius could I not have minced
And served up to his father at a feast?
The luck of battle might have been in doubt—
So let it have been! Whom had I to fear,
Being sure to die? I could have carried torches
Into his camp, filled passage ways with flame,
Annihilated father and son and followers
And given my own life on top of all!
O Sun, scanning with flame all works of earth,
And thou, O Juno, witness and go-between
Of my long miseries; and Hecatë,
Screeched for at night at crossroads in the cities;
And thou, avenging Furies, and all gods
On whom Elissa dying may call: take notice,
Overshadow this hell with your high power,
As I deserve, and hear my prayer!
If by necessity that impious wretch
Must find his haven and come safe to land,
If so Jove's destinies require, and this,
His end in view, must stand, yet all the same
When hard beset in war by a brave people,
Forced to go outside his boundaries
And torn from Iulus, let him beg assistance,
Let him see the unmerited deaths of those
Around and with him, and accepting peace
On unjust terms, let him not, even so,
Enjoy his kingdom or the life he longs for,
But fall in battle before his time and lie

Unburied on the sand![5] This I implore,
This is my last cry, as my last blood flows.
Then, O my Tyrians, besiege with hate
His progeny and all his race to come:
Make this your offering to my dust. No love,
No pact must be between our peoples;[6] No,
But rise up from my bones, avenging spirit![7]
Harry with fire and sword the Dardan countrymen
Now, or hereafter, at whatever time
The strength will be afforded. Coast with coast
In conflict, I implore, and sea with sea,
And arms with arms: may they contend in war,
Themselves and all the children of their children!"

Now she took thought of one way or another,
At the first chance, to end her hated life,
And briefly spoke to Barcë, who had been
Sychaeus' nurse; her own an urn of ash
Long held in her ancient fatherland.
"Dear nurse,
Tell Sister Anna to come here, and have her
Quickly bedew herself with running water
Before she brings out victims for atonement.
Let her come that way. And you, too, put on
Pure wool around your brows. I have a mind
To carry out that rite to Stygian Jove[8]
That I have readied here, and put an end
To my distress, committing to the flames
The pyre of that miserable Dardan."

At this with an old woman's eagerness
Barcë hurried away. And Dido's heart
Beat wildly at the enormous thing afoot.
She rolled her bloodshot eyes, her quivering cheeks
Were flecked with red as her sick pallor grew
Before her coming death. Into the court
She burst her way, then at her passion's height

5. This prophecy of Dido's, expressed in the form of a wish, is destined to come true. Aeneas meets resistance in Italy; at one point in the war he has to leave Ascanius behind and go to beg aid from an Italian king, Evander. The final peace is made on condition that the name of his people be changed from "Trojans" to "Latins"; and he is eventually drowned in an Italian river. Aeneas' reward for all his struggles is to come not during his life, but in the glory of the generations which succeed him. 6. In fact, the Romans and Carthaginians fought three separate wars (called Punic Wars from the Roman word for the Carthaginians). Rome won them all (though she almost lost the second one): after the third, the city of Carthage was razed to the ground. 7. Dido foresees the harrying of Italy by the Carthaginian general Hannibal, who in the third century B.C. invaded Italy, defeating the Romans in battle after battle, but failed to capture Rome. 8. Jove (Jupiter) as lord of the Underworld, where flowed the river Styx.

She climbed the pyre and bared the Dardan sword—
A gift desired once, for no such need.
Her eyes now on the Trojan clothing there
And the familiar bed, she paused a little,
Weeping a little, mindful, then lay down
And spoke her last words:
"Remnants dear to me
While god and fate allowed it, take this breath
And give me respite from these agonies.
I lived my life out to the very end
And passed the stages Fortune had appointed.
Now my tall shade goes to the under world.
I built a famous town, saw my great walls,
Avenged my husband, made my hostile brother
Pay for his crime. Happy, alas, too happy,
If only the Dardanian keels had never
Beached on our coast." And here she kissed the bed.
"I die unavenged," she said, "but let me die.
This way, this way,[9] a blessed relief to go
Into the undergloom. Let the cold Trojan,
Far at sea, drink in this conflagration
And take with him the omen of my death!"

Amid these words her household people saw her
Crumpled over the steel blade, and the blade
Aflush with red blood, drenched her hands. A scream
Pierced the high chambers. Now through the shocked city
Rumor went rioting, as wails and sobs
With women's outcry echoed in the palace
And heaven's high air gave back the beating din,
As though all Carthage or old Tyre fell
To storming enemies,[1] and, out of hand,
Flames billowed on the roofs of men and gods.
Her sister heard the trembling, faint with terror,
Lacerating her face, beating her breast,
Ran through the crowd to call the dying queen:

"It came to this, then, sister? You deceived me?
The pyre meant this, altars and fires meant this?
What shall I mourn first, being abandoned? Did you
Scorn your sister's company in death?
You should have called me out to the same fate!
The same blade's edge and hurt, at the same hour,

9. In Latin *sic, sic*—the repetition represents the two thrusts of the sword. 1. These lines prefigure the capture and destruction of Carthage in the Third Punic War (146 B.C.).

Should have taken us off. With my own hands
Had I to build this pyre, and had I to call
Upon our country's gods, that in the end
With you placed on it there, O heartless one,
I should be absent? You have put to death
Yourself and me, the people and the fathers
Bred in Sidon, and your own new city.
Give me fresh water, let me bathe her wound
And catch upon my lips any last breath
Hovering over hers."
Now she had climbed
The topmost steps and took her dying sister
Into her arms to cherish, with a sob,
Using her dress to stanch the dark blood flow.
But Dido trying to lift her heavy eyes
Fainted again. Her chest-wound whistled air.
Three times she struggled up on one elbow
And each time fell back on the bed. Her gaze
Went wavering as she looked for heaven's light
And groaned at finding it. Almighty Juno,
Filled with pity for this long ordeal
And difficult passage, now sent Iris[2] down
Out of Olympus to set free
The wrestling spirit from the body's hold.
For since she died, not at her fated span
Nor as she merited, but before her time
Enflamed and driven mad, Proserpina[3]
Had not yet plucked from her the golden hair,
Delivering her to Orcus of the Styx.
So humid Iris through bright heaven flew
On saffron-yellow wings, and in her train
A thousand hues shimmered before the sun.
At Dido's head she came to rest.
"This token
Sacred to Dis[4] I bear away as bidden
And free you from your body."
Saying this,
She cut a lock of hair. Along with it
Her body's warmth fell into dissolution,
And out into the winds her life withdrew.

2. As in Homer, a divine messenger. Sometimes identified with the rainbow (hence "humid Iris" l. 771 below). 3. The queen of the underworld. Before an animal was sacrificed, some hair was cut from the forehead: before a human being died, Proserpina (Persephone) was thought to cut a lock of hair as an offering to Dis, the god of the underworld. Since Dido by her suicide has anticipated her fated day, Proserpina cannot cut the lock; Juno sends Iris to do it. 4. Roman name for Greek Hades, god of the underworld.

[After his hurried departure from Carthage, Aeneas goes to Sicily, to the kingdom of his friend Acestes. There he organizes funeral games in honor of his father, Anchises (who had died in Sicily on their first visit there), and leaves behind those of his following who are unwilling to go on to the uncertainty of a settlement in Italy. Once on Italian soil, Aeneas, obeying instructions from his dead father who had appeared to him in a dream, consults the Sibyl, who guides him down to the world of the dead. There he is to see his father and the vision of his race, which is to be his only reward, for he will die before his people are settled in their new home.]

Book VI

[AENEAS IN THE UNDERWORLD]

Gods who rule the ghosts; all silent shades;
And Chaos and infernal Fiery Stream,[5]
And regions of wide night without a sound,
May it be right to tell what I have heard,
May it be right, and fitting, by your will,
That I describe the deep world sunk in darkness
Under the earth.
Now dim to one another
In desolate night they[6] walked on through the gloom,
Through Dis's homes all void, and empty realms,
As one goes through a wood by a faint moon's
Treacherous light, when Jupiter veils the sky
And black night blots the colors of the world.
Before the entrance, in the jaws of Orcus,
Grief and avenging Cares have made their beds,
And pale Diseases and sad Age are there,
And Dread, and Hunger that sways men to crime,
And sordid Want—in shapes to affright the eyes—
And Death and Toil and Death's own brother, Sleep,
And the mind's evil joys; on the door sill
Death-bringing War, and iron cubicles
Of the Eumenidës, and raving Discord,
Viperish hair bound up in gory bands.
In the courtyard a shadowy giant elm
Spreads ancient boughs, her ancient arms where dreams,
False dreams, the old tale goes, beneath each leaf
Cling and are numberless. There, too,
About the doorway forms of monsters crowd—

5. A translation of *Phlegethon*, the name of one of the Underworld rivers. 6. Aeneas and the Sibyl.

Centaurs,[7] twiformed Scyllas, hundred-armed
Briareus, and the Lernaean hydra[8]
Hissing horribly, and the Chimaera
Breathing dangerous flames, and Gorgons, Harpies,[9]
Huge Geryon,[1] triple-bodied ghost.
Here, swept by sudden fear, drawing his sword,
Aeneas stood on guard with naked edge
Against them as they came. If his companion,
Knowing the truth, had not admonished him
How faint these lives were—empty images
Hovering bodiless—he had attacked
And cut his way through phantoms, empty air.

The path goes on from that place to the waves
Of Tartarus's Acheron.[2] Thick with mud,
A whirlpool out of a vast abyss
Boils up and belches all the silt it carries
Into Cocytus.[3] Here the ferryman,
A figure of fright, keeper of waters and streams,
Is Charon,[4] foul and terrible, his beard
Grown wild and hoar, his staring eyes all flame,
His sordid cloak hung from a shoulder knot.
Alone he poles his craft and trims the sails
And in his rusty hull ferries the dead,
Old now—but old age in the gods is green.

Here a whole crowd came streaming to the banks,
Mothers and men, the forms with all life spent
Of heroes great in valor, boys and girls
Unmarried, and young sons laid on the pyre
Before their parents' eyes—as many souls
As leaves that yield their hold on boughs and fall
Through forests in the early frost of autumn,
Or as migrating birds from the open sea
That darken heaven when the cold season comes
And drives them overseas to sunlit lands.

7. Mythical creatures, half man, half horse—a byword for violence. *Scyllas:* Many-headed monsters. *Briareus* had fifty heads. 8. Many-headed serpent killed by Heracles. Each time one head was cut off, two new ones grew in its place. *Chimaera:* One-third lion, one-third goat, one-third snake. 9. Not, here, the creatures which carried off the food of Phineus' table but spirits of the storm wind which carry souls off to Hades. *Gorgons:* Monsters whose look could turn people to stone. 1. A giant with three bodies: an opponent of Heracles. 2. One of the rivers of the underworld. *Tartarus:* The lower depths of the underworld. 3. Another infernal river. The name suggests in Greek, "mourning," "lamentation." 4. The ferryman who took the souls across the river. He is a god, and very old, but age in gods does not affect their vitality or strength ("old age in the gods is green").

There all stood begging to be first across
And reached out longing hands to the far shore.

But the grim boatman now took these aboard,
Now those, waving the rest back from the strand.
In wonder at this and touched by the commotion,
Aeneas said:
"Tell me, Sister, what this means,
The crowd at the stream. Where are the souls bound?
How are they tested, so that these turn back,
While those take oars to cross the dead-black water?"

Briefly the ancient priestess answered him:

"Cocytus is the deep pool that you see,
The swamp of Styx beyond, infernal power
By which the gods take oath and fear to break it.
All in the nearby crowd you notice here
Are pauper souls of the unburied.
Charon's the boatman. Those the water bears
Are souls of buried men. He may not take them
Shore to dread shore on the hoarse currents there
Until their bones rest in the grave, or till
They flutter and roam this side a hundred years;
They may have passage then, and may return
To cross the deeps they long for."
Anchises' son
Had halted, pondering on so much, and stood
In pity for the souls' hard lot. Among them
He saw two sad ones of unhonored death,
Leucaspis and the Lycian fleet's commander,
Orontës,[5] who had sailed the windy sea
From Troy together, till the Southern gale
Had swamped and whirled them down, both ship and men.
Of a sudden he saw his helmsman, Palinurus,
Going by, who but a few nights before
On course from Libya, as he watched the stars,
Had been pitched overboard astern. As soon
As he made sure of the disconsolate one
In all the gloom, Aeneas called:
"Which god
Took you away from us and put you under,

5. Trojans lost at sea in the storm which took Aeneas to Carthage.

Palinurus? Tell me. In this one prophecy
Apollo, who had never played me false,
Falsely foretold you'd be unharmed at sea
And would arrive at the Ausonian coast.
Is the promise kept?"
But the shade said:
"Phoebus' caldron[6]
Told you no lie, my captain, and no god
Drowned me at sea. The helm that I hung on to,
Duty bound to keep our ship on course,
By some great shock chanced to be torn away,
And I went with it overboard. I swear
By the rough sea, I feared less for myself
Than for your ship: with rudder gone and steersman
Knocked overboard, it might well come to grief
In big seas running. Three nights, heavy weather
Out of the South on the vast water tossed me.
On the fourth dawn, I sighted Italy
Dimly ahead, as a wave-crest lifted me.
By turns I swam and rested, swam again
And got my footing on the beach, but savages
Attacked me as I clutched at a cliff-top,
Weighted down by my wet clothes. Poor fools,
They took me for a prize and ran me through.
Surf has me now, and sea winds, washing me
Close inshore.
By heaven's happy light
And the sweet air, I beg you, by your father,
And by your hopes of Iulus' rising star,
Deliver me from this captivity,
Unconquered friend! Throw earth on me—you can—
Put in to Velia[7] port! Or if there be
Some way to do it, if your goddess mother
Shows a way—and I feel sure you pass
These streams and Stygian marsh by heaven's will—
Give this poor soul your hand, take me across,
Let me at least in death find quiet haven."
When he had made his plea, the Sibyl said:
"From what source comes this craving, Palinurus?
Would you though still unburied see the Styx
And the grim river of the Eumenidës,
Or even the river bank, without a summons?

6. The Pythia, priestess of Apollo at Delphi, delivered the god's prophecies seated on a tripod, a three-legged shallow caldron. 7. South of the Bay of Naples, near Cape Palinuro (which is still named after Aeneas' pilot).

Abandon hope by prayer to make the gods
Change their decrees. Hold fast to what I say
To comfort your hard lot: neighboring folk
In cities up and down the coast will be
Induced by portents to appease your bones,
Building a tomb and making offerings there
On a cape forever named for Palinurus."

The Sibyl's words relieved him, and the pain
Was for a while dispelled from his sad heart,
Pleased at the place-name. So the two walked on
Down to the stream. Now from the Stygian water
The boatman, seeing them in the silent wood
And headed for the bank, cried out to them
A rough uncalled-for challenge:
"Who are you
In armor, visiting our rivers? Speak
From where you are, stop there, say why you come.
This is the region of the Shades, and Sleep,
And drowsy Night. It breaks eternal law
For the Stygian craft to carry living bodies.
Never did I rejoice, I tell you, letting
Alcidës[8] cross, or Theseus and Pirithous,
Demigods by paternity though they were,
Invincible in power. One forced in chains
From the king's own seat the watchdog of the dead
And dragged him away trembling. The other two
Were bent on carrying our lady off
From Dis's chamber."
This the prophetess
And servant of Amphrysian Apollo[9]
Briefly answered:
"Here are no such plots,
So fret no more. These weapons threaten nothing.
Let the great watchdog at the door howl on
Forever terrifying the bloodless shades.
Let chaste Proserpina remain at home
In her uncle's house. The man of Troy, Aeneas,
Remarkable for loyalty, great in arms,
Goes through the deepest shades of Erebus
To see his father.

8. Heracles. One of his labors was to bring Cerberus, the watchdog of Hades, up from the lower world. *Theseus . . . Pirithoüs:* They came to kidnap Proserpina (Persephone): they failed and were imprisoned but Heracles rescued Theseus. 9. An elaborate learned allusion. Apollo had once served as herdsman to King Admetus on the banks of the river Amphrysus in Thessaly.

If the very image
Of so much goodness moves you not at all,
Here is a bough"[1]—at this she showed the bough
That had been hidden, held beneath her dress—
"You'll recognize it."
Then his heart, puffed up
With rage, subsided. They had no more words.
His eyes fixed on the ancient gift, the bough,
The destined gift, so long unseen, now seen,
He turned his dusky craft and made for shore.
There from the long thwarts where they sat he cleared
The other souls and made the gangway wide,
Letting the massive man step in the bilge.
The leaky coracle groaned at the weight
And took a flood of swampy water in.
At length, on the other side, he put ashore
The prophetess and hero in the mire,
A formless ooze amid the grey-green sedge.
Great Cerberus barking with his triple throat
Makes all that shoreline ring, as he lies huge
In a facing cave. Seeing his neck begin
To come alive with snakes, the prophetess
Tossed him a lump of honey and drugged meal
To make him drowse. Three ravenous gullets gaped
And he snapped up the sop. Then his great bulk
Subsided and lay down through all the cave.
Now seeing the watchdog deep in sleep, Aeneas
Took the opening: swiftly he turned away
From the river over which no soul returns.

Now voices crying loud were heard at once—
The souls of infants wailing. At the door
Of the sweet life they were to have no part in,
Torn from the breast, a black day took them off
And drowned them all in bitter death. Near these
Were souls falsely accused, condemned to die.
But now without a judge, or jurymen,
Had these souls got their places: Minos[2] reigned
As the presiding judge, moving the urn,
And called a jury of the silent ones
To learn of lives and accusations. Next
Were those sad souls, benighted, who contrived

1. The golden bough which Aeneas had been ordered to take as tribute to Proserpina. 2. King of Crete, now judge of the dead. *The urn*: The magistrate of a Roman court decided the order in which cases were to be heard by drawing lots from an urn. *Silent ones*: The dead.

Their own destruction, and as they hated daylight,
Cast their lives away. How they would wish
In the upper air now to endure the pain
Of poverty and toil! But iron law
Stands in the way, since the drear hateful swamp
Has pinned them down here, and the Styx that winds
Nine times around exerts imprisoning power.
Not far away, spreading on every side,
The Fields of Mourning came in view, so called
Since here are those whom pitiless love consumed
With cruel wasting, hidden on paths apart
By myrtle woodland growing overhead.
In death itself, pain will not let them be.
He saw here Phaedra, Procris, Eriphylë[3]
Sadly showing the wounds her hard son gave;
Evadnë and Pasiphaë, at whose side
Laodamia[4] walked, and Caeneus,[5]
A young man once, a woman now, and turned
Again by fate into the older form.
Among them, with her fatal wound still fresh,
Phoenician Dido wandered the deep wood.
The Trojan captain paused nearby and knew
Her dim form in the dark, as one who sees,
Early in the month, or thinks to have seen, the moon
Rising through cloud, all dim. He wept and spoke
Tenderly to her:

"Dido, so forlorn,
The story then that came to me was true,
That you were out of life, had met your end
By your own hand. Was I, was I the cause?
I swear by heaven's stars, by the high gods,
By any certainty below the earth,
I left your land against my will, my queen.
The gods' commands drove me to do their will,
As now they drive me through this world of shades,
These mouldy waste lands and these depths of night.

3. She betrayed her husband for gold and was killed by her own son. *Phaedra*: Wife of Theseus, king of Athens, who fell in love with Hippolytus, her husband's son by another woman; the result was her death by suicide and Hippolytus' death through his father's curse. *Procris*: Killed by her husband in an accident which was brought about by her own jealousy. 4. She begged to be allowed to talk with her dead husband; the request was granted by the gods and when his time came to return, she went back with him to the land of the dead. *Evadnë*: Threw herself on the pyre of her husband, who was killed by Zeus for impiety. *Pasiphaë*: Wife of Minos of Crete, she conceived a monstrous love for a bull, and gave birth to the Minotaur. 5. Virgil's words in the original are ambiguous (perhaps to reflect the ambiguity of the sex of Caeneus). The usual explanation of the passage is that Caenis (a woman) was changed by Poseidon into a man (Caeneus) but returned to her original sex after death. Since the name occurs here in a catalogue of women, this seems the most likely explanation.

And I could not believe that I would hurt you
So terribly by going. Wait a little.
Do not leave my sight.
Am I someone to flee from? The last word
Destiny lets me say to you is this."

Aeneas with such pleas tried to placate
The burning soul, savagely glaring back,
And tears came to his eyes. But she had turned
With gaze fixed on the ground as he spoke on,
Her face no more affected than if she were
Immobile granite or Marpesian[6] stone.
At length she flung away from him and fled,
His enemy still, into the shadowy grove
Where he whose bride she once had been, Sychaeus,
Joined in her sorrows and returned her love.
Aeneas still gazed after her in tears,
Shaken by her ill fate and pitying her.

[After being shown a pageant of the great Romans who will make Rome mistress of the world, Aeneas returns to the upper air and begins his settlement in Italy. He is offered the hand of the princess Lavinia by her father Latinus, but this provokes a war against the Trojans, led by King Turnus of Laurentum, in the course of which Aeneas is wounded and stops by a stream to rest. At this point his mother, Venus, comes to him with the armor made for him by Vulcan (Hephaestus), her husband; on the shield is carved a representation of the future glories of Rome.]

Book VIII

[THE SHIELD OF AENEAS]

Venus the gleaming goddess,
Bearing her gifts, came down amid high clouds
And far away still, in a vale apart,
Sighted her son beside the ice-cold stream.
Then making her appearance as she willed
She said to him:
"Here are the gifts I promised,
Forged to perfection by my husband's craft,
So that you need not hesitate to challenge

6. Marpessa was a marble quarry on the island of Paros.

Arrogant Laurentines or savage Turnus,
However soon, in battle."
As she spoke
Cytherëa[7] swept to her son's embrace
And placed the shining arms before his eyes
Under an oak tree. Now the man in joy
At a goddess' gifts, at being so greatly honored,
Could not be satisfied, but scanned each piece
In wonder and turned over in his hands
The helmet with its terrifying plumes
And gushing flames, the sword-blade edged with fate,
The cuirass of hard bronze, blood-red and huge—
Like a dark cloud burning with sunset light
That sends a glow for miles—the polished greaves[8]
Of gold and silver alloy, the great spear,
And finally the fabric of the shield
Beyond description.
There the Lord of Fire,
Knowing the prophets, knowing the age to come,
Had wrought the future story of Italy,
The triumphs of the Romans: there one found
The generations of Ascanius' heirs,
The wars they fought, each one. Vulcan[9] had made
The mother wolf,[1] lying in Mars' green grotto;
Made the twin boys at play about her teats,
Nursing the mother without fear, while she
Bent round her smooth neck fondling them in turn
And shaped their bodies with her tongue.
Nearby,
Rome had been added by the artisan,
And Sabine women[2] roughly carried off
Out of the audience at the Circus games;
Then suddenly a new war coming on
To pit the sons of Romulus against
Old Tatius[3] and his austere town of Curës.
Later the same kings, warfare laid aside,
In arms before Jove's altar stood and held
Libation dishes as they made a pact

7. A title of Venus, who was born from the sea-foam off the Greek island of Cythera. 8. Leg pieces. 9. Hephaestus, the "Lord of Fire." 1. The twins who were to build Rome, Romulus and Remus, sons of Mars the war-god, were cast out into the woods, and there suckled by a she-wolf. 2. The newly founded city of Rome consisted almost entirely of men; the Romans decided to steal the wives of their neighbors, the Sabines. They invited them to an athletic festival and at a given signal, every Roman carried off a Sabine bride. The war which followed ended in the amalgamation of the Roman and Sabine peoples. 3. A Sabine king.

With offering of wine. Not far from this
Two four-horse war-cars, whipped on, back to back,
Had torn Mettus[4] apart (still, man of Alba,
You should have kept your word) and Roman Tullus
Dragged the liar's rags of flesh away
Through woods where brambles dripped a bloody dew.
There, too, Porsenna[5] stood, ordering Rome
To take the exiled Tarquin back, then bringing
The whole city under massive siege.
There for their liberty Aeneas' sons
Threw themselves forward on the enemy spears.
You might have seen Porsenna imaged there
To the life, a menacing man, a man in anger
At Roman daring: Cocles[6] who downed the bridge,
Cloelia who broke her bonds and swam the river.

On the shield's upper quarter Manlius,[7]
Guard of the Tarpeian Rock, stood fast
Before the temple and held the Capitol,
Where Romulus' house[8] was newly thatched and rough.
Here fluttering through gilded porticos
At night, the silvery goose warned of the Gauls
Approaching: under cover of the darkness
Gauls amid the bushes had crept near
And now lay hold upon the citadel.
Golden locks they had and golden dress,
Glimmering with striped cloaks, their milky necks
Entwined with gold. They hefted Alpine spears,
Two each, and had long body shields for cover.
Vulcan had fashioned naked Luperci
And Salii[9] leaping there with woolen caps
And fallen-from-heaven shields, and put chaste ladies
Riding in cushioned carriages through Rome
With sacred images. At a distance then
He pictured the deep hell of Tartarus,
Dis's high gate, crime's punishments, and, yes,

4. Of Alba. He broke an agreement made during the early wars of Rome and was punished by being torn apart by two chariots moving in opposite directions. *Tullus:* The Roman king who punished Mettus. 5. The Etruscan king who attempted to restore the last of the Roman kings, Tarquin, to the throne from which he had been expelled. 6. Horatius Cocles, who with two companions defended the bridge across the Tiber to give the Romans time to destroy it. *Cloelia:* A Roman hostage held by Porsenna. 7. Consul in 392 B.C.; he was in charge of the citadel ("Tarpeian Rock") at a time when the Gauls from the north held all the rest of the city. They made a night attack on the citadel, but Manlius, awakened by the cackling of the sacred geese, beat it off, and saved Rome. 8. In Virgil's time there was still preserved at Rome a rustic building which was supposed to have been the dwelling place of Romulus. 9. The twelve priests of Mars, who danced in his honor carrying shields which had fallen from heaven. *Luperci:* Priests of Lupercus, a Roman god corresponding to the Greek Pan.

You, Catiline,[1] on a precarious cliff
Hanging and trembling at the Furies' glare.
Then, far away from this, were virtuous souls
And Cato[2] giving laws to them. Mid-shield,
The pictured sea flowed surging, all of gold,
As whitecaps foamed on the blue waves, and dolphins
Shining in silver round and round the scene
Propelled themselves with flukes and cut through billows.
Vivid in the center were the bronze-beaked
Ships and the fight at sea off Actium.[3]
Here you could see Leucata all alive
With ships maneuvering, sea glowing gold,
Augustus Caesar leading into battle
Italians, with both senators and people,
Household gods and great gods: there he stood
High on the stern, and from his blessed brow
Twin flames gushed upward, while his crest revealed
His father's star. Apart from him, Agrippa,[4]
Favored by winds and gods, led ships in column,
A towering figure, wearing on his brows
The coronet adorned with warships' beaks,
Highest distinction for command at sea.
Then came Antonius with barbaric wealth
And a diversity of arms, victorious
From races of the Dawnlands and Red Sea,
Leading the power of the East, of Egypt,
Even of distant Bactra[5] of the steppes.
And in his wake the Egyptian consort came
So shamefully. The ships all kept together
Racing ahead, the water torn by oar-strokes,
Torn by the triple beaks, in spume and foam.
All made for the open sea. You might believe
The Cyclades[6] uprooted were afloat
Or mountains running against mountain heights
When seamen in those hulks pressed the attack
Upon the other turreted ships. They hurled

1. Leader of a conspiracy to overthrow the republic which was halted mainly through the efforts of Cicero, consul in 63 B.C. Catiline is the type of discord, representing the civil war which almost destroyed the Roman state, and to which Augustus later put an end. 2. The noblest of the republicans who had fought Julius Caesar; he stood for honesty and the seriousness which the Romans most admired. He committed suicide in 47 B.C. after Caesar's victory in Africa. Before taking his life he read through Plato's *Phaedo*, a dialogue concerned with the immortality of the soul, which ends with an account of the death of Socrates. 3. On the west coast of Greece. The naval battle fought here in 31 B.C. was the decisive engagement of the civil war. Augustus, the master of the western half of the empire, defeated Antony, who held the eastern half and was supported by Cleopatra, queen of Egypt. *Leucata:* A promontory near Actium; there was a temple of Apollo on it. 4. Augustus' admiral at Actium. 5. On the borders of India. 6. The islands of the southern Aegean Sea.

Broadsides of burning flax on flying steel,
And fresh blood reddened Neptune's fields. The queen
Amidst the battle called her flotilla on
With a sistrum's[7] beat, a frenzy out of Egypt,
Never turning her head as yet to see
Twin snakes of death behind, while monster forms
Of gods of every race, and the dog-god
Anubis[8] barking, held their weapons up
Against our Neptune, Venus, and Minerva.
Mars, engraved in steel, raged in the fight
As from high air the dire Furies came
With Discord, taking joy in a torn robe,
And on her heels, with bloody scourge, Bellona.[9]

Overlooking it all, Actian Apollo[1]
Began to pull his bow. Wild at this sight,
All Egypt, Indians, Arabians, all
Sabaeans[2] put about in flight, and she,
The queen, appeared crying for winds to shift
Just as she hauled up sail and slackened sheets.
The Lord of Fire had portrayed her there,
Amid the slaughter, pallid with death to come,
Then borne by waves and wind from the northwest,
While the great length of mourning Nile awaited her
With open bays, calling the conquered home
To his blue bosom and his hidden streams.
But Caesar then in triple triumph[3] rode
Within the walls of Rome, making immortal
Offerings to the gods of Italy—
Three hundred princely shrines throughout the city.
There were the streets, humming with festal joy
And games and cheers, an altar to every shrine,
To every one a mothers' choir, and bullocks
Knifed before the altars strewed the ground.
The man himself, enthroned before the snow-white
Threshold of sunny Phoebus, viewed the gifts
The nations of the earth made, and he fitted them
To the tall portals. Conquered races passed
In long procession, varied in languages
As in their dress and arms. Here Mulciber,[4]
Divine smith, had portrayed the Nomad tribes

7. An Oriental rattle, used in the worship of Isis. 8. The Egyptian death-god, depicted with the head of a jackal. 9. A Roman war-goddess. 1. So called because of his temple at Actium; the temple (and its cult statue) overlooked the sea battle. 2. Arabs from the Yemen. 3. In 29 B.C. Augustus celebrated a triple triumph for victories in Dalmatia, at Actium, and at Alexandria. 4. Another name of Vulcan.

And Afri with ungirdled flowing robes,
Here Leleges and Carians,[5] and here
Gelonians with quivers. Here Euphrates,
Milder in his floods now, there Morini,[6]
Northernmost of men; here bull-horned Rhine,
And there the still unconquered Scythian Dahae;
Here, vexed at being bridged, the rough Araxes.[7]
All these images on Vulcan's shield,
His mother's gift, were wonders to Aeneas.
Knowing nothing of the events themselves,
He felt joy in their pictures, taking up
Upon his shoulder all the destined acts
And fame of his descendants.

[In the course of the desperate battles which follow, the young Pallas, entrusted to Aeneas' care by his father, is killed by the Italian champion Turnus, who takes and wears the belt of Pallas as the spoil of victory. The fortunes of the war later change in favor of the Trojans, and Aeneas kills the Etruscan King Mezentius, Turnus' ally. Eventually, as the Italians prepare to accept the generous peace terms offered by Aeneas, Turnus forestalls them by accepting Aeneas' challenge to single combat to decide the issue. But this solution is frustrated by the intervention of Juno, who foresees Aeneas' victory. She prompts Turnus' sister, the river nymph Juturna, to intervene in an attempt to save Turnus' life. Juturna stirs up the Italians who are watching the champions prepare for the duel; the truce is broken, and in the subsequent fighting Aeneas is wounded by an arrow. Healed by Venus, he returns to the fight, and the Italians are driven back. Turnus finally faces his adversary. His sword breaks on the armor forged by Vulcan, and he runs from Aeneas; he is saved by Juturna, who, assuming the shape of his charioteer, hands him a fresh sword. At this point Jupiter intervenes to stop the vain attempts of Juno and Juturna to save Turnus.]

Book XII

[THE DEATH OF TURNUS]

Omnipotent Olympus' king meanwhile
Had words for Juno, as she watched the combat
Out of a golden cloud. He said:
"My consort,
What will the end be? What is left for you?

5. Peoples of Asia Minor. *Gelonians*: From Scythia (in the Balkans). 6. A Belgian tribe.
7. A turbulent river in Armenia. Augustus built a new bridge over it.

You yourself know, and say you know, Aeneas
Born for heaven, tutelary of this land,
By fate to be translated to the stars.[8]
What do you plan? What are you hoping for,
Keeping your seat apart in the cold clouds?
Fitting, was it, that a mortal archer
Wound an immortal? That a blade let slip
Should be restored to Turnus, and new force
Accrue to a beaten man? Without your help
What could Juturna do? Come now, at last
Have done, and heed our pleading, and give way.
Let yourself no longer be consumed
Without relief by all that inward burning;
Let care and trouble not forever come to me
From your sweet lips. The finish is at hand.
You had the power to harry men of Troy
By land and sea, to light the fires of war
Beyond belief, to scar a family
With mourning before marriage.[9] I forbid
Your going further."
So spoke Jupiter,
And with a downcast look Juno replied:

"Because I know that is your will indeed,
Great Jupiter, I left the earth below,
Though sore at heart, and left the side of Turnus.
Were it not so, you would not see me here
Suffering all that passes, here alone,
Resting on air. I should be armed in flames
At the very battle-line, dragging the Trojans
Into a deadly action. I persuaded
Juturna—I confess—to help her brother
In his hard lot, and I approved her daring
Greater difficulties to save his life,
But not that she should fight with bow and arrow.
This I swear by Styx' great fountainhead
Inexorable, which high gods hold in awe.
I yield now and for all my hatred leave
This battlefield. But one thing not retained
By fate I beg for Latium, for the future
Greatness of your kin: when presently

8. Aeneas is destined for immortality: after his death, he will be worshipped as a local god.
9. A reference not only to the Italian losses but also to the suicide of Amata, wife of King Latinus, who hanged herself when the Trojans assaulted the city just before the duel between Aeneas and Turnus began.

They crown peace with a happy wedding day—
So let it be—and merge their laws and treaties,
Never command the land's own Latin folk
To change their old name, to become new Trojans,
Known as Teucrians; never make them alter
Dialect or dress. Let Latium be.
Let there be Alban kings for generations,
And let Italian valor be the strength
Of Rome in after times. Once and for all
Troy fell, and with her name let her lie fallen."

The author of men and of the world replied
With a half-smile:
"Sister of Jupiter[1]
Indeed you are, and Saturn's other child,
To feel such anger, stormy in your breast.
But come, no need; put down this fit of rage.
I grant your wish, I yield, I am won over
Willingly. Ausonian folk will keep
Their fathers' language and their way of life,
And, that being so, their name. The Teucrians
Will mingle and be submerged, incorporated.
Rituals and observances of theirs
I'll add, but make them Latin, one in speech.
The race to come, mixed with Ausonian blood,
Will outdo men and gods in its devotion,
You shall see—and no nation on earth
Will honor and worship you so faithfully."

To all this Juno nodded in assent
And, gladdened by his promise, changed her mind.
Then she withdrew from sky and cloud.
That done,
The Father set about a second plan—
To take Juturna from her warring brother.
Stories are told of twin fiends, called the Dirae,[2]
Whom, with Hell's Megaera, deep Night bore
In one birth. She entwined their heads with coils
Of snakes and gave them wings to race the wind.
Before Jove's throne, a step from the cruel king,
These twins attend him and give piercing fear
To ill mankind, when he who rules the gods

1. Jupiter and Juno, like their prototypes Zeus and Hera, are brother and sister as well as husband and wife. 2. Lit. "dreadful ones" (the termination shows they are female, like the Erinyes). One of them is called Megaera.

Deals out appalling death and pestilence,
Or war to terrify our wicked cities.
Jove now dispatched one of these, swift from heaven,
Bidding her be an omen to Juturna.
Down she flew, in a whirlwind borne to earth,
Just like an arrow driven through a cloud
From a taut string, an arrow armed with gall
Of deadly poison, shot by a Parthian—[3]
A Parthian or a Cretan—for a wound
Immedicable; whizzing unforeseen
It goes through racing shadows: so the spawn
Of Night went diving downward to the earth.

On seeing Trojan troops drawn up in face
Of Turnus' army, she took on at once
The shape of that small bird[4] that perches late
At night on tombs or desolate roof-tops
And troubles darkness with a gruesome song.
Shrunk to that form, the fiend in Turnus' face
Went screeching, flitting, flitting to and fro
And beating with her wings against his shield.
Unstrung by numbness, faint and strange, he felt
His hackles rise, his voice choke in his throat.
As for Juturna, when she knew the wings,
The shriek to be the fiend's, she tore her hair,
Despairing, then she fell upon her cheeks
With nails, upon her breast with clenched hands.

"Turnus, how can your sister help you now?
What action is still open to me, soldierly
Though I have been? Can I by any skill
Hold daylight for you? Can I meet and turn
This deathliness away? Now I withdraw,
Now leave this war. Indecent birds, I fear you;
Spare me your terror. Whip-lash of your wings
I recognize, that ghastly sound, and guess
Great-hearted Jupiter's high cruel commands.
Returns for my virginity,[5] are they?
He gave me life eternal—to what end?
Why has mortality been taken from me?
Now beyond question I could put a term
To all my pain, and go with my poor brother

3. Parthia was the most dangerous neighbor of the Roman Empire in the east. Parthian mounted archers were famous, as were Cretan archers. 4. The owl. 5. Jupiter had been the lover of Juturna and had rewarded her with immortality.

Into the darkness, his companion there.
Never to die? Will any brook of mine
Without you, brother, still be sweet to me?
If only earth's abyss were wide enough
To take me downward, goddess though I am,
To join the shades below!"
So she lamented,
Then with a long sigh, covering up her head
In her grey mantle, sank to the river's depth.

Aeneas moved against his enemy
And shook his heavy pine-tree spear. He called
From his hot heart:
"Rearmed now, why so slow?
Why, even now, fall back? The contest here
Is not a race, but fighting to the death
With spear and sword. Take on all shapes there are,
Summon up all your nerve and skill, choose any
Footing, fly among the stars, or hide
In caverned earth—"
The other shook his head,
Saying:
"I do not fear your taunting fury,
Arrogant prince. It is the gods I fear
And Jove my enemy."
He said no more,
But looked around him. Then he saw a stone,
Enormous, ancient, set up there to prevent
Landowners' quarrels. Even a dozen picked men
Such as the earth produces in our day
Could barely lift and shoulder it. He swooped
And wrenched it free, in one hand, then rose up
To his heroic height, ran a few steps,
And tried to hurl the stone against his foe—
But as he bent and as he ran
And as he hefted and propelled the weight
He did not know himself. His knees gave way,
His blood ran cold and froze. The stone itself,
Tumbling through space, fell short and had no impact.

Just as in dreams when the night-swoon of sleep
Weighs on our eyes, it seems we try in vain
To keep on running, try with all our might,
But in the midst of effort faint and fail;
Our tongue is powerless, familiar strength

Will not hold up our body, not a sound
Or word will come: just so with Turnus now:
However bravely he made shift to fight
The immortal fiend blocked and frustrated him.
Flurrying images passed through his mind.
He gazed at the Rutulians,[6] and beyond them,
Gazed at the city, hesitant, in dread.
He trembled now before the poised spear-shaft
And saw no way to escape; he had no force
With which to close, or reach his foe, no chariot
And no sign of the charioteer, his sister.
At a dead loss he stood. Aeneas made
His deadly spear flash in the sun and aimed it,
Narrowing his eyes for a lucky hit.
Then, distant still, he put his body's might
Into the cast. Never a stone that soared
From a wall-battering catapult went humming
Loud as this, nor with so great a crack
Burst ever a bolt of lightning. It flew on
Like a black whirlwind bringing devastation,
Pierced with a crash the rim of sevenfold shield,
Cleared the cuirass' edge, and passed clean through
The middle of Turnus' thigh. Force of the blow
Brought the huge man to earth, his knees buckling,
And a groan swept the Rutulians as they rose,
A groan heard echoing on all sides from all
The mountain range, and echoed by the forests.
The man brought down, brought low, lifted his eyes
And held his right hand out to make his plea:

"Clearly I earned this, and I ask no quarter.
Make the most of your good fortune here.
If you can feel a father's grief—and you, too,
Had such a father in Anchises—then
Let me bespeak your mercy for old age
In Daunus,[7] and return me, or my body,
Stripped, if you will, of life, to my own kin.
You have defeated me. The Ausonians
Have seen me in defeat, spreading my hands.
Lavinia is your bride. But go no further
Out of hatred."

Fierce under arms, Aeneas
Looked to and fro, and towered, and stayed his hand

6. The Italian troops watching the combat between Turnus and Aeneas. 7. Father of Turnus.

Upon the sword-hilt. Moment by moment now
What Turnus said began to bring him round
From indecision. Then to his glance appeared
The accurst swordbelt surmounting Turnus' shoulder,
Shining with its familiar studs—the strap
Young Pallas wore when Turnus wounded him
And left him dead upon the field; now Turnus
Bore that enemy token on his shoulder—
Enemy still. For when the sight came home to him,
Aeneas raged at the relic of his anguish
Worn by this man as trophy. Blazing up
And terrible in his anger, he called out:

"You in your plunder, torn from one of mine,
Shall I be robbed of you? This wound will come
From Pallas: Pallas makes this offering
And from your criminal blood exacts his due."

He sank his blade in fury in Turnus' chest.
Then all the body slackened in death's chill,
And with a groan for that indignity
His spirit fled into the gloom below.

OVID

43 B.C.–A.D. 17

Virgil had grown to manhood in the years of civil war, when no man's property, nor even his life, was safe. He knew all too well the horrors that would inevitably recur if Augustus' attempt to establish stable government should fail; like all his generation, he knew how precarious the newfound peace was and felt himself deeply engaged in the Augustan program. But a new generation of poets, who had not known the time of troubles, took all that had been achieved for granted, and turned to new themes. The most brilliant of them, Ovid, was a boy of eleven when Octavius defeated Anthony at Actium; the early years of his manhood, far from being dominated by fear of chaos come again, were marked by rapid literary and social success in the brilliant society of a capital intent on enjoying the peace and prosperity which had been restored with so much effort.

Ovid was a versifier of genius; "whatever I tried to say," he wrote, "came out in verse," and Pope adapted the line for his own case: "I lisped in numbers for the numbers came." Elegance, wit, and precision remained the hallmarks of Ovid's poetry throughout his long and productive career; though his themes are often frivolous, the technical perfection of the medium carries the dazzled reader along. The *Amores*, unabashed chronicles of a Roman

Don Juan, was his first publication: it was soon followed by the *Art of Love*, a handbook of seduction (originally circulated as Books I and II, for men—Book III, for women, was added by popular request).

In A.D. 8 Ovid was banished by imperial decree to the town of Tomi, in what is now Rumania: it was outside the frontiers of the empire. He remained there until his death in A.D. 17, sending back to Rome poetic epistles, the *Sorrows*, which asked for pardon but to no effect. The reason for his banishment is not known: involvement in some scandal concerning Augustus' daughter Julia is a possibility, but the cynical love poetry may have been a contributing factor. Augustus was trying hard, by propaganda and legislation, to revive old Roman standards of morality and Ovid's *Art of Love* was not exactly helpful. His most influential work, the *Metamorphoses*, is a treasure house of Greek and Roman mythological stories brilliantly combined in a long narrative and retold with such wit, charm, and surpassing beauty that poets ever since, Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Milton among them, have used it as a source.

It consists of fifteen books; beginning with the creation of the world, the transformation of matter into living bodies, Ovid regales his readers with tales of human beings changed into animals, flowers, trees, proceeding through Greek myth to stories of early Rome and so to his own day—the ascension of the murdered Julius Caesar to the heavens in the form of a star and the divine promise that Augustus too, on some day far in the future, will become a god. Our selection contains one of the best known episodes, Apollo and Daphne from Book I, and from Book XV, the long discourse of the philosopher Pythagoras who preaches the doctrine of impermanence, of unceasing change.

H. Fraenkel, *Ovid: A Poet Between Two Worlds* (1945), looks at Ovid as a poet in a historical context. G. K. Galinsky, *Ovid's Metamorphoses: An Introduction to the Basic Aspects* (1975), is a useful guide.

Metamorphoses[1]

My intention is to tell of bodies changed
To different forms; the gods, who made the changes,
Will help me—or I hope so—with a poem
That runs from the world's beginning to our own days.[2]

THE CREATION

Before the ocean was, or earth, or heaven,
Nature was all alike, a shapelessness,
Chaos, so-called, all rude and lumpy matter,
Nothing but bulk, inert, in whose confusion
Discordant atoms warred: there was no sun
To light the universe; there was no moon

1. A selection. Translated by Rolfe Humphries. 2. In fact the last metamorphosis in the poem is that of the soul of the murdered dictator, Julius Caesar, which is turned into a star. Caesar was murdered in 44 B.C.; Ovid was born in the next year, 43 B.C.

With slender silver crescents filling slowly;
No earth hung balanced in surrounding air;
No sea reached far along the fringe of shore.
Land, to be sure, there was, and air, and ocean,
But land on which no man could stand, and water
No man could swim in, air no man could breathe,
Air without light, substance forever changing,
Forever at war: within a single body
Heat fought with cold, wet fought with dry, the hard
Fought with the soft, things having weight contended
With weightless things.
Till God, or kindlier Nature,
Settled all argument, and separated
Heaven from earth, water from land, our air
From the high stratosphere, a liberation
So things evolved, and out of blind confusion
Found each its place, bound in eternal order.
The force of fire, that weightless element,
Leaped up and claimed the highest place[3] in heaven;
Below it, air; and under them the earth
Sank with its grosser portions; and the water,
Lowest of all, held up, held in, the land.

Whatever god it was, who out of chaos
Brought order to the universe, and gave it
Division, subdivision, he molded earth,
In the beginning, into a great globe,
Even on every side, and bade the waters
To spread and rise, under the rushing winds,
Surrounding earth; he added ponds and marshes,
He banked the river-channels, and the waters
Feed earth or run to sea, and that great flood
Washes on shores, not banks. He made the plains
Spread wide, the valleys settle, and the forest
Be dressed in leaves; he made the rocky mountains
Rise to full height, and as the vault of Heaven
Has two zones,[4] left and right, and one between them
Hotter than these, the Lord of all Creation
Marked on the earth the same design and pattern.
The torrid zone too hot for men to live in,
The north and south too cold, but in the middle
Varying climate, temperature and season.
Above all things the air, lighter than earth,

3. The upper atmosphere, the *aether* as the Greeks called it, was thought of as a fiery element.
4. I.e., two zones to the "right" (the north) and two to the "left" (the south).

Lighter than water, heavier than fire,
Towers and spreads; there mist and cloud assemble,
And fearful thunder and lightning and cold winds,
But these, by the Creator's order, held
No general dominion; even as it is,
These brothers brawl and quarrel; though each one
Has his own quarter, still, they come near tearing
The universe apart. Eurus is monarch
Of the lands of dawn,[5] the realms of Araby,
The Persian ridges under the rays of morning.
Zephyrus holds the west that glows at sunset,
Boreas, who makes men shiver, holds the north,
Warm Auster governs in the misty southland,
And over them all presides the weightless ether,
Pure without taint of earth.
These boundaries given,
Behold, the stars, long hidden under darkness,
Broke through and shone, all over the spangled heaven,
Their home forever, and the gods lived there,
And shining fish were given the waves for dwelling
And beasts the earth, and birds the moving air.

But something else was needed, a finer being,
More capable of mind, a sage, a ruler,
So Man was born, it may be, in God's image,
Or Earth, perhaps, so newly separated
From the old fire of Heaven, still retained
Some seed of the celestial force which fashioned
Gods out of living clay and running water.
All other animals look downward; Man,
Alone, erect, can raise his face toward Heaven.

THE FOUR AGES[6]

The Golden Age was first, a time that cherished
Of its own will, justice and right; no law,
No punishment, was called for; fearfulness
Was quite unknown, and the bronze tablets held
No legal threatening; no suppliant throng
Studied a judge's face; there were no judges,
There did not need to be. Trees had not yet

5. I.e., the sunrise, the east. *Eurus:* The east wind. 6. In this myth of the four ages Ovid is following the account of the archaic Greek poet Hesiod (who, however, counted five ages; he interposed the age of the heroes, the wars of Thebes and Troy, between the Bronze and Iron ages).

Been cut and hollowed, to visit other shores.
Men were content at home, and had no towns
With moats and walls around them; and no trumpets
Blared out alarums; things like swords and helmets
Had not been heard of. No one needed soldiers.
People were unaggressive, and unanxious;
The years went by in peace. And Earth, untroubled,
Unharried by hoe or plowshare, brought forth all
That men had need for, and those men were happy,
Gathering berries from the mountain sides,
Cherries, or blackcaps, and the edible acorns.
Spring was forever, with a west wind blowing
Softly across the flowers no man had planted,
And Earth, unplowed, brought forth rich grain; the field,
Unfallowed, whitened with wheat, and there were rivers
Of milk, and rivers of honey, and golden nectar
Dripped from the dark-green oak-trees.

After Saturn[7]
Was driven to the shadowy land of death,
And the world was under Jove, the Age of Silver
Came in, lower than gold, better than bronze.
Jove made the springtime shorter, added winter,
Summer, and autumn, the seasons as we know them.
That was the first time when the burnt air glowed
White-hot, or icicles hung down in winter.
And men built houses for themselves; the caverns,
The woodland thickets, and the bark-bound shelters
No longer served; and the seeds of grain were planted
In the long furrows, and the oxen struggled
Groaning and laboring under the heavy yoke.

Then came the Age of Bronze, and dispositions
Took on aggressive instincts, quick to arm,
Yet not entirely evil. And last of all
The Iron Age succeeded, whose base vein
Let loose all evil: modesty and truth
And righteousness fled earth, and in their place
Came trickery and slyness, plotting, swindling,
Violence and the damned desire of having.
Men spread their sails to winds unknown to sailors,
The pines came down their mountain-sides, to revel
And leap in the deep waters,[8] and the ground,

7. Father of Jove (Jupiter), who, like his counterpart Zeus, overthrew his father's regime.
8. I.e., after they were made into ships.

Free, once, to everyone, like air and sunshine,
Was stepped off by surveyors. The rich earth,
Good giver of all the bounty of the harvest,
Was asked for more; they dug into her vitals,
Pried out the wealth a kinder lord had hidden
In Stygian shadow,[9] all that precious metal,
The root of evil. They found the guilt of iron,
And gold, more guilty still. And War came forth
That uses both to fight with; bloody hands
Brandished the clashing weapons. Men lived on plunder.
Guest was not safe from host, nor brother from brother,
A man would kill his wife, a wife her husband,
Stepmothers, dire and dreadful, stirred their brews
With poisonous aconite, and sons would hustle
Fathers to death, and Piety lay vanquished,
And the maiden Justice, last of all immortals,
Fled from the bloody earth.

Heaven was no safer.
Giants attacked the very throne of Heaven,
Piled Pelion on Ossa,[1] mountain on mountain
Up to the very stars. Jove struck them down
With thunderbolts, and the bulk of those huge bodies
Lay on the earth, and bled, and Mother Earth,
Made pregnant by that blood, brought forth new bodies,
And gave them, to recall her older offspring,
The forms of men. And this new stock was also
Contemptuous of gods, and murder-hungry
And violent. You would know they were sons of blood.

JOVE'S INTERVENTION

And Jove was witness from his lofty throne
Of all this evil, and groaned as he remembered
The wicked revels of Lycaon's[2] table,
The latest guilt, a story still unknown
To the high gods. In awful indignation
He summoned them to council. No one dawdled.
Easily seen when the night skies are clear,
The Milky Way shines white. Along this road
The gods move toward the palace of the Thunderer,
His royal halls, and, right and left, the dwellings
Of other gods are open, and guests come thronging.
The lesser gods live in a meaner section,
An area not reserved, as this one is,

9. The Styx is one of the rivers of the underworld. 1. Two mountains in central Greece, south of Olympus. 2. King of Arcadia, in the Peloponnese.

For the illustrious Great Wheels of Heaven.
(Their Palatine Hill,[3] if I might call it so.)

They took their places in the marble chamber
Where high above them all their king was seated,
Holding his ivory sceptre, shaking out
Thrice, and again, his awful locks, the sign
That made the earth and stars and ocean tremble,
And then he spoke, in outrage: "I was troubled
Less for the sovereignty of all the world
In that old time when the snake-footed giants
Laid each his hundred hands on captive Heaven.
Monstrous they were, and hostile, but their warfare
Sprung from one source, one body. Now, wherever
The sea-gods roar around the earth, a race
Must be destroyed, the race of men. I swear it!
I swear by all the Stygian rivers gliding
Under the world, I have tried all other measures.
The knife must cut the cancer out, infection
Averted while it can be, from our numbers.
Those demigods, those rustic presences,
Nymphs, fauns, and satyrs, wood and mountain dwellers,
We have not yet honored with a place in Heaven,
But they should have some decent place to dwell in,
In peace and safety. Safety? Do you reckon
They will be safe, when I, who wield the thunder,
Who rule you all as subjects, am subjected
To the plottings of the barbarous Lycaon?"

They burned, they trembled. Who was this Lycaon,
Guilty of such rank infamy? They shuddered
In horror, with a fear of sudden ruin,
As the whole world did later, when assassins
Struck Julius Caesar down, and Prince Augustus
Found satisfaction in the great devotion
That cried for vengeance, even as Jove took pleasure,
Then, in the gods' response. By word and gesture
He calmed them down, awed them again to silence,
And spoke once more:

THE STORY OF LYCAON

"He has indeed been punished.
On that score have no worry. But what he did,

3. The hill of Rome where the emperor Augustus lived.

And how he paid, are things that I must tell you.
I had heard the age was desperately wicked,
I had heard, or so I hoped, a lie, a falsehood,
So I came down, as man, from high Olympus,
Wandered about the world. It would take too long
To tell you how widespread was all that evil.
All I had heard was grievous understatement!
I had crossed Maenala, a country bristling
With dens of animals, and crossed Cyllene,
And cold Lycaeus' pine woods.[4] Then I came
At evening, with the shadows growing longer,
To an Arcadian palace, where the tyrant
Was anything but royal in his welcome.
I gave a sign that a god had come, and people
Began to worship, and Lycaon mocked them,
Laughed at their prayers, and said: 'Watch me find out
Whether this fellow is a god or mortal,
I can tell quickly, and no doubt about it.'
He planned, that night, to kill me while I slumbered;
That was his way to test the truth. Moreover,
And not content with that, he took a hostage,
One sent by the Molossians,[5] cut his throat,
Boiled pieces of his flesh, still warm with life,
Broiled others, and set them before me on the table.
That was enough. I struck, and the bolt of lightning
Blasted the household of that guilty monarch.
He fled in terror, reached the silent fields,
And howled,[6] and tried to speak. No use at all!
Foam dripped from his mouth; bloodthirsty still, he turned
Against the sheep, delighting still in slaughter,
And his arms were legs, and his robes were shaggy hair,
Yet he is still Lycaon, the same grayness,
The same fierce face, the same red eyes, a picture
Of bestial savagery. One house has fallen,
But more than one deserves to. Fury reigns
Over all the fields of Earth. They are sworn to evil,
Believe it. Let them pay for it, and quickly!
So stands my purpose."

Part of them approved
With words and added fuel to his anger,
And part approved with silence, and yet all
Were grieving at the loss of humankind,

4. Maenala, Cyllene, and Lycaeus are mountains in Arcadia. 5. A tribe located in Epirus, the northernmost extremity of Greece. 6. The beginning of the first metamorphosis—Lycaon (the first part of whose name is the Greek for "wolf") becomes a wolf.

Were asking what the world would be, bereft
Of mortals: who would bring their altars incense?
Would earth be given the beasts, to spoil and ravage?
Jove told them not to worry; he would give them
Another race, unlike the first, created
Out of a miracle; he would see to it.

He was about to hurl his thunderbolts
At the whole world, but halted, fearing Heaven
Would burn from fire so vast, and pole to pole
Break out in flame and smoke, and he remembered
The fates had said that some day land and ocean,
The vault of Heaven, the whole world's mighty fortress,
Besieged by fire, would perish. He put aside
The bolts made in Cyclopean[7] workshops; better,
He thought, to drown the world by flooding water.

THE FLOOD

So, in the cave of Aeolus,[8] he prisoned
The North-wind, and the West-wind, and such others
As ever banish cloud, and he turned loose
The South-wind, and the South-wind came out streaming
With dripping wings, and pitch-black darkness veiling
His terrible countenance. His beard is heavy
With rain-cloud, and his hoary locks a torrent,
Mists are his chaplet, and his wings and garments
Run with the rain. His broad hands squeeze together
Low-hanging clouds, and crash and rumble follow
Before the cloudburst, and the rainbow, Iris,
Draws water from the teeming earth, and feeds it
Into the clouds again. The crops are ruined,
The farmers' prayers all wasted, all the labor
Of a long year, comes to nothing.

And Jove's anger,
Unbounded by his own domain, was given
Help by his dark-blue brother, Neptune[9] called
His rivers all, and told them, very briefly,
To loose their violence, open their houses,
Pour over embankments, let the river horses
Run wild as ever they would. And they obeyed him.

7. Made by the Cyclopes, one-eyed giants like Polyphemus in the *Odyssey* (Book IX). But unlike Polyphemus and his pastoral relatives, these Cyclopes are metalworkers who forge the thunderbolts of Jupiter (Zeus). 8. King of the winds (cf. *Odyssey* Book X). 9. (Poseidon) the sea god.

His trident struck the shuddering earth; it opened
Way for the rush of waters. The leaping rivers
Flood over the great plains. Not only orchards
Are swept away, not only grain and cattle,
Not only men and houses, but altars, temples,
And shrines with holy fires. If any building
Stands firm, the waves keep rising over its roof-top,
Its towers are under water, and land and ocean
Are all alike, and everything is ocean,
An ocean with no shore-line.
Some poor fellow
Seizes a hill-top; another, in a dinghy,
Rows where he used to plough, and one goes sailing
Over his fields of grain or over the chimney
Of what was once his cottage. Someone catches
Fish in the top of an elmtree, or an anchor
Drags in green meadow-land, or the curved keel brushes
Grape-arbors under water. Ugly sea-cows
Float where the slender she-goats used to nibble
The tender grass, and the Nereids[1] come swimming
With curious wonder, looking, under water,
At houses, cities, parks, and groves. The dolphins
Invade the woods and brush against the oak-trees;
The wolf swims with the lamb; lion and tiger
Are borne along together; the wild boar
Finds all his strength is useless, and the deer
Cannot outspeed that torrent; wandering birds
Look long, in vain, for landing-place, and tumble,
Exhausted, into the sea. The deep's great license
Has buried all the hills and new waves thunder
Against the mountain-tops. The flood has taken
All things, or nearly all, and those whom water,
By chance, has spared, starvation slowly conquers.

DEUCALION AND PYRRHA

Phocis, a fertile land, while there was land,
Marked off Oetean from Boeotian[2] fields.
It was ocean now, a plain of sudden waters.
There Mount Parnassus lifts its twin peaks skyward,
High, steep, cloud-piercing. And Deucalion came there
Rowing his wife. There was no other land,
The sea had drowned it all. And here they worshipped

1. Sea-nymphs. 2. On the Theban plain. *Phocis:* A district in central Greece, north of the Gulf of Corinth. *Oetean:* Mt. Oeta is in southern Thessaly.

First the Corycian nymphs[3] and native powers,
Then Themis, oracle and fate-revealer.
There was no better man than this Deucalion,
No one more fond of right; there was no woman
More scrupulously reverent than Pyrrha.
So, when Jove saw the world was one great ocean,
Only one woman left of all those thousands,
And only one man left of all those thousands,
Both innocent and worshipful, he parted
The clouds, turned loose the North-wind, swept them off,
Showed earth to heaven again, and sky to land,
And the sea's anger dwindled, and King Neptune
Put down his trident, calmed the waves, and Triton,
Summoned from far down under, with his shoulders
Barnacle-strewn, loomed up above the waters,
The blue-green sea-god, whose resounding horn
Is heard from shore to shore. Wet-bearded, Triton
Set lip to that great shell, as Neptune ordered,
Sounding retreat, and all the lands and waters
Heard and obeyed. The sea has shores; the rivers,
Still running high, have channels; the floods dwindle,
Hill-tops are seen again; the trees, long buried,
Rise with their leaves still muddy. The world returns.

Deucalion saw that world, all desolation,
All emptiness, all silence, and his tears
Rose as he spoke to Pyrrha: "O my wife,
The only woman, now, on all this earth,
My consort and my cousin and my partner
In these immediate dangers, look! Of all the lands
To East or West, we two, we two alone,
Are all the population. Ocean holds
Everything else; our foothold, our assurance,
Are small as they can be, the clouds still frightful.
Poor woman—well, we are not all alone—
Suppose you had been, how would you bear your fear?
Who would console your grief? My wife, believe me,
Had the sea taken you, I would have followed.
If only I had the power, I would restore
The nations as my father[4] did, bring clay
To life with breathing. As it is, we two
Are all the human race, so Heaven has willed it,

3. The Corycian cave is high above Delphi, on the upper slopes of Parnassus. *Themis:* "Tradition" in Greek, one of the predecessors of Apollo at Delphi. 4. Prometheus. A Greek legend credited him with making the first human beings out of clay.

Samples of men, mere specimens."
They wept,
and prayed together, and having wept and prayed,
Resolved to make petition to the goddess
To seek her aid through oracles. Together
They went to the river-water, the stream Cephisus,
Still far from clear, but flowing down its channel,
And they took river-water, sprinkled foreheads,
Sprinkled their garments, and they turned their steps
To the temple of the goddess, where the altars
Stood with the fires gone dead, and ugly moss
Stained pediment and column. At the stairs
They both fell prone, kissed the chill stone in prayer:
"If the gods' anger ever listens
To righteous prayers, O Themis, we implore you,
Tell us by what device our wreck and ruin
May be repaired. Bring aid, most gentle goddess,
To sunken circumstance."
And Themis heard them,
And gave this oracle: "Go from the temple,
Cover your heads, loosen your robes, and throw
Your mother's bones behind you!" Dumb, they stood
In blank amazement, a long silence, broken
By Pyrrha, finally: she would not do it!
With trembling lips she prays whatever pardon
Her disobedience might merit, but this outrage
She dare not risk, insult her mother's spirit
By throwing her bones around. In utter darkness
They voice the cryptic saying over and over,
What can it mean? They wonder. At last Deucalion
Finds the way out: "I might be wrong, but surely
The holy oracles would never counsel
A guilty act. The earth is our great mother,
And I suppose those bones the goddess mentions
Are the stones of earth; the order means to throw them,
The stones, behind us."
She was still uncertain,
And he by no means sure, and both distrustful
Of that command from Heaven; but what damage,
What harm, would there be in trying? They descended,
Covered their heads, loosened their garments, threw
The stones behind them as the goddess ordered.
The stones—who would believe it, had we not
The unimpeachable witness of Tradition?—
Began to lose their hardness, to soften, slowly,

To take on form, to grow in size, a little,
Become less rough, to look like human beings,
Or anyway as much like human beings
As statues do, when the sculptor is only starting,
Images half blocked out. The earthy portion,
Damp with some moisture, turned to flesh, the solid
Was bone, the veins were as they always had been.
The stones the man had thrown turned into men,
The stones the woman threw turned into women,
Such being the will of God. Hence we derive
The hardness that we have, and our endurance
Gives proof of what we have come from.
Other forms
Of life came into being, generated
Out of the earth: the sun burnt off the dampness,
Heat made the slimy marshes swell; as seed
Swells in a mother's womb to shape and substance,
So new forms came to life. When the Nile river
Floods and recedes and the mud is warmed by sunshine,
Men, turning over the earth, find living things,
And some not living, but nearly so, imperfect,
On the verge of life,[5] and often the same substance
Is part alive, part only clay. When moisture
Unites with heat, life is conceived; all things
Come from this union. Fire may fight with water,
But heat and moisture generate all things,
Their discord being productive. So when earth,
After that flood, still muddy, took the heat,
Felt the warm fire of sunlight, she conceived,
Brought forth, after their fashion, all the creatures,
Some old, some strange and monstrous.
One, for instance,
She bore unwanted, a gigantic serpent,[6]
Python by name, whom the new people dreaded,
A huge bulk on the mountain-side. Apollo,
God of the glittering bow, took a long time
To bring him down, with arrow after arrow
He had never used before except in hunting

5. This strange doctrine, the automatic generation of living species in warm river mud, stems from Greek philosophical speculation about the origins of life. 6. Pytho. The following lines are a good example of Ovid's witty and skilful transitions from one story to another: he will vary them like a virtuoso in the course of the fifteen books. From the spontaneous birth of animals in the Nile mud he singles out one, Pytho, killed by Apollo, who instituted games in commemoration of the feat and decreed for the winner a crown of oak. As everyone of his readers knew, the crown at the Pythian games was of laurel. But, says Ovid, the laurel did not then exist and this launches him on the story of its origin, the transformation of Daphne (the name means "laurel").

Deer and the skipping goats. Out of the quiver
Sped arrows by the thousand, till the monster,
Dying, poured poisonous blood on those black wounds.
In memory of this, the sacred games,
Called Pythian, was established, and Apollo
Ordained for all young winners in the races,
On foot or chariot, for victorious fighters,
The crown of oak. That was before the laurel,
That was before Apollo wreathed his forehead
With garlands from that tree, or any other.

APOLLO AND DAPHNE

Now the first girl Apollo loved was Daphne,
Whose father was the river-god Peneus,[7]
And this was no blind chance, but Cupid's malice.
Apollo, with pride and glory still upon him
Over the Python slain, saw Cupid bending
His tight-strung little bow. "O silly youngster,"
He said, "What are you doing with such weapons?
Those are for grown-ups! The bow is for my shoulders;
I never fail in wounding beast or mortal,
And not so long ago I slew the Python
With countless darts; his bloated body covered
Acre on endless acre, and I slew him!
The torch, my boy, is enough for you to play with,
To get the love-fires burning. Do not meddle
With honors that are mine!" And Cupid answered:
"Your bow shoots everything, Apollo—maybe—
But mine will fix you! You are far above
All creatures living, and by just that distance
Your glory less than mine." He shook his wings,
Soared high, came down to the shadows of Parnassus,
Drew from his quiver different kinds of arrows,
One causing love, golden and sharp and gleaming,
The other blunt, and tipped with lead, and serving
To drive all love away, and this blunt arrow
He used on Daphne, but he fired the other,
The sharp and golden shaft, piercing Apollo
Through bones, through marrow, and at once he loved
And she at once fled from the name of lover,
Rejoicing in the woodland hiding places
And spoils of beasts which she had taken captive,
A rival of Diana, virgin goddess.[8]

7. The main river of Thessaly. 8. Or Artemis, a hunting goddess, daughter of Jupiter (Zeus).

She had many suitors, but she scorned them all;
Wanting no part of any man, she travelled
The pathless groves, and had no care whatever
For husband, love, or marriage. Her father often
Said, "Daughter, give me a son-in-law!" and "Daughter,
Give me some grandsons!" But the marriage torches
Were something hateful, criminal, to Daphne,
So she would blush, and put her arms around him,
And coax him: "Let me be a virgin always;
Diana's father said she might. Dear father!
Dear father—please!" He yielded, but her beauty
Kept arguing against her prayer. Apollo
Loves at first sight; he wants to marry Daphne,
He hopes for what he wants—all wishful thinking!—
Is fooled by his own oracles. As stubble
Burns when the grain is harvested, as hedges
Catch fire from torches that a passer-by
Has brought too near, or left behind in the morning,
So the god burned, with all his heart, and burning
Nourished that futile love of his by hoping.
He sees the long hair hanging down her neck
Uncared for, says, "But what if it were combed?"
He gazes at her eyes—they shine like stars!
He gazes at her lips, and knows that gazing
Is not enough. He marvels at her fingers,
Her hands, her wrists, her arms, bare to the shoulder,
And what he does not see he thinks is better.
But still she flees him, swifter than the wind,
And when he calls she does not even listen:
"Don't run away, dear nymph! Daughter of Peneus,
Don't run away! I am no enemy,
Only your follower: don't run away!
The lamb flees from the wolf, the deer the lion,
The dove, on trembling wing, flees from the eagle.
All creatures flee their foes. But I, who follow,
Am not a foe at all. Love makes me follow,
Unhappy fellow that I am, and fearful
You may fall down, perhaps, or have the briars
Make scratches on those lovely legs, unworthy
To be hurt so, and I would be the reason.
The ground is rough here. Run a little slower,
And I will run, I promise, a little slower.
Or wait a minute: be a little curious
Just who it is you charm. I am no shepherd,
No mountain-dweller, I am not a ploughboy,

Uncouth and stinking of cattle. You foolish girl,
You don't know who it is you run away from,
That must be why you run. I am lord of Delphi
And Tenedos and Claros and Patara.[9]
Jove is my father. I am the revealer
Of present, past and future; through my power
The lyre and song make harmony; my arrow
Is sure in aim—there is only one arrow surer,
The one that wounds my heart. The power of healing
Is my discovery; I am called the Healer
Through all the world: all herbs are subject to me.
Alas for me, love is incurable
With any herb; the arts which cure the others
Do me, their lord, no good!"
He would have said
Much more than this, but Daphne, frightened, left him
With many words unsaid, and she was lovely
Even in flight, her limbs bare in the wind,
Her garments fluttering, and her soft hair streaming,
More beautiful than ever. But Apollo,
Too young a god to waste his time in coaxing,
Came following fast. When a hound starts a rabbit
In an open field, one runs for game, one safety,
He has her, or thinks he has, and she is doubtful
Whether she's caught or not, so close the margin,
So ran the god and girl, one swift in hope,
The other in terror, but he ran more swiftly,
Borne on the wings of love, gave her no rest,
Shadowed her shoulder, breathed on her streaming hair.
Her strength was gone, worn out by the long effort
Of the long flight; she was deathly pale, and seeing
The river of her father, cried "O help me,
If there is any power in the rivers,
Change and destroy the body which has given
Too much delight!" And hardly had she finished,
When her limbs grew numb and heavy, her soft breasts
Were closed with delicate bark, her hair was leaves,
Her arms were branches, and her speedy feet
Rooted and held, and her head became a tree top,
Everything gone except her grace, her shining.
Apollo loved her still. He placed his hand
Where he had hoped and felt the heart still beating
Under the bark; and he embraced the branches

9. All famous oracular shrines of Apollo.

As if they still were limbs, and kissed the wood,
And the wood shrank from his kisses, and the god
Exclaimed: "Since you can never be my bride,
My tree at least you shall be! Let the laurel
Adorn, henceforth, my hair, my lyre, my quiver:
Let Roman victors, in the long procession,
Wear laurel wreaths for triumph and ovation.
Beside Augustus' portals let the laurel
Guard and watch over the oak, and as my head
Is always youthful, let the laurel always
Be green and shining!" He said no more. The laurel,
Stirring, seemed to consent, to be saying *Yes*.

There is a grove in Thessaly, surrounded
By woodlands with steep slopes; men call it Tempe.
Through this the Peneus River's foamy waters
Rise below Pindus mountain. The cascades
Drive a fine smoky mist along the tree tops,
Frail clouds, or so it seems, and the roar of the water
Carries beyond the neighborhood. Here dwells
The mighty god himself,[1] his holy of holies
Is under a hanging rock; it is here he gives
Laws to the nymphs, laws to the very water.
And here came first the streams of his own country
Not knowing what to offer, consolation
Or something like rejoicing: crowned with poplars
Sperchios came, and restless Enipeus,
Old Apidanus, Aeas, and Amphrysos[2]
The easy-going. And all the other rivers
That take their weary waters into oceans
All over the world, came there, and only one
Was absent, Inachus,[3] hiding in his cavern,
Salting his stream with tears, oh, most unhappy,
Mourning a daughter lost. Her name was Io,
Who might, for all he knew, be dead or living,
But since he can not find her anywhere
He thinks she must be nowhere, and his sorrow
Fears for the worst.

JOVE AND IO

Jove had seen Io coming
From the river of her father, and had spoken:

1. The river Peneus. 2. Thessalain rivers. 3. A river near Argos.

"O maiden, worthy of the love of Jove,
And sure to make some lover happy in bed,
Come to the shade of these deep woods" (he showed them)
"Come to the shade, the sun is hot and burning,
No beasts will hurt you there, I will go with you,
If a god is at your side, you will walk safely
In the very deepest woods. I am a god,
And no plebeian godling, either, but the holder
Of Heaven's scepter, hurler of the thunder.
Oh, do not flee me!" She had fled already
Leaving Lyrcea's plains, and Lerna's[4] meadows,
When the god hid the lands in murk and darkness
And stayed her flight, and took her.
Meanwhile Juno
Looked down on Argos: what could those clouds be doing
In the bright light of day? They were not mists
Rising from rivers or damp ground. She wondered,
Took a quick look around to see her husband,
Or see where he might be—she knew his cheating!
So when she did not find him in the heaven,
She said, "I am either wrong, or being wronged,"
Came gliding down from Heaven, stood on earth,
Broke up the clouds. But Jove, ahead of time,
Could tell that she was coming; he changed Io
Into a heifer, white and shining, lovely
Even in altered form, and even Juno
Looked on, though hating to, with admiration,
And asked whom she belonged to, from what pasture,
As if she did not know! And Jove, the liar,
To put a stop to questions, said she had sprung
Out of the earth, full-grown. Then Juno asked him,
"Could I have her, as a present?" What could he do?
To give his love away was surely cruel,
To keep her most suspicious. Shame on one side
Says *Give her up!* and love says *Don't!* and shame
Might have been beaten by love's argument,
But then, if he refused his wife the heifer,
So slight a present—if he should refuse it,
Juno might think perhaps it was no heifer!

Her rival thus disposed of, still the goddess
Did not at once abandon all suspicion.
Afraid of Jove, and worried over his cheating,

4. A marsh in the territory of Argos.

She turned her over to the keeping of Argus
Who had a hundred eyes; two at a time,
No more than two, would ever close in slumber,
The rest kept watch. No matter how he stood,
Which way he turned, he always looked at Io,
Always had Io in sight. He let her graze
By daylight, but at sundown locked her in,
Hobbled and haltered. She would feed on leaves
And bitter grasses, and her couch, poor creature,
Was ground, not always grassy, and the water
She drank was muddy, often. When she wanted
To reach toward Argus her imploring arms,
She had no arms to reach with; when she tried
To plead, she only lowed, and her own voice
Filled her with terror. When she came to the river,
Her father's, where she used to play, and saw,
Reflected in the stream, her jaws and horns,
She fled in panic. None of her sisters knew her,
And Inachus, her father, did not know her,
But following them, she let them pet and praise her.
Old Inachus pulled grass and gave it to her,
And she licked his hand and tried to give it kisses,
Could not restrain her tears. If she could talk,
She would ask for help, and tell her name and sorrow,
But as it was, all she could do was furrow
The dust with one forefoot, and make an I,
And then an O beside it, spelling her name,
Telling the story of her changed condition.
Her father knew her, cried, "Alas for me!"
Clung to her horns and snowy neck, poor heifer,
Crying, "Alas for me! I have sought you, daughter,
All over the world, and now that I have found you,
I have found a greater grief. You do not answer,
And what you think is sighing comes out mooing!
And all the while I, in my ignorance, counted
On marriage for you, wanting, first, a son,
Then, later, grandsons; now your mate must be
Selected from some herd, your son a bullock.
Not even death can end my heavy sorrow.
It hurts to be a god; the door of death,
Shut in my face, prolongs my grief forever."
And both of them were weeping, but their guardian,
Argus the star-eyed, drove her from her father
To different pasture-land, and sat there, watching,
Perched on a mountain-top above the valley.

Jove could not bear her sorrows any longer;
He called his son, born of the shining Pleiad,[5]
Told him *Kill Argus!* And Mercury came flying
On winged sandals, wearing the magic helmet,
Bearing the sleep-producing wand, and lighted
On earth, and put aside the wings and helmet
Keeping the wand. With this he plays the shepherd
Across the pathless countryside, a driver
Of goats, collected somewhere, and he goes
Playing a little tune on a pipe of reeds,
And this new sound is wonderful to Argus.
"Whoever you are, come here and sit beside me,"
He says, "This rock is in the shade; the grass
Is nowhere any better." And Mercury joins him,
Whiling the time away with conversation
And soothing little melodies, and Argus
Has a hard fight with drowsiness; his eyes,
Some of them, close, but some of them stay open.
To keep himself awake by listening,
He asks about the pipe of reeds, how was it
This new invention came about?
The god
Began the story: "On the mountain slopes
Of cool Arcadia, a woodland nymph
Once lived, with many suitors, and her name
Was Syrinx.[6] More than once the satyrs chased her,
And so did other gods of field or woodland,
But always she escaped them, virgin always
As she aspired to be, one like Diana,
Like her in dress and calling, though her bow
Was made of horn, not gold, but even so,
She might, sometimes, be taken for the goddess.
Pan,[7] with a wreath of pine around his temples,
Once saw her coming back from Mount Lycaeus,[8]
And said" and Mercury broke off the story
And then went on to tell what Pan had told her,
How she said *No*, and fled, through pathless places,
Until she came to Ladon's river, flowing
Peaceful along the sandy banks, whose water
Halted her flight, and she implored her sisters[9]

5. Maia, daughter of Atlas. She and her six sisters became stars, the Pleiades. 6. The name means "shepherd's pipe." It is made of reeds. *Satyrs:* Woodland creatures, half animal, half man, bald, bearded, and highly sexed. 7. A god of the wild mountain pastures and woods. 8. An Arcadian mountain, sacred to Pan. 9. The water-nymphs of the river Ladon.

To change her form, and so, when Pan had caught her
And thought he held a nymph, it was only reeds
That yielded in his arms, and while he sighed,
The soft air stirring in the reeds made also
The echo of a sigh. Touched by this marvel,
Charmed by the sweetness of the tone, he murmured
This much I have! and took the reeds, and bound them
With wax, a tall and shorter one together,
And called them Syrinx, still.
And Mercury
Might have told more, but all the eyes of Argus,
He saw, had closed, and he made the slumber deeper
With movements of the wand, and then he struck
The nodding head just where it joins the shoulder,
Severed it with the curving blade, and sent it
Bloody and rolling over the rocks. So Argus
Lay low, and all the light in all those eyes
Went out forever, a hundred eyes, one darkness.
And Juno took the eyes and fastened them
On the feathers of a bird of hers, the peacock,
So that the peacock's tail is spread with jewels,
And Juno, very angry, sent a fury
To harass Io, to drive her mad with terror,
In flight all over the world. At last a river
Halted her flight, the Nile, and when she came there
She knelt beside the stream, lifted her head,
The only gesture she could make of praying,
And seemed, with groans and tears and mournful lowing,
To voice complaint to Jove, to end her sorrows,
And he was moved to pity; embracing Juno
He begged her: "End this punishment; hereafter
Io, I swear, will never cause you anguish,"
And what he swore he called the Styx to witness.
And Juno was appeased. Io became
What once she was, again; the bristles vanish,
The horns are gone, the great round eyes grow smaller,
The gaping jaws are narrower, the shoulders
Return, she has hands again, and toes and fingers,
The only sign of the heifer is the whiteness.
She stands erect, a nymph again, still fearful
That speech may still be mooing, but she tries
And little by little gains back the use of language.
Now people, robed in linen, pay her homage,
A very goddess, and a son is born,

Named Epaphus, the seed of Jove; his temples
Are found beside his mother's in many cities.[1]

Book XV

[By the beginning of Book XV, Ovid has pursued the theme of metamorphosis through all the cycles of Greek mythology and has turned to the legends of early Rome. After Rome's founder and first king, Romulus the warrior, came Numa, the peaceful giver of laws and religious rites. Ovid has him journey to Croton in Southern Italy to listen to the teachings of the Greek philosopher Pythagoras. The teachings of Pythagoras, in Ovid at any rate, are an exposition of the theme of metamorphosis from a philosophical and religious standpoint, a striking contrast to the witty and generally amatory treatment of the subject so far.]

THE TEACHINGS OF PYTHAGORAS

There was a man here, Samian born,[2] but he
Had fled from Samos, for he hated tyrants
And chose, instead, an exile's lot. His thought
Reached far aloft, to the great gods in Heaven,
And his imagination looked on visions
Beyond his mortal sight. All things he studied
With watchful eager mind, and he brought home
What he had learned and sat among the people
Teaching them what was worthy, and they listened
In silence, wondering at the revelations
How the great world began, the primal cause,
The nature of things, what God is, whence the snows
Come down, where lightning breaks from, whether wind
Or Jove speaks in the thunder from the clouds,
The cause of earthquakes, by what law the stars
Wheel in their courses, all the secrets hidden
From man's imperfect knowledge. He was first
To say that animal food should not be eaten,
And learnèd as he was, men did not always
Believe him when he preached "Forbear, O mortals,
To spoil your bodies with such impious food!

1. The next line runs: "His boon companion was young Phaethon . . ." It is Ovid's transition to the next extended narrative, that of Phaethon and the chariot of the sun, which occupies the next 400 lines or so. 2. The historical Pythagoras (sixth century B.C.) was born in Samos, a Greek island off the coast of Asia Minor, but emigrated to Croton in southern Italy. He founded a philosophical school which seems to have been like a religious brotherhood; the Pythagoreans were vegetarians; they believed in the transmigration of souls from men to animals and vice versa. Consequently, they were opposed to animal sacrifice. They were noted also for their skill as mathematicians (Pythagoras' theorem).

There is corn for you, apples, whose weight bears down
The bending branches; there are grapes that swell
On the green vines, and pleasant herbs, and greens
Made mellow and soft with cooking; there is milk
And clover-honey. Earth is generous
With her provision, and her sustenance
Is very kind; she offers, for your tables,
Food that requires no bloodshed and no slaughter.
Meat is for beasts to feed on, yet not all
Are carnivores, for horses, sheep, and cattle
Subsist on grass, but those whose disposition
Is fierce and cruel, tigers, raging lions,
And bears and wolves delight in bloody feasting.
Oh, what a wicked thing it is for flesh
To be the tomb of flesh, for the body's craving
To fatten on the body of another,
For one live creature to continue living
Through one live creature's death. In all the richness
That Earth, the best of mothers, tenders to us,
Does nothing please except to chew and mangle
The flesh of slaughtered animals? The Cyclops
Could do no worse! Must you destroy another
To satiate your greedy-gutted cravings?
There was a time, the Golden Age, we call it,
Happy in fruits and herbs, when no men tainted
Their lips with blood, and birds went flying safely
Through air, and in the fields the rabbits wandered
Unfrightened, and no little fish was ever
Hooked by its own credulity: all things
Were free from treachery and fear and cunning,
And all was peaceful. But some innovator,
A good-for-nothing, whoever he was, decided,
In envy, that what lions ate was better,
Stuffed meat into his belly like a furnace,
And paved the way for crime. It may have been
That steel was warmed and dyed with blood through killing
Dangerous beasts, and that could be forgiven
On grounds of self-defense; to kill wild beasts
Is lawful, but they never should be eaten.

One crime leads to another: first the swine
Were slaughtered, since they rooted up the seeds
And spoiled the season's crop; then goats were punished
On vengeful altars for nibbling at the grape-vines.
These both deserved their fate, but the poor sheep,

What had they ever done, born for man's service,
But bring us milk, so sweet to drink, and clothe us
With their soft wool, who give us more while living
Than ever they could in death? And what had oxen,
Incapable of fraud or trick or cunning,
Simple and harmless, born to a life of labor,
What had they ever done? None but an ingrate,
Unworthy of the gift of grain, could ever
Take off the weight of the yoke, and with the axe
Strike at the neck that bore it, kill his fellow
Who helped him break the soil and raise the harvest.
It is bad enough to do these things; we make
The gods our partners in the abomination,
Saying they love the blood of bulls in Heaven.
So there he stands, the victim at the altars,
Without a blemish, perfect (and his beauty
Proves his own doom), in sacrificial garlands,
Horns tipped with gold, and hears the priest intoning:
Not knowing what he means, watches the barley
Sprinkled between his horns, the very barley
He helped make grow, and then is struck
And with his blood he stains the knife whose flashing
He may have seen reflected in clear water.
Then they tear out his entrails, peer, examine,
Search for the will of Heaven, seeking omens.
And then, so great man's appetite for food
Forbidden, then, O human race, you feed,
You feast, upon your kill. Do not do this,
I pray you, but remember: when you taste
The flesh of slaughtered cattle, you are eating
Your fellow-workers.

"Now, since the god inspires me,
I follow where he leads, to open Delphi,
The very heavens, bring you revelation
Of mysteries, great matters never traced
By any mind before, and matters lost
Or hidden and forgotten, these I sing.
There is no greater wonder than to range
The starry heights, to leave the earth's dull regions,
To ride the clouds, to stand on Atlas' shoulders,
And see, far off, far down, the little figures
Wandering here and there, devoid of reason,
Anxious, in fear of death, and so advise them,
And so make fate an open book.

"O mortals,
Dumb in cold fear of death, why do you tremble
At Stygian rivers, shadows, empty names,
The lying stock of poets, and the terrors
Of a false world? I tell you that your bodies
Can never suffer evil, whether fire
Consumes them, or the waste of time. Our souls
Are deathless; always, when they leave our bodies,
They find new dwelling-places. I myself,
I well remember, in the Trojan War
Was Panthous' son, Euphorbus, and my breast
Once knew the heavy spear of Menelaus.[3]
Not long ago, in Argos, Abas'[4] city,
In Juno's temple, I saw the shield I carried
On my left arm. All things are always changing,
But nothing dies. The spirit comes and goes,
Is housed wherever it wills, shifts residence
From beasts to men, from men to beasts, but always
It keeps on living. As the pliant wax
Is stamped with new designs, and is no longer
What once it was, but changes form, and still
Is pliant wax, so do I teach that spirit
Is evermore the same, though passing always
To ever-changing bodies. So I warn you,
Lest appetite murder brotherhood, I warn you
By all the priesthood in me, do not exile
What may be kindred souls by evil slaughter.
Blood should not nourish blood.
"Full sail, I voyage
Over the boundless ocean, and I tell you
Nothing is permanent in all the world.
All things are fluent; every image forms,
Wandering through change. Time is itself a river
In constant movement, and the hours flow by
Like water, wave on wave, pursued, pursuing,
Forever fugitive, forever new.
That which has been, is not; that which was not,
Begins to be; motion and moment always
In process of renewal. Look, the night,
Worn out, aims toward the brightness, and sun's glory
Succeeds the dark. The color of the sky
Is different at midnight, when tired things

3. This claim is found in early, reliable sources. 4. A mythical king of Argos.

Lie all at rest, from what it is at morning
When Lucifer rides his snowy horse, before
Aurora paints the sky for Phoebus'[5] coming.
The shield of the god reddens at early morning,
Reddens at evening, but is white at noonday
In purer air, farther from earth's contagion.
And the Moon-goddess changes in the nighttime,
Lesser today than yesterday, if waning,
Greater tomorrow than today, when crescent.

Notice the year's four seasons: they resemble
Our lives. Spring is a nursling, a young child,
Tender and young, and the grass shines and buds
Swell with new life, not yet full-grown nor hardy,
But promising much to husbandmen, with blossom
Bright in the fertile fields. And then comes summer
When the year is a strong young man, no better time
Than this, no richer, no more passionate vigor.
Then comes the prime of Autumn, a little sober,
But ripe and mellow, moderate of mood,
Halfway from youth to age, with just a showing
Of gray around the temples. And then Winter,
Tottering, shivering, bald or gray, and agèd.

Our bodies also change. What we have been,
What we now are, we shall not be tomorrow.
There was a time when we were only seed,
Only the hope of men, housed in the womb,
Where Nature shaped us, brought us forth, exposed us
To the void air, and there in light we lay,
Feeble and infant, and were quadrupeds
Before too long, and after a little wobbled
And pulled ourselves upright, holding a chair,
The side of the crib, and strength grew into us,
And swiftness; youth and middle age went swiftly
Down the long hill toward age, and all our vigor
Came to decline, so Milon, the old wrestler,
Weeps when he sees his arms whose bulging muscles
Were once like Hercules', and Helen weeps
To see her wrinkles in the looking glass:
Could this old woman ever have been ravished,
Taken twice over?[6] Time devours all things

5. The sun. *Lucifer*: The morning star. 6. Once by Theseus, then by Paris.

With envious Age, together. The slow gnawing
Consumes all things, and very, very slowly.

Not even the so-called elements are constant.
Listen, and I will tell you of their changes.
There are four of them, and two, the earth and water,
Are heavy, and their own weight bears them downward,
And two, the air and fire (and fire is purer
Even than air) are light, rise upward
If nothing holds them down. These elements
Are separate in space, yet all things come
From them and into them, and they can change
Into each other. Earth can be dissolved
To flowing water, water can thin to air,
And air can thin to fire, and fire can thicken
To air again, and air condense to water,
And water be compressed to solid earth.
Nothing remains the same: the great renewer,
Nature, makes form from form, and, oh, believe me
That nothing ever dies. What we call birth
Is the beginning of a difference,
No more than that, and death is only ceasing
Of what had been before. The parts may vary,
Shifting from here to there, hither and yon,
And back again, but the great sum is constant.

Nothing, I am convinced, can be the same
Forever. There was once an Age of Gold,
Later, an Age of Iron. Every place
Submits to Fortune's wheel. I have seen oceans
That once were solid land, and I have seen
Lands made from ocean. Often sea-shells lie
Far from the beach, and men have found old anchors
On mountain-tops. Plateaus have turned to valleys,
Hills washed away, marshes become dry desert,
Deserts made pools. Here Nature brings forth fountains,
There shuts them in; when the earth quakes, new rivers
Are born and old ones sink and dry and vanish.
Lycus,[7] for instance, swallowed by the earth
Emerges far away, a different stream,
And Erasinus disappears, goes under
The ground, and comes to light again in Argos,

7. A river of Asia Minor, as is Mysus, below.

And Mysus, so the story goes, was tired
Of his old source and banks and went elsewhere
And now is called Caicus. The Anigrus[8]
Was good to drink from once, but now rolls down
A flood that you had better leave alone,
Unless the poets lie, because the Centaurs
Used it to wash their wounds from Hercules' arrows.[9]
And Hypanis, rising from Scythian mountains,
Once fresh and sweet to the taste, is salty and brackish.

Antissa, Pharos, Tyre,[1] all inland cities,
Were islands once, Leucas and Zancle[2] mainland,
And Helice and Buris,[3] should you seek them,
Those old Achaian cities, you would find them
Under the waves, and mariners can show you
The sloping ramps, the buried walls. Near Troezen[4]
Stands a high treeless hill, a level plain
Until the violent winds, penned underground,
Stifled in gloomy caverns, struggled long
For freer air to breathe, since that black prison
Had never a chink, made the ground swell to bursting,
The way one blows a bladder or a goatskin,
And where that blister or that bubble grew
Out of the ground, the lump remained and hardened
With time, and now it seems a rounded hill-top.

Example on example! I could cite you
So many more that I have seen or heard of.
Just a few more. The element of water
Gives and receives strange forms. At midday Ammon[5]
Is cold, but warm in the morning and the evening.
The Athamanians[6] set wood on fire
By pouring water on it in the dark of the moon,
And the Ciconian[7] people have a river
They never drink, for they would turn to marble.
Crathis and Sybaris,[8] in our own country,
Turn hair the color of platinum or gold,
And there are other streams, more marvelous even,

8. A river of Elis, in the western Peloponnese. 9. They were poison-tipped. *Hypanis:* A river in Scythia, running into the Black Sea. 1. A Phoenician trading city on the coast of Lebanon. *Antissa.* On the island of Lesbos. *Pharos:* Peninsula connected to the mainland of Alexandria in Egypt. 2. Off the coast of Sicily. *Leucas:* A large island off the west coast of Greece. 3. Coastal cities in Achaea, which disappeared into the sea in 373 B.C. 4. In the Peloponnese, across from Attica. The mountain on the peninsula of Methana, north of Troezen, is made of volcanic rock. 5. The spring at the site of the oracle of Ammon, in Libya. 6. A people of northwestern Greece. This miraculously hot spring was supposed to have been at Dodona, an oracular shrine in that region. 7. A Thracian tribe. 8. Rivers in southern Italy.

Whose waters affect the mind as well as body.
You have heard about Salmacis;[9] there are lakes
In Ethiopia where a swallow of the water
Will drive you raving mad or hold you rigid
In catatonic lethargy. No man
Who likes his wine should ever drink from Clytor[1]
Or he would hate it; something in that water,
It may be, counteracts the heat of wine,
Or possibly, and so the natives tell us,
Melampus,[2] when he cured the maddened daughters
Of Proetus by his herbs and magic singing,
Threw in that spring mind-clearing hellebore,[3]
So that a hatred of wine stays in those waters.
Lyncestis[4] river is just the opposite;
Whoever drinks too freely there will stagger
As if he had taken undiluted wine.
At Pheneus, in Arcadia, there are springs
Harmless by day, injurious in the nighttime.
As lakes and rivers vary in their virtues,
So lands can change. The little island Delos
Once floated on the waters, but now stands firm,
And Jason's Argo, as you well remember,
Dreaded the Clashing Rocks,[5] the high-flung spray,
Immovable now, contemptuous of the winds.
Etna,[6] whose furnaces glow hot with sulphur,
Will not be fiery always in the future,
And was not always fiery in the past.
The earth has something animal about it,
Living almost, with many lungs to breathe through,
Sending out flames, but the passages of breathing
Are changeable; some caverns may be closed
And new ones open whence the fire can issue.
Deep caves compress the violent winds, which drive
Rock against rock, imprisoning the matter
That holds the seeds of flame, and this bursts blazing
Ignited by the friction, and the caves
Cool when the winds are spent. The tars and pitches,
The yellow sulphur with invisible burning,
Are no eternal fuel, so volcanoes,

9. In Book IV, Ovid had already explained that bathing in the spring of Salmacis (in Caria, a district of Asia Minor) made men soft and weak. 1. In Arcadia. 2. A prophet, who cured the daughters of Proetus, King of Argos. They had been driven mad in punishment for their pride; the madness, inflicted by Juno, made them imagine they were cows. 3. A drug made from herbs, which was supposed to restore sanity. 4. The Lyncestae were a tribe in Macedonia. 5. Two rocks in the Black Sea which crushed any ship that came between them; after the Argo passed through them successfully, they remained fixed in place forever. 6. The volcano (still active) in northeast Sicily.

Starved of their nourishment, devour no longer,
Abandon fire, as they have been abandoned.

Far to the north, somewhere around Pallene,[7]
The story goes, there is a lake where men
Who plunge nine times into the chilly waters
Come out with downy feathers over their bodies.
This I do not believe, nor that the women
Of Scythia sprinkle their bodies with magic juices
For the same purpose and effect.
"However,
There are stranger things that have been tried and tested
And these we must believe. You have seen dead bodies,
Rotten from time or heat, breed smaller creatures.
Bury the carcasses of slaughtered bullocks,
Chosen for sacrifice (all men know this),
And from the putrid entrails will come flying
The flower-culling bees,[8] whose actions prove
Their parenthood, for they are fond of meadows,
Are fond of toil, and work with hopeful spirit.
The horse, being warlike, after he is buried
Produces hornets. Cut a sea-crab's claws,
Bury the rest of the body, and a scorpion
Comes from the ground. And worms that weave cocoons
White on the leaves of the trees, as country people
Know well, turn into moths with death's-head marking.
The mud holds seeds that generate green frogs,
Legless at first, but the legs grown, to swim with,
And take long jumps with, later. And a bear-cub,
New-born, is not a bear at all, but only
A lump, hardly alive, whose mother gives it
A licking into shape, herself as model.
The larvae of the honey-bearing bees,
Safe in hexagonal waxen cells, are nothing
But wormlike bodies; feet and wings come later.
Who would believe that from an egg would come
Such different wonders as Juno's bird, the peacock,
Jove's eagle, Venus' dove, and all the fliers?
Some people think that when the human spine
Has rotted in the narrow tomb, the marrow
Is changed into a serpent.
"All these things
Have their beginning in some other creature,

7. A peninsula in Macedonia. 8. Compare the riddle Sampson put to the Philistines, *Judges* XIV: 5–18.

But there is one bird which renews itself
Out of itself. The Assyrians call it the phoenix.
It does not live on seeds nor the green grasses,
But on the gum of frankincense and juices
Of cardamon. It lives five centuries,
As you may know, and then it builds itself
A nest in the highest branches of a palm-tree,
Using its talons and clean beak to cover
This nest with cassia and spikes of spikenard,
And cinnamon and yellow myrrh, and there
It dies among the fragrance, and from the body
A tiny phoenix springs to birth, whose years
Will be as long. The fledgling, gaining strength
To carry burdens, lifts the heavy nest,
His cradle and the old one's tomb, and bears it
Through the thin air to the city of the Sun
And lays it as an offering at the doors
Of the Sun-god's holy temple.

"Wonders, wonders!
The same hyena can be male or female,
To take or give the seed of life, at pleasure,
And the chameleon, a little creature
Whose food is wind and air, takes on the color
Of anything it rests on. India, conquered,
Gave Bacchus,[9] tendril-crowned, the tawny lynxes
Whose urine, when it met the air, was hardened
Becoming stone; so coral also hardens
At the first touch of air, while under water
It sways, a pliant weed.

"The day will end,
The Sun-god plunge tired horses in the ocean
Before I have the time I need to tell you
All of the things that take new forms. We see
The eras change, nations grow strong, or weaken,
Like Troy, magnificent in men and riches,
For ten years lavish with her blood, and now
Displaying only ruins and for wealth
The old ancestral tombs. Sparta, Mycenae,
Athens, and Thebes, all flourished once, and now
What are they more than names? I hear that Rome
Is rising, out of Trojan blood, established
On strong and deep foundations, where the Tiber
Comes from the Apennines.[1] Rome's form is changing

9. The god Dionysus with his army of maenads and satyrs conquered the Indians. 1. The mountainous spine of the Italian peninsula. *Tiber:* The river that flows through Rome.

Growing to greatness, and she will be, some day,
Head of the boundless world; so we are told
By oracles and seers. I can remember
When Troy was tottering ruinward, a prophet,
Helenus, son of Priam, told Aeneas
In consolation for his doubts and weeping
'O son of Venus, if you bear in mind
My prophecies, Troy shall not wholly perish
While you are living: fire and sword will give you
Safe passage through them; you will carry on
Troy's relics, till a land, more friendly to you
Than your own native soil, will give asylum.
I see the destined city for the Trojans
And their sons' sons, none greater in all the ages,
Past, present, or to come. Through long, long eras
Her famous men will bring her power, but one,
Sprung from Iulus' blood,[2] will make her empress
Of the whole world, and after earth has used him
The heavens will enjoy him, Heaven will be
His destination.' What Helenus told Aeneas,
I have told you, I remember, and I am happy
That for our kin[3] new walls, at last, are rising,
That the Greek victory was to such good purpose.

We must not wander far and wide, forgetting
The goal of our discourse. Remember this:
The heavens and all below them, earth and her creatures,
All change, and we, part of creation, also
Must suffer change. We are not bodies only,
But winged spirits, with the power to enter
Animal forms, house in the bodies of cattle.
Therefore, we should respect those dwelling-places
Which may have given shelter to the spirit
Of fathers, brothers, cousins, human beings
At least, and we should never do them damage,
Not stuff ourselves like the cannibal Thyestes.[4]
An evil habit, impious preparation,
Wicked as human bloodshed, to draw the knife
Across the throat of the calf, and hear its anguish
Cry to deaf ears! And who could slay
The little goat whose cry is like a baby's,
Or eat a bird he has himself just fed?

2. Augustus. 3. Pythagoras, who was in a former incarnation Euphorbus (cf. 1. 118) speaks here as a Trojan. 4. His brother Atreus tricked him into eating the flesh of his own children. (Cf. Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*).

One might as well do murder; he is only
The shortest step away. Let the bull plow
And let him owe his death to length of days;
Let the sheep give you armor for rough weather,
The she-goats bring full udders to the milking.
Have done with nets and traps and snares and springes,
Bird-lime and forest-beaters, lines and fish-hooks.
Kill, if you must, the beasts that do you harm,
But, even so, let killing be enough;
Let appetite refrain from flesh, take only
A gentler nourishment."

THE NEW TESTAMENT

In the last years of Augustus' life, in the Roman province of Judea, there was born to Joseph, a carpenter of Nazareth, and his wife, Mary, a son who was in the tradition of the Hebrew prophets but was also the bearer of a message that was to transform the world. His life on earth was short; it ended in the agony of crucifixion at about His thirty-third year. This event is a point of intersection of the three main lines of development of the ancient world—Hebrew, Greek, and Latin—for this Hebrew prophet was executed by a Roman governor, and His life and teachings were written down in the Greek language. These documents, which eventually, with some additions, constituted what we now know as the New Testament, circulated in the Greek-speaking half of the Roman Empire and later, in a Latin translation, in the West. They became the sacred texts of a church which, at first persecuted by and then triumphantly associated with Roman imperial power, outlasted the destruction of the empire and ruled over a spiritual kingdom which still exists.

The teaching of Christ was revolutionary not only in terms of Greek and Roman feeling but also in terms of the Hebrew religious tradition. The Hebrew idea of a personal God who is yet not anthropomorphic, who is omnipotent, omniscient, and infinitely just, was now broadened to include among His attributes an infinite mercy which tempered the justice. Greek and Roman religion was outward and visible, the formal practice of ritual acts in a social context; Christianity was inward and spiritual, the important relationship was that between the individual soul and God. All human beings were on an equal plane in the eyes of their Creator. This idea ran counter to the theory and practice of an institution basic to the economy of the ancient world, slavery. Like the earlier Hebrew prophets, Christ was rejected by His own people, as prophets have always been, and His death on the cross and His resurrection provided His followers and the future converts with an unforgettable symbol of a new dispensation, the son of God in human form suffering to atone for the sins of humanity, the supreme expression of divine mercy. This conception is the basis of the teaching of Paul, the apos-

tle to the gentiles, who in the middle years of the first century A.D. changed Christianity from a Jewish sect to a world-wide movement with flourishing churches all over Asia Minor and Greece, and even in Rome. The burden of his teaching was the frailty and corruption of this life and world, and the certainty of resurrection. "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." To those who had accepted this vision the secular materialism that was the dominant view in the new era of peace and progress guaranteed by the stabilization of Roman rule was no longer tenable.

Recommended reading is Bruce M. Metzger, *The New Testament, Its Background, Growth, and Content* (1965).

The New Testament[1]

[The Birth and Youth of Jesus][2]

2. And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world[3] should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judæa, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ[4] the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary,

1. The text of these selections is that of the King James, or Authorized, Version. 2. Luke 2:1–52. 3. The Roman Empire. 4. A Greek word meaning "anointed," used of kings, priests, and the Deliverer promised by the Prophets.

and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them. And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS,[5] which was so named of the angel[6] before he was conceived in the womb. And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished,[7] they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord; (as it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb[8] shall be called holy to the Lord;) and to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons. And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles,[9] and the glory of thy people Israel. And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him. And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again[1] of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; and she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spoke of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem. And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth. And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him. Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year

5. A form of the name Joshua, which means "he shall save." 6. In the Annunciation to Mary. (Luke 1:31.) 7. For the law here referred to, see Leviticus 12. 8. First-born son, regarded as belonging to God. See Exodus 13:2. 9. Non-Jews. 1. The Greek word is the one always used of the resurrection of the dead.

at the feast of the passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it. But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him. And it came to pass that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors,[2] both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them. And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

[The Teaching of Jesus: The Sermon on the Mount[3]*]*

5. And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: and he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted?[4] it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel,[5] but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so

2. Teachers, rabbis. 3. Matthew 5:1–7:29. 4. How can it regain its savor? 5. A household vessel with the capacity of a bushel.

shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees,[6] ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: but I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca,[7] shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.[8] Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: but I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit

6. A sect which insisted on strict observance of the Mosaic law. *Scribes*: The official interpreters of the Sacred Scriptures. 7. The word means "empty." 8. The reference is to Jewish legal institutions. The penalties which might be inflicted for murder (see the opening sentence of this paragraph) were death by the sword (a sentence of a local court, "the judgment"), death by stoning (the sentence of a higher court, "the council"), and lastly the burning of the criminal's body in the place where refuse was thrown, Gehenna, which is hence used as a name for hell. Jesus compares the different degrees of punishment (administered by God) for the new sins which he here lists to the degrees of punishment recognized by Jewish law.

adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: but I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans[9] the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

6. Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: that thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.

And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee

9. The men who collected the taxes for the Roman tax-farming corporations; they were, naturally, universally despised and hated.

openly. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do; for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single,[1] thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon. Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or,

1. Clear.

Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

7. Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judged, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him? Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils?

and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it. And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

[PARABLES OF JESUS][2]

15. Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.

And he spoke this parable unto them, saying, What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

And he said, A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

2. Luke 15:1–32.

And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him. And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: but as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

[THE BETRAYAL OF JESUS][3]

26. . . . Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, and said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him.

Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread[4] the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover? And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples. And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the passover.

3. Matthew 26:14–75. 4. Held in remembrance of the delivery of the Jews from captivity in Egypt. See Exodus 12.

Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve. And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I? And he answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me. The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born. Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said.

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament,[5] which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom. And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives. Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended[6] because of me this night: for it is written,[7] I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee. Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended. Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples.

Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee,[8] and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me.[9] And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt. And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy. And he left them, and went away again, and prayed

5. I.e., of the new covenant, or agreement. Jesus compares himself to the lamb that was killed at the Passover as a sign of the convenant between God and the Jews. 6. The Greek means literally, "you will be made to stumble." 7. See Zechariah 13:7. 8. James and John. 9. Stay awake.

the third time, saying the same words. Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.

And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people. Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast. And forthwith he came to Jesus and said, Hail, master; and kissed him. And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they and laid hands on Jesus, and took him. And behold, one of them which were with Jesus[1] stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear. Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?[2] But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be? In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me. But all this was done that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.

And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end. Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death; but found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses, and said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days. And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? What is it which these witness against thee? But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death.[3] Then did they spit in his

1. This was Peter. 2. The legion was a Roman military formation; its full complement was six thousand men. 3. Liable to the death penalty.

face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands, saying, Prophesy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee?

Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee. But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest. And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man. And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee.[4] Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.

[THE TRIAL AND CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS][5]

27. When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death: and when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor.[6]

Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself. And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field,[7] to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet,[8] saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; and gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me. And Jesus stood before the governor: and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest.

And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing. Then said Pilate unto him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee? And he answered him to never

4. Betrays. Peter's speech revealed his Galilean origin. 5. Matthew 27:1–66. 6. His official title was procurator of the province of Judea. The Roman policy was to allow the Jews as much independence as possible (especially in religious matters), but only the Roman authorities could impose a death sentence. 7. A field which had been dug for potter's clay, and was consequently not worth very much as land. 8. Jeremiah. The prophecy here quoted is a version of Zechariah 11:13.

a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly. Now at that feast the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would. And they had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas.[9] Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ? For he knew that for envy they had delivered him.[1]

When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him. But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus. The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas. Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified.[2] And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified.

When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it. Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children.

Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged[3] Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified. Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe.

And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed[4] in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head. And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him. And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene,[5] Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross. And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull,

They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall:[6] and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink. And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.[7] And sitting down they watched

9. Under sentence of death for sedition and murder. 1. I.e., to the Roman authorities. 2. The regular Roman punishment for sedition. 3. Whipped, a routine part of the punishment. 4. To represent the king's scepter. 5. On the coast of North Africa. 6. The Greek word translated "vinegar" describes a sour wine which was the regular drink of the Roman soldiery. The addition of bitter gall is further mockery. 7. *That it might . . . cast lots*: It is generally agreed that this is a late addition to the text.

him there; and set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS. Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left.

And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God. The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth. Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?[8] Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias.[9] And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink. The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him.

Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple[1] was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. Now when the centurion,[2] and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God. And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him: among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children. When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathæa, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple. He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered. And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed. And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre.

Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three

8. The opening words of Psalm 22. The actual words of Jesus, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" are Aramaic, the spoken Hebrew of the period. 9. The prophet Elijah. 1. The curtain which screened off the holy of holies. 2. The Roman officer in charge of the execution.

days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure[3] until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch:[4] go your way, make it as sure as ye can. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.

[THE RESURRECTION][5]

28. In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you. And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word.

And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail! And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.

Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

3. Guarded. 4. Police force. 5. Matthew 28:1–20.

PETRONIUS
died A.D. 65

It is not certain that Titus Petronius (Arbiter) was the author of the *Satyricon*, but he is the best candidate. A friend of Nero's, he committed suicide at the imperial order after becoming involved in the Pisonian conspiracy against the emperor in A.D. 65. A brilliant account of Petronius' character and death is given by Tacitus in the eighteenth and nineteenth chapters of Book XVI of the *Annals*.

It is in the satiric masterpiece of this Roman aristocrat that the pragmatic, materialistic attitude Christianity was to supplant is most clearly displayed. It was probably written during the principate of Nero (A.D. 54–68), a period in which the material benefits and the spiritual weakness of the new order had already become apparent. The *Satyricon* itself has survived only in fragments; we know nothing certain about the scope of the work as a whole, but from the fragments it is clear that this book is the work of a satiric genius, perhaps the most original genius of Latin literature.

"Dinner with Trimalchio," one of the longer fragments, selections from which are included here, shows us a tradesman's world. The narrator, a student of literature, and his cronies may have an aristocratic disdain for the businessmen at whose tables they eat, but they know that Trimalchio and his kind have inherited the earth. Trimalchio began life as a foreign slave, but he is now a multimillionaire. The representative of culture, Agamemnon the teacher, drinks his wine and praises his fatuous remarks; he is content to be the court jester, the butt of Trimalchio's witticisms. Trimalchio knows no god but Mercury, the patron of business operations, but the gold bracelet, a percentage of his income which he has dedicated to Mercury, he wears on his own arm. He identifies himself with the god, and worships himself, the living embodiment of the power of money. The conversation at his table is a sardonic revelation of the temper of a whole civilization. Written in brilliantly humorous and colloquial style it exposes mercilessly a blindness to spiritual values of any kind, a distrust of the intellect, and a ferocious preoccupation with the art of cheating one's neighbor. The point is made more effective by the conscious evocation of the epic tradition throughout the work. The names alone of the teacher, Agamemnon, and his assistant in instruction, Menelaus; the wall paintings which show "the Iliad and the Odyssey and the gladiator's show given by Laenas"; Trimalchio's exhibition of monstrous ignorance of Homer (which nobody dares to correct); the Nestorian tone of Ganymedes, who regrets the old days when men were men (he is talking of the time when Safinius forced the bakers to lower the price of bread)—one touch after another reminds us that these figures are the final product of a tradition that began with Achilles and Odysseus.

The satire is witty, but it is nonetheless profound. All of them live for the moment, in material enjoyment, but they know that it cannot last. "Let us remember the living" is their watchword, but they cannot forget the dead.

And as the banquet goes on, the thought of death, suppressed beneath the debased Epicureanism of Trimalchio and his associates, emerges slowly to the surface of their consciousness and comes to dominate it completely. The last arrival at the banquet is Habinnas the undertaker, and his coming coincides with the last stage of Trimalchio's drunkenness, the maudlin exhibition of his funeral clothes and the description of his tomb. "I would that I were dead," says the Sibyl in the story Trimalchio tells early in the evening; at its end he himself acts out his own funeral, complete with ointment, robes, wine, and trumpet players. The fact of death, the one fact which the practical materialism of Trimalchio and his circle can neither deny nor assimilate, asserts itself triumphantly as the supreme fact in the emptiness of Trimalchio's mind.

The introduction to *Petronius. The Satyricon*, translated by J. P. Sullivan (1977), will be helpful to the student.

Dinner with Trimalchio[1]

[The narrator, Encolpius, is a penniless vagabond who is a student of rhetoric under a master named Agamemnon. His close associates are Ascyltus, a fellow student, and Giton, a handsome boy who has no particular occupation. After some disreputable and very tiring adventures they are invited, as pupils of Agamemnon, to a banquet. The scene of the story is an unidentified city in southern Italy, the time probably about A.D. 50.]

The next day but one finally arrived. But we were so knocked about that we wanted to run rather than rest. We were mournfully discussing how to avoid the approaching storm,[2] when one of Agamemnon's slaves broke in on our frantic debate.

"Here," said he, "don't you know who's your host today? It's Trimalchio—he's terribly elegant. . . . He has a clock[3] in the dining-room and a trumpeter[4] all dressed up to tell him how much longer he's got to live."

This made us forget all our troubles. We dressed carefully and told Giton, who was very kindly acting as our servant, to attend us at the baths.[5]

We did not take our clothes off but began wandering around, or rather exchanging jokes while circulating among the little groups. Suddenly we saw a bald old man in a reddish shirt, playing ball with some long-haired boys. It was not so much the boys that made us watch, although they alone were worth the trouble, but the old gentleman himself. He was taking his exercise in slippers and throw-

1. Translated by J. P. Sullivan. 2. A repetition of the unsavory incidents they have just experienced. 3. At this period a rare and expensive article. *Trimalchio*: The name suggests "triply blessed" or "triply powerful." 4. To sound off every hour on the hour. 5. A public institution. They were magnificent buildings, containing not only baths of many types and temperatures, but places for conversation and games and even libraries.

ing a green ball around. But he didn't pick it up if it touched the ground; instead there was a slave holding a bagful, and he supplied them to the players. We noticed other novelties. Two eunuchs stood around at different points: one of them carried a silver chamber pot, the other counted the balls, not those flying from hand to hand according to the rules, but those that fell to the ground. We were still admiring these elegant arrangements when Menelaus[6] hurried up to us.

"This is the man you'll be dining with," he said. "In fact, you are now watching the beginning of the dinner."

No sooner had Menelaus spoken than Trimalchio snapped his fingers. At the signal the eunuch brought up the chamber pot for him, while he went on playing. With the weight off his bladder, he demanded water for his hands, splashed a few drops on his fingers and wiped them on a boy's head.

It would take too long to pick out isolated incidents. Anyway, we entered the baths where we began sweating at once and we went immediately into the cold water. Trimalchio had been smothered in perfume and was already being rubbed down, not with linen towels, but with bath-robes of the finest wool. As this was going on, three masseurs sat drinking Falernian[7] in front of him. Through quarreling they spilled most of it and Trimalchio said they were drinking his health.[8] Wrapped in thick scarlet felt he was put into a litter. Four couriers with lots of medals went in front, as well as a go-cart in which his favourite boy was riding—a wizened, bleary-eyed youngster, uglier than his master. As he was carried off, a musician with a tiny set of pipes took his place by Trimalchio's head and whispered a tune in his ear the whole way.

We followed on, choking with amazement by now, and arrived at the door with Agamemnon at our side. On the doorpost a notice was fastened which read:

ANY SLAVE LEAVING THE HOUSE WITHOUT HIS MASTER'S PERMISSION WILL RECEIVE ONE HUNDRED LASHES

Just at the entrance stood the hall-porter, dressed in a green uniform with a belt of cherry red. He was shelling peas into a silver basin. Over the doorway hung—of all things—a golden cage from which a spotted magpie greeted visitors.

As I was gaping at all this, I almost fell over backwards and broke a leg. There on the left as one entered, not far from the porter's cubbyhole, was a huge dog with a chain round its neck. It was painted on the wall and over it, in big capitals, was written:

6. Appropriately enough, Agamemnon's assistant in instruction. 7. A famous wine from Campania south of Rome. 8. He claims they are pouring a libation.

BEWARE OF THE DOG

My colleagues laughed at me, but when I got my breath back I went to examine the whole wall. There was a mural of a slave market, price tags and all. Then Trimalchio himself, holding a wand of Mercury and being led into Rome by Minerva.[9] After this a picture of how he learned accounting and, finally how he became a steward. The painstaking artist had drawn it all in great detail with descriptions underneath. Just where the colonnade ended Mercury hauled him up by the chin and rushed him to a high platform. . . .

I began asking the porter what were the pictures they had in the middle.

"The *Iliad*, and *Odyssey*, and the gladiatorial show given by Laenas," he told me.

Time did not allow us to look at many things there . . . by now we had reached the dining-room. . . .

Finally we took our places. Boys from Alexandria poured iced water over our hands. Others followed them and attended to our feet, removing any hangnails with great skill. But they were not quiet even during this troublesome operation: they sang away at their work. I wanted to find out if the whole staff were singers, so I asked for a drink. In a flash a boy was there, singing in a shrill voice while he attended to me—and anyone else who was asked to bring something did the same. It was more like a musical comedy than a respectable dinner party.

Some extremely elegant hors d'oeuvre were served at this point—by now everyone had taken his place with the exception of Trimalchio, for whom, strangely enough, the place at the top was reserved. The dishes for the first course included an ass of Corinthian bronze with two panniers, white olives on one side and black on the other. Over the ass were two pieces of plate, with Trimalchio's name and the weight of the silver inscribed on the rims. There were some small iron frames shaped like bridges supporting dormice sprinkled with honey and poppy seed. There were steaming hot sausages too, on a silver gridiron with damsons and pomegranate seeds underneath.

We were in the middle of these elegant dishes when Trimalchio himself was carried in to the sound of music and set down on a pile of tightly stuffed cushions. The sight of him drew an astonished laugh from the guests. His cropped head stuck out from a scarlet coat; his neck was well muffled up and he had put round it a napkin with a broad purple stripe and tassels dangling here and there. On the little finger of his left hand he wore a heavy gilt ring and a smaller one on

9. Athena, patron goddess of arts and skills. *Mercury* (Hermes): As a trickster, the patron god of thieves and businessmen.

the last joint of the next finger. This I thought was solid gold, but actually it was studded with little iron stars. And to show off even more of his jewellery, he had his right arm bare and set off by a gold armlet and an ivory circlet fastened with a gleaming metal plate.

After picking his teeth with a silver toothpick, he began: "My friends, I wasn't keen to come into the dining room yet. But if I stayed away any more, I would have kept you back, so I've deprived myself of all my little pleasures for you. However, you'll allow me to finish my game."

A boy was at his heels with a board of terebinth wood[1] with glass squares, and I noticed the very last word in luxury—instead of white and black pieces he had gold and silver coins. While he was swearing away like a trooper over his game and we were still on the hors d'oeuvre, a tray was brought in with a basket on it. There sat a wooden hen, its wings spread round it the way hens are when they are broody. Two slaves hurried up and as the orchestra played a tune they began searching through the straw and dug out peahens' eggs, which they distributed to the guests.

Trimalchio turned to look at this little scene and said: "My friends, I gave orders for that bird to sit on some peahens' eggs. I hope to goodness they are not starting to hatch. However, let's try them and see if they are still soft."

We took up our spoons (weighing at least half a pound each) and cracked the eggs, which were made of rich pastry. To tell the truth, I nearly threw away my share, as the chicken seemed already formed. But I heard a guest who was an old hand say: "There should be something good here." So I searched the shell with my fingers and found the plumpest little figpecker, all covered with yolk and seasoned with pepper.

At this point Trimalchio became tired of his game and demanded that all the previous dishes be brought to him. He gave permission in a loud voice for any of us to have another glass of mead if we wanted it. Suddenly there was a crash from the orchestra and a troop of waiters—still singing—snatched away the hors d'oeuvre. However in the confusion one of the side-dishes happened to fall and a slave picked it up from the floor. Trimalchio noticed this, had the boy's ears boxed and told him to throw it down again. A cleaner came in with a broom and began to sweep up the silver plate along with the rest of the rubbish. Two long-haired Ethiopians followed him, carrying small skin bottles like those they use for scattering sand in the circus, and they poured wine over our hands—no one ever offered us water.

Our host was complimented on these elegant arrangements. "You've

1. A very hard wood which takes a high polish and is very expensive (like everything Trimalchio has).

got to fight fair," he replied. "That is why I gave orders for each guest to have his own table. At the same time these smelly slaves won't crowd so."

Carefully sealed wine bottles were immediately brought, their necks labelled:

FALERNIAN
CONSUL OPIMIUS
ONE HUNDRED YEARS OLD[2]

While we were examining the labels, Trimalchio clapped his hands and said with a sigh:

"Wine has a longer life than us poor folks. So let's wet our whistles. Wine is life. I'm giving you real Opimian. I didn't put out such good stuff yesterday, though the company was much better class."

Naturally we drank and missed no opportunity of admiring his elegant hospitality. In the middle of this a slave brought in a silver skeleton, put together in such a way that its joints and backbone could be pulled out and twisted in all directions. After he had flung it about on the table once or twice, its flexible joints falling into various postures, Trimalchio recited:

"Man's life alas! is but a span,
So let us live it while we can,
We'll be like this when dead."

After our applause the next course was brought in. Actually it was not as grand as we expected, but it was so novel that everyone stared. It was a deep circular tray with the twelve signs of the Zodiac arranged round the edge. . . .

After this course Trimalchio got up and went to the toilet. Free of his domineering presence, we began to strike up a general conversation. Dama[3] started off by calling for bigger glasses.

"The day's nothin'," he said, "It's night 'fore y'can turn around. So the best thing's get out of bed and go straight to dinner. Lovely cold weather we've had too. M'bath hardly thawed me out. Still, a hot drink's as good as an overcoat. I've been throwin' it back neat, and I'm pretty tight—the wine's gone to m'head."

This started Seleucus off.

"Me now," he said, "I don't have a bath every day. It's like gettin' rubbed with fuller's[4] earth, havin' a bath. The water bites into you,

2. The wine was labeled with the name of the man who was consul in the year it was bottled. Opimius was consul in 121 B.C. Since it was in this year that the custom of dating the wine by the consul's name began, Trimalchio's wine was the oldest possible. If genuine, it would have been undrinkable. 3. One of Trimalchio's friends. Like those of Seleucus and Phileros who join the conversation later, his name is Greek. 4. *Fuller*: A cleaner (of woollen cloaks). They used very strong solvents.

and as the days go by, your heart turns to water. But when I've knocked back a hot glass of wine and honey, kiss-my-arse I say to the cold weather. Mind you, I couldn't have a bath—I was at a funeral today. Poor old Chrysanthus has just given up the ghost—nice man he was! It was only the other day he stopped me in the street. I still seem to hear his voice. Dear, dear! We're just so many walking bags of wind. We're worse than flies—at least flies have got some strength in them, but we're no more than empty bubbles.

"And what would he have been like if he hadn't been on a diet? For five days he didn't take a drop of water or a crumb of bread into his mouth. But he's gone to join the majority. The doctors finished him—well, hard luck, more like. After all, a doctor is just to put your mind at rest. Still, he got a good sendoff—he had a bier and all beautifully draped. His mourners—several of his slaves were left their freedom—did him proud, even though his widow was a bit mean with her tears. Suppose now he hadn't been so good to her! But women as a sex are real vultures. It's no good doing them a favour, you might as well throw it down a well. An old passion is just an ulcer."

He was being a bore and Phileros said loudly:

"Let's think of the living. He's got what he deserved. He lived an honest life and he died an honest death. What has he got to complain about? He started out in life with just a penny and he was ready to pick up less than that from a muck-heap, if he had to use his teeth. He went up in the world. He got bigger and bigger till he got where you see, like a honeycomb. I honestly think he left a solid hundred thousand and he had the lot in hard cash. But I'll be honest about it—seeing I'm a bit of a cynic—he had a foul mouth and too much lip. He wasn't a man, he was just murder.

"Now his brother was a fine man, a real friend to his friends, always ready with a helping hand or a decent meal.

"Chrysanthus had bad luck at first, but the first vintage set him on his feet. He fixed his own price when he sold the wine. And what properly kept his head above water was a legacy he came in for, when he pocketed more than was left to him. And the blockhead, when he had a quarrel with his brother, cut him out of his will in favour of some sod we've never heard of. You're leaving a lot behind when you leave your own flesh and blood. But he took advice from his slaves and they really fixed him. It's never right to believe all you're told, especially for a business man. But it's true he enjoyed himself while he lived. You got it, you keep it. He was certainly Fortune's favourite—lead turned to gold in his hand. Mind you, it's easy when everything runs smoothly.

"And how old do you think he was? Seventy or more! But he was hard as nails and carried his age well. His hair was black as a raven's

wing. I knew the man for ages and ages and he was still an old lecher. I honestly don't think he left the dog alone. What's more, he liked little boys—he could turn his hand to anything. Well, I don't blame him—after all, he couldn't take anything else with him."

This was Phileros, then Ganymedes said:

"You're all talking about things that don't concern heaven or earth. Meanwhile, no one gives a damn the way we're hit by the corn situation. Honest to God, I couldn't get hold of a mouthful of bread today. And look how there's still no rain. It's been absolute starvation for a whole year now. To hell with the food officers! They're in with the bakers—'You be nice to me and I'll be nice to you.' So the little man suffers, while those grinders of the poor never stop celebrating. Oh, if only we still had the sort of men I found here when I first arrived from Asia. Like lions they were. That was the life! Come one, come all! If white flour was inferior to the very finest, they'd thrash those bogeymen till they thought God Almighty was after them.

"I remember Safinius—he used to live by the old arch then; I was a boy at the time. He wasn't a man, he was all pepper. He used to scorch the ground wherever he went. But he was dead straight—don't let him down and he wouldn't let you down. You'd be ready to play *morra*[5] with him in the dark. But on the city council, how he used to wade into some of them—no beating about the bush, straight from the shoulder! And when he was in court, his voice got louder and louder like a trumpet. He never sweated or spat—I think there was a touch of the old acid about him. And very affable he was when you met him, calling everyone by name just like one of us. Naturally at the time corn was dirt cheap. You could buy a penny loaf that two of you couldn't get through. Today—I've seen bigger bull's-eyes.

"Ah me! It's getting worse every day. This place is going down like a calf's tail. But why do we have a third-rate food officer who wouldn't lose a penny to save our lives? He sits at home laughing and rakes in more money a day than anyone else's whole fortune. I happen to know he's just made a thousand in gold. But if we had any balls at all, he wouldn't be feeling so pleased with himself. People today are lions at home and foxes outside.

"Take me, I've already sold the rags off my back for food and if this shortage continues, I'll be selling my bit of a house. What's going to happen to this place if neither god nor man will help us? As I hope to go home tonight, I'm sure all this is heaven's doing.

"Nobody believes in heaven, see, nobody fasts, nobody gives a damn for the Almighty. No, people only bow their heads to count their money. In the old days high-class ladies used to climb up the

5. A game (still played in southern Italy) which requires the players to match the number of fingers held out by the opponent.

hill barefoot, their hair loose and their hearts pure, and ask God for rain. And he'd send it down in bucketfuls right away—it was then or never—and everyone went home like drowned rats. Since we've given up religion the gods nowadays keep their feet well wrapped up. The fields just lie . . ."

"Please, please," broke in Echion the rag merchant, "be a bit more cheerful. 'First it's one thing, then another,' as the yokel said when he lost his spotted pig. What we haven't got today, we'll have tomorrow. That's the way life goes. Believe me, you couldn't name a better country, if it had the people. As things are, I admit, it's having a hard time, but it isn't the only place. We mustn't be soft. The sky don't get no nearer wherever you are. If you were somewhere else, you'd be talking about the pigs walking round ready roasted back here.

"And another thing, we'll be having a holiday with a three-day show that's the best ever—and not just a hack troupe of gladiators but freedmen for the most part. My old friend Titus has a big heart and a hot head. Maybe this, maybe that, but something at all events. I'm a close friend of his and he does nothing by halves. He'll give us cold steel, no quarter and the slaughterhouse right in the middle where all the stands can see it. And he's got the wherewithal—he was left thirty million when his poor father died. Even if he spent four hundred thousand, his pocket won't feel it and he'll go down in history. He's got some big brutes already, and a woman who fights in a chariot and Glyco's steward,[6] who was caught having fun with his mistress. You'll see quite a quarrel in the crowd between jealous husbands and romantic lovers. But that half-pint Glyco threw his steward to the lions, which is just giving himself away. How is it the servant's fault when he's forced into it? It's that old pisspot who really deserves to be tossed by a bull. But if you can't beat the ass you beat the saddle. But how did Glyco imagine the poisonous daughter of Hermogenes[7] would ever turn out well? The old man could cut the claws off a flying kite, and a snake don't hatch old rope. Glyco—well, Glyco's got his. He's branded for as long as he lives and only the grave will get rid ot it. But everyone pays for their mistakes.

"But I can almost smell the dinner Mammaea is going to give us[8]—two denarii apiece for me and the family. If he really does it, he'll make off with all Norbanus's votes, I tell you he'll win at a canter. After all, what good has Nobanus done us? He put on some half-pint gladiators, so done in already that they'd have dropped if you blew at them. I've seen animal-killers[9] fight better. As for the

6. A household slave. His master was permitted by law to punish him by forcing him to fight wild beasts in the arena. 7. Presumably the father of Glyco's wife. 8. A public banquet, given by Mammaea as part of his electoral compaign. His rival Norbanus has been giving gladiatorial shows. 9. Professional fighters of wild animals, considered inferior to gladiators.

horsemen killed, he got them off a lamp[1]—they ran round like cocks in a backyard. One was just a carthorse, the other couldn't stand up, and the reserve was just one corpse instead of another—he was practically hamstrung. One boy did have a bit of spirit—he was in Thracian armour,[2] and even he didn't show any initiative. In fact, they were all flogged afterwards, there were so many shouts of 'Give 'em what for!' from the crowd. Pure yellow, that's all. " 'Well, I've put on a show for you,' he says. 'And I'm clapping you,' says I. 'Reckon it up—I'm giving more than I got. So we're quits.'

"Hey, Agamemnon! I suppose you're saying 'What is that bore going on and on about?' It's because a good talker like you don't talk. You're a cut above us, and so you laugh at what us poor people say. We all know you're off your head with all that reading. But never mind! Some day I'll get you to come down to my place in the country and have a look at our little cottage. We'll find something to eat—a chicken, some eggs. It'll be nice, even though the unreliable weather this year has made off with everything. Anyway, we'll find enough to fill our bellies.

"And my kid is growing up to be a pupil of yours. He can divide by four already. If God spares him, you'll have him ready to do anything for you. In his spare time, he won't take his head out of his exercise book. He's clever and there's good stuff in him, even if he is crazy about birds. Only yesterday I killed his three goldfinches and told him a weasel ate them. But he's found some other silly hobbies, and he's having a fine time painting. Still, he's already well ahead with his Greek, and he's starting to take to his Latin, though his tutor is too pleased with himself and unreliable—he just comes and goes. He knows his stuff but doesn't want to work. There is another one as well, not so clever but he is conscientious—he teaches the boy more than he knows himself. In fact, he makes a habit of coming around on holidays, and whatever you give him, he's happy.

"Anyway, I've just bought the boy some law books, as I want him to pick up some legal training for home use. There's a living in that sort of thing. He's done enough dabbling in poetry and such like. If he objects, I've decided he'll learn a trade—barber, auctioneer, or at least a barrister—something he can't lose till he dies. Well, yesterday I gave it to him straight: 'Believe me, my lad, any studying you do will be for your own good. You see Phileros the solicitor—if he hadn't studied, he'd be starving today. It's not so long since he was humping round loads on his back. Now he can even look Norbanus in the face. An education is an investment, and a proper profession never goes dead on you.' "

This was the sort of conversation flying round when Trimalchio

1. They were as small as the horsemen depicted on a lamp. 2. Light armor, such as that worn by soldiers from Thrace, a savage country northeast of Greece.

came in, dabbed his forehead and washed his hands in perfume. There was a short pause, then he said:

"Excuse me, dear people, my inside has not been answering the call for several days now. The doctors are puzzled. But some pomegranate rind and resin in vinegar has done me good. But I hope now it will be back on its good behaviour. Otherwise my stomach rumbles like a bull. So if any of you wants to go out, there's no need for him to be embarrassed. None of us was born solid. I think there's nothing so tormenting as holding yourself in. This is the one thing even God Almighty can't object to. Yes, laugh, Fortunata,[3] but you generally keep me up all night with this sort of thing.

"Anyway, I don't object to people doing what suits them even in the middle of dinner—and the doctors forbid you to hold yourself in. Even if it's a longer business, everything is there just outside—water, bowls, and all the other little comforts. Believe me, if the wind goes to your brain it starts flooding your whole body too. I've known a lot of people die from this because they wouldn't be honest with themselves."

We thanked him for being so generous and considerate and promptly proceeded to bury our amusement in our glasses. Up to this point we'd not realized we were only in mid-stream, as you might say.

The orchestra played, the tables were cleared, and then three white pigs were brought into the dining-room, all decked out in muzzles and bells. The first, the master of ceremonies announced, was two years old, the second three, and the third six. I was under the impression that some acrobats were on their way in and the pigs were going to do some tricks, the way they do in street shows. But Trimalchio dispelled this impression by asking:

"Which of these would you like for the next course? Any clodhopper can do you a barnyard cock or a stew and trifles like that, but my cooks are used to boiling whole calves."

He immediately sent for the chef and without waiting for us to choose he told him to kill the oldest pig.

He then said to the man in a loud voice:

"Which division are you from?"

When he replied he was from number forty, Trimalchio asked:

"Were you bought or were you born here?"

"Neither," said the chef, "I was left to you in Pansa's will."

"Well, then," said Trimalchio, "see you serve it up carefully—otherwise I'll have you thrown into the messenger's division."

So the chef, duly reminded of his master's magnificence, went back to his kitchen, the next course leading the way.

Trimalchio looked around at us with a gentle smile: "If you don't

3. Trimalchio's wife.

like the wine, I'll have it changed. It is up to you to do it justice. I don't buy it, thank heaven. In fact, whatever wine really tickles your palate this evening, it comes from an estate of mine which as yet I haven't seen. It's said to join my estates at Tarracina and Tarentum. What I'd like to do now is add Sicily to my little bit of land, so that when I want to go to Africa, I could sail there without leaving my own property.

"But tell me, Agamemnon, what was your debate about today? Even though I don't go in for the law, still I've picked up enough education for home consumption. And don't you think I turn my nose up at studying, because I have two libraries, one Greek, one Latin. So tell us, just as a favour, what was the topic of your debate?"

Agamemnon was just beginning, "A poor man and a rich man were enemies . . ." when Trimalchio said: "What's a poor man?" "Oh, witty!" said Agamemnon, and then told us about some fictitious case or other. Like lightning Trimalchio said: "If this happened, it's not a fictitious case—if it didn't happen, then it's nothing at all."

We greeted this witticism and several more like it with the greatest enthusiasm.

"Tell me, my dear Agamemnon," continued Trimalchio, "do you remember the twelve labours of Hercules and the story of Ulysses—how the Cyclops tore out his thumb with a pair of pincers.[4] I used to read about them in Homer, when I was a boy. In fact, I actually saw the Sibyl at Cumae with my own eyes dangling in a bottle, and when the children asked her in Greek: 'What do you want, Sybil?' she used to answer: 'I want to die.' "

[Presents for the guests are distributed with a slave announcing the nature of each gift and making in each case an atrocious pun on the name of the guest.]

We laughed for ages. There were hundreds of things like this but they've slipped my mind now.

Ascyltus, with his usual lack of restraint, found everything extremely funny, lifting up his hands and laughing till the tears came. Eventually one of Trimalchio's freedman[5] friends flared up at him—the one sitting above me, in fact.

"You with the sheep's eyes," he said, "what's so funny? Isn't our host elegant enough for you? You're better off, I suppose, and used to a bigger dinner. Holy guardian here preserve me! If I was sitting by him, I'd make him bleat! A fine pippin he is to be laughing at other people! Some fly-by-night from god knows where—not worth

4. Trimalchio refers to Odysseus' adventures in the cave of the Cyclops (*Odyssey*, Book IX). In spite of what he goes on to say, he has obviously not read Homer. 5. A former slave who had bought his freedom.

his own piss. In fact, if I pissed round him, he wouldn't know where to turn.

"By god, it takes a lot to make me boil, but if you're too soft, worms like this only come to the top. Look at him laughing! What's he got to laugh at? Did his father pay cash for him? You're a Roman knight,[6] are you? Well, my father was a king.

" '*Why are you only a freedman?*' did you say? Because I went into service voluntarily. I wanted to be a Roman citizen, not a subject with taxes to pay. And today, I hope no one can laugh at the way I live. I'm a man among men, and I walk with my head up. I don't owe anybody a penny—there's never been a court-order out for me. No one's said '*Pay up!*' to me in the street.

"I've bought a bit of land and some tiny pieces of plate. I've twenty bellies to feed, as well as a dog. I bought my old woman's freedom so nobody could wipe his dirty hands on *her* hair. Four thousand I paid for myself. I was elected to the Augustan College[7] and it cost me nothing. I hope when I die I won't have to blush in my coffin.

"But you now, you're such a busybody you don't look behind you. You see a louse on somebody else, but not the fleas on your own back. You're the only one who finds us funny. Look at the professor now—he's an older man than you and we get along with him. But you're still wet from your mother's milk and not up to your ABC yet. Just a crackpot—you're like a piece of wash-leather in soak, softer but no better! You're grander than us—well, have two dinners and two suppers! I'd rather have my good name than any amount of money. When all's said and done, who's ever asked me for money twice? For forty years I slaved but nobody ever knew if I was a slave or a free man. I came to this colony when I was a lad with long hair—the town-hall hadn't been built then. But I worked hard to please my master—there was a real gentleman, with more in his little finger-nail than there is in your whole body. And I had people in the house who tried to trip me up one way or another, but still—thanks be to his guardian spirit!—I kept my head above water. That's real success: being born free is as easy as all get-out. Now what are you gawping at, like a goat in a vetch field?"

At this remark, Giton, who was waiting on me, could not suppress his laughter and let out a filthy guffaw, which did not pass unnoticed by Ascyltus's opponent. He turned his abuse on the boy.

"So!" he said, "you're amused too, are you, you curly-headed onion? A merry Saturnalia[8] to you! Is it December, I'd like to know? When did *you* pay your liberation tax?[9] Look, he doesn't know what

6. A Roman class including all who had property above a certain amount. 7. The state religion was the worship of Augustus, the emperor. The office of priest might be sold or conferred. 8. A December festival in honor of an ancient Italian deity at which the normal order of everyday life was reversed and the slaves and children made fun of their masters. 9. The freed slave had to pay 5 per cent of his value to the treasury.

to do, the gallow's bird, the crow's meat.

"God's curse on you, and your master too, for not keeping you under control! As sure as I get my bellyful, it's only because of Trimalchio that I don't take it out of you here and now. He's a freedman like myself. We're doing all right, but those good-for-nothings, well—. It's easy to see, like master, like man. I can hardly hold myself back, and I'm not naturally hot-headed—but once I start, I don't give a penny for my own mother.

"All right! I'll see you when we get outside, you rat, you excrescence. I'll knock your master in the dirt before I'm an inch taller or shorter. And I won't let you off either, by heaven, even if you scream down God Almighty. Your cheap curls and your no-good master won't be much use to you then—I'll see to that. I'll get my teeth into you, all right. Either I'm much mistaken about myself or you won't be laughing at us behind your golden beard. Athena's curse on you and the man who first made you such a forward brat.

"I didn't learn no geometry or criticism and such silly rubbish, but I can read the letters on a notice board and I can do my percentages in metal, weights, and money. In fact, if you like, we'll have a bet. Come on, here's my cash. Now you'll see how your father wasted his money, even though you do know how to make a speech.

"Try this:

> Something we all have.
> Long I come, broad I come. What am I?

"I'll give you it: something we all have that runs and doesn't move from its place: something we all have that grows and gets smaller.[1]

"You're running round in circles, you've had enough, like the mouse in the pisspot. So either keep quiet or keep out of the way of your betters, they don't even know you're alive—unless you think I care about your box-wood rings that you swiped from your girl friend! Lord make me lucky! Let's go into town and borrow some money. You'll soon see they trust this iron one.

"Pah! a drownded fox makes a nice sight, I must say. As I hope to make my pile and die so famous that people swear by my dead body, I'll hound you to death. And he's a nice thing too—the one who taught you all these tricks—a muttonhead, not a master. We learned different. Our teacher used to say: 'Are your things in order? Go straight home. No looking around. And be polite to your elders.' Nowadays it's all an absolute muck-heap. They turn out nobody worth a penny. I'm like you see me and I thank God for the way I was learnt." . . .

1. There is no agreement about the correct answer to these riddles. Suggested answers are, to the first, the foot; the second, the eye; the third, the hair.

In the middle of all this, a lictor[2] knocked at the double doors and a drunken guest entered wearing white, followed by a large crowd of people. I was terrified by this lordly apparition and thought it was the chief magistrate arriving. So I tried to rise and get my bare feet on the floor. Agamemnon laughed at this panic and said:

"Get hold of yourself, you silly fool. This is Habinnas—Augustan College and monumental mason."

Relieved by this information I resumed my position and watched Habinnas' entry with huge admiration. Being already drunk, he had his hands on his wife's shoulders; loaded with several garlands, oil pouring down his forehead and into his eyes, he settled himself into the place of honour and immediately demanded some wine and hot water. Trimalchio, delighted by these high spirits, demanded a larger cup for himself and asked how he had enjoyed it all.

"The only thing we missed," replied Habinnas, "was yourself—the apple of my eye was here. Still, it was damn good. Scissa was giving a ninth-day dinner[3] in honour of a poor slave of hers she'd freed on his death-bed. And I think she'll have a pretty penny to pay in liberation tax because they reckon he was worth fifty thousand. Still, it was pleasant enough, even if we did have to pour half our drinks over his wretched bones."

"Well," said Trimalchio, "what did you have for dinner?"

"I'll tell you if I can—I've such a good memory that I often forget my own name. For the first course we had a pig crowned with sausages and served with blood-puddings and very nicely done giblets, and of course beetroot and pure wholemeal bread—which I prefer to white myself: it's very strengthening and I don't regret it when I do my business. The next course was cold tart and a concoction of first-class Spanish wine poured over hot honey. I didn't eat anything at all of the actual tart, but I dived right into the honey. Scattered round were chickpeas, lupines, a choice of nuts and an apple apiece—though I took two. And look, I've got them tied up in a napkin, because if I don't take something in the way of a present to my youngster, I'll have a row on my hands.

"Oh, yes, my good lady reminds me. We had a hunk of bearmeat set before us, which Scintilla was foolish enough to try, and she practically spewed up her guts; but I ate more than a pound of it, as it tasted like real wild-boar. And I say if bears can eat us poor people, it's all the more reason why us poor people should eat bears.

"To finish up with, we had some cheese basted with new wine, snails all round, chitterlings, plates of liver, eggs in pastry hoods, turnips, mustard, and some filthy concoction—good riddance to that. There were pickled cumin seeds too, passed round in a bowl and

2. A magistrate's attendant. 3. On the last day of the mourning period.

some people were that bad-mannered they took three handfuls. You see, we sent the ham away.

"But tell me something, Gaius, now I ask—why isn't Fortunata at the table?"

"You know her," replied Trimalchio, "unless she's put the silver away and shared out the left-overs among the slaves, she won't put a drop of water to her mouth."

"All the same," retorted Habinnas, "unless she sits down, I'm shagging off."

And he was starting to get up, when at a given signal all the servants shouted "*Fortunata*" four or five times. So in she came with her skirt tucked up under a yellow sash to show her cerise petticoat underneath, as well as her twisted anklets and gold-embroidered slippers. Wiping her hands on a handkerchief which she carried round her neck, she took her place on the couch where Habbinas' wife was reclining. She kissed her. "Is it really you?" she said, clapping her hands together.

It soon got to the point where Fortunata took the bracelets from her great fat arms and showed them to the admiring Scintilla. In the end she even undid her anklets and her gold hair net, which she said was pure gold. Trimalchio noticed this and had it all brought to him and commented:

"A woman's chains, you see. This is the way us poor fools get robbed. She must have six and a half pounds on her. Still, I've got a bracelet myself, made up from one-tenth per cent to Mercury[4]—and it weighs not an ounce less than ten pounds."

Finally, for fear he looked like a liar, he even had some scales brought in and had them passed round to test the weight.

Scintilla was no better. From round her neck she took a little gold locket, which she called her "lucky box." From it she extracted two earrings and in her turn gave them to Fortunata to look at.

"A present from my good husband," she said, "and no one has a finer set."

"Hey!" said Habinnas, "you cleaned me out to buy you a glass bean. Honestly, if I had a daughter, I'd cut her little ears off. If there weren't any women, everything would be dirt cheap. As it is, we've got to drink cold water and piss it out hot."

Meanwhile, the women giggled tipsily between themselves and kissed each other drunkenly, one crying up her merits as a housewife, the other crying about her husband's demerits and boy friends. While they had their heads together like this, Habinnas rose stealthily and taking Fortunata's feet, flung them up over the couch.

"Oh, oh!" she shrieked, as her underskirt wandered up over her

4. Trimalchio sets aside a percentage of his profits to offer to his patron deity.

knees. So she settled herself in Scintilla's lap and hid her disgusting red face in her handkerchief.

Then came an interval, after which Trimalchio called for dessert. . . .

Fortunata was now wanting to dance, and Scintilla was doing more clapping than talking, when Trimalchio said:

"Philargyrus—even though you are such a terrible fan of the Greens[5]—you have my permission to join us. And tell your dear Menophila to sit down as well."

Need I say more? We were almost thrown out of our places, so completely did the household fill the dining-room. I even noticed that the chef was actually given a place above me, and he was reeking of pickles and sauce. And he wasn't satisfied with just having a place, but he had to start straight off on an imitation of the tragedian Ephesus, and then challenge his master to bet against the Greens winning at the next races.

Trimalchio became expansive after this argument.

"My dear people," he said, "slaves are human beings too. They drink the same milk as anybody else, even though luck's been agin 'em. Still, if nothing happens to me, they'll have their taste of freedom soon. In fact, I'm setting them all free in my will. I'm giving Philargyrus a farm, what's more, and the woman he lives with. As for Cario, I'm leaving him a block of flats, his five per cent manumission tax, and a bed with all the trimmings. I'm making Fortunata my heir, and I want all my friends to look after her.

"The reason I'm telling everyone all this is so my household will love me now as much as if I was dead."

Everyone began thanking his lordship for his kindness, when he became very serious and had a copy of his will brought in. Amid the sobs of his household he read out the whole thing from beginning to end.

Then looking at Habinnas, he said:

"What have you to say, my dear old friend? Are you building my monument the way I told you? I particularly want you to keep a place at the foot of my statue and put a picture of my pup there, as well as paintings of wreaths, scent-bottles, and all the contests of Petraites,[6] and thanks to you I'll be able to live on after I'm dead. And another thing! See that it's a hundred feet facing the road and two hundred back into the field. I want all the various sorts of fruit round my ashes and lots and lots of vines. After all, it's a big mistake to have nice houses just for when you're alive and not worry about the one we have to live in for much longer. And that's why I want this written up before anything else:

5. One of the teams in the chariot races. 6. A popular gladiator.

THIS MONUMENT DOES NOT GO TO THE HEIR

"But I'll make sure in my will that I don't get done down once I'm dead. I'll put one of my freedmen in charge of my tomb to look after it and not let people run up and shit on my monument. I'd like you to put some ships there too, sailing under full canvas, and me sitting on a high platform in my robes of office, wearing five gold rings and pouring out a bagful of money for the people. You know I gave them all a dinner and two denarii apiece. Let's have in a banqueting hall as well, if you think it's a good idea, and show the whole town having a good time. Put up a statue of Fortunata on my right, holding a dove, and have her leading her little dog tied to her belt—and this dear little chap as well, and great big wine jars sealed up so the wine won't spill. And perhaps you could carve me a broken wine jar and boy crying over it. A clock in the middle, so that anybody who looks at the time, like it or not, has got to read my name. As for the inscription now, take a good look and see if this seems suitable enough:

HERE SLEEPS
GAIUS POMPEIUS TRIMALCHIO
MAECENATIANUS
ELECTED TO THE AUGUSTAN COLLEGE IN HIS ABSENCE
HE COULD HAVE BEEN ON EVERY BOARD IN ROME
BUT HE REFUSED
GOD-FEARING BRAVE AND TRUE
A SELF-MADE MAN
HE LEFT AN ESTATE OF 30,000,000
AND HE NEVER HEARD A PHILOSOPHER
FAREWELL
AND YOU FARE WELL, TRIMALCHIO."

[After a visit to the baths, where Encolpius and his friends made an unsuccessful attempt to escape, the dinner is resumed.]

After this dish Trimalchio looked at the servants and said:

"Why haven't you had dinner yet? Off you go and let some others come on duty."

Up came another squad and as the first set called out: "Good night, Gaius!" the new arrivals shouted: "Good evening, Gaius!"

This led to the first incident that damped the general high spirits. Not a bad-looking boy entered with the newcomers and Trimalchio jumped at him and began kissing him at some length. Fortunata, asserting her just and legal rights, began hurling insults at Trimalchio, calling him a low scum and a disgrace, who couldn't control his beastly desires. "You dirty dog!" she finally added.

Trimalchio took offence at this abuse and flung his glass into For-

tunata's face. She screamed as though she'd lost an eye and put her trembling hands across her face. Scintilla was terrified too and hugged the quaking woman to her breast. An obliging slave pressed a little jug of cold water to her cheek, while Fortunata rested her head on it and began weeping. Trimalchio just said:

"Well, well, forgotten her chorus days, has she? She doesn't remember, but she was bought and sold, and I took her away from it all and made her as good as the next. Yet she puffs herself up like a frog and doesn't even spit for luck. Just a great hunk, not a woman. But those as are born over a shop don't dream of a house. May I never have a day's good luck again, if I don't teach that Cassandra in clogs some manners!

"There was I, not worth twopence, and I could have had ten million. And you know I'm not lying about it. Agatho, who ran a perfume shop for the lady next door, he took me on one side and said: 'You don't want to let your family die out, you know!' But me, trying to do the right thing and not wanting to look changeable, I cut my own throat.

"All right! I'll make you want to dig me up with your bare nails. Just so you'll know on the spot what you've done for yourself—Habinnas! I don't want you to put her statue on my tomb, so at least when I'm dead I won't have any more squabbles. And another thing! just to show I can get my own back—when I'm dead I don't want her to kiss me."

After this thunderbolt, Habinnas began asking him to calm down: "None of us are without faults," he said, "we're not gods, we're human!" Scintilla said the same, calling him Gaius, and she began asking him, in the name of his guardian spirit, to give in.

Trimalchio held back his tears no longer. "I ask you, Habinnas," he said, "as you hope to enjoy your bit of savings—if I did anything wrong, spit in my face. I kissed this very careful little fellow, not for his pretty face, but because he's careful with money—he says his ten times table, he reads a book at sight, he's got himself some Thracian kit out of his daily allowance, and he's bought himself an easy chair and two cups out of his own pocket. Doesn't he deserve to be the apple of my eye? But Fortunata won't have it.

"Is that the way you feel, high heels? I'll give you a piece of advice: don't let your good luck turn your head, you kite, and don't make me show my teeth, my little darling—otherwise you'll feel my temper. You know me: once I've decided on something, it's fixed with a twelve-inch nail.

"But to come back to earth—I want you to enjoy yourselves, my dear people. After all, I was once like you are, but being the right sort, I got where I am. It's the old headpiece that makes a man, the

rest is all rubbish. 'Buy right—sell right!'—that's me! Different people will give you a different line. I'm just on top of the world, I'm that lucky.

"But you, you snoring thing, are you still moaning? I'll give you something to moan about in a minute.

"However, as I'd started to say, it was my shrewd way with money that got me to my present position. I came from Asia as big as this candlestick. In fact, every day I used to measure myself against it, and to get some whiskers round my beak quicker, I used to oil my lips from the lamp. Still, for fourteen years I was the old boy's fancy. And there's nothing wrong if the boss wants it. But I did all right by the old girl too. You know what I mean—I don't say anything because I'm not the boasting sort.

"Well, as heaven will have it, I became boss in the house, and the old boy, you see, couldn't think of anything but me. That's about it—he made me co-heir with the Emperor[7] and I got a senator's fortune. But nobody gets enough, never. I wanted to go into business. Not to make a long story of it, I built five ships, I loaded them with wine—it was absolute gold at the time—and I sent them to Rome. You'd have thought I ordered it—every single ship was wrecked. That's fact, not fable! In one single day Neptune swallowed up thirty million. Do you think I gave up? This loss honestly wasn't more than a flea-bite to me—it was as if nothing had happened. I built more boats, bigger and better and luckier, so nobody could say I wasn't a man of courage. You know, the greater the ship, the greater the confidence. I loaded them again—with wine, bacon, beans, perfumes and slaves. At this point Fortunata did the decent thing, because she sold off all her gold trinkets, all her clothes, and put ten thousand in gold pieces in my hand. This was the yeast my fortune needed to rise. What heaven wants, soon happens. In one voyage I carved out a round ten million. I immediately bought back all my old master's estates. I built a house, I invested in slaves, and I bought up the horse trade. Whatever I touched grew like a honeycomb. Once I had more than the whole country, then down tools! I retired from business and began advancing loans through freedmen.

"Actually I was tired of trading on my own account, but it was an astrologer who convinced me. He happened to come to our colony, a sort of Greek, Serapa by name, and he could have told heaven itself what to do. He even told me things I'd forgotten. He went through everything for me from A to Z. He knew me inside out—the only thing he didn't tell me was what I ate for dinner the day before. You'd have thought he'd never left my side.

7. An honor which Trimalchio shared with many others, for it was customary (as a prudent measure, to avoid confiscation on some pretext or other) to include a bequest to the emperor in one's will.

"Wasn't there that thing, Habinnas?—I think you were there: 'You got your lady wife out of those *certain circumstances*. You are not lucky in your friends. Nobody thanks you enough for your trouble. You have large estates. You are nursing a viper in your bosom.'

"And he said—though I shouldn't tell you—I have thirty years, four months, two days to live. What's more, I shall soon receive a legacy. My horoscope tells me this. If I'm allowed to join my estates to Apulia,[8] I'll have lived enough.

"Meantime, under the protection of Mercury, I built this house. As you know, it was still a shack, now it's a shrine. It has four dining-rooms, twenty bedrooms, two marble colonnades, a row of box-rooms up above, a bedroom where I sleep myself, a nest for this viper, and a really good lodge for the porter. The guest apartment takes a hundred guests. In fact, when Scaurus[9] came here, he didn't want to stay anywhere else, even though he's got his father's guest house down by the sea. And there are a lot of other things I'll show you in a second.

"Believe me: have a penny, and you're worth a penny. You got something, you'll be thought something. Like your old friend—first a frog, now a king.

"Meantime, Stichus, bring out the shroud and the things I want to be buried in. Bring some cosmetic cream too, and a sample from that jar of wine I want my bones washed in."

Stichus did not delay over it, but brought his white shroud and his formal dress into the dining-room . . . Trimalchio told us to examine them and see if they were made of good wool. Then he said with a smile:

"Now you, Stichus, see no mice or moths get at those—otherwise I'll burn you alive. I want to be buried in style, so the whole town will pray for my rest."

He opened a bottle of nard on the spot, rubbed some on all of us and said:

"I hope this'll be as nice when I'm dead as when I'm alive." The wine he had poured into a big decanter and he said:

"I want you to think you've been invited to my wake."

The thing was becoming absolutely sickening, when Trimalchio, showing the effects of his disgusting drunkenness, had a fresh entertainment brought into the dining-room, some cornet players. Propped up on a lot of cushions, he stretched out along the edge of the couch and said: "Pretend I'm dead and say something nice."

The cornet players struck up a dead march. One man in particular, the slave of his undertaker (who was the most respectable person

8. The southeastern extremity of Italy. 9. Unknown. The name is aristocratic but our translator suggests Trimalchio may be referring to a well-known manufacturer of fish sauce from Pompeii.

present) blew so loudly that he roused the neighbourhood. As a result, the fire brigade, thinking Trimalchio's house was on fire, suddenly broke down the front door and began kicking up their own sort of din with their water and axes.

Seizing this perfect chance, we gave Agamemnon the slip and escaped as rapidly as if there really were a fire.

ST. AUGUSTINE

A.D. 354–430

Aurelius Augustinus was born in 354 A.D. at Tagaste, in North Africa. He was baptized as a Christian in 387 A.D. and ordained bishop of Hippo, in North Africa, in 395 A.D. When he died there in 430 A.D., the city was besieged by Gothic invaders. Besides the *Confessions* (begun in 397 A.D.) he wrote *The City of God* (finished in 426 A.D.) and many polemical works against schismatics and heretics.

He was born into a world which no longer enjoyed the "Roman peace." Invading barbarians had pierced the empire's defenses and were increasing their pressure every year. The economic basis of the empire was cracking under the strain of the enormous taxation needed to support the army; the land was exhausted. The empire was Christian, but the Church was split, beset by heresies and organized heretical sects. The empire was about to go down to destruction, and there was every prospect that the Church would go down with it.

Augustine, one of the men responsible for the consolidation of the Church in the West, especially for the systematization of its doctrine and policy, was not converted to Christianity until he had reached middle life. "Late have I loved Thee, O Beauty so ancient and so new," he says in his *Confessions*, written long after his conversion. The lateness of his conversion and his regret for his wasted youth were among the sources of the energy which drove him to assume the intellectual leadership of the Western Church and to guarantee, by combating heresy on the one hand and laying new ideological foundations for Christianity on the other, the Church's survival through the dark centuries to come. Augustine had been brought up in the literary and philosophical tradition of the classical world, and it is partly because of his assimilation of classical literature and method to Christian training and teaching that the literature of the ancient world survived at all when Roman power collapsed in a welter of bloodshed and destruction which lasted for generations.

In his *Confessions* he set down, for the benefit of others, the story of his early life and his conversion to Christianity. This is, as far as we know, the first authentic ancient autobiography, and that fact itself is a significant expression of the Christian spirit, which proclaims the value of the individual soul and the importance of its relation with God. Throughout the *Confessions* Augustine talks directly to God, in humility, yet conscious that

God is concerned for him personally. At the same time he comes to an understanding of his own feelings and development as a human being which marks his *Confessions* as one of the great literary documents of the Western world. His description of his childhood is the only detailed account of the childhood of a great man which antiquity has left us, and his accurate observation and keen perception are informed by the Hebrew and Christian idea of the sense of sin. "So small a boy and so great a sinner"—from the beginning of his narrative to the end Augustine sees man not as the Greek at his most optimistic tended to see him, the center and potential master of the universe, but as a child, wandering in ignorance, capable of reclamation only through the divine mercy which waits eternally for him to turn to it.

In Augustine are combined the intellectual tradition of the ancient world at its best and the religious feeling which was characteristic of the Middle Ages. The transition from the old world to the new can be seen in his pages; his analytical intellect pursues its Odyssey through strange and scattered islands—the mysticism of the Manichees, the skepticism of the Academic philosophers, the fatalism of the astrologers—until he finds his home in the Church, to which he was to render such great service. His account of his conversion in the garden at Milan records the true moment of transition from the ancient to the medieval world. The innumerable defeats and victories, the burning towns and ravaged farms, the bloodshed, dates, and statistics of the end of an era are all illuminated and ordered by this moment in the history of the human spirit. Here is the point of change itself.

For criticism and biography, see P. Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (1967), an authoritative and engrossing account of his whole career.

Confessions[1]

[Childhood]

Book I

What have I to say to Thee, God, save that I know not where I came from, when I came into this life-in-death—or should I call it death-in-life? I do not know. I only know that the gifts Your mercy had provided sustained me from the first moment: not that I remember it but so I have heard from the parents of my flesh, the father from whom, and the mother in whom, You fashioned me in time.

Thus for my sustenance and my delight I had woman's milk: yet it was not my mother or my nurses who stored their breasts for me: it was Yourself, using them to give me the food of my infancy, according to Your ordinance and the riches set by You at every level of creation. It was by Your gift that I desired what You gave and no more, by Your gift that those who suckled me willed to give me what You had given them: for it was by the love implanted in them by

1. Abridged. Translated by F. J. Sheed.

You that they gave so willingly that milk which by Your gift flowed in the breasts. It was a good for them that I received good from them, though I received it not *from* them but only through them: since all good things are from You, O God, and *from God is all my health.*[2] But this I have learnt since: You have made it abundantly clear by all that I have seen You give, within me and about me. For at that time I knew how to suck, to lie quiet when I was content, to cry when I was in pain: and that was all I knew.

Later I added smiling to the things I could do, first in sleep, then awake. This again I have on the word of others, for naturally I do not remember; in any event, I believe it, for I have seen other infants do the same. And gradually I began to notice where I was, and the will grew in me to make my wants known to those who might satisfy them; but I could not, for my wants were within me and those others were outside: nor had they any faculty enabling them to enter into my mind. So I would fling my arms and legs about and utter sounds, making the few gestures in my power—these being as apt to express my wishes as I could make them: but they were not very apt. And when I did not get what I wanted, either because my wishes were not clear or the things not good for me, I was in a rage—with my parents as though I had a right to their submission, with free human beings as though they had been bound to serve me; and I took my revenge in screams. That infants are like this, I have learnt from watching other infants; and that I was like it myself I have learnt more clearly from these other infants, who did not know me, than from my nurses who did.

* * *

From infancy I came to boyhood, or rather it came to me, taking the place of infancy. Yet infancy did not go: for where was it to go to? Simply it was no longer there. For now I was not an infant, without speech, but a boy, speaking. This I remember; and I have since discovered by observation how I learned to speak. I did not learn by elders teaching me words in any systematic way, as I was soon after taught to read and write. But of my own motion, using the mind which You, my God, gave me, I strove with cries and various sounds and much moving of my limbs to utter the feelings of my heart—all this in order to get my own way. Now I did not always manage to express the right meanings to the right people. So I began to reflect [I observed that] my elders would make some particular sound, and as they made it would point at or move towards some particular thing: and from this I came to realize that the thing

2. Throughout the *Confessions*, Augustine quotes liberally from the Bible; this citation, set off like the others in italics, has no special significance, but where a quotation alludes to a passage which bears more directly on Augustine's situation, it is glossed.

was called by the sound they made when they wished to draw my attention to it. That they intended this was clear from the motions of their body, by a kind of natural language common to all races which consists in facial expressions, glances of the eye, gestures, and the tones by which the voice expresses the mind's state—for example whether things are to be sought, kept, thrown away, or avoided. So, as I heard the same words again and again properly used in different phrases, I came gradually to grasp what things they signified; and forcing my mouth to the same sounds, I began to use them to express my own wishes. Thus I learnt to convey what I meant to those about me; and so took another long step along the stormy way of human life in society, while I was still subject to the authority of my parents and at the beck and call of my elders.

O God, my God, what emptiness and mockeries did I now experience: for it was impressed upon me as right and proper in a boy to obey those who taught me, that I might get on in the world and excel in the handling of words[3] to gain honor among men and deceitful riches. I, poor wretch, could not see the use of the things I was sent to school to learn; but if I proved idle in learning, I was soundly beaten. For this procedure seemed wise to our ancestors: and many, passing the same way in days past, had built a sorrowful road by which we too must go, with multiplication of grief and toil upon the sons of Adam.

Yet, Lord, I observed men praying to You: and I learnt to do likewise, thinking of You (to the best of my understanding) as some great being who, though unseen, could hear and help me. As a boy I fell into the way of calling upon You, my Help and my Refuge; and in those prayers I broke the strings of my tongue—praying to You, small as I was but with no small energy, that I might not be beaten at school. And when You did not hear me *(not as giving me over to folly)*,[4] my elders and even my parents, who certainly wished me no harm, treated my stripes as a huge joke, which they were very far from being to me. Surely, Lord, there is no one so steeled in mind or cleaving to You so close—or even so insensitive, for that might have the same effect—as to make light of the racks and hooks and other torture instruments[5] (from which in all lands men pray so fervently to be saved) while truly loving those who are in such bitter fear of them. Yet my parents seemed to be amused at the torments inflicted upon me as a boy by my masters, though I was no less afraid of my punishments or zealous in my prayers to You for deliverance. But in spite of my terrors I still did wrong, by writing or reading or

3. The study of rhetoric, which was the passport to eminence in public life. 4. Augustine recognizes the necessity of this rigorous training; that he never forgot its harshness is clear from his remark in the *City of God*, Book XXI, Section 14: "If a choice were given him between suffering death and living his early years over again, who would not shudder and choose death?"
5. The instruments of public execution.

studying less than my set tasks. It was not, Lord, that I lacked mind or memory, for You had given me as much of these as my age required; but the one thing I revelled in was play; and for this I was punished by men who after all were doing exactly the same things themselves. But the idling of men is called business; the idling of boys, though exactly like, is punished by those same men: and no one pities either boys or men. Perhaps an unbiased observer would hold that I was rightly punished as a boy for playing with a ball: because this hindered my progress in studies—studies which would give me the opportunity as a man to play at things more degraded. And what difference was there between me and the master who flogged me? For if on some trifling point he had the worst of the argument with some fellow-master, he was more torn with angry vanity than I when I was beaten in a game of ball.

* * *

But to continue with my boyhood, which was in less peril of sin than my adolescence. I disliked learning and hated to be forced to it. But I *was* forced to it, so that good was done to me though it was not my doing. Short of being driven to it, I certainly would not have learned. But no one does well against his will, even if the thing he does is a good thing to do. Nor did those who forced me do well: it was by You, O God, that well was done. Those others had no deeper vision of the use to which I might put all they forced me to learn, but to sate the insatiable desire of man for wealth that is but penury and glory that is but shame. But You, Lord, *by Whom the very hairs of our head are numbered*,[6] used for my good the error of those who urged me to study; but my own error, in that I had no will to learn, you used for my punishment—a punishment richly deserved by one so small a boy and so great a sinner. Thus, You brought good for me out of those who did ill, and justly punished me for the ill I did myself. So You have ordained and so it is: that every disorder of the soul is its own punishment.

To this day I do not quite see why I so hated the Greek tongue[7] that I was made to learn as a small boy. For I really liked Latin—not the rudiments that we got from our first teachers but the literature that we came to be taught later. For the rudiments—reading and writing and figuring—I found as hard and hateful as Greek. Yet this too could come only from sin and the vanity of life, because *I was flesh, and a wind that goes away and returns not.* For those first lessons were the surer. I acquired the power I still have to read what

6. Who knows and attends to the smallest detail of each life. [Matthew 10:30.] 7. Important not only for gaining knowledge of Greek literature but also because it was the official language of the Eastern half of the Roman Empire. Augustine never really mastered Greek, though his remark elsewhere, that he had acquired so little Greek that it amounted to practically none, is overmodest.

I find written and to write what I want to express; whereas in the studies that came later I was forced to memorize the wanderings of Aeneas[8]—whoever *he* was—while forgetting my own wanderings; and to weep for the death of Dido who killed herself for love,[9] while bearing dry-eyed my own pitiful state, in that among these studies I was becoming dead to You, O God, my life.

Nothing could be more pitiful than a pitiable creature who does not see to pity himself, and weeps for the death that Dido suffered through love of Aeneas and not for the death he suffers himself through not loving You, O God, Light of my heart, Bread of my soul, Power wedded to my mind and the depths of my thought. I did not love You and I went away from You in fornication:[1] and all around me in my fornication echoed applauding cries "Well done! Well done!" *For the friendship of this world is fornication against Thee:* and the world cries "Well done" so loudly that one is ashamed of unmanliness not to do it. And for this I did not grieve; but I grieved for Dido, slain as she sought by the sword an end to her woe, while I too followed after the lowest of Your creatures, forsaking You, earth going unto earth. And if I were kept from reading, I grieved at not reading the tales that caused me such grief. This sort of folly is held nobler and richer than the studies by which we learn to read and write!

But now let my God cry aloud in my soul, and let Your truth assure me that it is not so: the earlier study is the better. I would more willingly forget the wanderings of Aeneas and all such things than how to write and read. Over the entrance of these grammar schools hangs a curtain:[2] but this should be seen not as lending honor to the mysteries, but as a cloak to the errors taught within. Let not those masters—who have now lost their terrors for me—cry out against me, because I confess to You, my God, the desire of my soul, and find soul's rest in blaming my evil ways that I may love Your holy ways. Let not the buyers or sellers of book-learning cry out against me. If I ask them whether it is true, as the poet says, that Aeneas ever went to Carthage, the more ignorant will have to answer that they do not know, the more scholarly that he certainly did not. But if I ask with what letters the name Aeneas is spelt, all whose schooling has gone so far will answer correctly, according to the convention men have agreed upon for the use of letters. Or again, were I to ask which loss would be more damaging to human life—the loss from men's memory of reading and writing or the loss of these poetic imaginings—there can be no question what anyone would answer who had not lost his own memory. Therefore as a boy I did wrong in liking the empty studies more than the useful—or rather in loving the empty and hating the useful. For one and one make two, two

8. Virgil's *Aeneid*, Book III. 9. *Aeneid*, Book IV. 1. Metaphorically in this instance.
2. School was often held in a building open on one side and curtained off from the street.

and two make four, I found a loathsome refrain; but such empty unrealities as the Wooden Horse with its armed men, and Troy on fire, and Creusa's Ghost, were sheer delight.[3]

Give me leave, O my God, to speak of my mind, Your gift, and of the follies in which I wasted it. It chanced that a task was set me, a task which I did not like but had to do. There was the promise of glory if I won, the fear of ignominy, and a flogging as well, if I lost. It was to declaim the words uttered by Juno in her rage and grief when she could not keep the Trojan prince from coming to Italy.[4] I had learnt that Juno had never said these words, but we were compelled to err in the footsteps of the poet who had invented them: and it was our duty to paraphrase in prose what he had said in verse. In this exercise that boy won most applause in whom the passions of grief and rage were expressed most powerfully and in the language most adequate to the majesty of the personage represented.

What could all this mean to me, O My true Life, My God? Why was there more applause for the performance I gave than for so many classmates of my own age? Was not the whole business so much smoke and wind? Surely some other matter could have been found to exercise mind and tongue. Thy praises, Lord, might have upheld the fresh young shoot of my heart, so that it might not have been whirled away by empty trifles, defiled, a prey to the spirits of the air. For there is more than one way of sacrificing to the fallen angels.

* * *

[*The Pear Tree*]

Book II

I propose now to set down my past wickedness and the carnal corruptions of my soul, not for love of them but that I may love Thee, O my God. I do it for love of Thy love, passing again in the bitterness of remembrance over my most evil ways that Thou mayest thereby grow ever lovelier to me, O Loveliness that dost not deceive, Loveliness happy and abiding: and I collect my self out of that broken state in which my very being was torn asunder because I was turned away from Thee, the One, and wasted myself upon the many.

Arrived now at adolescence I burned for all the satisfactions of hell, and I sank to the animal in a succession of dark lusts: *my beauty consumed away*, and I stank in Thine eyes, yet was pleasing in my own and anxious to please the eyes of men.

3. *Aeneid*, Book II. 4. Augustine was assigned the task of delivering a prose paraphrase of Juno's angry speech in the *Aeneid*, Book I. (She complains that her enemies, the Trojans under Aeneas, are on their way to their destined goal in Italy in spite of her resolution to prevent them.) Rhetorical exercises such as this were common in the schools, since they served the double purpose of teaching literature and rhetorical composition at the same time.

My one delight was to love and to be loved. But in this I did not keep the measure of mind to mind, which is the luminous line of friendship; but from the muddy concupiscence of the flesh and the hot imagination of puberty mists steamed up to becloud and darken my heart so that I could not distinguish the white light of love from the fog of lust. Both love and lust boiled within me, and swept my youthful immaturity over the precipice of evil desires to leave me half drowned in a whirlpool of abominable sins. Your wrath had grown mighty against me and I knew it not. I had grown deaf from the clanking of the chain of my mortality, the punishment for the pride of my soul: and I departed further from You, and You left me to myself: and I was tossed about and wasted and poured out and boiling over in my fornications: and You were silent, O my late-won Joy. You were silent, and I, arrogant and depressed, weary and restless, wandered further and further from You into more and more sins which could bear no fruit save sorrows.

* * *

Where then was I, and how far from the delights of Your house, in that sixteenth year of my life in this world, when the madness of lust—needing no licence from human shamelessness, receiving no licence from Your laws—took complete control of me, and I surrendered wholly to it? My family took no care to save me from this moral destruction by marriage: their only concern was that I should learn to make as fine and persuasive speeches as possible.

* * *

Your law, O Lord, punishes theft; and this law is so written in the hearts of men that not even the breaking of it blots it out: for no thief bears calmly being stolen from—not even if he is rich and the other steals through want. Yet I chose to steal, and not because want drove me to it—unless a want of justice and contempt for it and an excess for iniquity. For I stole things which I already had in plenty and of better quality. Nor had I any desire to enjoy the things I stole, but only the stealing of them and the sin. There was a pear tree near our vineyard, heavy with fruit, but fruit that was not particularly tempting either to look at or to taste. A group of young blackguards, and I among them, went out to knock down the pears and carry them off late one night, for it was our bad habit to carry on our games in the streets till very late. We carried off an immense load of pears, not to eat—for we barely tasted them before throwing them to the hogs. Our only pleasure in doing it was that it was forbidden. Such was my heart, O God, such was my heart: yet in the depth of the abyss You had pity on it. Let that heart now tell You what it sought when I was thus evil for no object, having no cause for wrongdoing save

my wrongness. The malice of the act was base and I loved it—that is to say I loved my own undoing, I loved the evil in me—not the thing for which I did the evil, simply the evil: my soul was depraved, and hurled itself down from security in You into utter destruction, seeking no profit from wickedness but only to be wicked.

* * *

[*Student at Carthage*]

Book III

I came to Carthage[5] where a cauldron of illicit loves leapt and boiled about me. I was not yet in love, but I was in love with love, and from the very depth of my need hated myself for not more keenly feeling the need. I sought some object to love, since I was thus in love with loving; and I hated security and a life with no snares for my feet. For within I was hungry, all for the want of that spiritual food which is Thyself, my God; yet [though I was hungry for want of it] I did not hunger for it: I had no desire whatever for incorruptible food, not because I had it in abundance but the emptier I was, the more I hated the thought of it. Because of all this my soul was sick, and broke out in sores, whose itch I agonized to scratch with the rub of carnal things—carnal, yet if there were no soul in them, they would not be objects of love. My longing then was to love and to be loved, but most when I obtained the enjoyment of the body of the person who loved me.

Thus I polluted the stream of friendship with the filth of unclean desire and sullied its limpidity with the hell of lust. And vile and unclean as I was, so great was my vanity that I was bent upon passing for clean and courtly. And I did fall in love, simply from wanting to. O my God, my Mercy, with how much bitterness didst Thou in Thy goodness sprinkle the delights of that time! I was loved, and our love came to the bond of consummation: I wore my chains with bliss but with torment too, for I was scourged with the red hot rods of jealousy, with suspicions and fears and tempers and quarrels.

I developed a passion for stage plays, with the mirror they held up to my own miseries and the fuel they poured on my flame. How is it that a man wants to be made sad by the sight of tragic sufferings that he could not bear in his own person? Yet the spectator does want to feel sorrow, and it is actually his feeling of sorrow that he enjoys. Surely this is the most wretched lunacy? For the more a man feels such sufferings in himself, the more he is moved by the sight of them on the stage. Now when a man suffers himself, it is called misery; when he suffers in the suffering of another, it is called pity.

5. The capital city of the province, where Augustine went to study rhetoric.

But how can the unreal sufferings of the stage possibly move pity? The spectator is not moved to aid the sufferer but merely to be sorry for him; and the more the author of these fictions makes the audience grieve, the better they like him. If the tragic sorrows of the characters—whether historical or entirely fictitious—be so poorly represented that the spectator is not moved to tears, he leaves the theatre unsatisfied and full of complaints; if he *is* moved to tears, he stays to the end, fascinated and revelling in it.

* * *

Those of my occupations at that time which were held as reputable[6] were directed towards the study of the law, in which I meant to excel—and the less honest I was, the more famous I should be. The very limit of human blindness is to glory in being blind. By this time I was a leader in the School of Rhetoric and I enjoyed this high station and was arrogant and swollen with importance: though You know, O Lord, that I was far quieter in my behavior and had no share in the riotousness of the *eversores*—the Overturners[7]—for this blackguardly diabolical name they wore as the very badge of sophistication. Yet I was much in their company and much ashamed of the sense of shame that kept me from being like them. I was with them and I did for the most part enjoy their companionshhip, though I abominated the acts that were their specialty—as when they made a butt of some hapless newcomer, assailing him with really cruel mockery for no reason whatever, save the malicious pleasure they got from it. There was something very like the action of devils in their behavior. They were rightly called Overturners, since they had themselves been first overturned and perverted, tricked by those same devils who were secretly mocking them in the very acts by which they amused themselves in mocking and making fools of others.

With these men as companions of my immaturity, I was studying the books of eloquence; for in eloquence it was my ambition to shine, all from a damnable vaingloriousness and for the satisfaction of human vanity. Following the normal order of study I had come to a book of one Cicero, whose tongue[8] practically everyone admires, though not his heart. That particular book is called *Hortensius*[9] and contains an exhortation to philosophy. Quite definitely it changed the direction of my mind, altered my prayers to You, O Lord, and gave me a new purpose and ambition. Suddenly all the vanity I had hoped in I saw as worthless, and with an incredible intensity of desire I longed after immortal wisdom. I had begun that journey upwards by which I was

6. I.e. his rhetorical studies. 7. A group of students who prided themselves on their wild actions and indiscipline; *eversores* is the Latin word that means "Overturners." 8. Style. 9. Only fragments of this dialogue remain. In it Cicero replies to an opponent of philosophy with an impassioned defense of the intellectual life.

to return to You. My father was now dead two years; I was eighteen and was receiving money from my mother for the continuance of my study of eloquence. But I used that book not for the sharpening of my tongue; what won me in it was what it said, not the excellence of its phrasing.

* * *

So I resolved to make some study of the Sacred Scriptures and find what kind of books they were. But what I came upon was something not grasped by the proud, not revealed either to children, something utterly humble in the hearing but sublime in the doing, and shrouded deep in mystery. And I was not of the nature to enter into it or bend my neck to follow it. When I first read those Scriptures, I did not feel in the least what I have just said; they seemed to me unworthy to be compared with the majesty of Cicero. My conceit was repelled by their simplicity, and I had not the mind to penetrate into their depths. They were indeed of a nature to grow in Your little ones.[1] But I could not bear to be a little one; I was only swollen with pride, but to myself I seemed a very big man.

* * *

[*Worldly Ambitions*]

Book VI

By this time my mother had come to me, following me over sea and land with the courage of piety and relying upon You in all perils. For they were in danger from a storm, and she reassured even the sailors—by whom travelers newly ventured upon the deep are ordinarily reassured—promising them safe arrival because thus You had promised her in a vision. She found me in a perilous state through my deep despair of ever discovering the truth. But even when I told her that if I was not yet a Catholic Christian, I was no longer a Manichean,[2] she was not greatly exultant as at some unlooked-for good news, because she had already received assurance upon that part of my misery; she bewailed me as one dead certainly, but certainly to be raised again by You, offering me in her mind as one stretched out dead, that You might say to the widow's son: "*Young man, I say to thee arise*":[3] and he should sit up and begin to speak and You should give him to his mother.

1. Refers not only to the rhetorical simplicity of Jesus' teachings but his interest in teaching children, "for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." [Matthew 19:14.] 2. Augustine had for nine years been a member of this religious sect, which followed the teaching of the Babylonian mystic Mani (216–77). The Manicheans believed that the world was a battleground for the forces of good and evil: redemption in a future life would come to the Elect, who renounced worldly occupations and possessions and practiced a severe asceticism (including abstention from meat). Augustine's mother, Monica, was a Christian, and lamented her son's Manichean beliefs. 3. Luke 7:14, recounting one of Christ's miracles.

* * *

Nor did I then groan in prayer for Your help. My mind was intent upon inquiry and unquiet for argumentation. I regarded Ambrose[4] as a lucky man by worldly standards to be held in honor by such important people: only his celibacy seemed to me a heavy burden. I had no means of guessing, and no experience of my own to learn from, what hope he bore within him, what struggles he might have against the temptations that went with his high place, what was his consolation in adversity, and on what joys of Your bread the hidden mouth of his heart fed. Nor did he know how I was inflamed nor the depth of my peril. I could not ask of him what I wished as I wished, for I was kept from any face to face conversation with him by the throng of men with their own troubles, whose infirmities he served. The very little time he was not with these he was refreshing either his body with necessary food or his mind with reading. When he read, his eyes traveled across the page and his heart sought into the sense, but voice and tongue were silent. No one was forbidden to approach him nor was it his custom to require that visitors should be announced: but when we came into him we often saw him reading and always to himself; and after we had sat long in silence, unwilling to interrupt a work on which he was so intent, we would depart again. We guessed that in the small time he could find for the refreshment of his mind, he would wish to be free from the distraction of other men's affairs and not called away from what he was doing. Perhaps he was on his guard lest [if he read aloud] someone listening should be troubled and want an explanation if the author he was reading expressed some idea over-obscurely, and it might be necessary to expound or discuss some of the more difficult questions. And if he had to spend time on this, he would get through less reading than he wished. Or it may be that his real reason for reading to himself was to preserve his voice, which did in fact readily grow tired. But whatever his reason for doing it, that man certainly had a good reason.

* * *

I was all hot for honors, money, marriage: and You made mock of my hotness. In my pursuit of these, I suffered most bitter disappointments, but in this You were good to me since I was thus prevented from taking delight in anything not Yourself. Look now into my heart, Lord, by whose will I remember all this and confess it to You. Let my soul cleave to You now that You have freed it from the

4. The leading personality among the Christians of the West. Not many years after this he defied the power of the emperor Theodosius, and forced him to beg for God's pardon in the church at Milan for having put the inhabitants of Thessalonica to the sword.

tenacious hold of death. At that time my soul was in misery, and You pricked the soreness of its wound, that leaving all things it might turn to You, who are over all and without whom all would return to nothing, that it might turn to You and be healed. I was in utter misery and there was one day especially on which You acted to bring home to me the realization of my misery. I was preparing an oration in praise of the Emperor[5] in which I was to utter any number of lies to win the applause of people who knew they were lies. My heart was much wrought upon by the shame of this and inflamed with the fever of the thoughts that consumed it. I was passing along a certain street in Milan when I noticed a beggar. He was jesting and laughing and I imagine more than a little drunk. I fell into gloom and spoke to the friends who were with me about the endless sorrows that our own insanity brings us: for here was I striving away, dragging the load of my unhappiness under the spurring of my desires, and making it worse by dragging it: and with all our striving, our one aim was to arrive at some sort of happiness without care: the beggar had reached the same goal before us, and we might quite well never reach it at all. The very thing that he had attained by means of a few pennies begged from passers-by—namely the pleasure of a temporary happiness—I was plotting for with so many a weary twist and turn.

Certainly his joy was no true joy; but the joy I sought in my ambition was emptier still. In any event he was cheerful and I worried, he had no cares and I nothing but cares. Now if anyone had asked me whether I would rather be cheerful or fearful, I would answer: "Cheerful"; but if he had gone on to ask whether I would rather be like that beggar or as I actually was, I would certainly have chosen my own state though so troubled and anxious. Now this was surely absurd. It could not be for any true reason. I ought not to have preferred my own state rather than his merely because I was the more learned, since I got no joy from my learning, but sought only to please men by it—not even to teach them, only to please them. Therefore did You break my bones with the rod of Your discipline.

* * *

Great effort was made to get me married. I proposed, the girl was promised me. My mother played a great part in the matter for she wanted to have me married and then cleansed with the saving waters of baptism,[6] rejoicing to see me grow every day more fitted for baptism and feeling that her prayers and Your promises were to be fulfilled in my faith. By my request and her own desire she begged You daily with the uttermost intensity of her heart to show her in a vision

5. Probably the young Valentinian, whose court was at Milan.
6. He could not be baptized while living in sin with his mistress, a liaison that resulted in the birth of a son, Adeodatus, who later accompanied Augustine to Italy.

something of my future marriage, but You would never do it. She did indeed see certain vain fantasies, under the pressure of her mind's preoccupation with the matter; and she told them to me, not, however, with the confidence she always had when You had shown things to her, but as if she set small store by them; for she said that there was a certain unanalyzable savor, not to be expressed in words, by which she could distinguish between what You revealed and the dreams of her own spirit. Still she pushed on with the matter of my marriage, and the girl was asked for. She was still two years short of the age for marriage[7] but I liked her and agreed to wait.

There was a group of us friends who had much serious discussion together, concerning the cares and troubles of human life which we found so hard to endure. We had almost decided to seek a life of peace, away from the throng of men. This peace we hoped to attain by putting together whatever we could manage to get, and making one common household for all of us: so that in the clear trust of friendship, things should not belong to this or that individual, but one thing should be made of all our possessions, and belong wholly to each one of us, and everybody own everything. It seemed that there might be perhaps ten men in this fellowship. Among us there were some very rich men, especially Romanianus, our fellow townsman, who had been a close friend of mine from childhood and had been brought to the court in Milan by the press of some very urgent business. He was strongest of all for the idea and he had considerable influence in persuasion because his wealth was much greater than anyone else's. We agreed that two officers should be chosen every year to handle the details of our life together, leaving the rest undisturbed. But then we began to wonder whether our wives would agree, for some of us already had wives and I meant to have one. So the whole plan, which we had built up so neatly, fell to pieces in our hands and was simply dropped. We returned to our old sighing and groaning and treading of this world's broad and beaten ways:[8] for many thoughts were in our hearts, but *Thy counsel standeth forever.* And out of Thy counsel didst Thou deride ours and didst prepare Thine own things for us, meaning to *give us meat in due season and to open Thy hands and fill our souls with Thy blessing.*

Meanwhile my sins were multiplied. She with whom I had lived so long was torn from my side as a hindrance to my forthcoming marriage. My heart which had held her very dear was broken and wounded and shed blood. She went back to Africa, swearing that she would never know another man, and left with me the natural son I had had of her. But I in my unhappiness could not, for all my manhood, imitate her resolve. I was unable to bear the delay of two years

7. The legal age was twelve years. Augustine was in his early thirties. 8. Cf. Matthew 7:13: "Broad is the way that leadeth to destruction," that is, to damnation.

which must pass before I was to get the girl I had asked for in marriage. In fact it was not really marriage that I wanted. I was simply a slave to lust. So I took another woman, not of course as a wife; and thus my soul's disease was nourished and kept alive as vigorously as ever, indeed worse than ever, that it might reach the realm of matrimony in the company of its ancient habit. Nor was the wound healed that had been made by the cutting off of my former mistress. For there was first burning and bitter grief; and after that it festered, and as the pain grew duller it only grew more hopeless.

* * *

[*Conversion*]

Book VIII

* * *

Thus I was sick at heart and in torment, accusing myself with a new intensity of bitterness, twisting and turning in my chain in the hope that it might be utterly broken, for what held me was so small a thing! But it still held me. And You stood in the secret places of my soul, O Lord, in the harshness of Your mercy redoubling the scourges of fear and shame lest I should give way again and that small slight tie which remained should not be broken but should grow again to full strength and bind me closer even than before. For I kept saying within myself: "Let it be now, let it be now," and by the mere words I had begun to move toward the resolution. I almost made it, yet I did not quite make it. But I did not fall back into my original state, but as it were stood near to get my breath. And I tried again and I was almost there, and now I could all but touch it and hold it: yet I was not quite there, I did not touch it or hold it. I still shrank from dying unto death and living unto life. The lower condition which had grown habitual was more powerful than the better condition which I had not tried. The nearer the point of time came in which I was to become different, the more it struck me with horror; but it did not force me utterly back nor turn me utterly away, but held me there between the two.

Those trifles of all trifles, and vanities of vanities, my one-time mistresses, held me back, plucking at my garment of flesh and murmuring softly: "Are you sending us away?" And "From this moment shall we not be with you, now or forever?" And "From this moment shall this or that not be allowed you, now or forever?" What were they suggesting to me in the phrase I have written "this or that," what were they suggesting to me, O my God? Do you in your mercy keep from the soul of Your servant the vileness and uncleanness they were suggesting. And now I began to hear them not half so loud;

they no longer stood against me face to face, but were softly muttering behind my back and, as I tried to depart, plucking stealthily at me to make me look behind. Yet even that was enough, so hesitating was I, to keep me from snatching myself free, from shaking them off and leaping upwards on the way I was called: for the strong force of habit said to me: "Do you think you can live without them?"

But by this time its voice was growing fainter. In the direction toward which I had turned my face and was quivering in fear of going, I could see the austere beauty of Continence, serene and indeed joyous but not evilly, honorably soliciting me to come to her and not linger, stretching forth loving hands to receive and embrace me, hands full of multitudes of good examples. With her I saw such hosts of young men and maidens, a multitude of youth and of every age, gray widows and women grown old in virginity, and in them all Continence herself, not barren but the fruitful mother of children, her joys, by You, Lord, her Spouse. And she smiled upon me and her smile gave courage as if she were saying: "Can you not do what these men have done, what these women have done? Or could men or women have done such in themselves, and not in the Lord their God? The Lord their God gave me to them. Why do you stand upon yourself and so not stand at all? Cast yourself upon Him and be not afraid; He will not draw away and let you fall. Cast yourself without fear, He will receive you and heal you."

Yet I was still ashamed, for I could still hear the murmuring of those vanities, and I still hung hesitant. And again it was as if she said: "Stop your ears against your unclean members, that they may be mortified. They tell you of delights, but not of such delights as the law of the Lord your God tells." This was the controversy raging in my heart, a controversy about myself against myself. And Alypius[9] stayed by my side and awaited in silence the issue of such agitation as he had never seen in me.

When my most searching scrutiny had drawn up all my vileness from the secret depths of my soul and heaped it in my heart's sight, a mighty storm arose in me, bringing a mighty rain of tears. That I might give way to my tears and lamentations, I rose from Alypius: for it struck me that solitude was more suited to the business of weeping. I went far enough from him to prevent his presence from being an embarrassment to me. So I felt, and he realized it. I suppose I had said something and the sound of my voice was heavy with tears. I arose, but he remained where we had been sitting, still in utter amazement. I flung myself down somehow under a certain fig tree and no longer tried to check my tears, which poured forth from my

9. A student of Augustine's at Carthage; he had joined the Manichees with Augustine, followed him to Rome and Milan, and now shared his desires and doubts. Alypius finally became a bishop in North Africa.

eyes in a flood, *an acceptable sacrifice to Thee.* And much I said not in these words but to this effect: "*And Thou, O Lord, how long? How long, Lord; wilt Thou be angry forever? Remember not our former iniquities.*"[1] For I felt that I was still bound by them. And I continued my miserable complaining: "How long, how long shall I go on saying tomorrow and again tomorrow? Why not now, why not have an end to my uncleanness this very hour?"

Such things I said, weeping in the most bitter sorrow of my heart. And suddenly I heard a voice from some nearby house, a boy's voice or a girl's voice, I do not know: but it was a sort of singsong, repeated again and again. "Take and read, take and read." I ceased weeping and immediately began to search my mind most carefully as to whether children were accustomed to chant these words in any kind of game, and I could not remember that I had ever heard any such thing. Damming back the flood of my tears I arose, interpreting the incident as quite certainly a divine command to open my book of Scripture and read the passage at which I should open. For it was part of what I had been told about Anthony,[2] that from the Gospel which he happened to be reading he had felt that he was being admonished as though what he read was spoken directly to himself: *Go, sell what thou hast and give to the poor and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come follow Me.*[3] By this experience he had been in that instant converted to You. So I was moved to return to the place where Alypius was sitting, for I had put down the Apostle's[4] book there when I arose. I snatched it up, opened it and in silence read the passage upon which my eyes first fell: *Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and impurities, not in contention and envy, but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ and make not provision for the flesh in its concupiscences.* [Romans xiii, 13.] I had no wish to read further, and no need. For in that instant, with the very ending of the sentence, it was as though a light of utter confidence shone in all my heart, and all the darkness of uncertainty vanished away. Then leaving my finger in the place or marking it by some other sign, I closed the book and in complete calm told the whole thing to Alypius and he similarly told me what had been going on in himself, of which I knew nothing. He asked to see what I had read. I showed him, and he looked further than I had read. I had not known what followed. And this is what followed: "*Now him that is weak in faith, take unto you.*" He applied this to himself and told me so. And he was confirmed by this message, and with no troubled wavering gave himself to God's goodwill and purpose—a purpose indeed most suited to his charac-

1. The quotation is from Psalm 79; Augustine compares his spiritual despair with that of captive and subjected Israel. 2. The Egyptian saint whose abstinence and self-control are still proverbial; he was one of the founders of the system of monastic life. 3. *Luke* 18:22. 4. Paul.

ter, for in these matters he had been immeasurably better than I.

Then we went in to my mother and told her, to her great joy. We related how it had come about: she was filled with triumphant exultation, and praised You who are mighty beyond what we ask or conceive: for she saw that You had given her more than with all her pitiful weeping she had ever asked. For You converted me to Yourself so that I no longer sought a wife nor any of this world's promises, but stood upon that same rule of faith in which You had shown me to her so many years before.[5] Thus You changed her mourning into joy, a joy far richer than she had thought to wish, a joy much dearer and purer than she had thought to find in grandchildren of my flesh.

[*Death of His Mother*]

Book IX

* * *

And I thought it would be good in Your sight if I did not dramatically snatch my tongue's service from the speech-market but quietly withdrew; but that in any event withdraw I must, so that youths—not students of Your law or Your peace but of lying follies and the conflicts of the law—should no longer buy at my mouth the tools of their madness. Fortunately it happened that there were only a few days left before the Vintage Vacation,[6] and I decided to endure them so that I might leave with due deliberation, seeing that I had been redeemed by You and was not going to put myself up for sale again. Our purpose therefore was known to You, but not to men other than our own friends. We had agreed among ourselves not to spread the news abroad at all, although, in our ascent from *the valley of tears and our singing of the song of degrees*, You had given us *sharp arrows* and *burning coals* against *cunning tongues* that might argue against us with pretended care for our interest, might destroy us saying that they loved us: as men consume food saying that they love it.

* * *

Furthermore that very summer, under the too heavy labor of teaching, my lungs had begun to give way and I breathed with difficulty,[7] the pain in my breast showed that they were affected and they no longer let me talk with any strength for too long at a time. At first this had disturbed me, because it made it practically a matter of necessity that I should lay down the burden of teaching, or at least

5. At Carthage, when Augustine was still a Manichee, Monica had dreamed that she was standing on a wooden ruler weeping for her son, and then saw that he was standing on the same ruler as herself. 6. This grape-harvesting and wine-making holiday lasted from the end of August to the middle of October. 7. Since he not only lectured but also read aloud, as is suggested by his comments on Ambrose's silent reading (Book VI).

give it up for the time if I was to be cured and grow well again. But when the full purpose of giving myself leisure to meditate on how You are the Lord arose in me and became a settled resolve—as you know, O my God—I actually found myself glad to have this perfectly truthful excuse to offer parents who might be offended and for their children's sake would never willingly have let me give up teaching. So I was full of joy, and I put up with the space of time that still had to run—I fancy it was about twenty days. But to bear the time took considerable fortitude. Desire for money, which formerly had helped me to bear the heavy labor of teaching, was quite gone; so that I should have [had nothing to help me bear it and so] found it altogether crushing if patience had not taken the place of covetousness. Some of Your servants, my brethren, may think that I sinned in this, since having enrolled with all my heart in Your service, I allowed myself to sit for so much as an hour in the chair of untruthfulness. It may be so. But, most merciful Lord, have You not pardoned and remitted this sin, along with others most horrible and deadly, in the holy water of baptism?

* * *

And now the day was come on which I was to be set free from the teaching of Rhetoric in fact, as I was already free in mind. And so it came about. You delivered my tongue as You had already delivered my heart, and I rejoiced and praised You, and so went off with my friends to the country-house.[8] The amount of writing I did there—the writing was now in your service but during this breathing-space still smacked of the school of pride—my books[9] exist to witness, with the record they give of discussions either with my friends there present or with Yourself when I was alone with You; and there are my letters to show what correspondence I had with Nebridius[1] while he was away.

* * *

When the Vintage Vacation was over I gave the people of Milan notice that they must find someone else to sell the art of words to their students, because I had chosen to serve You, and because owing to my difficulty in breathing and the pain in my lungs I could not continue my teaching. And in a letter I told Your bishop, the holy Ambrose, of my past errors and my present purpose, that he might advise me which of Your Scriptures I should especially read to pre-

8. At Cassiciacum, in the country, placed at his disposal by a friend. 9. While at Cassiciacum, Augustine wrote a book attacking the Academic philosophers, a book on the happy life, and another entitled *De ordine*, a treatise on divine providence. 1. Nebridius came from Carthage to Milan with Augustine, shared his spiritual pilgrimage through the pagan philosophies and Manichean doctrines to become a Christian, and returned to Africa where he died. Augustine's letters to Nebridius are still extant.

pare me and make me more fit to receive so great a grace. He told me to read Isaias the prophet, I imagine because he more clearly foretells the gospel and the calling of the gentiles[2] than the other Old Testament writers; but I did not understand the first part of this book, and thinking that it would be all of the same kind, put it aside meaning to return to it when I should be more practised in the Lord's way of speech.

When the time had come to give in my name for baptism, we left the country and returned to Milan. Alypius had decided to be born again in You at the same time, for he was already endowed with the humility that Your sacraments require, and had brought his body so powerfully under control that he could tread the icy soil of Italy with bare feet, which required unusual fortitude. We also took with us the boy Adeodatus, carnally begotten by me in my sin. You had made him well. He was barely fifteen, yet he was more intelligent than many a grave and learned man. In this I am but acknowledging to You Your own gifts, O Lord my God, Creator of all and powerful to reshape our shapelessness: for I had no part in that boy but the sin. That he had been brought up by us in Your way was because You had inspired us, no other. I do but acknowledge to You Your own gifts. There is a book of mine called *De Magistro:*[3] it is a dialogue between him and me. You know, O God, that all the ideas which are put into the mouth of the other party to the dialogue were truly his, though he was but sixteen. I had experience of many other remarkable qualities in him. His great intelligence filled me with a kind of awe: and who but You could be the maker of things so wonderful? But You took him early from this earth, and I think of him utterly without anxiety, for there is nothing in his boyhood or youth or anywhere in him to cause me to fear. We took him along with us, the same age as ourselves in Your grace, to be brought up in Your discipline: and we were baptized, and all anxiety as to our past life fled away. The days were not long enough as I meditated, and found wonderful delight in meditating, upon the depth of Your design for the salvation of the human race. I wept at the beauty of Your hymns and canticles, and was powerfully moved at the sweet sound of Your Church's singing. Those sounds flowed into my ears, and the truth streamed into my heart: so that my feeling of devotion overflowed, and the tears ran from my eyes, and I was happy in them.

It was only a little while before that the church of Milan had begun to practice this kind of consolation and exultation, to the great

2. The appeal of Christ's apostles to peoples outside the Hebrew nation: "I am sought of them that asked not for me: I am found of them that sought me not." [Isaiah 65.1 ff.] 3. *The Teacher*, written at Tagaste in Africa two years after Augustine's baptism and shortly after his return from Italy. The subject is teaching and the thesis that only God is the cause for man's acquisition of learning and truth.

joy of the brethen singing together with heart and voice. For it was only about a year, or not much more, since Justina, the mother of the boy emperor Valentinian, was persecuting Your servant Ambrose in the interests of her own heresy: for she had been seduced by the Arians.[4] The devoted people had stayed day and night in the church, ready to die with their bishop, Your servant. And my mother, Your handmaid, bearing a great part of the trouble and vigil, had lived in prayer. I also, though still not warmed by the fire of Your Spirit, was stirred to excitement by the disturbed and wrought-up state of the city. It was at this time that the practice was instituted of singing hymns and psalms after the manner of the Eastern churches,[5] to keep the people from being altogether worn out with anxiety and want of sleep. The custom has been retained from that day to this, and has been imitated by many, indeed in almost all congregations throughout the world.

At this time You revealed to Your bishop Ambrose in a vision the place where the bodies of the martyrs Protasius and Gervasius[6] lay hid, which You had for so many years kept incorrupt in the treasury of Your secret knowledge that You might bring them forth at the proper moment to check a woman's fury—the woman being the ruler of the Empire![7] For when they were discovered and dug up and with due honor brought to Ambrose's basilica, not only were people cured who had been tormented by evil spirits—and the devils themselves forced to confess it—but also there was a man, a citizen well known to the city, who had been blind for many years: he asked what was the cause of the tumultuous joy of the people, and when he heard, he sprang up and asked his guide to lead him into the place. When he arrived there he asked to be allowed to touch with his handkerchief the place on which lay the saints, whose death is precious in Your sight. He did so, put the handkerchief to his eyes, and immediately they were opened. The news spread abroad, Your praises glowed and shone, and if the mind of that angry woman was not brought to the sanity of belief, it was at least brought back from the madness of persecution. Thanks be to my God! From what and towards what have You led my memory, that it should confess to You these great things which I had altogether forgotten? Yet even then, *when the odor of Thy ointments was so sweet smelling*, I did *not run after Thee:* and for this I wept all the more now when I heard Your hymns and

4. Members of a heretical sect who followed the doctrine of Arius (A.D. 250?–336) that the Son had not existed from all eternity and was therefore inferior to the Father. At the Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325) Arius and his followers were declared heretical, but the Arian heresy remained a serious problem for the Church for many years. Justina demanded that Ambrose allow the Arians to hold public services inside the walls of Milan. 5. The Greek-speaking churches of the Eastern half of the empire. They split off from the Catholic Church in the ninth century. 6. Two beheaded skeletons discovered by St. Ambrose at Milan were identified as the relics of these saints: nothing certain is known about them but they were said to have been martyred in the second century A.D. 7. Justina.

canticles, as one who had then sighed for You and now breathed in You, breathed so far as the air allows in this our house of grass.[8]

You, Lord, who make men of one mind to dwell in one house brought to our company a young man of our own town, Evodius. He had held office in the civil service, had been converted and baptized before us, had resigned from the state's service, and given himself to Yours. We kept together, meaning to live together in our devout purpose. We thought deeply as to the place in which we might serve You most usefully. As a result we started back for Africa. And when we had come as far as Ostia[9] on the Tiber, my mother died. I pass over many things, for I must make haste. Do You, O my God, accept my confessions and my gratitude for countless things of which I say nothing. But I will not omit anything my mind brings forth concerning her, Your servant, who brought me forth—brought me forth in the flesh to this temporal light, and in her heart to light eternal. Not of her gifts do I speak but of Your gifts in her. For she did not bring herself into the world or educate herself in the world: it was You who created her, nor did her father or mother know what kind of being was to come forth from them. It was the scepter of Your Christ, the discipline of your Only-Begotten, that brought her up in holy fear, in a Catholic family which was a worthy member of Your church. Yet it was not the devotion of her mother in her upbringing that she talked most of, but of a certain aged servant, who had indeed carried my mother's father on her back when he was a baby, as little ones are accustomed to be carried on the backs of older girls. Because of this, because also of her age and her admirable character, she was very much respected by her master and mistress in their Christian household. As a result she was given charge of her master's daughters. This charge she fulfilled most conscientiously, checking them sharply when necessary with holy severity and teaching them soberly and prudently. Thus, except at the times when they ate—and that most temperately—at their parents' table, she would not let them even drink water, no matter how tormenting their thirst. By this she prevented the forming of a bad habit, and she used to remark very sensibly: "Now you drink water because you are not allowed to have wine: but when you are married, and thus mistresses of food-stores and wine-cellars, you will despise water, but the habit of drinking will still remain." By this kind of teaching and the authority of her commands she moderated the greediness that goes with childhood and brought the little girls' thirst to such a control that they no longer wanted what they ought not to have.

Yet, as Your servant told me, her son, there did steal upon my

8. "All flesh is grass. . . . The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever." [Isaiah 40:6–8.] 9. A port on the southwest coast of Italy; it was the port of Rome and the point of departure for Africa.

mother an inclination to wine. For when, in the usual way, she was sent by her parents, as a well-behaved child, to draw wine from the barrel, she would dip the cup in, but before pouring the wine from the cup into the flagon, she would sip a little with the very tip of her lips, only a little because she did not yet like the taste sufficiently to take more. Indeed she did it not out of any craving for wine, but rather from the excess of childhood's high spirits, which tend to boil over in absurdities, and are usually kept in check by the authority of elders. And so, adding to that daily drop a little more from day to day—for he that despises small things, falls little by little—she fell into the habit, so that she would drink off greedily cups almost full of wine. Where then was that wise old woman with her forceful prohibitions? Could anything avail against the evil in us, unless Your healing, O Lord, watched over us? When our father and mother and nurses are absent, You are present, who created us, who call us, who can use those placed over us for some good unto the salvation of our souls. What did You do then, O my God? How did You cure her, and bring her to health? From another soul you drew a harsh and cutting sarcasm, as though bringing forth a surgeon's knife from Your secret store, and with one blow amputated that sore place. A maid-servant with whom she was accustomed to go to the cellar, one day fell into a quarrel with her small mistress when no one else chanced to be about, and hurled at her the most biting insult possible, calling her a drunkard. My mother was pierced to the quick, saw her fault in its true wickedness, and instantly condemned it and gave it up. Just as the flattery of a friend can pervert, so the insult of an enemy can sometimes correct. Nor do You, O God, reward men according to what You do by means of them, but according to what they themselves intended. For the girl being in a temper wanted to enrage her young mistress, not to amend her, for she did it when no one else was there, either because the time and place happened to be thus when the quarrel arose, or because she was afraid that elders[1] would be angry because she had not told it sooner. But You, O Lord, Ruler of heavenly things and earthly, who turn to Your own purposes the very depths of rivers as they run and order the turbulence of the flow of time, did by the folly of one mind bring sanity to another; thus reminding us not to attribute it to our own power if another is amended by our word, even if we meant to amend him.

My mother, then, was modestly and soberly brought up, being rather made obedient to her parents by You than to You by her parents. When she reached the age for marriage, and was bestowed upon a husband, she served him as her lord. She used all her effort to win him to You, preaching You to him by her character, by which

1. Leaders of the church.

You made her beautiful to her husband, respected and loved by him and admirable in his sight. For she bore his acts of unfaithfulness quietly, and never had any jealous scene with her husband about them. She awaited Your mercy upon him, that he might grow chaste through faith in You. And as a matter of fact, though generous beyond measure, he had a very hot temper. But she knew that a woman must not resist a husband in anger, by deed or even by word. Only, when she saw him calm again and quiet, she would take the opportunity to give him an explanation of her actions, if it happened that he had been roused to anger unreasonably. The result was that whereas many matrons with much milder husbands carried the marks of blows to disfigure their faces, and would all get together to complain of the way their husbands behaved, my mother—talking lightly but meaning it seriously—advised them against their tongues: saying that from the day they heard the matrimonial contract read to them they should regard it as an instrument by which they became servants; and from that time they should be mindful of their condition and not set themselves up against their masters. And they often expressed amazement—for they knew how violent a husband she had to live with—that it had never been heard, and there was no mark to show, that Patricius[2] had beaten his wife or that there had been any family quarrel between them for so much as a single day. And when her friends asked her the reason, she taught them her rule, which was as I have just said. Those who followed it, found it good and thanked her; those who did not, went on being bullied and beaten.

Her mother-in-law began by being angry with her because of the whispers of malicious servants. But my mother won her completely by the respect she showed, and her unfailing patience and mildness. She ended by going to her son, telling him of the tales the servants had bandied about to the destruction of peace in the family between herself and her daughter-in-law, and asking him to punish them for it. So he, out of obedience to his mother and in the interests of order in the household and peace among his womenfolk, had the servants beaten whose names he had been given, as she had asked when giving them. To which she added the promise that anyone must expect a similar reward from her own hands who should think to please her by speaking ill of her daughter-in-law. And as no one had the courage to do so, they lived together with the most notable degree of kindness and harmony.

This great gift also, O my God, my Mercy, You gave to Your good servant, in whose womb You created me, that she showed herself, wherever possible, a peacemaker between people quarreling and minds at discord. For swelling and undigested discord often belches

2. Augustine's father.

forth bitter words when in the venom of intimate conversation with a present friend hatred at its rawest is breathed out upon an absent enemy. But when my mother heard bitter things said by each of the other, she never said anything to either about the other save what would help to reconcile them. This might seem a small virtue, if I had not had the sorrow of seeing for myself so many people who—as if by some horrible widespreading infection of sin—not only tell angry people the things their enemies said in anger, but even add things that were never said at all. Whereas, on the contrary, ordinary humanity would seem to require not merely that we refrain from exciting or increasing wrath among men by evil speaking, but that we study to extinguish wrath by kind speaking. Such a one was she: and You were the master who taught her most secretly in the school of her heart.

The upshot was that toward the very end of his life she won her husband to You; and once he was a Christian she no longer had to complain of the things she had had to bear with before he was a Christian. Further, she was a servant of Your servants. Such of them as knew her praised and honored and loved You, O God, in her; for they felt Your presence in her heart, showing itself in the fruit of her holy conversation. She had been *the wife of one husband, had requited her parents, had governed her house* piously, *was well reported of for good works. She had brought up her children*,[3] being in labor of them as often as she saw them swerving away from You. Finally of all of us Your servants, O Lord—since by Your gift You suffer us to speak—who before her death were living together[4] after receiving the grace of baptism, she took as much care as if she had been the mother of us all, and served us as if she had been the daughter of us all.

When the day was approaching on which she was to depart this life—a day that You knew though we did not—it came about, as I believe by Your secret arrangement, that she and I stood alone leaning in a window, which looked inwards to the garden within the house where we were staying, at Ostia on the Tiber; for there we were away from everybody, resting for the sea voyage from the weariness of our long journey by land. There we talked together, she and I alone, in deep joy; and *forgetting the things that were behind and looking forward to those that were before*, we were discussing in the presence of Truth, which You are, what the eternal life of the saints could be like, *which eye has not seen nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man*. But with the mouth of our heart we panted for the high waters of Your fountain, the fountain of the life which is with You: that being sprinkled from that fountain according to our capacity, we might in some sense meditate upon so great a matter.

And our conversation had brought us to this point, that any plea-

3. Augustine is quoting Paul's description of the duties of a widow. [I Timothy 5.] 4. Augustine and his fellow converts.

sure whatsoever of the bodily senses, in any brightness whatsoever of corporeal light, seemed to us not worthy of comparison with the pleasure of that eternal Light, not worthy even of mention. Rising as our love flamed upward towards that Selfsame,[5] we passed in review the various levels of bodily things, up to the heavens themselves, whence sun and moon and stars shine upon this earth. And higher still we soared, thinking in our minds and speaking and marveling at Your works: and so we came to our own souls, and went beyond them to come at last to that region of richness unending, where You feed Israel forever with the food of truth: and there life is that Wisdom by which all things are made, both the things that have been and the things that are yet to be. But this Wisdom itself is not made: it is as it has ever been, and so it shall be forever: indeed "has ever been" and "shall be forever" have no place in it, but it simply is, for it is eternal: whereas "to have been" and "to be going to be" are not eternal. And while we were thus talking of His Wisdom and panting for it, with all the effort of our heart we did for one instant attain to touch it; then sighing, and leaving the first fruits of our spirit bound to it, we returned to the sound of our own tongue, in which a word has both beginning and ending. For what is like to your Word, Our Lord, who abides in Himself forever, yet grows not old and makes all things new!

So we said: If to any man the tumult of the flesh grew silent, silent the images of earth and sea and air: and if the heavens grew silent, and the very soul grew silent to herself and by not thinking of self mounted beyond self: if all dreams and imagined visions grew silent, and every tongue and every sign and whatsoever is transient—for indeed if any man could hear them, he should hear them saying with one voice: We did not make ourselves, but He made us who abides forever: but if, having uttered this and so set us to listening to Him who made them, they all grew silent, and in their silence He alone spoke to us, not by them but by Himself: so that we should hear His word, not by any tongue of flesh nor the voice of an angel nor the sound of thunder nor in the darkness of a parable,[6] but that we should hear Himself whom in all these things we love, should hear Himself and not them: just as we two had but now reached forth and in a flash of the mind attained to touch the eternal Wisdom which abides over all: and if this could continue, and all other visions so different be quite taken away, and this one should so ravish and absorb and wrap the beholder in inward joys that his life should eternally be such as that one moment of understanding for which we had been sighing—would not this be: *Enter Thou into the joy of Thy*

5. Reality, the divine principle. This ecstasy of Augustine and Monica is throughout described in philosophical terms, in which God is Wisdom. 6. Alludes to Luke 8:10: "To you [the disciples of Jesus] it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God; but for others they are in parables, so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand."

Lord? But when shall it be? Shall it be when *we shall all rise again* and *shall not all be changed?*[7]

Such thoughts I uttered, though not in that order or in those actual words; but You know, O Lord, that on that day when we talked of these things the world with all its delights seemed cheap to us in comparison with what we talked of. And my mother said: "Son, for my own part I no longer find joy in anything in this world. What I am still to do here and why I am here I know not, now that I no longer hope for anything from this world. One thing there was, for which I desired to remain still a little longer in this life, that I should see you a Catholic Christian before I died. This God has granted me in superabundance, in that I now see you His servant to the contempt of all worldly happiness. What then am I doing here?"

What answer I made, I do not clearly remember; within five days or not much longer she fell into a fever. And in her sickness, she one day fainted away and for the moment lost consciousness. We ran to her but she quickly returned to consciousness, and seeing my brother and me standing by her she said as one wondering: "Where was I?" Then looking closely upon us as we stood wordless in our grief, she said: "Here you will bury your mother." I stayed silent and checked my weeping. But my brother said something to the effect that he would be happier if she were to die in her own land and not in a strange country. But as she heard this she looked at him anxiously, restraining him with her eye because he savored of earthly things, and then she looked at me and said: "See the way he talks." And then she said to us both: "Lay this body wherever it may be. Let no care of it disturb you: this only I ask of you that you should remember me at the altar of the Lord wherever you may be." And when she had uttered this wish in such words as she could manage, she fell silent as her sickness took hold of her more strongly.

But as I considered Your gifts, O unseen God, which You send into the hearts of Your faithful to the springing up of such wonderful fruits, I was glad and gave thanks to You, remembering what I had previously known of the care as to her burial which had always troubled her: for she had arranged to be buried by the body of her husband. Because they had lived together in such harmony, she had wished—so little is the human mind capable of rising to the divine—that it should be granted her, as an addition to her happiness and as something to be spoken of among men, that after her pilgrimage beyond the sea the earthly part of man and wife should lie together under the same earth. Just when this vain desire had begun to vanish from her heart through the fullness of Your goodness, I did not know;

7. Refers to the Last Judgment, when "the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." [I Corinthians 15:52.]

but I was pleased and surprised that it had now so clearly vanished: though indeed in the conversation we had had together at the window, when she said: "What am I still doing here?" there had appeared no desire to die in her own land. Further I heard afterwards that in the time we were at Ostia, she had talked one day to some of my friends, as a mother talking to her children, of the contempt of this life and of the attraction of death. I was not there at the time. They marveled at such courage in a woman—but it was You who had given it to her—and asked if she was not afraid to leave her body so far from her own city. But she said: "Nothing is far from God, and I have no fear that He will not know at the end of the world from what place He is to raise me up." And so on the ninth day of her illness, in the fifty-sixth year of her life and the thirty-third of mine, that devout and holy soul was released from the body.

I closed her eyes; and an immeasurable sorrow flowed into my heart and would have overflowed in tears. But my eyes under the mind's strong constraint held back their flow and I stood dry-eyed. In that struggle it went very ill with me. As she breathed her last, the child Adeodatus broke out into lamentation and we all checked him and brought him to silence. But in this very fact the childish element in me, which was breaking out into tears, was checked and brought to silence by the manlier voice of my mind. For we felt that it was not fitting that her funeral should be solemnized with moaning and weeping and lamentation, for so it is normal to weep when death is seen as sheer misery or as complete extinction. But she had not died miserably, nor did she wholly die. Of the one thing we were sure by reason of her character, of the other by the reality of our faith.

What then was it that grieved my heart so deeply? Only the newness of the wound, in finding the custom I had so loved of living with her suddenly snapped short. It was a joy to me to have this one testimony from her: when her illness was close to its end, meeting with expressions of endearment such services as I rendered, she called me a dutiful loving son, and said in the great affection of her love that she had never heard from my mouth any harsh or reproachful word addressed to herself. But what possible comparison was there, O my God who made us, between the honor I showed her and the service she had rendered me?

Because I had now lost the great comfort of her, my soul was wounded and my very life torn asunder, for it had been one life made of hers and mine together. When the boy had been quieted and ceased weeping, Evodius took up the psalter and began to chant—with the whole house making the responses—the psalm *Mercy and judgment I will sing to Thee, O Lord.*[8] And when they heard what

8. The opening words of Psalm 101.

was being done, many of the brethren and religious women came to us; those whose office it was were making arrangement for the burial, while, in another part of the house where it could properly be done I discoursed, with friends who did not wish to leave me by myself, upon matters suitable for that time. Thus I used truth as a kind of fomentation[9] to bring relief to my torment, a torment known to You, but not known to those others: so that listening closely to me they thought that I lacked all feeling of grief. But in Your ears, where none of them could hear, I accused the emotion in me as weakness; and I held in the flood of my grief. It was for the moment a little diminished, but returned with fresh violence, not with any pouring of tears or change of countenance: but I knew what I was crushing down in my heart. I was very much ashamed that these human emotions could have such power over me—though it belongs to the due order and the lot of our earthly condition that they should come to us—and I felt a new grief at my grief and so was afflicted with a twofold sorrow.

When the body was taken to burial, I went and returned without tears. During the prayers which we poured forth to you when the sacrifice of our redemption[1] was offered for her—while the body, as the custom there is, lay by the grave before it was actually buried—during those prayers I did not weep. Yet all that day I was heavy with grief within and in the trouble of my mind I begged of You in my own fashion to heal my pain; but You would not—I imagine because You meant to impress upon my memory by this proof how strongly the bond of habit holds the mind even when it no longer feeds upon deception. The idea came to me to go and bathe, for I had heard that the bath—which the Greeks call *βαλανειον*— is so called because it drives anxiety from the mind.[2] And this also I acknowledge to Your mercy, O Father of orphans, that I bathed and was the same man after as before. The bitterness of grief had not sweated out of my heart. Then I fell asleep, and woke again to find my grief not a little relieved. And as I was in bed and no one about, I said over those true verses that Your servant Ambrose wrote of You:

Deus creator omnium
polique rector vestiens
diem decoro lumine,
noctem sopora gratia,

artus solutos ut quies
reddat laboris usui

9. Soothing dressing for a wound. 1. Perhaps a communion service. 2. Augustine evidently derives balaneion, the Greek word for "bath," from the words *ballo* and *ania*, which mean "cast away" and "sorrow" respectively.

mentesque fessas allevet
luctusque solvat anxios.[3]

And then little by little I began to recover my former feeling about Your handmaid, remembering how loving and devout was her conversation with You, how pleasant and considerate her conversation with me, of which I was thus suddenly deprived. And I found solace in weeping in Your sight both about her and for her, about myself and for myself. I no longer tried to check my tears, but let them flow as they would, making them a pillow for my heart: and it rested upon them, for it was Your ears that heard my weeping, and not the ears of a man, who would have misunderstood my tears and despised them. But now, O Lord, I confess it to You in writing, let him read it who will and interpret it as he will: and if he sees it as sin that for so small a portion of an hour I wept for my mother, now dead and departed from my sight, who had wept so many years for me that I should live ever in Your sight—let him not scorn me but rather, if he is a man of great charity, let him weep for my sins to You, the Father of all the brethren of Your Christ.

Now that my heart is healed of that wound, in which there was perhaps too much of earthly affection, I pour forth to You, O our God, tears of a very different sort for Your handmaid—tears that flow from a spirit shaken by the thought of the perils there are for every soul that dies in Adam.[4] For though she had been made alive in Christ, and while still in the body had so lived that Your name was glorified in her faith and her character, yet I dare not say that from the moment of her regeneration in baptism no word issued from her mouth contrary to Your Command. Your Son, who is Truth, has said: *Whosoever shall say to his brother, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire;*[5] and it would go ill with the most praiseworthy life lived by men, if You were to examine it with Your mercy laid aside! But because You do not enquire too fiercely into our sins, we have hope and confidence of a place with You. Yet if a man reckons up before You the merits he truly has, what is he reckoning except Your own gifts? If only men would know themselves to be but men, so that he that glories would glory in the Lord!

Thus, my Glory and my Life, God of my heart, leaving aside for this time her good deeds, for which I give thanks to Thee in joy, I now pray to Thee for my mother's sins. Grant my prayer through

3. "God, the creator of all things and ruler of the heavens, / you who clothe the day with the glory of light / and the night with the gift of sleep, / so that rest may relax the limbs / and restore them for the day's work, / relieve the fatigue of the mind / and dispel anxiety and grief." 4. That is, with the curse of Adam not nullified through baptism in Jesus Christ and conformity with his teachings. 5. From Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. He is preaching a more severe moral code than the traditional one that whoever kills shall be liable to judgment.

the true Medicine of our wounds,[6] who hung upon the cross and who now sitting at Thy right hand makes intercession for us. I know that she dealt mercifully, and from her heart forgave those who trespassed against her: do Thou also forgive such trespasses as she may have been guilty of in all the years since her baptism, forgive them, Lord, forgive them, I beseech Thee: enter not into judgment with her. Let Thy mercy be exalted above Thy justice for Thy words are true and Thou hast promised that the merciful shall obtain mercy. That they should be merciful is Thy gift who *hast mercy on whom Thou wilt, and wilt have compassion on whom Thou wilt.*

And I believe that Thou hast already done what I am now asking; but be not offended, Lord, at the things my mouth would utter. For on that day when her death was so close, she was not concerned that her body should be sumptuously wrapped or embalmed with spices, nor with any thought of choosing a monument or even for burial in her own country. Of such things she gave us no command, but only desired to be remembered at Thy altar, which she had served without ever missing so much as a day, on which she knew that the holy Victim was offered; *by whom the handwriting is blotted out of the decree that was contrary to us,*[7] by which offering too the enemy was overcome who, reckoning our sins and seeking what may be laid to our charge, found nothing in Him, in whom we are conquerors. Who shall restore to Him his innocent blood? Who shall give Him back the price by which He purchased us and so take us from Him? To this sacrament of our redemption Thy handmaid had bound her soul by the bond of faith. Let none wrest her from Thy protection; let neither the lion nor the dragon[8] bar her way by force or craft. For she will not answer that she owes nothing, lest she should be contradicted and confuted by that cunning accuser: but she will answer that her debts have been remitted by Him, to whom no one can hand back the price which He paid for us, though He owed it not.

So let her rest in peace, together with her husband, for she had no other before nor after him, but served him, in patience bringing forth fruit for Thee, and winning him likewise for Thee. And inspire, O my Lord my God, inspire Thy servants my brethren, Thy sons my masters, whom I serve with heart and voice and pen, that as many of them as read this may remember at Thy altar Thy servant Monica, with Patricius, her husband, by whose bodies Thou didst bring me into this life, though how I know not.[9] May they with loving mind remember these who were my parents in this transitory light, my brethren who serve Thee as our Father in our Catholic mother, and

6. I.e., Jesus Christ. 7. Alludes to Christ's redemption of humanity from the curse of Adam through the Crucifixion. 8. Psalm 91.13 invokes God's protection of the godly: "Thou shalt tread upon the lion and the adder; the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet." 9. I.e., Augustine does not understand the seemingly miraculous process by which the fetus grows in the womb.

those who are to be fellow citizens with me in the eternal Jerusalem,[1] which Thy people sigh for in their pilgrimage from birth until they come there: so that what my mother at her end asked of me may be fulfilled more richly in the prayers of so many gained for her by my Confessions than by my prayers alone.

* * *

1. Heaven.

Masterpieces of the Middle Ages

The period of the Middle Ages—approximately A.D. 500–1500—encompasses a thousand years of European history distinguished by the unique fusion of a Heroic-Age society with Greco-Roman culture and Christian religion. The era is fairly well marked off by the emergence and disappearance of certain massive forces. It begins with the collapse of the Roman Empire in Western Europe, a development coincident with and partly occasioned by the settlement of Germanic peoples within the territory of the empire. It ends with the discovery of the Western Hemisphere, the invention of the printing press, the consolidation of strong national states, the break in religious unity brought about by the Protestant Reformation, and the renewal—after a lapse of nearly a thousand years—of direct contact with Greek art, thought, and literature. The medieval centuries created, or at least refashioned, and bequeathed to us such institutional patterns as the Christian church; the monarchical state; the town and village; the traditional European social order—the "lords spiritual," the "lords temporal," with the hierarchy of nobility and gentry ranging from duke to knight, and the third, or bourgeois, estate; the university; the system and logical method of Scholastic philosophy; Romanesque and Gothic architecture; and a rich variety of literary forms.

The literature of the earlier Middle Ages reflects directly and clearly the life and civilization of a Heroic Age. The dominant figure is the fighting king or chieftain; the favorite pursuit is war; the characteristic goals are power, wealth, and glory; and the primary virtues, accordingly, are valor and loyalty. The literary pattern is based on actuality, of which it presents a kind of idealization. In early Germanic and Celtic society the king ruled a small, essentially tribal nation; he and his companions in battle constituted a formal or informal noble class controlling the life of the people. The poems of such a society naturally tell chiefly of the fights of great champions, though also of the druids or other counselors who advised them and of the minstrels who entertained them. The proportions and the emphasis are much the same in the literature of the Irish, the Scandinavians, the French of the twelfth century, the Germans of the thirteenth. The hero of the *Song of Roland*, a twelfth-century French work, combines the fighting chieftain, serving his king, with the devout Crusader; and Archbishop Turpin is both spiritual adviser and fighting champion.

In the literature of the fourteenth century, the warrior plays a smaller rôle and is assimilated to the more extensive pattern of later medieval civiliza-

tion. Thus in Dante's Heaven only one of the nine celestial spheres—Mars—is occupied by great men-at-arms, all devout Christians, of course. Chaucer's Knight and Squire are only two among twenty-nine pilgrims on their way to Canterbury. The Knight is devoted to truth and honor, generosity, and courteous conduct, while his son, along with other virtues appropriate to a young soldier, possesses those of a courtly lover. The fighting champion of the Heroic Age has become the "officer and gentleman" of the modern world.

This gradual assimilation of the Celtic and Germanic hero to a civilization in which Christianity ordered the Greco-Roman culture to new ends was made possible by the religious unity and authority of Western Europe. The medieval millennium was indeed an age of faith, though it was far from being an age of religious passivity or inertia. The first half of the period was occupied in winning the new peoples of Europe to Christianity. When this had been accomplished, the Crusades began—a series of holy wars intended to rescue Palestine from pagan occupation and, in general, to defeat and either destroy or convert the pagans, chiefly Mohammedans. But the Greek and Arabic learning and philosophy which these non-Christian people introduced into Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries demanded an intellectual alertness. The sharpness of the Crusader's sword had to be matched by the acumen of the Scholastic philosopher; one of the chief works of St. Thomas Aquinas is a summation of principles in defense of Christianity "against the pagans" (his *summa contra Gentiles*). Medieval Christianity could never afford to take itself for granted. For the first four centuries after Christ the new religion was aggressively on the defensive; thereafter it had to be actively on the offensive in both the practical and the ideological spheres. Nevertheless, in Western Europe itself the combination of theological unity and ecclesiastical authority was a phenomenon unmatched either before or after the Middle Ages. The Roman Empire had provided political unity, law, and order, to assure the success of secular pursuits. Beyond that, it had left moral and spiritual problems to be handled by the individual, singly or in voluntary or ethnic groups. In medieval Europe political disunity was at something like a maximum; but under the leadership and direction of the Church there was achieved a remarkable unanimity of spiritual, moral, and intellectual attitudes and ideals.

The community of European culture in this period was such that the productions of individual countries look like regional manifestations of a central nuclear force. Generally speaking, students and scholars moved freely from land to land; monks, abbots, and bishops might be sent from the country of their birth to serve or preside in distant places; artists and poets wandered widely either in the train of or in search of patrons. Besides his native tongue, the educated man might be expected to speak and write the common "standard" language of Europe—Latin. In an age when the political state was relatively weak, a man's strongest loyalties were to an individual, a feudal lord, for example; to a code, such as the code of chivalry; to an order—of monks or friars or knights; or simply to the Church itself, if, like so many medieval men of intellectual interests, he was a cleric of some sort.

These ties—except for the feudal, and sometimes including that also—were *international* in nature. In such a cultural atmosphere the themes and

subjects and techniques of art and literature circulated freely throughout Europe. The *Gothic* architecture of a building is a more central aspect of it than the fact that it was designed and built by an English, a French, a German, or an Italian school of builders. Christianity itself furnished a common subject matter for painters, sculptors, and countless others skilled in the graphic and plastic arts; the biblical stories and scenes had the same meaning in every country. The stories of Charlemagne, Roland, and Arthur, of Aeneas, of Troy and Thebes, were European literary property. They were handled and rehandled, copied, translated, adapted, expanded, condensed, and in general appropriated by innumerable authors, writing in various languages, with no thought of property rights or misgivings about plagiarism. There were no copyright regulations and no author's royalties to motivate insistence on individuality of authorship; there was comparatively little concern about the identity of the artist. Many medieval poems and tales are anonymous, including some of the greatest.

The submergence of the artist in his work is accounted for in part, at least, by the medieval system of human values. The dominant hierarchy of values—we have seen that it did not dominate universally, especially in the literature of northern Europe—was based on the Christian view of man. Man, in this conception, is a creature of God, toward whom he is inevitably oriented but from whom he is separated by the world in which he must live his earthly, mortal life. Human civilization under Christian direction may be regarded as ideally designed—even if not actually so functioning—to assist man on his way to union with God. This is the criterion for the ultimate appraisal of all the institutions of society and all the patterns of culture. Hence derive the scale, the order, the hierarchical categories of medieval life and thought. Since the spiritual side of man transcends the material, the saint becomes the ideal. The saint is one whose life is most fully subdued, assimilated, and ordered to the spiritual. On earth he may be a hermit, like Cuthbert; a reformer of monasteries, like Bernard; a philosopher and a theologian, like Aquinas; a king, like Louis IX of France; or a humble man in private life. Since communion with God—the essential aspect of bliss in heaven—is an experience of the soul, the contemplative life, which prepares for the mystical communion, is superior to any form of the active life. Hence the monk—by virtue of his vocation—has an advantage over the secular priest, just as the priest is, other things being equal, in a position spiritually more desirable than that of the layman. As a whole, medieval literature is a study in human life judged according to this scale of values. The scale is represented clearly in Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Secular-value patterns are assimilated to it, for instance in the *Song of Roland*; or it may be taken for granted without much emphasis, as in Chaucer's works. But it is always there, whether below or above the surface. For the modern reader it supplies a focus for the adequate reading and understanding of most of the literature of the Middle Ages.

Robert S. Hoyt, *Europe in the Middle Ages* (1957), is a good historical survey. For a view of medieval thought and culture as a whole, the standard older work is H. O. Taylor, *The Mediaeval Mind*, 2 vols., 4th ed. (1925). A more recent book is F. B. Artz, *The Mind of the Middle Ages*, 2nd ed. (1954).

THE STORY OF DEIRDRE

Like the Greeks, the Germanic and Celtic peoples had a Heroic Age. For some centuries after about 1000 B.C., the Celts were the dominant people in Europe north of the Mediterranean and south of Scandinavia; their settlements extended from western Asia (Galatia) to Ireland. In medieval and modern times they are represented by the ethnic groups and languages known as Irish, Scottish Gaelic, Manx, Welsh, Cornish, and Breton. As with the epics of Homer, the early Irish literature reflects the civilization and culture of *their* Heroic Age, from approximately the second century B.C. to the fourth century A.D. It was an era of kings not of all Ireland but of each of the four or five provinces, such as Ulaid [OO-lid] (modern Ulster) and Connachta [Con-NAK-ta] (modern Connaught, in the west); below these were the kings of the many small tribal nations. There were no cities; the political and social capital was the king's court, a compound of wooden buildings dominated by a large hall or room in which the ruler sat in state (more or less), surrounded by liegemen who, along with the women, slept on beds or on the floor at night. Warriors traveled and fought in two-wheeled chariots drawn by a pair of horses and driven by a charioteer. In this preliterate time learning was the prerogative of the druids, a quasi-professional, perhaps quasi-priestly class who transmitted knowledge orally from one generation to the next. According to the early literature, the kings often looked to them for advice, and they were believed to have the gift of prophecy.

Attached to the royal court there was also apt to be a more or less official story-teller (*scelaige*, [skay-lig-eh] in Irish), who entertained the company with traditional tales (*scela*) [skay-lah] of great men and women and their notable deeds. There was a hierarchy of competence among these professional entertainers; a person holding the highest rank, that of *ollave* [ol-lav], was expected, according to one account, to have a repertory of 350 stories. Probably he called on his memory of outlines of the plots, while depending on his creative imagination for narrative detail. This may account for the brevity of some of the early texts, such as *The Story of Deirdre*. The ordinary use of writing—as distinct from Ogham inscriptions using notches scratched originally on stone or wood or horn—came in with the conversion to Christianity, beginning in the fifth century. The oldest texts of the tales of the Ulster Cycle, as they are called, were written in the eighth and ninth centuries (the extant manuscripts date from the twelfth century and later). The writers—and copiers—were, of course, Christian; this, along with the time interval, explains the paucity of information in the stories about the religion of the Irish before the conversion. Besides, the principal characters may originally have been figures of regeneration or fertility myths, and thus gods, or supernatural beings, who in later, Christian tradition became human. This is doubtless why the heroes and heroines are so often supermen and "bionic" women. What would be miracles wrought by saints in Christian legend are reported as powers of magic attributed to superhuman heroes. We can recognize this in the prowess of Noisiu [Noy-shu] and his two brothers in the Deirdre story—together, "they could hold off the entire province of

Ulaid," and they were as swift as hunting dogs. And the strength and skills of Cuchulainn [Cu-húl-in] the central figure of the *Cattle Raid of Cooley*, greatest and longest work of the Ulster cycle, are nearly always possible only for a Superman. But his character and personality, like those of Deirdre and Noisiu, are fully and attractively human.

The traditional Irish title of our story was *The Exile of the Sons of Uisliu* [Wees-li-u], in allusion to their flight from the court of Conchobur (Con-co-vor] and subsequent sojourn and travel in Scotland and elsewhere. The prose narrative is brief and bare, yet extraordinarily vivid and moving. The poems in clear images bring before us the (partly) happy life of the exiles as they camp in the open forest, and thus vary the deep mood of fatalistic prophecy at the beginning of the story and, later, the unalloyed pathos of Deirdre's grief for the slain Noisiu. Deirdre and Noisiu are as star-crossed lovers as ever were Juliet and Romeo. Their love, indeed, does not begin in the manner of courtly romance; instead, Noisiu must choose between disobedience to Conchobur and the disgrace which will fall upon him if he refuses Deirdre's challenge. But, once the choice is made, the commitment and the devotion of the pair are total and unswerving; and, like Shakespeare's Juliet, Deirdre is the stronger and the more articulate character.

Deirdre has been called the Irish Helen, in allusion to the wife of the Argive king Menelaos, whose abduction by the prince Paris led to the Trojan War. The fatal beauty of one woman caused the destruction of Troy; that of the other woman caused the burning of Emuin Machae [Ev-in Mah-ka], King Conchobur's capital. For more than a millennium Deirdre has haunted the memory and imagination of Irish poets. If Helen's face launched a thousand ships, Deirdre's story inspired a multitude of writers. Among the works of modern Anglo-Irish authors are Synge's *Deirdre of the Sorrows*, a three-act play first produced in 1910 at the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, shorter dramas by Yeats and AE (George William Russell), and a novelistic treatment by James Stephens.

Our ancient narrative begins with the birth of Deirdre at the court of Conchobur, king of the Ulaid, as the people of Ulster were then called. The scene may remind us of situations in Homer; for instance, the company surrounding King Alcinous when Odysseus is invited to tell his story were also eating and drinking. The Greek minstrel has his counterpart in the Irish storyteller; the setting, simpler and cruder than that in Phaeacia, has more ominous elements of wonder and awe. By marvel and by prophecy alike Deirdre is destined for no ordinary life. As in Greek epic and tragedy, the portrayal of major figures may vary from story to story. Creon in *Oedipus the King* is a patient, benign person, unlike the rigid ruler of *Antigone*. In most Irish narratives Conchubur is favorably shown as a beneficent king of the Ulaid and protector of the great Cuchulainn, his nephew. But in the Deirdre story he is the relentless and unscrupulous enemy of the lovers. After promising them a safe return to his court, he plots the assassination of Noisiu and his brothers. They had sworn to eat no food after landing in Ireland until they reached Conchubur's capital. Hence Conchubur first detaches Fergus, the principal "guarantor" on whom Noisiu and Deirdre rely for their safety, from the party of returning travelers. To do this he

makes use of a peculiar Irish custom, known as the *geis* [gaysh]—a kind of tabu to which a person might be subject. Now Fergus has a *geis* which requires him never to refuse an invitation to food or drink. He is thus obliged to remain behind while Noisiu and most of the entourage go on—and fall into the power of Conchubur. Later, Fergus will take spectacular revenge; but by then, of course, the sons of Uisliu have been slain and Deirdre made a helpless captive of the king.

An excellent translation of the *Cattle Raid of Cooley* is available in Thomas Kinsella, *The Táin*, translated from the Irish Epic *Táin Bó Cúailnge* [Tawn Bo Koo-ling-e] (1970). Several shorter tales of the Ulster cycle are admirably translated in Jeffrey Gantz, *Early Irish Myths and Sagas* (1981). Kenneth H. Jackson, *The Oldest Irish Tradition: A Window on the Iron Age* (1964), is the best brief account of Heroic Age civilization and literature in Ireland, (55 pp.). Proinsias Mac Cana, *Celtic Mythology* (1970), is clear, brief, and handsomely illustrated.

The Story of Deirdre[1]

The Ulaid were drinking at the house of Fedilmid[2] son of Dall, Conchubur's storyteller, and Fedilmid's wife was standing over them and serving, even though she was with child. Drinking horns and portions of food went round, and the house was filled with drunken shouting. When it came time to sleep, Fedilmid's wife rose to go to her bed, but as she crossed the house the child in her womb screamed so that it was heard throughout the court. At that scream the men all rose, and they were standing chin to chin, but Senchae[3] son of Ailill quieted them, saying 'Do not disturb each other! Let the woman be brought to us that we might learn what caused that noise.' So the woman was brought to them, and her husband asked her:

> What is this violent noise that resounds,
> that rages in your roaring womb?
> The outcry between your two sides—mighty its sound—
> crushes the ears of those who hear it.
> My heart is terribly wounded:
> a great fear has seized it.

Then Fedilmid's wife spoke to Cathub,[4] for he was a wise man:

> Listen to Cathub, fair of face,
> a handsome prince, great and powerful his crown,
> exalted by his druid wisdom.
> I myself do not have the white[5] words

1. Translated by Jeffrey Gantz. 2. [Fay-dil-mid]. 3. [Shen-kay]: A wise counselor at the court of King Conchubur. *Ailill* [Al-il]: This is not the same man as Ailill, king of Connachta. 4. A seer or druid endowed with the gift of prophecy. 5. I.e., true, wise.

through which my husband might obtain
an answer to his question,
for, though it cried out in the cradle of my body,
no woman knows
what her womb bears.

And Cathub replied:

In the cradle of your womb there cried out
a woman with twisted yellow hair
and beautiful grey green eyes.
Foxglove her purple pink cheeks,
the colour of snow her flawless teeth,
brilliant her Parthian-red[6] lips.
A woman over whom there will be great slaughter
among the chariot-warriors of Ulaid.
There screams in your roaring womb
a tall, beautiful, long-haired woman
whom champions will contest,
whom high kings will woo;
and to the west of Conchubur's province
there will be a rich harvest of fighting men.
Parthian-red lips will frame
those flawless teeth;
high queens will envy her
her matchless, faultless form.

Then Cathub placed his hand on the woman's womb, and the child murmured, and he said 'Indeed, it is a girl, and her name will be Derdriu,[7] and there will be trouble on her account.' After the girl had been born, Cathub said:

Though you may have fame and beauty,
Derdriu, you will destroy much;
Ulaid will suffer on your account,
fair daughter of Fedilmid.

And after that there will be still more deaths
because of you, woman like a flame.
In your lifetime—hear this—
the three sons of Uisliu will be exiled.

In your lifetime a violent deed
will be done at Emuin;
repented thereafter will be the treachery
that violated the guarantee of mighty Fergus.

6. A deep, rich color, traditionally associated with the Eastern country of Parthia. 7. [Der-dri-oo]: The nominative case form of the name in Irish.

Because of you, woman of fate,
Fergus will be exiled from Ulaid,
and—a deed that will cause much weeping—
Conchubur's son Fiachnae[8] will be slain.

Because of you, woman of fate,
Gerrce[9] son of Illadán will be slain,
and—a crime no less awful—
Éogan[1] son of Durthacht will be destroyed.

You will do a frightful fierce deed[2]
out of anger at Ulaid's high king;
your grave will be everywhere[3]—
yours will be a famous tale, Derdriu.

'Let the child be slain!' said the young warriors. 'No,' said Conchubur, 'I will take her away tomorrow, and I will rear her as I see fit, and she will be my companion.' And none of the Ulaid dared oppose him. Derdriu was reared by Conchubur until she was by far the most beautiful woman in Ériu.[4] She was reared in a court apart, lest any of the Ulaid see her before she was to sleep with Conchubur, and no one was allowed into that court save her foster-father and her foster-mother[5] and a woman named Lebarcham who was a satirist[6] and could not be barred.

One day, in winter, Derdriu's foster-father was outside, in the snow, flaying a weaned calf for her. Derdriu saw a raven drinking the blood on the snow, and she said to Lebarcham 'I could love a man with those three colours: hair like a raven, cheeks like blood and body like snow.' 'Then luck and good fortune are with you,' answered Lebarcham, 'for such a man is not far off. In fact, he is quite near: Noísiu son of Uisliu.' Derdriu replied 'I will be ill, then, until I see him.'[7]

It happened one day that Noísiu was standing alone on the rampart of the stronghold of Emuin, and he was singing. The singing of the sons of Uisliu was very melodious: every cow that heard it gave two thirds more milk, and every man who heard it grew peaceful and sated with music. The sons of Uisliu were also good fighters: when they stood back to back, they could hold off the entire province of

8. [Fee-ak-nay]: He will be killed in revenge for the treacherous attack on Noísiu, as the narrative tells. 9. [Ger-kay]: Nothing further is told of him. *Illadán*: [Il-lah-don] 1. [Yóg-an]. *Durthacht* [Door-thakt]: Éogan will be the actual slayer of Noísiu. The narrative does not tell us how Éogan met death. 2. Perhaps a reference to Deirdre's violent suicide. 3. Many places in Ireland will claim to be Deirdre's grave—an indication of her fame. 4. [A-ri-oo]: The usual name of Ireland in the Irish language. 5. Children of the higher classes were often brought up by foster parents; here the names are not given. 6. Satirists—often female—were a prominent feature of early Irish society and literature. It was believed that their invectives could inflict physical injury (through the magical power of words). *Lebarcham*: [Lay-vor-kam]. 7. Besides love at first sight, familiar elsewhere in the world, love *before* first sight is frequent in early Irish literature—inspired, as here, by report.

Ulaid. Moreover, they were as swift as hunting hounds and could overtake and kill wild animals.

When Noísiu was outside alone, then, Derdriu stole out to him and made as if to go past, and he did not recognize her. 'A fine heifer[8] that that is going by,' he said. "The heifers are bound to be fine where there are no bulls,' she answered. 'You have the bull of the province: the king of Ulaid,' Noísiu said. 'Between the two of you, I would choose a young bull like yourself,' Derdriu replied. 'No! There is Cathub's prophecy,' said Noísiu. 'Are you rejecting me, then?' she asked. 'I am, indeed,' he answered. At that, Derdriu leapt at him and seized him by the ears, saying 'Two ears of shame and mockery these unless you take me with you!' 'Away from me, woman!' Noísiu said. 'Too late!'[9] answered Derdriu.

With that, Noísiu began to sing.[1] When the Ulaid heard his singing they rose up against each other, but the other sons of Uisliu[2] went out to restrain their brother. 'What are you doing?' they asked. 'The Ulaid will be coming to blows on your account.' Then Noísiu told his brothers what had happened. 'Evil will come of this,' they said. 'Even so, you will not be disgraced while we are alive. We will all take her to another land—there is not in Ériu a king who will turn us away.' That was their advice. They departed that night: three fifties of warriors and three fifties of women and three fifties of hounds and three fifties of servants and Derdriu mingled in with them.

For a long time, the brothers found protection with kings throughout Ériu, though through his snares and treacheries Conchubur often attempted to destroy them, from Ess Rúaid[3] to the south-west and then back north-east to Bend Étair. Finally, the Ulaid drove them out of Ériu and into Albu;[4] there, they settled in the wilderness, and, when the game of the mountains ran out, they helped themselves to cattle. One day, the men of Albu gathered to destroy them, so they went to the king of Albu, and he took them into his entourage; they became mercenaries and erected their dwellings on the green. Because of Derdriu, they built their houses so that no one could see her, for they feared there might be killing on her account.

Early one morning, however, the king's steward went out round the house of Derdriu and Noísiu, and he saw the lovers sleeping. At once, he went and awakened the king, saying 'Until now, we have not found a woman worthy of you. But there is with Noísiu son of

8. No disrespect is intended; rather, admiration. Cattle were a principal form of wealth in the Irish Heroic Age. And one might compare our use of "lamb" or "chick" or "fox" to refer to an attractive young person. 9. The challenge ("two ears of shame and mockery") has already been uttered (and is irreversible). 1. The reticent author does not say whether in exultation or dismay; at any rate, the Ulaid are apparently upset by the loudness of the song. 2. Aindle [End-lay] and Arddán [Ard-dahn]; their names are given in a stanza below. 3. [Es-roo-a]: The modern Asseroe, in the county Donegal. *Bend Étair* [A-tare]: the Hill of Howth, in Dublin Bay. 4. Probably Scotland.

Uisliu a woman worthy of the king of the western world. Let Noísiu be slain that the woman might sleep with you.' 'No,' replied the king, 'but go to her each day in secret and woo her for me.'

The steward did that, but everything he said to Derdriu she told Noísiu the same night. Since nothing could be got from her, the sons of Uisliu were sent into battles and hazards and dangerous situations that they might be killed, but they were so hardy that every attempt failed. So the men of Albu gathered to kill them; they told Derdriu, and she told Noísiu, saying 'Depart! Unless you leave tonight, you will be slain tomorrow.' That night, Derdriu and the sons of Uisliu departed and went to an island in the sea.

This news reached the Ulaid, and they said to Conchubur, 'A pity that the sons of Uisliu should die in a strange land because of a bad woman. Better that you should be lenient and not slay them—let them return and take them in.' 'Let them come, then,' said Conchubur, 'or let guarantors[5] be sent to them.' That message was taken to Noísiu and his brothers, and they replied, 'A welcome message that. We will come; we ask for Fergus as a guarantor, and Dubthach,[6] and Conchubur's son Cormac.'

So these men went to Albu and accompanied Derdriu and the sons of Uisliu back to Ériu. On Conchubur's orders, however, the Ulaid all strove to invite Fergus to feasts[7] and banquets, for the sons of Uisliu had sworn that the first food they touched in Ériu would be Conchubur's. Thus, Fergus and Dubthach remained behind, while Fergus's son Fíachu[8] went on with Derdriu and the sons of Uisliu until they reached the green of Emuin Machae. Meanwhile, Éogan son of Durthacht, the king of Fernmag,[9] had made up with Conchubur—the two had long been at odds—and had been charged to kill the sons of Uisliu, who would be kept from Conchubur by the king of Ulaid's mercenaries.

The sons of Uisliu were waiting in the centre of the green; the women of Emuin were sitting along the ramparts; Éogan was crossing the green with his troops. Fíachu came up to join Noísiu. Éogan, however, greeted Noísiu with the point of his spear and broke his back. At that, Fíachu put his arms round Noísiu and pulled him down and covered him, so that thereafter Noísiu was struck from above through the son of Fergus. The sons of Uisliu were then hunted from one end of the green to the other, and no one escaped save by point of spear and edge of sword. Derdriu was taken to stand beside Conchubur, her hands tied behind her.

This news reached Fergus and Dubthach and Cormac, and at once they went to Emuin and performed great deeds. Dubtharh killed

5. Men who would pledge themselves to assure the safety of Noisiu and the rest of the exiles. The guarantors are named a few lines below. 6. [Doov-thak]. 7. Conchubur's strategy is explained in the *Introduction*, above. 8. [Fee-ah-koo]. 9. [Fern-moy].

Conchubur's son Mane[1] and dispatched Fíachnae, the son of Conchubur's daughter Fedelm,[2] with a single blow; Fergus killed Traigthrén[3] son of Traiglethan and his brother. Conchubur was outraged, and a battle ensued: in one day, three hundred Ulaid fell, and Dubthach slew the young women of the province, and Fergus fired Emuin. Afterwards, Fergus and Dubthach and Cormac and their followers went to Connachta, for they knew that Ailill and Medb[4] would maintain them, though Connachta was no refuge of love for men from Ulaid. Three thousand was the number of the exiles, and, for sixteen years, these people saw that there was weeping and trembling in Ulaid every night.

Derdriu spent the year following Noísiu's death with Conchubur, and, during that time, she neither laughed nor smiled, nor did she ever have her fill of food or sleep. She never lifted her head from her knee, and, whenever musicians were brought to her, she recited this poem:

Fair to you the ardent warriors
who march into Emuin after an expedition;
more nobly did they march to their dwelling,
the three very heroic sons of Uisliu.

Noísiu with fine hazel mead
(I would wash him by the fire),
Arddán with a stag or fine pig,
Tall Aindle with a load on his back.

Sweet to you the fine mead
that battle-glorious Conchubur drinks;
but often I had before me, across the ocean,
food that was sweeter.

When modest Noísiu spread out
the cooking hearth on the wild forest floor,
sweeter than any honeyed food
was what the son of Uisliu prepared.

Melodious always to you
your pipers and trumpeters;
yet today I tell you
I have heard music that was sweeter.

Melodious to Conchubur, your king,
his pipers and trumpeters;
sweeter to me—fame of hosts—
the singing of the sons of Uisliu.

1. [Mah-nay]. 2. [Fay-delm]. 3. [Trayg-thrayn]. *Traiglethan* [Trayg-leth-an]. 4. [Mayv]. Ailill and Medb were the king and queen of the province of Connachta.

A wave the sound of Noísiu's voice—
his singing was always sweet;
Arddán's baritone was good,
and Aindle's tenor from his hunting lodge.

Noísiu's grave has now been made,
and the accompaniment was mournful.
For him I poured out—hero of heroes—
the deadly drink that killed him.[5]

Dear his short shining hair,
a handsome man, even very beautiful;
sad that I cannot await him today,
cannot expect the son of Uisliu.

Dear his desire, right and proper,
dear this modest noble warrior;
after his going to the forest's edge,
dear his company in the early morning.

Dear the grey eyes that women loved;
fierce they were to foes.
After a circuit of the forest—a noble union—
dear his tenor through the great dark wood.

I do not sleep now,
nor do I brighten my nails:
there is no joy for me
since the son of Tindell[6] will not come.

I do not sleep
but lie awake half the night;
my thoughts flee from these hosts,
I neither eat nor smile.

I have today no cause for joy
in the assembly of Emuin—throng of chieftains—
no peace, no delight, no comfort,
no great house, no fine adornments.

And when Conchubur tried to comfort her, she would recite this poem to him:

Conchubur, be quiet!
You have brought me grief upon sorrow;
as long as I live, surely,
your love will be of no concern to me.

You have taken from me—a great crime—
the one I thought most beautiful on earth,

5. A figurative expression—she was the cause of his death. 6. The mother of Noisiu and his brothers.

the one I loved most.
I will not see him again until I die.

His absence is my despair,
the absence of the son of Uisliu.
A jet black cairn over his white body
once so well known among men.

Brighter than a river meadow his glistening cheeks,
red his lips, beetle-black his brows;
the noble colour of snow
his shining, pearly teeth.

Well known his bright garb
among the warriors of Albu;
fair and brilliant his mantle—a noble union—
with its fringe of red gold.

A true treasure his satin tunic
with its hundred gems—a gentle number—
and for decoration, clear and shining,
fifty ounces of white gold.

A gold-hilted sword in his hand,
two steely spears with javelin points;
a shield with a rim of yellow gold
and a boss of silver.

Fair Fergus betrayed us[7]
after bringing us across the great sea;
he sold his honour for beer,
his great deeds are no more.

Although the Ulaid might gather
about Conchubur upon the plain,
I would forsake them all, openly,
for the company of Noísiu son of Uisliu.

Break no more my heart today—
I will reach my early grave soon enough.
Sorrow is stronger than the sea
if you are wise, Conchubur.

'What do you hate most that you see?' asked Conchubur. 'Yourself, surely, and Éogan son of Durthacht,' she replied. 'Then you will spend a year with Éogan,' Conchubur said. He took her to Éogan. The following day they went to a fair at Emuin Machae, Derdriu

7. Deirdre may have been unaware of the dilemma in which Fergus was caught; see the *Introduction*.

standing behind Éogan in his chariot. She had sworn that she would never see her two companions together in the same place. 'Well, Derdriu,' said Conchubur, 'it is the eye of a ewe between two rams you make between myself and Éogan.' There was a great boulder before Derdriu. She let her head be driven against it, and the boulder made fragments of her head, and she died.

THE SONG OF THE SEERESS

People originally from the Scandinavian countries played an important part in the history of northwestern Europe between the eighth and the eleventh centuries A.D. These Danes, Norwegians, and Swedes form a northern group of the Germanic branch of the Indo-European–speaking nations. First as raiders and then as permanent settlers, they occupied the coasts of Ireland, most of England except the southwest, and the peninsula of France hence called Normandy. In the late ninth century they—chiefly the Norwegians—settled Iceland, which continued as an independent country until near the middle of the thirteenth century. Like the Celts, these Norsemen had a rich "oral literature"; for them also the ordinary use of writing began with the conversion to Christianity in the eleventh century. What is notable about them, among the Germanic nations, is the transmission or composition of an abundant pagan mythology. The English, the Germans, and the Dutch in later times kept little of their pre-Christian religious heritage except the names of four of the days of the week. Thus Tuesday preserves the memory of Tiu (Norse Tyr); Wednesday is the day of Woden (Norse Odin); Thursday belongs to Thor; and Friday is the day of the goddess of love and fertility, Freya. But the Norse, and especially the Icelanders, have left us some twenty or twenty-five narrative poems about the gods and the earliest Germanic heroes. In these we hear of Thor's fights against the Giants and the Midgard Serpent, a dragon who lives in the ocean surrounding all the lands; of Odin's contests with elves and his numerous adventures in pursuit of hidden knowledge; and of his dealings with Brunhild, Sigurd (the German Siegfried), Sigmund, and others. From this as ultimate source come the figures and part of the plot framework of Wagner's operatic sequence the *Ring of the Nibelung*. The English and the Germans retained a vivid memory of the demigod Wayland, the marvelous smith; but to understand the allusions to him in their traditions we must turn to the Norse *Völundarkvitha* for the full story.

Although *The Song of the Seeress* incorporates or builds on many of the myths of the gods, it is well-nigh unique. It is cast in the form of a dialogue between Odin and Heidi, the seeress; he has called her from the dead to answer his questions. In this way the poet presents a vision of the universe: in the beginning, nothing but a primordial giant and empty space, "a yawning gap"; then the shaping of a world order from the body of the giant; then the emergence of the divine figures and the appearance of men and women; the continual confrontation of the gods and the monsters who seek to reduce

the cosmos to chaos; and the Armageddon-like end in reciprocal destruction—and a final vision of benevolence and order restored. The poet is often concise and allusive; he was speaking to an audience familiar with the myths beyond our knowledge; we cannot always be sure that we are reading him aright. The *Song* was probably composed near the end of the pagan period (Iceland accepted Christianity in the year 1000); the last section apparently shows influence from Christian ideas about "a new heaven and earth." It is impossible to say how many of the myths in the *Song* and in the other poems of this group (the *Elder Edda*) were a common Germanic heritage and how many were known only among the Scandinavians, or some of them. In any case, our own "nuclear" age should not find it difficult to understand the pervading conception of the *Song:* civilization and life itself are constantly threatened by evil powers; the gods meanwhile carry on a cold war to keep them at bay for as long as possible. Many readers will find the portrayal of this struggle not unlike that in J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. To some degree, indeed, the modern author has borrowed the mood and tone of the poem, as well as some proper names; for example Gandálf, in strophe 15, becomes Gandalf in Tolkien. And the translators' dedication acknowledges *their* relationship—"For J. R. R. Tolkien."

In his translation the poet W. H. Auden uses a verse form similar to the Norse original. Each line or verse contains at least two, sometimes three alliterating, stressed syllables; thus, in the first line of the poem:

"Heidi men call me when their homes I visit,"

"Heidi" and "homes" alliterate, that is, begin with the same sound, the consonant *h*. The fourth line has three alliterating syllables:

"To wicked women welcome always."

Further, any vowel or diphthong may alliterate with any other; thus in line 11,

"Odin, I know where your eye is concealed,"

the required alliteration is provided by "Odin" and "eye," while "I" may offer a third syllable if it is stressed in reading.

Translations of the poems in the *Elder Edda* (besides Taylor and Auden): Henry Adams Bellows, *The Poetic Edda* (1923; and later printings), and L. M. Hollander, *The Poetic Edda* (1962). For the background see E. O. G. Turville-Petre, *Myth and Religion of the North* (1964), as well as his *Origins of Icelandic Literature* (1953).

Song of the Seeress[1]

Heidi men call me when their homes I visit, 1
A far-seeing witch, wise in talismans,
Caster of spells, cunning in magic,
To wicked women welcome[2] always.

1. Translated by Paul B. Taylor and W. H. Auden. 2. Witches and seeresses had a bad reputation generally in Scandinavia—despite their recognized knowledge.

Arm-rings and necklaces, Odin, you gave me 2
To learn my lore, to learn my magic:
Wider and wider through all worlds[3] I see.

Outside I sat by myself when you came, 3
Terror of the Gods, and gazed in my eyes.
What do you ask of me? Why tempt me?
Odin, I know where your eye is concealed,[4]
Hidden away in the Well of Mimir:
Mimir each morning his mead drinks
From Valfather's Pledge. *Well, would you know more?*[5]

Of Heimdal,[6] too, and his horn I know, 4
Hidden under the holy tree;
Down on it pours a precious stream
From Valfather's Pledge. *Well, would you know more?*

Silence I ask of the Sacred Folk,[7] 5
Silence of the kith and kin of Heimdal:
At your will, Valfather, I shall well relate
The old songs of men I remember best.

I tell of giants from times forgotten, 6
Those who fed me in former days:
Nine Worlds I can reckon, nine roots of the Tree,
The wonderful Ash, way under the ground.

When Ymir[8] lived long ago 7
Was no sand or sea, no surging waves,
Nowhere was there earth nor heaven above,
But a grinning gap and grass nowhere.

The Sons of Bur[9] then built up the lands, 8
Molded in magnificence Middle Earth:[1]

3. The divisions of the universe in which, severally, lived gods, elves, dwarfs, etc. 4. At some time in the past Odin had given Mimir one of his eyes in return for secret knowledge (hence Odin is regularly represented with one eye). As the poem says, Mimir (a supernatural being) used the eye as a drinking cup. *Valfather:* An epithet of Odin—"Father (i.e., ruler or protector) of the slain." 5. This query, repeated several times in the poem, dramatizes the tension between the seeress and Odin. Although she boasts of her knowledge, she would like to be released as soon as possible. 6. Watchman of the gods, whose horn can summon or warn. *The holy tree:* The World-Ash; see strophe 6 below. 7. The assembly of gods who, apparently, will hear her along with Odin. 8. The primeval giant from whom the universe was shaped. 9. Odin and his brothers Ve and Vili. 1. In the newly ordered world, Asgard, the realm of the gods, was at the center; next was the earth; farthest out was Utgard, including the realms of the giants and other creatures. Earth was in the middle, hence Middle Earth. A similar arrangement in the Tolkien books.

Sun stared from the south on the stones of their hall,
From the ground there sprouted green leeks.

Sun turned from the south, Sister of Moon, 9
Her right arm rested on the rim of Heaven;
She had no inkling where her hall was,
Nor Moon a notion of what might he had,
The planets knew not where their places were.[2]

The High Gods gathered in council 10
In their Hall of Judgment, all the rulers:
To Night and to Nightfall their names gave,
The Morning they named and the Mid-Day,
Mid-Winter, Mid-Summer, for the assigning of years.

At Idavale the Aesir[3] met: 11
Temple and altar they timbered and raised,
Set up a forge to smithy treasures,
Tongs they fashioned and tools wrought;

Played chess[4] in the court and cheerful were; 12
Gold they lacked not, the gleaming metal.
Then came Three, the Thurse Maidens,[5]
Rejoicing in their strength, from Gianthome.

The High Gods gathered in council 13
In their Hall of Judgment: Who of the dwarfs
Should mold man by mastercraft
From Brimir's blood and Bláin's limbs?[6]

Mótsognir was their mighty ruler, 14
Greatest of dwarfs, and Durin after him:
The dwarfs did as Durin directed,
Many man-forms made from the earth.

Nýi and Nídi, Nordri, Sundri, 15
Austri and Vestri, Althjóf, Dvalin,
Bívor, Bávor, Bömbur, Nóri,

2. At first the sun, moon, and planets had no regular orbits; the gods ordained the regularity we know, and hence the boundaries of day and night, the seasons, etc., as the following strophe sets forth. 3. Aesir is a plural noun; it designates the principal family of the gods. *Idavale*: We are never told where this was, perhaps in the general realm of Asgard. 4. More likely a game such as backgammon. 5. Giantesses; but they appear out of place at this point in the poem. 6. These may be other names for the primeval giant Ymir or, possibly, intermediate members of the Giant family. The "man" of strophe 13 would seem actually to refer to the dwarfs, which were of human shape. At any rate, the following passage is concerned with dwarfs, not men and women.

An and Ánar, Óinn, Mjödvitnir,
Veig and Gandálf, Vindálf, Thorin,
Thrór and Thráin, Thekkur, Littur,
Vitur, Nyr and Nýrádur,
Fíli, Kíli, Fundin, Náli,
Hefti, Víli, Hanar, Svíur,
Billing, Brúni, Bíldur, and Buri,
Frár, Hornbori, Fraegur, Lóni,
Aurvangur, Jari, Eikinskjaldi:
(All Durin's folk I have duly named.)

I must tell of the dwarves in Dvalin's[7] host; 16
Like lions they were in Lokar's time:
In Juravale's marsh they made their dwelling,
From their stone hall set out on journeys.

There was Draupnir and Dólgthrasir, 17
Hár, Haugspori, Hlévangur, Glói,
Dori, Ori, Dufur, Andvari,
Skirfir, Virfir, Skáfidur, Ái,
Álf and Yngvi, Eikinskjaldi,
Fjalar and Frosti, Finn and Ginnar:
Men will remember while men live
The long line of Lofar's forebears.

Then from the host Three[8] came, 18
Great, merciful, from the god's home:
Ash and Elm on earth they found,
Faint, feeble, with no fate assigned them.

Breath they had not, nor blood nor senses, 19
Nor language possessed, nor life-hue:
Odin gave them breath, Haenir senses,
Blood and life-hue Lodur gave.

I know an ash-tree, named Yggdrasil:[9] 20
Sparkling showers are shed on its leaves
That drip dew into the dales below.
By Urd's Well it waves evergreen,
Stands over that still pool,
Near it a bower whence now there come

7. A chief of dwarves, as probably were also Lokar and Lofar. *Juravale*: Not identified. 8. The gods Odin, Haenir, and Lodur, as explained below. *Ash and Elm*: The first man and woman. 9. The name of the tree; literally, the "steed of Ygg," another name of Odin. Odin hanged himself on the tree in order to gain secret knowledge.

The Fate Maidens, first Urd.
Skuld second, scorer of runes,[1]
Then Verdandi, third of the Norns:
The laws that determine the lives of men
They fixed forever and their fate sealed.

The first war in the world I well remember, 21
When Gullveg[2] was spitted on spear points
And burned in the hall of the High God:
Thrice burned, thrice reborn
Often laid low, she lives yet.
The gods hastened to their Hall of Judgment, 22
Sat in council to decide whether
To endure great loss in loud strife
Or let both command men's worship.

At the host Odin hurled his spear 23
In the first world-battle; broken was the plankwall
Of the god's fortress: the fierce Vanes
Caused war to occur in the fields.

The gods hastened to their Hall of Judgment, 24
Sat in council to discover who
Had tainted all the air with corruption
And Odin's Maid offered to the giants.[3]

One Thor felled[4] in his fierce rage; 25
Seldom he sits when of such he hears:
Oaths were broken, binding vows,
Solemn agreements sworn between them.

Valkyries[5] I saw, coming from afar, 26
Eagerly riding to aid the Goths;
Skuld bore one shield, Skögul another,
Gunn, Hild, Göngul and Spearskögul:

1. She used the runic alphabet to inscribe prophecies (on wood or stone). *Und:* That which has come about—the Past; *Skuld:* That which is destined—the Future; *Verdandi:* That which is becoming—the Present. *Norns:* Fates. 2. The mysterious Gullveg was somehow connected, apparently, with the conflict between two families of gods, the Aesir and the Vanes (Frey and Freya, god and goddess of love and fertility). The myth probably reflects first war, then reconciliation between people who had different deities. 3. This was Loki, a clever but (usually) malevolent figure who often sits with the gods but is actually an ally of the giants and monsters. He contracted with the giants to give them Freya ("Odin's Maid")—and the sun and moon—in payment for building the citadel Asgard, and the gods were committed to the bargain. 4. Thor slew one of the giants. *Oaths were broken:* When the gods finally realized the enormity of the bargain they broke the contract. 5. Literally, "choosers of the slain" in battles, in obedience to Odin, their father. (One of the operas in Wagner's *Ring* is *The Valkyries.*) Goths: I.e., men.

Duly have I named the Daughters of Odin,
The valiant riders, the Valkyries.

Baldur I saw, the bleeding god, 27
His fate still hidden, Odin's son:
Tall on the plain a plant grew,
A slender marvel, the mistletoe.

From that fair shrub, shot by Hödur, 28
Flew the fatal dart that felled the God,[6]
But Baldur's Brother was born soon after:
Though one night old, Odin's Son
Took a vow to avenge that death.

His hands he washed not nor his hair combed 29
Till Baldur's Bane[7] was borne to the pyre:
Deadly the bow drawn by Vali,
The strong string of stretched gut,
But Frigg[8] wept in Fensalir
For the woe of Valhalla. *Well, would you know more?*

I see one in bonds by the boiling springs;[9] 30
Like Loki he looks, loathsome to view:
There Sigyn sits, sad by her husband,
In woe by her man. *Well, would you know more?*

From the east through Venom Valley runs 31
Over jagged rocks the River Gruesome.

North, in Darkdale, stands the dwelling place 32
Of Sindri's kin,[1] covered with gold;
A hall also in Everfrost,
The banquet hall of Brimir the Giant.

A third I see, that no sunlight reaches, 33
On Dead Man's Shore: the doors face northward,
Through its smoke vent venom drips,
Serpent skins enskein that hall.

6. Loki induced the blind god Hödur to cast a spear made of mistletoe at Baldur, who was invulnerable to any other material. 7. Baldur's slayer, Hödur, was slain in turn by Vali, a son of Odin. The line refers to cremation on a funeral pyre. 8. The wife of Odin and mother of Baldur; Fensalir is the name of her dwelling. *Valhalla*: Odin's great hall. 9. Loki has been captured by the gods and placed in bonds. Sigyn is Loki's wife. 1. The dwarfs.

Men wade there,[2] tormented by the stream, 34
Vile murderers, men forsworn,
And artful seducers of other men's wives:
Nidhógg[3] sucks blood from the bodies of the dead,
The Wolf rends them. *Well, would you know more?*

In the east dwells a crone,[4] in Ironwood: 35
The brood of Fenris are bred there,
Wolf-monsters, one of whom
Eventually shall devour the sun.

The giant's Watchman, joyful Eggthur, 36
Sits on his howe and harps well:
The red cock,[5] called All-Knower
Boldly crows from Birdwood.

Goldencomb to the Gods crows, 37
Who wakes the warriors in Valhalla:
A soot-red hen also calls
From Hel's Hall, deep under the ground.

Loud howls Garm[6] before Gnipahellir, 38
Bursting his fetters, Fenris runs:
Further in the future, afar I behold
The Twilight of the gods[7] who gave victory.

Brother shall strike brother and both fall, 39
Sisters' sons slay each other,
Evil be on earth, an Age of Whoredom,
Of sharp sword-play and shields' clashing,
A Wind-Age, a Wolf-Age, till the world ruins:
No man to another shall mercy show.

The waters are troubled, the waves surge up: 40
Announcing now the knell of Fate,
Heimdal winds his horn aloft,[8]
On Hel's Road all men tremble.

2. The river is in Hel, a cold, dark area, the abode of the dead, where crimes committed in life are punished. 3. A dragon; he also gnaws at the roots of the World-Ash. *The Wolf:* It is uncertain whether this is one of the family of Fenris (strophe 35) or another wolf. 4. The mother of two wolves; one, Skoll, will swallow the sun at the end of the world-order; the other, Hati, will swallow the moon. *Ironwood* and *Birdwood* are not precisely located by the poet. 5. The red cock in the Giants' realm, Goldencomb in Valhalla, the hall of Odin, and the "red hen" in Hel form a series. *Howe:* A mound or a low hill. 6. The monstrous dog who guards the entrance to Hel. *Fenris:* The wolf that will swallow Odin. 7. "Twilight" corresponds to the term used in Wagner's opera *Götterdämmerung*, but the Norse term almost certainly means "the destruction of the gods." 8. As a warning signal that the monsters are approaching Asgard, the capital of the gods.

Yggdrasil trembles, the towering Ash 41
Groans in woe; the Wolf is loose:
Odin speaks with the head of Mimir
Before he is swallowed by Surt's kin.[9]

From the east drives Hrym,[1] lifts up his shield, 42
The squamous serpent squirms with rage,
The Great Worm with the waves contending,
The pale-beaked eagle pecks at the dead,
Shouting for joy: the ship Naglfar[2]

Sails out from the east, at its helm Loki, 43
With the children of darkness, the doom-bringers,
Offspring of monsters, allies of the Wolf,
All who Byleist's Brother[3] follow.

What of the gods? What of the elves? 44
Gianthome groans, the gods are in council,
The dwarves grieve before their door of stone,
Masters of walls. *Well, would you know more?*

Surt with the bane-of-branches[4] comes 45
From the south, on his sword the sun of the Valgods,
Crags topple, the crone falls headlong,
Men tread Hel's Road, the Heavens split open.

A further woe falls upon Hlin[5] 46
As Odin comes forth to fight the Wolf;
The killer of Beli[6] battles with Surt:
Now shall fall Frigg's beloved.

Now valiant comes Valfather's Son, 47
Vidar, to vie with Valdyr[7] in battle,
Plunges his sword into the Son of Hvedrung,
Avenging his father with a fell thrust.
Now the Son of Hlödyn and Odin[8] comes 48
To fight with Fenris; fiercest of warriors,

9. Fenris, the wolf who will finally swallow Odin. Surt was a giant whose weapon was fire (hence the name—Surtsey, Surt's island—given to the island formed by the volcanic eruption off the south coast of Iceland in 1963). 1. The leader of the Giants in the final assault. *The squamous serpent . . . the Great Worm:* Both terms refer to the Midgard serpent or dragon who lies in the ocean. 2. A ship made of dead men's fingernails. 3. Loki. 4. An epithet of fire, which destroys the limbs of trees. *Sun of the Valgods:* More literally, the sun is reflected from the sword of the Battle-gods. *The Crone:* The mother of two wolves who will swallow the sun and moon. 5. Another name of Frigg, wife of Odin. 6. The god Frey; Beli was a giant. *Frigg's beloved:* Her husband, Odin. 7. The wolf Fenris, who is also the "Son of Hvethrung." 8. Thor, who destroys the Midgard Serpent but is himself mortally injured by the poison of the Serpent. The Icelandic text is not clear, but Fenris must be incorrect here, for he has already been slain.

He mauls in his rage all Middle Earth;
Men in fear all flee their homesteads;
Nine paces back steps Bur's Son,[9]
Retreats from the Worm, of taunts unafraid.

Now death is the portion of doomed men, 49
Red with blood the buildings of gods,
The sun turns black in the summer after,
Winds whine. *Well, would you know more?*

Earth sinks in the sea, the sun turns black, 50
Cast down from Heaven are the hot stars,
Fumes reek, into flames burst,
The sky itself is scorched with fire.

I see Earth rising a second time 51
Out of the foam, fair and green;
Down from the fells, fish to capture,
Wings the eagle; waters flow.

At Idavale the Aesir meet: 52
They remember the Worm of Middle Earth,
Ponder again the Great Twilight
And the ancient runes of the High God.

Boards shall be found of a beauty to wonder at, 53
Boards of gold in the grass long after,
The chess boards they owned in the olden days.

Unsown acres shall harvests bear, 54
Evil be abolished, Baldur return
And Hropt's[1] Hall with Hödur rebuild,
Wise gods. *Well, would you know more?*

Haenir shall wield the wand of prophecy, 55
The sons of two brothers[2] set up their dwelling
In wide Windhome. *Well, would you know more?*

Fairer than sunlight, I see a hall, 56
A hall thatched with gold in Gimlé:[3]
Kind lords shall live there in delight for ever.

9. Thor. 1. Hropt was another name for Odin. 2. Perhaps the sons of Ve and Vili, brothers of Odin. 3. Apparently "meadow of gems"—a name for a kind of earthly paradise.

Now rides the Strong One[4] to Rainbow Door, 57
Powerful from heaven, the All-Ruler:
From the depths below a drake comes flying,
The Dark Dragon[5] from Darkfell,
Bears on his pinions the bodies of men,
Soars overhead. I sink now.[6]

4. Apparently a benevolent deity, but the name is uncertain. The Rainbow Door is probably the earth; in Norse mythology the rainbow was a bridge reaching from heaven to earth. 5. Neither his identity nor his role is clear. 6. The seeress ends her discourse; she will now return to the realm of the dead.

THORSTEIN THE STAFF-STRUCK

Medieval Iceland produced not only a unique and highly interesting body of poetry but also some of the best prose narratives in European literature. Some of these, like the *Saga of the Volsungs*, deal with figures of early Germanic tradition. But some thirty or forty, called sagas of Icelanders, are about men and women who lived in Iceland (and often in Norway in their youth) from the late ninth to the early eleventh centuries. Written mostly in the thirteenth century, they may remind us a bit of the historical novels of a later time. But in the historical novel, usually, the major characters are fictional, products of the author's invention, while those well known to history serve as framework or background. In the Icelandic saga the converse is true: the principal figures were actual people attested by documents and other evidence, as were also most of the events and acts attributed to them. Oral tradition bridged the interval between the tenth century and the thirteenth. Thus the author of an extant saga was free to shape characterization, motivation, mood, and tone as he saw fit. It is now believed that the milieu of thirteenth-century Iceland may have influenced features of some of these narratives. A few may have been entirely fictional, except for the use of the names of actual persons. Like the Eddic poems, the sagas are nearly always anonymous. Some of the most notable are of novel length, like the *Saga of the Laxdalers* or the Grettir saga, or the *Saga of Burnt Njal*, greatest of all.

As must be evident, the story of Thorstein the Staff-Struck is very short; in fact, it was not called a saga but a *háttr*, literally, a "thread." Nevertheless, it shows the characteristic features of a family saga. Although the action is "strong," to use a modern term—people kill and get killed—violence is not included for its own sake; instead, it interests the narrator chiefly as an expression of personality and character. The incidents of the story are conducted in such a way as to distinguish sharply nearly all of the participants; these are all members of one or the other of two families or households who live in northeast Iceland. The "fierce," now aged but still irascible Thorarin is contrasted with his husky and confident but even-tempered son Thorstein; only when the insolent Thord wilfully insults him does Thorstein take action. In prosecuting Thorstein for manslaughter, Bjarni, Thord's employer and also the district chieftain, fullfils a more or less automatic obligation. How-

ever, when Thorstein ignores the sentence of exile, Bjarni (whose responsibility it was to attack Thorstein) takes no action. We learn that he is unwilling to deprive the infirm, nearly blind Thorarin of his son's support. Nevertheless, when Bjarni overhears the malicious gossip of Thorhall and Thorvald, he sends them out with instructions to kill Thorstein. We are not told what he expected would happen, but when he learns that Thorstein has slain the two brothers, once again he does nothing; when his wife Rannveig goads him, he remarks that "Thorstein has never killed anyone without a good reason." All the same, when she tells him of the taunts in circulation about him, he decides that he cannot avoid a confrontation with Thorstein.

Although the circumstances are different, Bjarni's motive in his (reluctant) challenge of Thorstein is the same as the latter's when he (at last) challenges Thord. Each man considers the respect of the community essential to his self-respect; hence they act as the code required regardless of their personal inclination or of the intrinsic merits of the case. The thirteenth-century Christian author faithfully presents this pre-Christian pattern; the ethical dilemma, unacknowledged by the protagonists, is implicit in the narration. Hence in the final encounter Bjarni and Thorstein carry out the *form* of conduct which tradition made obligatory, while the *manner* in which they do so insures a morally satisfactory result.

Readers will enjoy this succinct narrative best if they ask themselves such questions—among others—as, What purposes are served by the dialogue? What is Thorarin's motive for each of his acts? How does the author make use of the two female characters?

A concise general account of the family sagas is Peter Hallberg, translated by Paul Schach, *The Icelandic Saga* (1962). A critical study of structure and organization, with plot summaries, is Theodore M. Anderson, *The Icelandic Family Saga* (1967). Admirable translations of several of the principal sagas are available in the Penguin paperback series.

Thorstein the Staff-Struck[1]

There was a man called Thorarin who lived at Sunnudale; he was old and nearly blind. He had been a fierce viking in his younger years, and even in his old age he was very hard to deal with. He had an only son, Thorstein, who was a tall man, powerful but even-tempered; he worked so hard on his father's farm that three other men could hardly have done any better. Thorarin had little money, but a good many weapons. He and his son owned some breeding horses and that was their main source of income, for the young colts they sold never failed in spirit or strength.

Bjarni of Hof[2] had a servant called Thord who looked after his riding horses and was considered very good at the job. Thord was an arrogant man and would never let anyone forget the fact that he was

1. Translated, with footnotes, by Hermann Pálsson. 2. Bjarni of Hof was the local chieftain, and the wealthiest and most powerful farmer in the district.

in the service of a chieftain. But this didn't make him a better man and added nothing to his popularity. Bjarni also had two brothers working for him who were called Thorhall and Thorvald, both great scandalmongers about any gossip they heard in the district.

Thorstein and Thord arranged a horse-fight for their young stallions.[3] During the fight, Thord's horse started giving way, and when Thord realized he was losing, he struck Thorstein's horse a hard blow on the jaw. Thorstein saw this and hit back with an even heavier blow at Thord's horse, forcing it to back away. This got the spectators shouting with excitement. Then Thord aimed a blow at Thornstein with his horse-goad, hitting him so hard on the eye-brow that the skin broke and the lid fell hanging down over the eye. Thorstein tore a piece off his shirt and bandaged his head. He said nothing about what had happened, apart from asking people to keep this from his father. That should have been the end of the incident, but Thorvald and Thorhall kept jeering at Thorstein and gave him the nickname Staff-Struck.

One morning that winter just before Christmas, when the women at Sunnudale were getting up for their work, Thorstein went out to feed the cattle. He soon came back and lay down on a bench. His father, old Thorarin, came into the room and asked who was lying there. Thorstein told him.

'Why are you up so early, son?' said Thorarin.

Thorstein answered, 'It seems to me there aren't many men about to share the work with me.'

'Have you got a head-ache, son?' said Thorarin.

'Not that I've noticed,' said Thorstein.

'What can you tell me about the horse-fight last summer, son?' said Thorarin. 'Weren't you beaten senseless like a dog?'

'It's no credit to me if you call it a deliberate blow, not an accident,' said Thorstein.

Thorarin said, 'I'd never have thought I could have a coward for a son.'

'Father,' said Thorstein, 'Don't say anything now that you'll live to regret later.'

'I'm not going to say as much as I've a mind to,' said Thorarin.

Thorstein got to his feet, seized his weapons and set off. He came to the stable where Thord was grooming Bjarni's horses, and when he saw Thord he said, 'I'd like to know, friend Thord, whether it was accidental when you hit me in the horse-fight last summer, or deliberate. If it was deliberate, you'll be willing to pay me compensation.'

'If only you were double-tongued,' said Thord, 'then you could

3. Horse-fights used to be a favourite sport in Iceland. Two stallions were pitted against one another, and behind each of them there was a man equipped with a goad to prod them on. At these horse fights tempers would often run high.

easily speak with two voices and call the blow accidental with one and deliberate with the other. That's all the compensation you're getting from me.'

'In that case don't expect me to make this claim a second time,' said Thorstein.

With that he rushed at Thord and dealt him his death-blow. Then he went up to the house at Hof where he saw a woman standing outside the door. 'Tell Bjarni that a bull has gored Thord, his horse-boy,' he said to her, 'and also that Thord will be waiting for him at the stable.'

'Go back home, man,' she said. 'I'll tell Bjarni in my own good time.'

Thorstein went back home, and the woman carried on with her work.

After Bjarni had got up that morning and was sitting at table, he asked where Thord could be, and was told he had gone to see to the horses.

'I'd have thought he'd be back by now, unless something has happened to him,' said Bjarni.

The woman Thorstein had spoken to broke in. 'It's true what we women are often told, we're not very clever. Thorstein the Staff-Struck came here this morning and he said Thord had been gored by a bull and couldn't look after himself. I didn't want to wake you, and then I forgot all about it.'

Bjarni left the table, went over to the stable and found Thord lying there, dead. Bjarni had him buried, then brought a court action against Thorstein and had him sentenced to outlawry for manslaughter. But Thorstein stayed on at Sunnudale and worked for his father, and Bjarni did nothing more about it.

One day in the autumn when the men of Hof were busy singeing sheep's heads[4], Bjarni lay down on top of the kitchen wall to listen to their talk. Now the brothers Thorhall and Thorvald started gossiping; 'It never occurred to us when we came to live here with Killer-Bjarni[5] that we'd be singeing lambs' heads while his outlaw Thorstein is singeing the heads of wethers. It would have been better for Bjarni to have been more lenient with his kinsmen at Bodvarsdale and not to let his outlaw at Sunnudale act just like his own equal. But "A wounded coward lies low," and it's not likely that he'll ever wipe away this stain on his honour.'

One of the men said, 'Those words were better left unsaid, the trolls must have twisted your tongue. I think Bjarni simply isn't pre-

4. In Iceland, as in some other sheep-raising countries, sheep's heads were (and still are) considered a great delicacy. The heads are singed over a fire to remove all traces of wool before they are cleaned and cooked. 5. The name Killer-Bjarni is an allusion to the fact that Bjarni fought and killed some of his own kinsmen in the battle of Bodvarsdale which is mentioned in the following sentence.

pared to take the only breadwinner at Sunnudale away from Thorstein's blind father and other dependents there. I'll be more than surprised if you singe many more lambs' heads here, or tattle on much longer about the fight at Bodvarsdale.'

Then they went inside to have their meal, and after that to bed. Bjarni gave no sign that he had heard anything of what had been said. But early next morning he roused Thorhall and Thorvald and told them to ride over to Sunnudale and bring him Thorstein's severed head before mid-morning. 'I think you're more likely than anyone else to wipe away that stain from my honour, since I haven't the courage to do it for myself,' he said.

The brothers realized they had said too much, but they set off and went over to Sunnudale. Thorstein was standing in the doorway, sharpening a short sword. He asked them where they were going, and they told him they were looking for some horses. Thorstein said they didn't have very far to go. 'The horses are down by the fence.'

Thorstein came outside, and as they were walking together across the meadow, Thorvald raised his axe and rushed at him. But Thorstein pushed him back so hard that he fell, then ran him through with the short sword. Thorhall tried to attack Thorstein and went the same way as his brother. Thorstein tied them to their saddles, fixed the reins to the horses' manes, and drove them off.

The horses went back to Hof. Some of the servants there were out of doors and went inside to tell Bjarni that Thorvald and Thorhall had come back and their journey hadn't been wasted. Bjarni went outside and saw what had happened. He said nothing and had the two men buried. Then everything was quiet till after Christmas.

One evening after Bjarni and his wife Rannveig had gone to bed, she said to him, 'What do you think everyone in the district is talking about these days?'

'I couldn't say,' said Bjarni. 'In my opinion most people talk a lot of rubbish.'

'This is what people are mainly talking about now,' she continued: 'They're wondering how far Thorstein the Staff-Struck can go before you bother to take revenge. He's killed three of your servants, and your supporters are beginning to doubt whether you can protect them, seeing that you've failed to avenge this. You often take action when you shouldn't and hold back when you should.'

'It's the same old story,' said Bjarni, 'no one seems willing to learn from another man's lesson. Thorstein has never killed anyone without a good reason—but still, I'll think about your suggestion.'

With that they dropped the subject and slept through the night. In the morning Rannveig woke up as Bjarni was taking down his sword and shield. She asked him where he was going.

'The time has come for me to settle that matter of honour between Thorstein of Sunnudale and myself,' he said.

'How many men are you taking with you?' she asked.

'I'm not taking a whole army to attack Thorstein,' he said. 'I'm going alone.'

'You mustn't do that,' she said, 'risking your life against the weapons of that killer.'

'You're a typical woman,' said Bjarni, 'arguing against the very thing you were urging just a few hours ago! There's a limit to my patience, I can only stand so much taunting from you and others. And once my mind's made up, there's no point in trying to hold me back.'

Bjarni went over to Sunnudale. He saw Thorstein standing in the doorway, and they exchanged some words.

'You'll fight me in single combat,' said Bjarni, 'on that hillock over there in the home-meadow.'

'I'm in no way good enough to fight you,' said Thorstein. 'I give you my promise to leave the country with the first ship that sails abroad. I know a generous man like you will provide my father with labour to run the farm if I go away.'

'You can't talk yourself out of this now,' said Bjarni.

'You'll surely let me go and see my father first,' said Thorstein.

'Certainly,' said Bjarni.

Thorstein went inside and told his father that Bjarni had come and challenged him to a duel.

The old man said, 'Anybody who offends a more powerful man in his own district can hardly expect to wear out many more new shirts. In my opinion your offences are so serious, I can't find any excuse for you. So you'd better take your weapons and defend yourself the best you can. In my younger days I'd never have given way before someone like Bjarni, great fighting-man though he may be. I'd much rather lose you than have a coward for a son.'

Thorstein went outside and walked with Bjarni up the hillock. They started fighting with determination and destroyed each other's shield. When they had been fighting for a long time, Bjarni said to Thorstein, 'I'm getting very thirsty now, I'm not so used to hard work as you are.'

'Go down to the stream then and drink,' said Thorstein.

Bjarni did so, and laid the sword down beside him. Thorstein picked it up, examined it and said, 'You can't have been using this sword at Bodvarsdale.'

Bjarni said nothing, and they went back to the hillock. After they'd been fighting for a time, it became obvious to Bjarni that Thorstein was a highly skilled fighter, and the outcome seemed less certain than he'd expected.

'Everything seems to go wrong for me today,' he said. 'Now my shoe-thong's loose.'

'Tie it up then,' said Thorstein.

When Bjarni bent down to tie it, Thorstein went into the house and brought back two shields and a sword. He joined Bjarni on the hillock and said, 'Here's a sword and shield my father sends you. The sword shouldn't get so easily blunted as the one you've been using. And I don't want to stand here any longer with no shield to protect me against your blows. I'd very much like us to stop this game now, for I'm afraid your good luck will prove stronger than my bad luck. Every man wants to save his life, and I would too, if I could.'

'There's no point in your trying to talk yourself out of this,' said Bjarni. 'The fight must go on.'

'I wouldn't like to be the first to strike,' said Thorstein.

Then Bjarni struck at Thorstein, destroying his shield, and Thorstein hacked down Bjarni's shield in return.

'That was a blow,' said Bjarni.

Thorstein replied, 'Yours wasn't any lighter.'

Bjarni said, 'Your sword seems to be biting much better now than it was earlier.'

'I want to save myself from the foulest of luck if I possibly can,' said Thorstein. 'It scares me to have to fight you, so I want you yourself to settle the matter between us.'

It was Bjarni's turn to strike. Both men had lost their shields. Bjarni said, 'It would be a great mistake in one stroke both to throw away good fortune and do wrong. In my opinion I'd be fully paid for my three servants if you took their place and served me faithfully.'

Thorstein said, 'I've had plenty of opportunity today to take advantage of you, if my bad luck had been stronger than your good luck. I'll never deceive you.'

'Now I can see what a remarkable man you must be,' said Bjarni. 'You'll allow me to go inside to see your father and tell him about this in my own words?'

'You can go if you want as far as I'm concerned,' said Thorstein, 'but be on your guard.'

Bjarni went up to the bed-closet where Old Thorarin was lying. Thorarin asked who was there, and Bjarni told him.

'What's your news, friend Bjarni?' said Thorarin.

'The killing of Thorstein, your son,' said Bjarni.

'Did he put up any defence at all?' asked Thorarin.

'I don't think there's ever been a better fighter than your son, Thorarin,' said Bjarni.

'It's no wonder your opponents at Bodvarsdale found you so hard to deal with,' said Thorarin, 'seeing that you've overcome my son.'

Bjarni said, 'I want to invite you to come over to Hof and take the seat of honour there for the rest of your life. I'll be just like a son to you.'

'I'm in the same position now as any other pauper,' said Thorarin. 'Only a fool accepts a promise gladly, and promises of chieftains like yourself aren't usually honoured for more than a month after the event, while you're trying to console us. After that we're treated as ordinary paupers, though our grief doesn't grow any the less for that. Still, anyone who shakes hands on a bargain with a man of your character should be satisfied, in spite of other men's lessons. So I'd like to shake hands with you, and you'd better come into the bed-closet to me. Come closer now, for I'm an old man and trembling on my feet because of ill-health and old age. And I must admit, the loss of my son has upset me a bit.'

Bjarni went into the bed-closet and shook Thorarin by the hand. Then he realized the old man was groping for a short sword with the idea of thrusting it at him. Bjarni pulled back his hand and said, 'You merciless old rascal! I can promise you now you'll get what you deserve. Your son Thorstein is alive and well, and he'll come with me over to Hof, but you'll be given slaves to run the farm for you, and never suffer any want for the rest of your life.'

Thorstein went with Bjarni over to Hof, and stayed in his service for the rest of his life. He was considered a man of great courage and integrity. Bjarni kept his standing and became better-liked and more self-controlled the older he grew. He was a very trustworthy man. In the last years of his life he became a devout Christian and went to Rome on pilgrimage. He died on that journey, and is buried at a town called Sutri,[6] just north of Rome.[7]

6. The MSS have Vateri which is probably a scribal error. The town Sutri is mentioned elsewhere in early Icelandic records. 7. The story concludes with a long account of Bjarni's descendants, extending into the thirteenth century. [Editor's note.]

THE SONG OF ROLAND

With some literal inaccuracy, but with substantial truth, it has been said that French literature begins with the *Song of Roland*. Certainly it is the first great narrative poem in that language. Of unknown authorship and date, it was apparently composed in the decade or decades after the year 1100. Imbued with the spirit of the First Crusade, it seems to reproduce some details of the campaigns and expeditions to capture and hold the Holy Land for Christendom. The story it tells was developed from a historical incident in the career of Charlemagne (Charles the Great). As the Emperor was returning from a successful war in northern Spain, the Gascons attacked his baggage train and rearguard in the mountain passes of the Pyrenees. The rearguard perished, including Roland, the prefect of the Breton March. These events occurred in the year 778. Our poet of the twelfth century has transformed them—somewhat as Geoffrey of Monmouth, Chrétien de Troyes, and Malory

transformed incidents involving the probably also historical Arthur, his exploits, and the deeds of his warriors. The Charles of the *Roland*, a magnificent figure, is white-haired and venerable, and not without a touch of the miraculous: though still valiant in fight, he is reputed among the enemy to be two hundred years old, or more. He is served especially by a choice band of leaders, the twelve peers, of whom the chief is Roland, his nephew—a relationship that in Heroic narrative intensifies either loyalty or disloyalty. The enemy, too, has been changed. Not a few border Gascons or Basques, but enormous Saracen armies fight against Roland and the Emperor. Thus we have a holy war; all the motives of a Crusade are invoked in this struggle of Christians against Mohammedans. Keeping the Emperor as the central *background* figure, the poet has concentrated his efforts on Roland as the hero, the central *foreground* character. Close beside him stand Oliver, the wise and faithful friend, and Ganelon, whose hatred of Roland leads him to treason against Charles.

The world of the poem is an idealization of feudal society in the early twelfth century. This society was headed by proud barons—a hereditary nobility—whose independent spirit found liberal scope in valiant action, fierce devotion, and bitter personal antagonism. A man was esteemed for his prowess in battle, for his loyalty to his king or other feudal chief, and for his wisdom, as the portrait of Oliver reminds us. The action of the poem is infused with a warm glow of patriotic feeling—not the flag-waving variety, but a cherishing love of the homeland, "sweet France." It might be called regional rather than political patriotism, for in a feudal regime a man's binding obligations are to his lord rather than to the country as a whole. Yet the larger issue enters, in a special way: in the second half of the poem, Ganelon is finally condemned and punished because in compassing the destruction of Roland he has injured the king and the French nation; the poet denies Ganelon's claim that these are separable things.

The present volume includes only the first half of the poem, but this portion has a satisfactory completeness. We see the anger of Ganelon at Roland, out of which grows his treachery and the attack of the Saracens; the valor of Roland, and the rest, in battle; and their heroic death. The second half of the poem relates the vengeance taken by Charles against the Saracens—in two separate battles—and the trial and execution of Ganelon. Although the *Song of Roland* was the work, and probably the *written* work, of a well-educated man, during the period immediately following its composition it was sung or chanted. It is divided into strophes averaging fourteen lines, each of ten (or eleven) syllables.

It is easy to see why modern French readers and critics assign the *Roland* a high place in their national literature. Inherent in its structure and texture are the qualities especially esteemed in the French literary tradition—clarity of focus, lucidity in exposition and narration, definite design, and mastery of technical detail. In the poem as a whole—even in our abridgment of a part—scale and proportion are evident. The succession of quarrels, treachery, and battles is only the raw material out of which the poet has built a highly wrought work of art. The emphasis on action—on what Roland, Ganelon, and Oliver do and say—has been recognized since Aristotle as the right method for a poet. But mere action is the formula of the adventure

story. The great-literature standard requires that the action have significance. This significance the author of the *Roland* has provided in rich and ordered variety. The acts of the hero, of his friend, and of his foe are presented as part of the total character of each; they grow out of the whole man, including his temperament and personality. But they are also presented against an ethical and social background. Every act, every decision, bears a relation to the feudal code of conduct, of right and wrong, and hence is an indication of human good or evil. Courage rather than cowardice, loyalty rather than treachery, judgment rather than folly—a belief in these criteria is implicit or explicit in the presentation of each action. And they apply to the outermost frame within which the poet has placed the specific events of the narrative—the contest between Christianity and paganism. For to the author and his audience the Christian cause is just, the Saracen, unjust. Roland, fighting for the crusading Emperor, is *right*; Ganelon, aiding the heathen enemy against his brother-in-arms, is doubly *wrong*.

The man who brings about the death of Roland and twenty thousand Franks is no mean and petty villain. The husband of the Emperor's sister and the stepfather of Roland, he holds a very high place in Charles's council. Nor does he lack the ability or the personality to sustain this position. He has no hesitation in speaking against Roland in the first discussion of the Saracen proposals; his nomination as envoy to King Marsile is readily accepted by Charles; and his success in his treachery is a brilliant feat. For in order to accomplish it he must first provoke the now peacefully inclined Marsile to wrath and then turn this anger against Roland. To this end he takes a calculated risk for the sake of a calculated—but far from guaranteed—result. Insulting Marsile deliberately, in the name of the Emperor, he makes himself the first target of the Saracen king's fury and definitely endangers his own life. Luckily for him, the king's hand is stayed; and the Saracen nobles applaud Ganelon's magnificent courage. The rest is comparatively easy—though everything now depends on Ganelon's success in getting Roland placed in command of the rear guard. That he succeeds is the more credible because it was Roland who previously nominated Ganelon for the embassy: Roland and Charles may be expected to act, as in fact they do, on the principle that turn about is fair play.

To the twelfth-century poet and his audience of proud knights the question of motive in Ganelon's hatred of Roland doubtless presented little difficulty. Indeed, if Ganelon had not resorted to treason, a tenable defense of his attitude could be established. For it may well be that he is honestly opposed to the policy of relentless war against the Saracens. His speech at the first council, urging acceptance of Marsile's proposals, wins the support of the wise counselor Naimes, and carries the day. An advocate of peace would obviously regard the uncompromising spokesman of the war party—Roland—as his opponent. Later, talking with the Saracen envoy Blancandrin, Ganelon plausibly represents Roland as the chief obstacle to pacific relations between the two peoples. To be sure, Ganelon is now plotting against Roland; but that should not blind us to the possibility that he honestly differs with Roland about this question of the Emperor's foreign policy. When we have said this, and when we have recognized the faults in Roland's personality that might normally vex another powerful, but less powerful,

courtier, we have said all that can be said in defense of Ganelon. His acts put him quite beyond the possibility of moral justification. But justifying him is one thing; understanding him is quite another, and this the author has enabled us to do.

In Roland the poet has created one of the great heroes of European literature. Like Achilles, Aeneas, and Hamlet, he is the embodiment of a definite ideal of humanity. The ideal that Roland incarnates is that of feudal chivalry. Roland exhibits in superlative degree the traits and attitudes which feudal society and institutions sought to produce in a whole class. He is a supremely valiant fighter, a completely faithful vassal, and a warmly affectionate friend; and, since his creator lived in the early twelfth century, his fervent Christianity bears the Crusader's stamp. His words to his friend Oliver before the battle epitomize his vocation as he sees it:

> A man must bear some hardships for his lord,
> stand everything, the great heat, the great cold,
> lose the hide and hair on him for his good lord.
> Now let each man make sure to strike hard here:
> let them not sing a bad song about us!
> Pagans are wrong and Christians are right!
> They'll make no bad example of me this day!

This is the code of a man of action, of one to whom action appears as duty. Neither here nor elsewhere in the poem is Roland touched by any sense of the "doubtful doom of human kind" that haunts Aeneas. Nor has he ever dreamt of most of the things in Hamlet's philosophy. In assurance and self-reliance he is much closer to Achilles, except that Achilles fought essentially for himself—certainly not for Agamemnon! In Roland the man is wholly assimilated to the vassal. The ceiling above him is lower, the pattern he follows is more limited, than those of Achilles, Aeneas, and Hamlet; yet within his pattern Roland achieves perfection, as they do in theirs.

Roland's feats in battle require no analysis; they are bright and glorious; they outshine the great deeds of his noble comrades. This superiority is no more than the poet has led us to expect. It is the hero's weakness—weakness counterpoised to his greatness—that gives the poem depth and produces the tension that commands our interest. Roland's defect has been called the excess of his special virtue—confidence, courage, bravery; if assurance outstrips prudence, then bravery becomes recklessness, which can bring disaster upon the hero and those for whom he is responsible. The author carefully shows us that Roland has no habit or instinct of caution to match his marvelous courage. Charles notes the vindictive manner in which Ganelon proposes Roland for the rear guard, and though at a loss to divine its meaning, is moved to assign half his entire army to Roland. But Roland either has not noticed the gleam of triumph in Ganelon's eye, or, if he has, loftily disregards it and firmly refuses to take more than twenty thousand men, a relatively small force.

So far Roland has done nothing definitely wrong, though he has revealed a certain lack of perception and of intuitive prudence. But he does do wrong

when, surprised by an army of a hundred thousand Saracens, he refuses to blow the horn that would summon Charles to the rescue. The error is emphasized by the repetition in Oliver's effort to persuade him, and the relationship between Roland's refusal and his rashness of character is made apparent both through his answers and through the contrast with Oliver. Roland fears that asking for help would make him look foolish among the Franks—instead, he will slay the foe himself; he will not leave his kin at home open to reproach because of him; if, as Oliver says, the rearguard is hopelessly outnumbered, then death is better than disgrace. Actually, Roland is confident of victory despite the odds. His judgment is not equal to his daring. As the poet sums it up, "Roland is fierce and Oliver wise."

Hence catastrophe ensues. But it is catastrophe redeemed by glorious heroism, as well as self-sacrificing penitence. When, despite tremendous exploits by the Franks, especially by Roland, all but a handful of the rearguard have been slain, Roland wishes to sound the horn to let the Emperor know what has happened. But now Oliver dissents on the ground of honor: Roland had refused to summon Charles to a rescue, and it would be shameful to summon him only to witness a disaster. The repetitions in this scene balance those of the earlier one. Though the question is decided by Archbishop Turpin, the argument has embittered Oliver against Roland. Hence it is that when, blinded by his own blood, Oliver later strikes Roland, his comrade has to ask whether the blow was intentional. Roland's humility here is a part of his penitence, a penitence never put into words but sublimely revealed in deeds. Exhausted by battle as he is, his superhuman and repeated blasts on the horn burst his temples. The angels and archangels who receive his soul in Paradise are functional symbols of his final triumph in defeat. The poet does not remit the penalty of Roland's error, which is paid by his death. But his victory combines an epic with a tragic conclusion; atonement and redemption, not merely death, is the end, as it is in another profoundly Christian poem of action, Milton's *Samson Agonistes*.

The best summary in English of information about the origin and nature of the poem is contained in the introduction to the edition by T. A. Jenkins, *La Chanson de Roland* (1924). For discussion against the background of the *chanson de geste* in general, see Urban Tigner Holmes, *A History of Old French Literature* (1938). P. le Gentil, *The "Chanson de Roland"* (1969), provides technical information in the first half and a more general commentary in the second. J. J. Duggan, *The Song of Roland*, makes the strongest case for it as the work of an oral poet.

The Song of Roland[1]

1.

CHARLES THE KING, our Emperor, the Great,
has been in Spain for seven full years,

1. Abridged. Translated, with footnotes, by Frederick Goldin. Additional notes provided by the editor.

has conquered the high land down to the sea.
There is no castle that stands against him now,
no wall, no citadel left to break down—
except Saragossa, high on a mountain.[2]
King Marsilion holds it, who does not love God,
who serves Mahumet and prays to Apollin.[3]
He cannot save himself: his ruin will find him there. AOI.[4]

2.

King Marsilion was in Saragossa.
He has gone forth into a grove, beneath its shade,
and he lies down on a block of blue marble,
twenty thousand men, and more, all around him.
He calls aloud to his dukes and his counts:
"Listen, my lords, to the troubles we have.
The Emperor Charles of the sweet land of France
has come into this country to destroy us.
I have no army able to give him battle,
I do not have the force to break his force.
Now act like my wise men: give me counsel,
save me, save me from death, save me from shame!"
No pagan there has one word to say to him
except Blancandrin, of the castle of Valfunde.

3.

One of the wiest pagans was Blancandrin,
brave and loyal, a great mounted warrior,
a useful man, the man to aid his lord;
said to the King: "Do not give way to panic.
Do this: send Charles, that wild, terrible man,
tokens of loyal service and great friendship:
you will give him bears and lions and dogs,
seven hundred camels, a thousand molted hawks,
four hundred mules weighed down with gold and silver,
and fifty carts, to cart it all away:
he'll have good wages for his men who fight for pay.
Say he's made war long enough in this land:
let him go home, to France, to Aix,[5] at last—
come Michaelmas you will follow him there,

2. Saragossa, in northeastern Spain, is not actually on a mountain top. The poet's geography is not always accurate. 3. The Greek god Apollo; but the poet is mistaken, for these people worship only one god, Allah. *Mahumet:* A variation of Muhammed, the founder of the Islamic religion. 4. These three mysterious letters appear at certain moments throughout the text, 180 times in all. No one has ever adequately explained them, though every reader feels their effect. 5. Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle), capital of Charlemagne's empire. *Michaelmas:* The feast of Saint Michael, September 29.

say you will take their faith, become a Christian,
and be his man with honor, with all you have.
If he wants hostages, why, you'll send them,
ten, or twenty, to give him security.
Let us send him the sons our wives have borne.
I'll send my son with all the others named to die.
It is better that they should lose their heads[6]
than that we, Lord, should lose our dignity
and our honors—and be turned into beggars!" AOI.

4.

Said Blancandrin: "By this right hand of mine
and by this beard that flutters on my chest,
you will soon see the French army disband,
the Franks will go to their own land, to France.
When each of them is in his dearest home,
King Charles will be in Aix, in his chapel.
At Michaelmas he will hold a great feast—
that day will come, and then our time runs out,
he'll hear no news, he'll get no word from us.
This King is wild, the heart in him is cruel:
he'll take the heads of the hostages we gave.
It is better, Lord, that they lose their heads
than that we lose our bright, our beautiful Spain—
and nothing more for us but misery and pain!"
The pagans say: "It may be as he says."

5.

King Marsilion brought his counsel to end,
then he summoned Clarin of Balaguét,
Estramarin and Eudropin, his peer,
And Priamun, Guarlan, that bearded one,
and Machiner and his uncle Maheu,
and Joüner, Malbien from over-sea,
and Blancandrin, to tell what was proposed.
From the worst of criminals he called these ten.
"Barons, my lords, you're to go to Charlemagne;
he's at the siege of Cordres,[7] the citadel.
Olive branches are to be in your hands—
that signifies peace and humility.
If you've the skill to get me an agreement,
I will give you a mass of gold and silver

6. The speaker expects that the hostages will be killed by the French when the deception becomes clear. Sometime before, hostages sent by the French had been similarly slain; see 11. 207–09 below. 7. Córdoba, in southern Spain.

and lands and fiefs, as much as you could want."
Say the pagans: "We'll benefit from this!" AOI.

6.

Marsilion brought his council to an end,
said to his men: "Lords, you will go on now,
and remember: olive branches in your hands;
and in my name tell Charlemagne the King
for his god's sake to have pity on me—
he will not see a month from this day pass
before I come with a thousand faithful;
say I will take that Christian religion
and be his man in love and loyalty.
If he wants hostages, why, he'll have them."
Said Blancandrin: "Now you will get good terms." AOI.

7.

King Marsilion had ten white mules led out,
sent to him once by the King of Suatilie,[8]
with golden bits and saddles wrought with silver.
The men are mounted, the men who brought the message,
and in their hands they carry olive branches.
They came to Charles, who has France in his keeping.
He cannot prevent it: they will fool him. AOI.

8.

The Emperor is secure and jubilant:
he has taken Cordres, broken the walls,
knocked down the towers with his catapults.
And what remendous spoils his knights have won—
gold and silver, precious arms, equipment.
In the city not one pagan remained
who is not killed or turned into a Christian.
The Emperor is in an ample grove,
Roland and Oliver are with him there,
Samson the Duke and Anséis the fierce,
Geoffrey d'Anjou, the King's own standard-bearer;
and Gerin and Gerer, these two together always,
and the others, the simple knights, in force:
fifteen thousand from the sweet land of France.
The warriors sit on bright brocaded silk;
they are playing at tables to pass the time,
the old and the wisest men sitting at chess,

8. A subordinate king, owing allegiance to Marsilion.

the young light-footed men fencing with swords.
Beneath a pine, beside a wild sweet-briar,
there was a throne, every inch of pure gold.
There sits the King, who rules over sweet France.
His beard is white, his hair flowering white.
That lordly body! the proud fierce look of him!—
If someone should come here asing for him,
there'd be no need to point out the King of France.
The messengers dismounted, and on their feet
they greeted him in all love and good faith.

9.

Blancandrin spoke, he was the first to speak,
said to the King: "Greetings, and God save you,
that glorious God whom we all must adore.
Here is the word of the great king Marsilion:
he has looked into this law of salvation,
wants to give you a great part of his wealth,
bears and lions and hunting dogs on chains,
seven hundred camels, a thousand molted hawks,
four hundred mules packed tight with gold and silver,
and fifty carts, to cart it all away;
and there will be so many fine gold bezants,[9]
you'll have good wages for the men in your pay.
You have stayed long—long enough!—in this land,
it is time to go home, to France, to Aix.
My master swears he will follow you there."
The Emperor holds out his hands toward God,
bows down his head, begins to meditate. AOI.

10.

The Emperor held his head bowed down;
never was he too hasty with his words:
his custom is to speak in his good time.
When his head rises, how fierce the look of him;
he said to them: "You have spoken quite well.
King Marsilion is my great enemy.
Now all these words that you have spoken here—
how far can I trust them? How can I be sure?"
The Saracen: "He wants to give you hostages.
How many will you want? ten? fifteen? twenty?
I'll put my son with the others named to die.[1]
You will get some, I think, still better born.

9. Coins. 1. That is, if the promise is broken. *Saracen:* The usual term for the enemy.

When you are at home in your high royal palace,
at the great feast of Saint Michael-in-Peril,[2]
the lord who nurtures me will follow you,
and in those baths[3]—the baths God made for you—
my lord will come and want to be made Christian."
King Charles replies: "He may yet save his soul." AOI.

11.

Late in the day it was fair, the sun was bright.
Charles has them put the ten mules into stables.
The King commands a tent pitched in the broad grove,
and there he has the ten messengers lodged;
twelve serving men took splendid care of them.
There they remained that night till the bright day.
The Emperor rose early in the morning,
the King of France, and heard the mass and matins.
And then the King went forth beneath a pine,
calls for his barons to complete his council:
he will proceed only with the men of France. AOI.

12.

The Emperor goes forth beneath a pine,
calls for his barons to complete his council:
Ogier the Duke, and Archbishop Turpin,
Richard the Old, and his nephew Henri;
from Gascony, the brave Count Acelin,
Thibaut of Reims, and his cousin Milun;
and Gerer and Gerin, they were both there,
and there was Count Roland, he came with them,
and Oliver, the valiant and well-born;
a thousand Franks of France, and more, were there.
Ganelon came, who committed the treason.[4]
Now here begins the council that went wrong. AOI.

13.

"Barons, my lords," said Charles the Emperor,
"King Marsilion has sent me messengers,
wants to give me a great mass of his wealth,
bears and lions and hunting dogs on chains,
seven hundred camels, a thousand molting hawks,

2. The epithet "in peril of the sea" was applied to the famous sanctuary of Saint Michael on the Normandy coast because it could only be reached on foot at low tide, and pilgrims were endangered by the incoming tide; eventually the phrase was applied to the saint himself. 3. Famous healing springs at Aix. 4. The poet anticipates the treason that Ganelon will commit. The next line represents a similar anticipation: the plan adopted at the council will prove to be a mistake.

four hundred mules packed with gold of Araby,
and with all that, more than fifty great carts;
but also asks that I go back to France:
he'll follow me to Aix, my residence,
and take our faith, the one redeeming faith,
become a Christian, hold his march[5] lands from me.
But what lies in his heart? I do not know."
And the French say: "We must be on our guard!" AOI.

14.

The Emperor has told them what was proposed.
Roland the Count will never assent to that,
gets to his feet, comes forth to speak against it;
says to the King: "Trust Marsilion—and suffer!
We came to Spain seven long years ago,
I won Noples for you, I won Commibles,
I took Valterne and all the land of Pine,
and Balaguer and Tudela and Seville.
And then this king, Marsilion, played the traitor:
he sent you men, fifteen of his pagans—
and sure enough, each held an olive branch;
and they recited just these same words to you.
You took counsel with all your men of France;
they counseled you to a bit of madness:
you sent two Counts across to the Pagans,
one was Basan, the other was Basile.
On the hills below Haltille, he took their heads.
They were your men. Fight the war you came to fight!
Lead the army you summoned on to Saragossa!
Lay siege to it all the rest of your life!
Avenge the men that this criminal murdered!" AOI.

15.

The Emperor held his head bowed down with this,
and stroked his beard, and smoothed his mustache down,
and speaks no word, good or bad, to his nephew.
The French keep still, all except Ganelon:
he gets to his feet and, come before King Charles,
how fierce he is as he begins his speech;
said to the King: "Believe a fool—me or
another—and suffer! Protect your interest!
When Marsilion the King sends you his word
that he will join his hands[6] and be your man,

5. A frontier province or territory. 6. Part of the gesture of homage; the lord enclosed the joined hands of his vassal with his own hands.

and hold all Spain as a gift from your hands
and then receive the faith that we uphold—
whoever urges that we refuse this peace,
that man does not care, Lord, what death we die.
That wild man's counsel must not win the day here—
let us leave fools, let us hold with wise men!" AOI.

16.

And after that there came Naimon the Duke—
no greater vassal in that court than Naimon—
said to the King: "You've heard it clearly now,
Count Ganelon has given you your answer:
let it be heeded, there is wisdom in it.
King Marsilion is beaten in this war,
you have taken every one of his castles,
broken his walls with your catapults,
burnt his cities and defeated his men.
Now when he sends to ask you to have mercy,
it would be a sin to do still more to him.
Since he'll give you hostages as guarantee,
this great war must not go on, it is not right."
And the French say: "The Duke has spoken well." AOI.

17.

"Barons, my lords, whom shall we send down there,
to Saragossa, to King Marsilion?"
Naimon replies, "I'll go, if you grant it!
At once, my lord! give me the glove and the staff."[7]
The King replies: "You're a man of great wisdom:
now by my beard, now by this mustache of mine,
you will not go so far from me this year; or ever.
Go take your seat when no one calls on you."

18.

"Barons, my lords, whom can we send down there,
to this Saracen who holds Saragossa?"
Roland replies: "I can go there! No trouble!"
"No, no, not you!" said Oliver the Count,
"that heart in you is wild, spoils for a fight,
how I would worry—you'd fight with them, I know.
Now I myself could go, if the King wishes."
The King replies: "Be still, the two of you!
Not you, not he—neither will set foot there.

7. Symbols of his commission from the Emperor Charles.

Now by this beard, as sure as you see white,
let no man here name one of the Twelve Peers!"
The French keep still, see how he silenced them.

19.

Turpin of Reims has come forth from the ranks,
said to the King: "Let your Franks have a rest.
You have been in this land for seven years,
the many pains, the struggles they've endured!
I'm the one, Lord, give me the glove and the staff,
and I'll go down to this Saracen of Spain
and then I'll see what kind of man we have."
The Emperor replies to him in anger:
"Now you go back and sit on that white silk
and say no more unless I command it!" AOI.

20.

"My noble knights," said the Emperor Charles,
"choose me one man: a baron from my march,
to bring my message to King Marsilion."[8]
And Roland said: "Ganelon, my stepfather."
The French respond: "Why, that's the very man!
pass this man by and you won't send a wiser."
And hearing this Count Ganelon began to choke,
pulls from his neck the great furs of marten
and stands there now, in his silken tunic,
eyes full of lights, the look on him of fury,
he has the body, the great chest of a lord;
stood there so fair, all his peers gazed on him;
said to Roland: "Madman, what makes you rave?
Every man knows I am your stepfather,
yet you named me to go to Marsilion.
Now if God grants that I come back from there,
you will have trouble: I'll start a feud with you,
it will go on till the end of your life."
Roland replies: "What wild words—all that blustering!
Every man knows that threats don't worry me.
But we need a wise man to bring the message:
if the King wills, I'll gladly go in your place."

21.

Ganelon answers: "You will not go for me. AOI.
You're not my man, and I am not your lord.

8. Charlemagne wants them to choose a baron from an outlying region and not one of the Twelve Peers, the circle of his dearest men.

Charles commands me to perform this service:
I'll go to Marsilion in Saragossa.
And I tell you, I'll play a few wild tricks
before I cool the anger in me now."
When he heard that, Roland began to laugh. AOI.

22.
Ganelon sees: *Roland laughing at him!*
and feels such pain he almost bursts with rage,
needs little more to go out of his mind;
says to the Count: "I have no love for you,
you *made* this choice fall on me, and that was wrong.
Just Emperor, here I am, before you.
I have one will: to fulfill your command."

23.
"I know now I must go to Saragossa. AOI.
Any man who goes there cannot return.
And there is this: I am your sister's husband,
have a son by her, the finest boy there can be,
Baldewin," says he, "who will be a good man.
To him I leave my honors, fiefs, and lands.
Protect my son: these eyes will never see him."
Charles answers him: "That tender heart of yours!
You have to go, I have commanded it."

24.
And the King said: "Ganelon, come forward, AOI.
come and receive the staff and the glove.
You have heard it: the Franks have chosen you."
Said Ganelon: "Lord, it's Roland who did this.
In all my days I'll have no love for him,
or Oliver, because he's his companion,
or the Twelve Peers, because they love him so.
I defy them, here in your presence, Lord."
And the King said: "What hate there is in you!
You will go there, for I command you to."
"I can go there, but I'll have no protector. AOI.
Basile had none, nor did Basan his brother."

25.
The Emperor offers him his right glove.
But Ganelon would have liked not to be there.
When he had to take it, it fell to the ground.
"God!" say the French, "What's that going to mean?

What disaster will this message bring us!"
Said Ganelon: "Lords, you'll be hearing news."

26.

Said Ganelon: "Lord, give me leave to go,
since go I must, there's no reason to linger."
And the King said: "In Jesus' name and mine,"
absolved him and blessed him with his right hand.
Then he gave him the letter and the staff.

27.

Count Ganelon goes away to his camp.
He chooses, with great care, his battle-gear,
picks the most precious arms that he can find.
The spurs he fastened on were golden spurs;
he girds his sword, Murgleis, upon his side;
he has mounted Tachebrun, his battle horse,
his uncle, Guinemer, held the stirrup.
And there you would have seen brave men in tears,
his men, who say: "Baron, what bad luck for you!
All your long years in the court of the King,
always proclaimed a great and noble vassal!
Whoever it was doomed you to go down there—
Charlemagne himself will not protect that man.
Roland the Count should not have thought of this—
and you the living issue of a mighty line!"
And then they say: "Lord, take us there with you!"
Ganelon answers: "May the Lord God forbid!
It is better that I alone should die
than so many good men and noble knights.
You will be going back, Lords, to sweet France:
go to my wife and greet her in my name,
and Pinabel, my dear friend and peer,
and Baldewin, my son, whom you all know:
give him your aid, and hold him as your lord."
And he starts down the road; he is on his way. AOI.

28.

Ganelon rides to a tall olive tree,
there he has joined the pagan messengers.
And here is Blancandrin, who slows down for him:
and what great art they speak to one another.
Said Blancandrin: "An amazing man, Charles!
conquered Apulia, conquered all of Calabria,
crossed the salt sea on his way into England,

won its tribute,[9] got Peter's pence for Rome:
what does he want from us here in our march?"
Ganelon answers: "That is the heart in him.
There'll never be a man the like of him." AOI.

29.
Said Blancandrin: "The Franks are a great people.
Now what great harm all those dukes and counts do
to their own lord when they give him such counsel:
they torment him, they'll destroy him, and others."
Ganelon answers: "Well, now, I know no such man
except Roland, who'll suffer for it yet.
One day the Emperor was sitting in the shade:
his nephew came, still wearing his hauberk,
he had gone plundering near Carcassonne;
and in his hand he held a bright red apple:
'Dear Lord, here, take,' said Roland to his uncle;
'I offer you the crowns of all earth's kings.'
Yes, Lord, that pride of his will destroy him,
for every day he goes riding at death.
And *should* someone kill him, we would have peace." AOI.

30.
Said Blancandrin: "A wild man, this Roland!
wants to make every nation beg for his mercy
and claims a right to every land on earth!
But what men support him, if that is his aim?"
Ganelon answers: "Why, Lord, the men of France.
They love him so, they will never fail him.
He gives them gifts, masses of gold and silver,
mules, battle horses, brocaded silks, supplies.
And it is all as the Emperor desires:
he'll win the lands from here to the Orient." AOI.

31.
Ganelon and Blancandrin rode on until
each pledged his faith to the other and swore
they'd find a way to have Count Roland killed.
They rode along the paths and ways until,
in Saragossa, they dismount beneath a yew.
There was a throne in the shade of a pine,
covered with silk from Alexandria.

9. Although begun perhaps as early as the eighth century, it was not due to any effort of Charlemagne, who did not in fact visit England. Peter's pence: A tribute of one penny per house "for the use of Saint Peter," that is, for the Pope in Rome.

There sat the king who held the land of Spain,
and around him twenty thousand Saracens.
There is no man who speaks or breathes a word,
poised for the news that all would like to hear.
Now here they are: Ganelon and Blancandrin.

32.

Blancandrin came before Marsilion,
his hand around the fist of Ganelon,
said to the King: "May Mahumet save you,
and Apollin, whose sacred laws we keep!
We delivered your message to Charlemagne:
when we finished, he raised up both his hands
and praised his god. He made no other answer.
Here he sends you one of his noble barons,
a man of France, and very powerful.
You'll learn from him whether or not you'll have peace."
"Let him speak, we shall hear him," Marsilion answers. AOI.

33.

But Ganelon had it all well thought out.
With what great art he commences his speech,
a man who knows his way about these things;
said to the King: "May the Lord God save you,
that glorious God, whom we must all adore.
Here is the word of Charlemagne the King:
you are to take the holy Christian faith;
he will give you one half of Spain in fief.
If you refuse, if you reject this peace,
you will be taken by force, put into chains,
and then led forth to the King's seat at Aix;
you will be tried; you will be put to death:
you will die there, in shame, vilely, degraded."
King Marsilion, hearing this, was much shaken.
In his hand was a spear, with golden feathers.
He would have struck, had they not held him back. AOI.

34.

Marsilion the King—his color changed!
He shook his spear, waved the shaft to and fro.
When he saw that, Ganelon laid hand to sword,
he drew it out two fingers from its sheath;
and spoke to it: "How beautiful and bright!
How long did I bear you in the King's court
before I died! The Emperor will not say

I died alone in that foreign country:
they'll buy you first, with the best men they have!"
The pagans say: "Let us break up this quarrel!"

35.

The pagan chiefs pleaded with Marsilion
till he sat down once again on his throne.
The Caliph[1] spoke: "You did us harm just now,
served us badly, trying to strike this Frenchman.
You should have listened, you should have heard him out."
Said Ganelon: "Lord, I must endure it.
I shall not fail, for all the gold God made,
for all the wealth there may be in this land,
to tell him, as long as I have breath, all
that Charlemagne—that great and mighty King!—
has sent through me to his mortal enemy."
He is buckled in a great cloak of sable,
covered with silk from Alexandria:
he throws it down. Blancandrin picks it up.
But his great sword he will never throw down!
In his right fist he grasps its golden pommel.
Say the pagans: "That's a great man! A noble!" AOI.

36.

Now Ganelon drew closer to the King
and said to him: "You are wrong to get angry,
for Charles, who rules all France, sends you this word:
you are to take the Christian people's faith;
he will give you one half of Spain in fief,
the other half goes to his nephew: Roland—
quite a partner you will be getting there!
If you refuse, if you reject this peace,
he will come and lay siege to Saragossa;
you will be taken by force, put into chains,
and brought straight on to Aix, the capital.
No saddle horse, no war horse for you then,
no he-mule, no she-mule for you to ride:
you will be thrown on some miserable dray;
you will be tried, and you will lose your head.
Our Emperor sends you this letter."
He put the letter in the pagan's right fist.

37.

Marsilion turned white; he was enraged;
he breaks the seal, he's knocked away the wax,

1. A high official of King Marsilion.

runs through the letter, sees what is written there:
"Charles sends me word, this king who rules in France:
I'm to think of his anger and his grief—
he means Basan and his brother Basile,
I took their heads in the hills below Haltille;
if I want to redeem the life of my body,
I must send him my uncle: the Algalife.[2]
And otherwise he'll have no love for me."
Then his son came and spoke to Marsilion,
said to the King: 'Ganelon has spoken madness.
He crossed the line, he has no right to live.
Give him to me, I will do justice on him."
When he heard that, Ganelon brandished his sword;
he runs to the pine, set his back against the trunk.

38.

King Marsilion went forth into the orchard,
he takes with him the greatest of his men;
Blancandrin came, that gray-haired counselor,
and Jurfaleu, Marsilion's son and heir,
the Algalife, uncle and faithful friend.
Said Blancandrin: "Lord, call the Frenchman back.
He swore to me to keep faith with our cause."
And the King said: "Go, bring him back here, then."
He took Ganelon's right hand by the fingers,
leads him into the orchard before the King.
And there they plotted that criminal treason. AOI.

39.

Said Marsilion: "My dear Lord Ganelon,
that was foolish, what I just did to you,
I showed my anger, even tried to strike you.
Here's a pledge of good faith, these sable furs,
the gold alone worth over five hundred pounds:
I'll make it all up before tomorrow night."
Ganelon answers: "I will not refuse it.
May it please God to reward you for it." AOI.

40.

Said Marsilion: "I tell you, Ganelon,
I have a great desire to love you dearly.
I want to hear you speak of Charlemagne.
He is so old, he's used up all his time—
from what I hear, he is past two hundred!

2. The Caliph.

He has pushed his old body through so many lands,
taken so many blows on his buckled shield,
made beggars of so many mighty kings:
when will he lose the heart for making war?"
Ganelon answers: "Charles is not one to lose heart.
No man sees him, no man learns to know him
who does not say: the Emperor is great.
I do not know how to praise him so highly
that his great merit would not surpass my praise.
Who could recount his glory and his valor?
God put the light in him of such lordliness,
he would choose death before he failed his barons."

41.

Said the pagan: "I have reason to marvel
at Charlemagne, a man so old and gray—
he's two hundred years old, I hear, and more;
he has tortured his body through so many lands,
and borne so many blows from lance and spear,
made beggars of so many mighty kings:
when will he lose the heart for making war?"
"Never," said Ganelon, "while his nephew lives,
he's a fighter, there's no vassal like him
under the vault of heaven. And he has friends.
There's Oliver, a good man, his companion.
And the Twelve Peers, whom Charles holds very dear,
form the vanguard, with twenty thousand knights.
Charles is secure, he fears no man on earth." AOI.

42.

Said the pagan: "Truly, how I must marvel
at Charlemagne, who is so gray and white—
over two hundred years, from what I hear;
gone through so many lands a conqueror,
and borne so many blows from strong sharp spears,
killed and conquered so many mighty kings:
when will he lose the heart for making war?"
"Never," said Ganelon, "while one man lives: Roland!
no man like him from here to the Orient!
There's his companion, Oliver, a brave man.
And the Twelve Peers, whom Charles holds very dear,
form the vanguard, with twenty thousand Franks.
Charles is secure, he fears no man alive." AOI.

43.

"Dear Lord Ganelon," said Marsilion the King,
"I have my army, you won't find one more handsome:

I can muster four hundred thousand knights!
With this host, now, can I fight Charles and the French?"
Ganelon answers: "No, no, don't try that now,
you'd take a loss: thousands of your pagans!
Forget such foolishness, listen to wisdom:
send the Emperor so many gifts
there'll be no Frenchman there who does not marvel.
For twenty hostages—those you'll be sending—
he will go home: home again to sweet France!
And he will leave his rear-guard behind him.
There will be Roland, I do believe, his nephew,
and Oliver, brave man, born to the court.
These Counts are dead, if anyone trusts me.
Then Charles will see that great pride of his go down,
he'll have no heart to make war on you again." AOI.

44.

"Dear Lord Ganelon," said Marsilion the King,
"What must I do to kill Roland the Count?"
Ganelon answers: "Now I can tell you that.
The King will be at Cize,[3] in the great passes,
he will have placed his rear-guard at his back:
there'll be his nephew, Count Roland, that great man,
and Oliver, in whom he puts such faith,
and twenty thousand Franks in their company.
Now send one hundred thousand of your pagans
against the French—let them give the first battle.
The French army will be hit hard and shaken.
I must tell you: your men will be martyred.
Give them a second battle, then, like the first.
One will get him, Roland will not escape.
Then you'll have done a deed, a noble deed,
and no more war for the rest of your life!" AOI.

45.

"If someone can bring about the death of Roland,
then Charles would lose the right arm of his body,
that marvelous army would disappear—
never again could Charles gather such forces.
Then peace at last for the Land of Fathers!"[4]
When Marsilion heard that, he kissed his neck.
Then he begins to open up his treasures. AOI.

3. The pass through the Pyrenees. 4. *Tere Major*, in the text, can mean either "the great land," or "the land of fathers, ancestors." It always refers to France.

46.

Marsilion said, "Why talk. . . .
No plan has any worth which one. . . .[5]
Now swear to me that you will betray Roland."
Ganelon answers: "Let it be as you wish."
On the relics in his great sword Murgleis
he swore treason and became a criminal. AOI.

47.

There stood a throne made all of ivory.
Marsilion commands them bring forth a book:
it was the law of Mahum and Tervagant.[6]
This is the vow sworn by the Saracen of Spain:
if he shall find Roland in the rear-guard,
he shall fight him, all his men shall fight him,
and once he finds Roland, Roland will die.
Says Ganelon: "May it be as you will." AOI.

48.

And now there came a pagan, Valdabrun,
he was the man who raised Marsilion.
And, all bright smiles, he said to Ganelon:
"You take my sword, there's no man has one better:
a thousand coins, and more, are in the hilt.
It is a gift, dear lord, made in friendship,
only help us to Roland, that great baron,
let us find him standing in the rear-guard."
"It shall be done," replies Count Ganelon.
And then they kissed, on the face, on the chin.

49.

And there came then a pagan, Climborin,
and, all bright smiles, he said to Ganelon:
"You take my helmet, I never saw one better,
only help us to Roland, lord of the march,
show us the way to put Roland to shame."
"It shall be done," replied Count Ganelon.
And then they kissed, on the face, on the mouth. AOI.

50.

And then there came the Queen, Bramimunde;
said to the Count: "Lord, I love you well,
for my lord and all his men esteem you so.

5. Parts of lines 603–604 are unintelligible in the manuscript. 6. A fictitious deity whom the poet mistakenly says the Saracens worshipped.

I wish to send your wife two necklaces,
they are all gold, jacinths, and amethysts,
they are worth more than all the wealth of Rome.
Your Emperor has never seen their like."
He has taken them, thrusts them into his boot. AOI.

51.

The King calls for Malduit, his treasurer:
"The gifts for Charles—is everything prepared?"
And he replies: "Yes, Lord, and well prepared:
seven hundred camels, packed with gold and silver,
and twenty hostages, the noblest under heaven." AOI.

52.

Marsilion took Ganelon by the shoulder
and said to him: "You're a brave man, a wise man.
Now by that faith you think will save your soul,
take care you do not turn your heart from us.
I will give you a great mass of my wealth,
ten mules weighed down with fine Arabian gold;
and come each year, I'll do the same again.
Now you take these, the keys to this vast city:
present King Charles with all of its great treasure;
then get me Roland picked for the rear-guard.
Let me find him in some defile or pass,
I will fight him, a battle to the death."
Ganelon answers: "It's high time that I go."
Now he is mounted, and he is on his way. AOI.

53.

The Emperor moves homeward, he's drawing near.
Now he has reached the city of Valterne:
Roland had stormed it, destroyed it, and it stood
from that day forth a hundred years laid waste.
Charles is waiting for news of Ganelon
and the tribute from Spain, from that great land.
In the morning, at dawn, with the first light,
Count Ganelon came to the Christian camp. AOI.

54.

The Emperor rose early in the morning,
the King of France, and has heard mass and matins.
On the green grass he stood before his tent.
Roland was there, and Oliver, brave man,
Naimon the Duke, and many other knights.

Ganelon came, the traitor, the foresworn.
With what great cunning he commences his speech;
said to the King: "May the Lord God save you!
Here I bring you the keys to Saragossa.
And I bring you great treasure from that city,
and twenty hostages, have them well guarded.
And good King Marsilion sends you this word:
Do not blame him concerning the Algalife:
I saw it all myself, with my own eyes:
four hundred thousand men, and all in arms,
their hauberks on, some with their helms laced on,
swords on their belts, the hilts enameled gold,
who went with him to the edge of the sea.
They are in flight: it is the Christian faith—
they do not want it, they will not keep its law.
They had not sailed four full leagues out to sea
when a high wind, a tempest swept them up.
They were all drowned; you will never see them;
if he were still alive, I'd have brought him.
As for the pagan King, Lord, believe this:
before you see one month from this day pass,
he'll follow you to the Kingdom of France
and take the faith—he will take your faith, Lord,
and join his hands and become your vassal.
He will hold Spain as a fief from your hand."
Then the King said: "May God be thanked for this.
You have done well, you will be well rewarded."
Throughout the host they sound a thousand trumpets.
The French break camp, strap their gear on their pack-horses.
They take the road to the sweet land of France. AOI.

55.

King Charlemagne laid waste the land of Spain,
stormed its castles, ravaged its citadels.
The King declares his war is at an end.
The Emperor rides toward the land of sweet France.
Roland the Count affixed the gonfanon,[7]
raised it toward heaven on the height of a hill;
the men of France make camp across that country.
Pagans are riding up through these great valleys,
their hauberks on, their tunics of double mail,
their helms laced on, their swords fixed on their belts,
shields on their necks, lances trimmed with their banners.

7. Pennant.

In a forest high in the hills they gathered:
four hundred thousand men waiting for dawn.
God, the pity of it! the French do not know! AOI.

56.

The day goes by; now the darkness of night.
Charlemagne sleeps, the mighty Emperor.
He dreamt he was at Cize, in the great passes,
and in his fists held his great ashen lance.
Count Ganelon tore it away from him
and brandished it, shook it with such fury
the splinters of the shaft fly up toward heaven.
Charlemagne sleeps, his dream does not wake him.

57.

And after that he dreamed another vision:
he was in France, in his chapel at Aix,
a cruel wild boar was biting his right arm;
saw coming at him—from the Ardennes—a leopard,
it attacked him, fell wildly on his body.
And a swift hound running down from the hall
came galloping, bounding over to Charles,
tore the right ear off that first beast, the boar,
turns, in fury, to fight against the leopard.
And the French say: It is a mighty battle,
but cannot tell which one of them will win.
Charlemagne sleeps, his dream does not wake him. AOI.

58.

The day goes by, and the bright dawn arises.
Throughout that host. . . .[8]
The Emperor rides forth with such fierce pride.
"Barons, my lords," said the Emperor Charles,
"look at those passes, at those narrow defiles—
pick me a man to command the rear-guard."
Ganelon answers: "Roland, here, my stepson.
You have no baron as great and brave as Roland."
When he hears that, the King stares at him in fury;
and said to him: "You are the living devil,
a mad dog—the murderous rage in you!
And who will precede me, in the vanguard?"
Ganelon answers, "Why, Ogier of Denmark,
you have no baron who could lead it so well."

8. Second hemistich unintelligible in the manuscript.

59.

Roland the Count, when he heard himself named,
knew what to say, and spoke as a knight must speak:
"Lord Stepfather, I have to cherish you!
You have had the rear-guard assigned to me.
Charles will not lose, this great King who rules France,
I swear it now, one palfrey, one war horse—
while I'm alive and know what's happening—
one he-mule, one she-mule that he might ride,
Charles will not lose one sumpter, not one pack horse
that has not first been bought and paid for with swords."
Ganelon answers: "You speak the truth, I know." AOI.

60.

When Roland hears he will lead the rear-guard,
he spoke in great fury to his stepfather:
"Hah! you nobody, you base-born little fellow,
and did you think the glove would fall from my hands
as the staff fell from yours before King Charles?"[9] AOI.

61.

Just Emperor," said Roland, that great man,
'give me the bow that you hold in your hand.
And no man here, I think, will say in reproach
I let it drop, as Ganelon let the staff drop
from his right hand, when he should have taken it."
The Emperor bowed down his head with this,
he pulled his beard, he twisted his mustache,
cannot hold back, tears fill his eyes, he weeps.

62.

And after that there came Naimon the Duke,
no greater vassal in the court than Naimon,
said to the King: "You've heard it clearly now:
it is Count Roland. How furious he is.
He is the one to whom the rear-guard falls,
no baron here can ever change that now.
Give him the bow that you have stretched and bent,
and then find him good men to stand with him."
The King gives him the bow; Roland has it now.

9. Ganelon had let fall a glove, not a staff (line 333). For this and other less objective reasons, some editors have questioned the authenticity of this *laisse*. In the following *laisse*, at line 769, a reviser tried to make the text more consistent by adding the reference to the staff.

63.

The Emperor calls forth Roland the Count:
"My lord, my dear nephew, of course you know
I will give you half my men, they are yours.
Let them serve you, it is your salvation."
"None of that!" said the Count. "May God strike me
if I discredit the history of my line.
I'll keep twenty thousand Franks—they are good men.
Go your way through the passes, you will be safe.
You must not fear any man while I live."

64.

Roland the Count mounted his battle horse. AOI.
Oliver came to him, his companion.
And Gerin came, and the brave Count Gerer,
and Aton came, and there came Berenger,
And Astor came, and Anseïs, fierce and proud,
and the old man Gerard of Roussillon,
and Gaifier, that great and mighty duke.
Said the Archbishop: "I'm going, by my head!"
"And I with you," said Gautier the Count,
"I am Count Roland's man and must not fail him."
And together they choose twenty thousand men. AOI.

65.

Roland the Count summons Gautier de l'Hum:
"Now take a thousand Franks from our land, France,
and occupy those passes and the heights there.
The Emperor must not lose a single man." AOI.
Gautier replies: "Lord, I'll fight well for you."
And with a thousand French of France, their land,
Gautier rides out to the hills and defiles;
will not come down, for all the bad news, again,
till seven hundred swords have been drawn out.
King Almaris of the Kingdom of Belferne
gave them battle that day, and it was bitter.

66.

High are the hills, the valleys tenebrous,
the cliffs are dark, the defiles mysterious.
That day, and with much pain, the French passed through.
For fifteen leagues around one heard their clamor.
When they reach Tere Majur, the Land of Fathers,
they beheld Gascony, their lord's domain.

Then they remembered: their fiefs, their realms, their honors,
remembered their young girls, their gentle wives:
not one who does not weep for what he feels.
Beyond these others King Charles is in bad straits:
his nephew left in the defiles of Spain!
feels the pity of it; tears break through. AOI.

67.

And the Twelve Peers are left behind in Spain,
and twenty thousand Franks are left with them.
They have no fear, they have no dread of death.
The Emperor is going home to France.
Beneath his cloak, his face shows all he feels.
Naimon the Duke is riding beside him;
and he said to the King: "What is this grief?"
And Charles replies: "Whoever asks me, wrongs me.
I feel such pain, I cannot keep from wailing.
France will be destroyed by Ganelon.
Last night I saw a vision brought by angels:
the one who named my nephew for the rear-guard
shattered the lance between my fists to pieces.
I have left him in a march among strangers.
If I lose him, God! I won't find his like." AOI.

68.

King Charles the Great cannot keep from weeping.
A hundred thousand Franks feel pity for him;
and for Roland, an amazing fear.
Ganelon the criminal has betrayed him;
got gifts for it from the pagan king,
gold and silver, cloths of silk, gold brocade,
mules and horses and camels and lions.
Marsilion sends for the barons of Spain,
counts and viscounts and dukes and almaçurs,
and the emirs,[1] and the sons of great lords:
four hundred thousand assembled in three days.
In Saragossa he has them beat the drums,
they raise Mahumet upon the highest tower:
no pagan now who does not worship him
and adore him. Then they ride, racing each other,
search through the land, the valleys, the mountains;
and then they saw the banners of the French.

1. *Almaçurs . . . emirs:* Lords of high rank.

The rear-guard of the Twelve Companions
will not fail now, they'll give the pagans battle.

69.

Marsilion's nephew has come forward
riding a mule that he goads with a stick;
said—a warrior's laugh on him—to his uncle:
"Dear Lord and King, how long I have served you,
and all the troubles, the pains I have endured,
so many battles fought and won on the field
Give me a fief, the first blow at Roland.
I will kill him, here's the spear I'll do it with.
If Mahumet will only stand by me,
I will set free every strip of land in Spain,
from the passes of Aspre to Durestant.
Charles will be weary, his Franks will give it up:
and no more war for the rest of your life!"
King Marsilion gave him his glove, as sign. AOI.

70.

The King's nephew holds the glove in his fist,
speaks these proud words to Marsilion his uncle:
"You've given me, dear Lord, King, a great gift!
Choose me twelve men, twelve of your noble barons,
and I will fight against the Twelve Companions."
And Falsaron was the first to respond—
he was the brother of King Marsilion:
"Dear Lord, Nephew, it's you and I together!
We'll fight, that's sure! We'll battle the rear-guard
of Charlemagne's grand army! We are the ones!
We have been chosen. We'll kill them all! It is fated." AOI.

71.

And now again: there comes King Corsablis,
a Berber, a bad man, a man of cunning;
and now he spoke as a brave vassal speaks:
for all God's gold he would not be a coward.
Now rushing up: Malprimis de Brigal,
faster on his two feet than any horse;
and cries great-voiced before Marsilion:
"I'm on my way to Rencesvals to fight!
Let me find Roland, I won't stop till I kill him!"

[Lines 894–993 continue the rollcall of volunteers.]

79.

They arm themselves in Saracen hauberks,
all but a few are lined with triple mail;
they lace on their good helms of Saragossa,
gird on their swords, the steel forged in Vienne;
they have rich shields, spears of Valencia,
and gonfanons of white and blue and red.
They leave the mules and riding horses now,
mount their war horses and ride in close array.
The day was fair, the sun was shining bright,
all their armor was aflame with the light;
a thousand trumpets blow: that was to make it finer.
That made a great noise, and the men of France heard.
Said Oliver: "Companion, I believe
we may yet have a battle with the pagans."
Roland replies: "Now may God grant us that.
We know our duty: to stand here for our King.
A man must bear some hardships for his lord,
stand everything, the great heat, the great cold,
lose the hide and hair on him for his good lord.
Now let each man make sure to strike hard here:
let them not sing a bad song about us!
Pagans are wrong and Christians are right!
They'll make no bad example of me this day!" AOI.

80.

Oliver climbs to the top of a hill,
looks to his right, across a grassy vale,
sees the pagan army on its way there;
and called down to Roland, his companion:
"That way, toward Spain: the uproar I see coming!
All their hauberks, all blazing, helmets like flames!
It will be a bitter thing for our French.
Ganelon knew, that criminal, that traitor,
when he marked us out before the Emperor."
"Be still, Oliver," Roland the Count replies.
"He is my stepfather—my stepfather.
I won't have you speak one word against him."

81.

Oliver has gone up upon a hill,
sees clearly now: the kingdom of Spain,
and the Saracens assembled in such numbers:
helmets blazing, bedecked with gems in gold,

those shields of theirs, those hauberks sewn with brass,
and all their spears, the gonfanons affixed;
cannot begin to count their battle corps,
there are too many, he cannot take their number.
And he is deeply troubled by what he sees.
He made his way quickly down from the hill,
came to the French, told them all he had seen.

82.

Said Oliver: "I saw the Saracens,
no man on earth ever saw more of them—
one hundred thousand, with their shields, up in front,
helmets laced on, hauberks blazing on them,
the shafts straight up, the iron heads like flames—
you'll get a battle, nothing like it before.
My lords, my French, may God give you the strength.
Hold your ground now! Let them not defeat us!"
And the French say: "God hate the man who runs!
We may die here, but no man will fail you." AOI.

83.

Said Oliver: "The pagan force is great;
from what I see, our French here are too few.
Roland, my companion, sound your horn then,
Charles will hear it, the army will come back."
Roland replies: "I'd be a fool to do it.
I would lose my good name all through sweet France.
I will strike now, I'll strike with Durendal,
the blade will be bloody to the gold from striking!
These pagan traitors came to these passes doomed!
I promise you, they are marked men, they'll die." AOI.

84.

"Roland, Companion, now sound the olifant,[2]
Charles will hear it, he will bring the army back,
the King will come with all his barons to help us."
Roland replies: "May it never please God
that my kind should be shamed because of me,
or that sweet France should fall into disgrace.
Never! Never! I'll strike with Durendal,
I'll strike with this good sword strapped to my side,

2. The word (which is a form of "elephant") means (a) "ivory," (b) "a horn made of ivory," and is used specifically, almost as a proper name, to denote Roland's horn, made of an elephant's tusk, and adorned with gold and jewels about the rim.

you'll see this blade running its whole length with blood.
These pagan traitors have gathered here to die.
I promise you, they are all bound for death." AOI.

85.

"Roland, Companion, sound your olifant now,
Charles will hear it, marching through those passes.
I promise you, the Franks will come at once."
Roland replies: "May it never please God
that any man alive should come to say
that pagans—pagans!—once made me sound this horn:
no kin of mine will ever bear that shame.
Once I enter this great battle coming
and strike my thousand seven hundred blows,
you'll see the bloody steel of Durendal.
These French are good—they will strike like brave men.
Nothing can save the men of Spain from death."

86.

Said Oliver: "I see no blame in it—
I watched the Saracens coming from Spain,
the valleys and mountains covered with them,
every hillside and every plain all covered,
hosts and hosts everywhere of those strange men—
and here we have a little company."
Roland replies: "That whets my appetite.
May it not please God and his angels and saints
to let France lose its glory because of me—
let me not end in shame, let me die first.
The Emperor loves us when we fight well."

87.

Roland is good, and Oliver is wise,
both these vassals men of amazing courage:
once they are armed and mounted on their horses,
they will not run, though they die for it, from battle.
Good men, these Counts, and their words full of spirit.
Traitor pagans are riding up in fury.
Said Oliver: "Roland, look—the first ones,
on top of us—and Charles is far away.
You did not think it right to sound your olifant:
if the King were here, we'd come out without losses.
Now look up there, toward the passes of Aspre—
you can see the rear-guard: it will suffer.
No man in that detail will be in another."

Roland replies: "Don't speak such foolishness—
shame on the heart gone coward in the chest.
We'll hold our ground, we'll stand firm—we're the ones!
We'll fight with spears, we'll fight them hand to hand!" AOI.

88.

When Roland sees that there will be a battle,
it makes him fiercer than a lion or leopard;
shouts to the French, calls out to Oliver:
"Lord, companion: friend, do not say such things.
The Emperor, who left us these good French,
had set apart these twenty thousand men:
he knew there was no coward in their ranks.
A man must meet great troubles for his lord,
stand up to the great heat and the great cold,
give up some flesh and blood—it is his duty.
Strike with the lance, I'll strike with Durendal—
it was the King who gave me this good sword!
If I die here, the man who gets it can say:
it was a noble's, a vassal's, a good man's sword."

89.

And now there comes the Archbishop Turpin.
He spurs his horse, goes up into a mountain,
summons the French; and he preached them a sermon:
"Barons, my lords, Charles left us in this place.
We know our duty: to die like good men for our King.
Fight to defend the holy Christian faith.
Now you will have a battle, you know it now,
you see the Saracens with your own eyes.
Confess your sins, pray to the Lord for mercy.
I will absolve you all, to save your souls.
If you die here, you will stand up holy martyrs,
you will have seats in highest Paradise."
The French dismount, cast themselves on the ground;
the Archbishop blesses them in God's name.
He commands them to do one penance: strike.

90.

The French arise, stand on their feet again;
they are absolved, released from all their sins:
the Archbishop has blessed them in God's name.
Now they are mounted on their swift battle horses,
bearing their arms like faithful warriors;
and every man stands ready for the battle.

Roland the Count calls out to Oliver:
"Lord, Companion, you knew it, you were right,
Ganelon watched for his chance to betray us,
got gold for it, got goods for it, and money.
The Emperor will have to avenge us now.
King Marsilion made a bargain for our lives,
but still must pay, and that must be with swords." AOI.

91.

Roland went forth into the Spanish passes
on Veillantif, his good swift-running horse.
He bears his arms—how they become this man!—
grips his lance now, hefting it, working it,
now swings the iron point up toward the sky,
the gonfanon all white laced on above—
the golden streamers beat down upon his hands:
a noble's body, the face aglow and smiling.
Close behind him his good companion follows;
the men of France hail him: their protector!
He looks wildly toward the Saracens,
and humbly and gently to the men of France;
and spoke a word to them, in all courtesy:
"Barons, my lords, easy now, keep at a walk.
These pagans are searching for martyrdom.
We'll get good spoils before this day is over,
no king of France ever got such treasure!"
And with these words, the hosts are at each other. AOI.

92.

Said Oliver: "I will waste no more words.
You did not think it right to sound your olifant,
there'll be no Charles coming to your aid now.
He knows nothing, brave man, he's done no wrong;
those men down there—they have no blame in this.
Well, then, ride now, and ride with all your might!
Lords, you brave men, stand your ground, hold the field!
Make up your minds, I beg you in God's name,
to strike some blows, take them and give them back!
Here we must not forget Charlemagne's war cry."
And with that word the men of France cried out.
A man who heard that shout: Munjoie! Munjoie![3]

3. A mountjoy (montjoie) was (according to Littré) a mound or cairn of stones set up to mark the site of a victory. The old French war cry, "Montjoie St.-Denis!" or, briefly, "Montjoie!" derived from the cairn set up at St.-Denis on the site of the saint's martyrdom (his spiritual victory). Others derive "Montjoie" from the Hill of Rama, called "Mons Gaudii," from which pilgrims obtained their first view of Jerusalem.

would always remember what manhood is.
Then they ride, God! Look at their pride and spirit!
and they spur hard, to ride with all their speed,
come on to strike—what else would these men do?
The Saracens kept coming, never fearing them.
Franks and pagans, here they are, at each other.

93.

Marsilion's nephew is named Aëlroth.
He rides in front, at the head of the army,
comes on shouting insults against our French:
"French criminals, today you fight our men.
One man should have saved you: he betrayed you.
A fool, your King, to leave you in these passes.
This is the day sweet France will lose its name,
and Charlemagne the right arm of his body."
When he hears that—God!—Roland is outraged!
He spurs his horse, gives Veillantif its head.
The Count comes on to strike with all his might,
smashes his shield, breaks his hauberk apart,
and drives: rips through his chest, shatters the bones,
knocks the whole backbone out of his back,
casts out the soul of Aëlroth with his lance;
which he thrusts deep, makes the whole body shake,
throws him down dead, lance straight out,[4] from his horse;
he has broken his neck; broken it in two.
There is something, he says, he must tell him:
"Clown! Nobody! Now you know Charles is no fool,
he never was the man to love treason.
It took his valor to leave us in these passes!
France will not lose its name, sweet France! today.
Brave men of France, strike hard! The first blow is ours!
We're in the right, and these swine in the wrong!" AOI.

94.

A duke is there whose name is Falsaron,
he was the brother of King Marsilion,
held the wild land of Dathan and Abiram;[5]
under heaven, no criminal more vile;
a tremendous forehead between his eyes—
a good half-foot long, if you had measured it.
His pain is bitter to see his nephew dead;

4. The lance is held, not thrown, and used to knock the enemy from his horse. To throw one's weapons is savage and ignoble. Note *laisses* 154 and 160, and the outlandish names of the things the pagans throw at Roland, Gautier, and Turpin. 5. See Numbers, 16:1–35.

rides out alone, baits the foe with his body,
and riding shouts the war cry of the pagans,
full of hate and insults against the French:
"This is the day sweet France will lose its honor!"
Oliver hears, and it fills him with fury,
digs with his golden spurs into his horse,
comes on to strike the blow a baron strikes,
smashes his shield, breaks his hauberk apart,
thrusts into him the long streamers of his gonfalon,
knocks him down, dead, lance straight out, from the saddle;
looks to the ground and sees the swine stretched out,
and spoke these words—proud words, terrible words:
"You nobody, what are your threats to me!
Men of France, strike! Strike and we will beat them!"
Munjoie! he shouts—the war cry of King Charles. AOI.

95.

A king is there whose name is Corsablis,
a Berber, come from that far country.
He spoke these words to all his Saracens:
"Now here's one battle we'll have no trouble with,
look at that little troop of Frenchmen there,
a few odd men—they're not worth noticing!
King Charles won't save a single one of them.
Their day has come, they must all die today."
And Archbishop Turpin heard every word:
no man on earth he wants so much to hate!
digs with spurs of fine gold into his horse,
comes on to strike with all his awful might;
smashed through his shield, burst the rings of his hauberk,
sent his great lance into the body's center,
drove it in deep, he made the dead man shake,
knocked him down, dead, lance straight out, on the road;
looks to the ground and sees the swine stretched out;
there is something, he says, he must tell him:
"You pagan! You nobody! You told lies there:
King Charles my lord is our safeguard forever!
Our men of France have no heart for running.
As for your companions—we'll nail them to the ground;
and then you must all die the second death.[6]
At them, you French! No man forget what he is!
Thanks be to God, now the first blow is ours";
and shouts Munjoie! Munjoie! to hold the field.

6. The death of the soul, eternal damnation. See Revelation, 20:11–15; 21:8.

[Lines 1261–1347 narrate a series of single combats, many of them quite similar.]

111.

The French have fought with all their hearts and strength,
pagans are dead by the thousands, in droves:
of one hundred thousand, not two are saved.
Said the Archbishop: "Our men! What valiant fighters!
No king under heaven could have better.
It is written in the Gesta Francorum:[7]
our Emperor's vassals were all good men."
They walk over the field to seek their dead,
they weep, tears fill their eyes, in grief and pity
for their kindred, with love, with all their hearts.
Marsilion the King, with all his men
in that great host, rises up before them. AOI.

112.

King Marsilion comes along a valley
with all his men, the great host he assembled:
twenty divisions, formed and numbered by the King,
helmets ablaze with gems beset in gold,
and those bright shields, those hauberks sewn with brass.
Seven thousand clarions sound the pursuit,
and the great noise resounds across that country.
Said Roland then: "Oliver, Companion, Brother,
that traitor Ganelon has sworn our deaths:
it is treason, it cannot stay hidden,
the Emperor will take his terrible revenge.
We have this battle now, it will be bitter,
no man has ever seen the like of it.
I will fight here with Durendal, this sword,
and you, my companion, with Halteclere—
we've fought with them before, in many lands!
how many battles have we won with these two!
Let no one sing a bad song of our swords." AOI.

113.

When the French see the pagans so numerous,
the fields swarming with them on every side,
they call the names of Oliver, and Roland,
and the Twelve Peers: protect them, be their warranter.
The Archbishop told them how he saw things:

7. "The deeds of the French." The reference is to a Latin account of these events; it has not survived.

"Barons, my lords, do not think shameful thoughts,
do not, I beg you all in God's name, run.
Let no brave man sing shameful songs of us:
let us all die here fighting: that is far better.
We are promised: we shall soon find our deaths,
after today we won't be living here.
But here's one thing, and I am your witness:
Holy Paradise lies open to you,
you will take seats among the Innocents."[8]
And with these words the Franks are filled with joy,
there is no man who does not shout Munjoie! AOI.

114.

A Saracen was there of Saragossa,
half that city was in this pagan's keeping,
this Climborin, who fled before no man,
who took the word of Ganelon the Count,
kissed in friendship the mouth that spoke that word,
gave him a gift: his helmet and its carbuncle.
Now he will shame, says he, the Land of Fathers,
he will tear off the crown of the Emperor;
sits on the horse that he calls Barbamusche,
swifter than the sparrowhawk, than the swallow;
digs in his spurs, gives that war horse its head,
comes on to strike Engeler of Gascony,
whose shield and fine hauberk cannot save him;
gets the head of his spear into his body,
drives it in deep, gets all the iron through,
throws him back, dead, lance straight out, on the field.
And then he cries: "It's good to kill these swine!
At them, Pagans! At them and break their ranks!"
"God!" say the French, "the loss of that good man!" AOI.

115.

Roland the Count calls out to Oliver:
"Lord, Companion, there is Engeler dead,
we never had a braver man on horse."
The Count replies: "God let me avenge him";
and digs with golden spurs into his horse,
grips—the steel running with blood—Halteclere,
comes on to strike with all his mighty power:
the blow comes flashing down; the pagan falls.
Devils take away the soul of Climborin.

8. The infants slain by King Herod; see Matthew 2:13–18.

And then he killed Alphaïen the duke,
cut off the head of Escababi,
struck from their horses seven great Arrabites:
they'll be no use for fighting any more!
And Roland said: "My companion is enraged!
Why, he compares with me! he earns his praise!
Fighting like that makes us dearer to Charles";
lifts up his voice and shouts: "Strike! you are warriors!" AOI.

[Lines 1519–1627 narrate another series of single combats.]

125.

Marsilion sees his people's martyrdom.
He commands them: sound his horns and trumpets;
and he rides now with the great host he has gathered.
At their head rides the Saracen Abisme:
no worse criminal rides in that company,
stained with the marks of his crimes and great treasons,
lacking the faith in God, Saint Mary's son.
And he is black, as black as melted pitch,
a man who loves murder and treason more
than all the gold of rich Galicia,
no living man ever saw him play or laugh;
a great fighter, a wild man, mad with pride,
and therefore dear to that criminal king;
holds high his dragon, where all his people gather.
The Archbishop will never love that man,
no sooner saw than wanted to strike him;
considered quietly, said to himself:
"That Saracen—a heretic, I'll wager.
Now let me die if I do not kill him—
I never loved cowards or cowards' ways." AOI.

126.

Turpin the Archbishop begins the battle.
He rides the horse that he took from Grossaille,
who was a king this priest once killed in Denmark.
Now this war horse is quick and spirited,
his hooves high-arched, the quick legs long and flat,
short in the thigh, wide in the rump, long in the flanks,
and the backbone so high, a battle horse!
and that white tail, the yellow mane on him,
the little ears on him, the tawny head!
No beast on earth could ever run with him.
The Archbishop—that valiant man!—spurs hard,

9. Banner.

he will attack Abisme, he will not falter,
strikes on his shield, a miraculous blow:
a shield of stones, of amethysts, topazes,
esterminals,[1] carbuncles all on fire—
a gift from a devil, in Val Metas,
sent on to him by the Amiral Galafre.
There Turpin strikes, he does not treat it gently—
after that blow, I'd not give one cent for it;
cut through his body, from one side to the other,
and casts him down dead in a barren place.
And the French say: "A fighter, that Archbishop!
Look at him there, saving souls with that crozier!"

127.

Roland the Count calls out to Oliver:
"Lord, Companion, now you have to agree
the Archbishop is a good man on horse,
there's none better on earth or under heaven,
he knows his way with a lance and a spear."
The Count replies: "Right! Let us help him then."
And with these words the Franks began anew,
the blows strike hard, and the fighting is bitter;
there is a painful loss of Christian men.
To have seen them, Roland and Oliver,
these fighting men, striking down with their swords,
the Archbishop with them, striking with his lance!
One can recount the number these three killed:
it is written—in charters, in documents;
the *Geste* tells it: it was more than four thousand.
Through four assaults all went well with our men;
then comes the fifth, and that one crushes them.
They are all killed, all these warriors of France,
all but sixty, whom the Lord God has spared:
they will die too, but first sell themselves dear. AOI.

128.

Count Roland sees the great loss of his men,
calls on his companion, in God's name, what would you do?
All these good men you see stretched on the ground.
We can mourn for sweet France, fair land of France!
a desert now, stripped of such great vassals.
Oh King, and friend, if only you were here!
Oliver, Brother, how shall we manage it?
What shall we do to get word to the King?"

1. Precious ornaments.

Said Oliver: "I don't see any way.
I would rather die now than hear us shamed." AOI.

129.
And Roland said: "I'll sound the olifant,
Charles will hear it, drawing through the passes,
I promise you, the Franks will return at once."
Said Oliver: "That would be a great disgrace,
a dishonor and reproach to all your kin,
the shame of it would last them all their lives.
When I urged it, you would not hear of it;
you will not do it now with my consent.
It is not acting bravely to sound it now—
look at your arms, they are covered with blood."
The Count replies: "I've fought here like a lord."[2] AOI.

130.
And Roland says: "We are in a rough battle.
I'll sound the olifant, Charles will hear it."
Said Oliver: "No good vassal would do it.
When I urged it, friend, you did not think it right.
If Charles were here, we'd come out with no losses.
Those men down there—no blame can fall on them."
Oliver said: "Now by this beard of mine,
If I can see my noble sister, Aude,
once more, you will never lie in her arms!"[3] AOI.

131.
And Roland said: "Why are you angry at me?"
Oliver answers: "Companion, it is your doing.
I will tell you what makes a vassal good:
it is judgment, it is never madness;
restraint is worth more than the raw nerve of a fool.
Frenchmen are dead because of your wildness.
And what service will Charles ever have from us?
If you had trusted me, my lord would be here,
we would have fought this battle through to the end,
Marsilion would be dead, or our prisoner.
Roland, your prowess—had we never seen it!
And now, dear friend, we've seen the last of it.
No more aid from us now for Charlemagne,

2. Some have found lines 1710–12 difficult. Oliver means: We have fought this far—look at the enemy's blood on your arms: It is too late, it would be a disgrace to summon help when there is no longer any chance of being saved. And Roland thinks that that is the one time when it is not a disgrace. 3. Aude had been betrothed to Roland.

a man without equal till Judgment Day,
you will die here, and your death will shame France.
We kept faith, you and I, we were companions;
and everything we were will end today.
We part before evening, and it will be hard." AOI.

132.

Turpin the Archbishop hears their bitter words,
digs hard into his horse with golden spurs
and rides to them; begins to set them right:
"You, Lord Roland, and you, Lord Oliver,
I beg you in God's name do not quarrel.
To sound the horn could not help us now, true,
but still it is far better that you do it:
let the King come, he can avenge us then—
these men of Spain must not go home exulting!
Our French will come, they'll get down on their feet,
and find us here—we'll be dead, cut to pieces.
They will lift us into coffins on the backs of mules,
and weep for us, in rage and pain and grief,
and bury us in the courts of churches;
and we will not be eaten by wolves or pigs or dogs."
Roland replies, "Lord, you have spoken well." AOI.

133.

Roland has put the olifant to his mouth,
he sets it well, sounds it with all his strength.
The hills are high, and that voice ranges far,
they heard it echo thirty great leagues away.
King Charles heard it, and all his faithful men.
And the King says: "Our men are in a battle."
And Ganelon disputed him and said:
"Had someone else said that, I'd call him liar!" AOI.

134.

And now the mighty effort of Roland the Count:
he sounds his olifant; his pain is great,
and from his mouth the bright blood comes leaping out,
and the temple bursts in his forehead.
That horn, in Roland's hands, has a mighty voice:
King Charles hears it drawing through the passes.
Naimon heard it, the Franks listen to it.
And the King said: "I hear Count Roland's horn;
he'd never sound it unless he had a battle."
Says Ganelon: "Now no more talk of battles!

You are old now, your hair is white as snow,
the things you say make you sound like a child.
You know Roland and that wild pride of his—
what a wonder God has suffered it so long!
Remember? he took Noples without your command:
the Saracens rode out, to break the siege;
they fought with him, the great vassal Roland.
Afterwards he used the streams to wash the blood
from the meadows: so that nothing would show.
He blasts his horn all day to catch a rabbit,
he's strutting now before his peers and bragging—
who under heaven would dare meet him on the field?
So now: ride on! Why do you keep on stopping?
The Land of Fathers lies far ahead of us." AOI.

135.

The blood leaping from Count Roland's mouth,
the temple broken with effort in his forehead,
he sounds his horn in great travail and pain.
King Charles heard it, and his French listen hard.
And the King said: "That horn has a long breath!"
Naimon answers: "It is a baron's breath.
There is a battle there, I know there is.
He[4] betrayed him! and now asks you to fail him!
Put on your armor! Lord, shout your battle cry,
and save the noble barons of your house!
You hear Roland's call. He is in trouble."

136.

The Emperor commanded the horns to sound,
the French dismount, and they put on their armor:
their hauberks, their helmets, their gold-dressed swords,
their handsome shields; and take up their great lances,
the gonfalons of white and red and blue.
The barons of that host mount their war horses
and spur them hard the whole length of the pass;
and every man of them says to the other:
"If only we find Roland before he's killed,
we'll stand with him, and then we'll do some fighting!"
What does it matter what they say? They are too late.

137.

It is the end of day, and full of light,
arms and armor are ablaze in the sun,

4. Ganelon.

and fire flashes from hauberks and helmets,
and from those shields, painted fair with flowers,
and from those lances, those gold-dressed gonfanons.
The Emperor rides on in rage and sorrow,
the men of France indignant and full of grief.
There is no man of them who does not weep,
they are in fear for the life of Roland.
The King commands: seize Ganelon the Count!
and gave him over to the cooks of his house;
summons the master cook, their chief, Besgun:
"Guard him for me like the traitor he is:
he has betrayed the barons of my house."
Besgun takes him, sets his kitchen comrades,
a hundred men, the best, the worst, on him;
and they tear out his beard and his mustache,
each one strikes him four good blows with his fist;
and they lay into him with cudgels and sticks,
put an iron collar around his neck
and chain him up, as they would chain a bear;
dumped him, in dishonor, on a packhorse,
and guard him well till they give him back to Charles.

138.

High are the hills, and tenebrous, and vast, AOI.
the valleys deep, the raging waters swift;
to the rear, to the front, the trumpets sound:
they answer the lone voice of the olifant.
The Emperor rides on, rides on in fury,
the men of France in grief and indignation.
There is no man who does not weep and wail,
and they pray God: protect the life of Roland
till they come, one great host, into the field
and fight at Roland's side like true men all.
What does it matter what they pray? It does no good.
They are too late, they cannot come in time. AOI.

139.

King Charles the Great rides on, a man in wrath,
his great white beard spread out upon his hauberk.[5]
All the barons of France ride spurring hard,
there is no man who does not wail, furious
not to be with Roland, the captain count,
who stands and fights the Saracens of Spain,
so set upon, I cannot think his soul abides.

5. The beard spread out upon the hauberk is a gesture of defiance toward the enemy.

God! those sixty men who stand with him, what men!
No king, no captain ever stood with better. AOI.

140.

Roland looks up on the mountains and slopes,
sees the French dead, so many good men fallen,
and weeps for them, as a great warrior weeps:
"Barons, my lords, may God give you his grace,
may he grant Paradise to all your souls,
make them lie down among the holy flowers.
I never saw better vassals than you.
All the years you've served me, and all the times,
the mighty lands you conquered for Charles our King!
The Emperor raised you for this terrible hour!
Land of France, how sweet you are, native land,
laid waste this day, ravaged, made a desert.
Barons of France, I see you die for me,
and I, your lord—I cannot protect you.
May *God* come to your aid, that God who never failed.
Oliver, brother, now I will not fail *you*.
I will die here—of grief, if no man kills me.
Lord, Companion, let us return and fight."

141.

Roland returned to his place on the field,
strikes—a brave man keeping faith—with Durendal,
struck through Faldrun de Pui, cut him to pieces,
and twenty-four of the men they valued most;
no man will ever want his vengeance more!
As when the deer turns tail before the dogs,
so the pagans flee before Roland the Count.
Said the Archbishop: "You! Roland! What a fighter!
Now that's what every knight must have in him
who carries arms and rides on a fine horse:
he must be strong, a savage, when he's in battle;
for otherwise, what's he worth? Not four cents!
Let that four-cent man be a monk in some minster,
and he can pray all day long for our sins."
Roland replies: "Attack, do not spare them!"
And with that word the Franks began again.
There was a heavy loss of Christian men.

142.

When a man knows there'll be no prisoners,
what will that man not do to defend himself!
And so the Franks fight with the fury of lions.

Now Marsilion, the image of a baron,
mounted on that war horse he calls Gaignun,
digs in his spurs, comes on to strike Bevon,
who was the lord of Beaune and of Dijon;
smashes his shield, rips apart his hauberk,
knocks him down, dead, no need to wound him more.
And then he killed Yvorie and Yvon,
and more: he killed Gerard of Rousillon.
Roland the Count is not far away now,
said to the pagan: "The Lord God's curse on you!
You kill my companions, how you wrong me!
You'll feel the pain of it before we part,
you will learn my sword's name by heart today";
comes on to strike—the image of a baron.
He has cut off Marsilion's right fist;
now takes the head of Jurfaleu the blond—
the head of Jurfaleu! Marsilion's son.
The pagans cry: "Help, Mahumet! Help us!
Vengeance, our gods, on Charles! the man who set
these criminals on us in our own land,
they will not quit the field, they'll stand and die!"
And one said to the other: "Let *us* run then."
And with that word, some hundred thousand flee.[6]
Now try to call them back: they won't return. AOI.

143.

What does it matter? If Marsilion has fled,
his uncle has remained: the Algalife,[7]
who holds Carthage, Alfrere, and Garmalie,
and Ethiopia: a land accursed;
holds its immense black race under his power,
the huge noses, the enormous ears on them;
and they number more than fifty thousand.
These are the men who come riding in fury,
and now they shout that pagan battle cry.
And Roland said: "Here comes our martyrdom;
I see it now: we have not long to live.
But let the world call any man a traitor
who does not make them pay before he dies!
My lords, attack! Use those bright shining swords!
Fight a good fight for your deaths and your lives,
let no shame touch sweet France because of us!
When Charles my lord comes to this battlefield

6. An exaggeration, since the entire Saracen army numbers a hundred thousand. 7. The Caliph, Marsilion's uncle, whom Ganelon lied about to Charlemagne. See lines 680–91 (also lines 453, 493, 505).

and sees how well we punished these Saracens,
finds fifteen of their dead for one of ours,
I'll tell you what he will do: he will bless us." AOI.

144.
When Roland sees that unbelieving race,
those hordes and hordes blacker than blackest ink—
no shred of white on them except their teeth—
then said the Count: "I see it clearly now,
we die today: it is there before us.
Men of France, strike! I will start it once more."
Said Oliver: "God curse the slowest man."
And with that word, the French strike into battle.

145.
The Saracens, when they saw these few French,
looked at each other, took courage, and presumed,
telling themselves: "The Emperor is wrong!"
The Algalife rides a great sorrel horse,
digs into it with his spurs of fine gold,
strikes Oliver, from behind, in the back,
shattered the white hauberk upon his flesh,
drove his spear through the middle of his chest;
and speaks to him: "Now you feel you've been struck!
Your great Charles doomed you when he left you in this pass.
That man wronged us, he must not boast of it.
I've avenged all our dead in you alone!"

146.
Oliver feels: he has been struck to death;
grips Halteclere, that steel blade shining, strikes
on the gold-dressed pointed helm of the Algalife,
sends jewels and flowers crackling down to the earth,
into the head, into the little teeth;
draws up his flashing sword, casts him down, dead,
and then he says: "Pagan, a curse on you!
If only I could say Charles has lost nothing—
but no woman, no lady you ever knew
will hear you boast, in the land you came from,
that you could take one thing worth a cent from me,
or do me harm, or do any man harm";
then cries out to Roland to come to his aid. AOI.

147.
Oliver feels he is wounded to death,
will never have his fill of vengeance, strikes,

as a baron strikes, where they are thickest,
cuts through their lances, cuts through those buckled shields,
through feet, through fists, through saddles, and through flanks.
Had you seen him, cutting the pagans limb
from limb, casting one corpse down on another,
you would remember a brave man keeping faith.
Never would he forget Charles' battle-cry,
Munjoie! he shouts, that mighty voice ringing;
calls to Roland, to his friend and his peer:
"Lord, Companion, come stand beside me now.
We must part from each other in pain today." AOI.

148.

Roland looks hard into Oliver's face,
it is ashen, all its color is gone,
the bright red blood streams down upon his body,
Oliver's blood spattering on the earth.
"God!" said the Count, "I don't know what to do,
Lord, Companion, your fight is finished now.
There'll never be a man the like of you.
Sweet land of France, today you will be stripped
of good vassals, laid low, a fallen land!
The Emperor will suffer the great loss";
faints with that word, mounted upon his horse. AOI.

149.

Here is Roland, lords, fainted on his horse,
and Oliver the Count, wounded to death:
he has lost so much blood, his eyes are darkened—
he cannot see, near or far, well enough
to recognize a friend or enemy:
struck when he came upon his companion,
strikes on his helm, adorned with gems in gold,
cuts down straight through, from the point to the nasal,[8]
but never harmed him, he never touched his head.
Under this blow, Count Roland looked at him;
and gently, softly now, he asks of him:
"Lord, Companion, do you mean to do this?
It is Roland, who always loved you greatly.
You never declared that we were enemies."
Said Oliver: "Now I hear it is you—
I don't see you, may the Lord God see you.
Was it you that I struck? Forgive me then."
Roland replies: "I am not harmed, not harmed,

8. The nosepiece protruding down from the cone-shaped helmet.

I forgive you, Friend, here and before God."
And with that word, each bowed to the other.
And this is the love, lords, in which they parted.

150.

Oliver feels: death pressing hard on him;
his two eyes turn, roll up into his head,
all hearing is lost now, all sight is gone;
gets down on foot, stretches out on the ground,
cries out now and again: *mea culpa!*[9]
his two hands joined, raised aloft toward heaven,
he prays to God: grant him His Paradise;
and blesses Charles, and the sweet land of France,
his companion, Roland, above all men.
The heart fails him, his helmet falls away,
the great body settles upon the earth.
The Count is dead, he stands with us no longer.
Roland, brave man, weeps for him, mourns for him,
you will not hear a man of greater sorrow.

151.

Roland the Count, when he sees his friend dead,
lying stretched out, his face against the earth,
softly, gently, begins to speak the regret:[1]
"Lord, Companion, you were brave and died for it.
We have stood side by side through days and years,
you never caused me harm, I never wronged you;
when you are dead, to be alive pains me."
And with that word the lord of marches faints
upon his horse, which he calls Veillantif.
He is held firm by his spurs of fine gold,
whichever way he leans, he cannot fall.

152.

Before Roland could recover his senses
and come out of his faint, and be aware,
a great disaster had come forth before him:
the French are dead, he has lost every man
except the Archbishop, and Gautier de l'Hum,
who has come back, down from that high mountain:
he has fought well, he fought those men of Spain.
His men are dead, the pagans finished them;
flees now down to these valleys, he has no choice,

9. "My guilt." A formula used in the confession of one's sins.

1. What follows is a formal and customary lament for the dead.

and calls on Count Roland to come to his aid:
"My noble Count, my brave lord, where are you?
I never feared whenever you were there.
It is Walter: I conquered Maëlgut,
my uncle is Droün, old and gray: your Walter
and always dear to you for the way I fought;
and I have fought this time: my lance is shattered,
my good shield pierced, my hauberk's meshes broken;
and I am wounded, a lance struck through my body.
I will die soon, but I sold myself dear."
And with that word, Count Roland has heard him,
he spurs his horse, rides spurring to his man. AOI.

153.

Roland in pain, maddened with grief and rage:
rushes where they are thickest and strikes again,
strikes twenty men of Spain, strikes twenty dead,
and Walter six, and the Archbishop five.
The pagans say: "Look at those criminals!
Now take care, Lords, they don't get out alive,
only a traitor will not attack them now!
Only a coward will let them save their skins!"
And then they raise their hue and cry once more,
rush in on them, once more, from every side. AOI.

154.

Count Roland was always a noble warrior,
Gautier de l'Hum is a fine mounted man,
the Archbishop, a good man tried and proved:
not one of them will ever leave the others;
strike, where they are thickest, at the pagans.
A thousand Saracens get down on foot,
and forty thousand more are on their mounts:
and I tell you, not one will dare come close,
they throw, and from afar, lances and spears,
wigars and darts, mizraks,[2] javelins, pikes.
With the first blows they killed Gautier de l'Hum
and struck Turpin of Reims, pierced through his shield,
broke the helmet on him, wounded his head;
ripped his hauberk, shattered its rings of mail,
and pierced him with four spears in his body,
the war horse killed under him; and now there comes
great pain and rage when the Archbishop falls. AOI.

2. Like wigars throwing weapons.

155.

Turpin of Reims, when he feels he is unhorsed,
struck to the earth with four spears in his body,
quickly, brave man, leaps to his feet again;
his eyes find Roland now, he runs to him
and says one word: "See! I'm not finished yet!
What good vassal ever gives up alive!";
and draws Almace, his sword, that shining steel!
and strikes, where they are thickest, a thousand blows, and more.
Later, Charles said: Turpin had spared no one;
he found four hundred men prostrate around him,
some of them wounded, some pierced from front to back,
some with their heads hacked off. So says the *Geste,*
and so says one who was there, on that field,
the baron Saint Gilles,[3] for whom God performs miracles,
who made the charter setting forth these great things in the Church of Laon. Now any man
who does not know this much understands nothing.

156.

Roland the Count fights well and with great skill,
but he is hot, his body soaked with sweat;
has a great wound in his head, and much pain,
his temple broken because he blew the horn.
But he must know whether King Charles will come;
draws out the olifant, sounds it, so feebly.
The Emperor drew to a halt, listened.
"Seigneurs," he said, "it goes badly for us—
My nephew Roland falls from our ranks today.
I hear it in the horn's voice: he hasn't long.
Let every man who wants to be with Roland
ride fast! Sound trumpets! Every trumpet in this host!"
Sixty thousand, on these words, sound, so high
the mountains sound, and the valleys resound.
The pagans hear: it is no joke to them;
cry to each other: "We're getting Charles on us!"

157.

The pagans say: "The Emperor is coming, AOI.
listen to their trumpets—it is the French!
If Charles comes back, it's all over for us,

3. Saint Gilles of Provence: These lines explain how the story of Rencesvals could be told after all who had fought there died.

if Roland lives, this war begins again
and we have lost our land, we have lost Spain."
Some four hundred, helmets laced on, assemble,
some of the best, as they think, on that field.
They storm Roland, in one fierce, bitter attack.
And now Count Roland has some work on his hands. AOI.

158.

Roland the Count, when he sees them coming,
how strong and fierce and alert he becomes!
He will not yield to them, not while he lives.
He rides the horse they call Veillantif, spurs,
digs into it with his spurs of fine gold,
and rushes at them all where they are thickest,
the Archbishop—that Turpin!—at his side.
Said one man to the other: "Go at it, friend.
The horns we heard were the horns of the French,
King Charles is coming back with all his strength."[4]

159.

Roland the Count never loved a coward,
a blusterer, an evil-natured man,
a man on horse who was not a good vassal.
And now he called to Archbishop Turpin:
"You are on foot, Lord, and here I am mounted,
and so, here I take my stand: for love of you.
We'll take whatever comes, the good and bad,
together, Lord: no one can make me leave you.
They will learn our swords' names today in battle,
the name of Almace, the name of Durendal!"
Said the Archbishop: "Let us strike or be shamed!
Charles is returning, and he brings our revenge."

160.

Say the pagans: "We were all born unlucky!
The evil day that dawned for us today!
We have lost our lords and peers, and now comes Charles—
that Charlemagne!—with his great host. Those trumpets!
that shrill sound on us—the trumpets of the French!
And the loud roar of that Munjoie! This Roland
is a wild man, he is too great a fighter—
What man of flesh and blood can ever hope
to bring him down? Let us cast at him, and leave him there."

4. Lines 2131–33 could be spoken either by Roland and the Archbishop or by the pagans.

And so they did: arrows, wigars, darts,
lances and spears, javelots dressed with feathers;
struck Roland's shield, pierced it, broke it to pieces,
ripped his hauberk, shattered its rings of mail,
but never touched his body, never his flesh.
They wounded Veillantif in thirty places,
struck him dead, from afar, under the Count.
The pagans flee, they leave the field to him.
Roland the Count stood alone, on his feet. AOI.

161.

The pagans flee, in bitterness and rage,
strain every nerve running headlong toward Spain,
and Count Roland has no way to chase them,
he has lost Veillantif, his battle horse;
he has no choice, left alone there on foot.
He went to the aid of Archbishop Turpin,
unlaced the gold-dressed helmet, raised it from his head,
lifted away his bright, light coat of mail,
cut his under tunic into some lengths,
stilled his great wounds with thrusting on the strips;
then held him in his arms, against his chest,
and laid him down, gently, on the green grass;
and softly now Roland entreated him:
"My noble lord, I beg you, give me leave:
our companions, whom we have loved so dearly,
are all dead now, we must not abandon them.
I want to look for them, know them once more,
and set them in ranks, side by side, before you."
Said the Archbishop: "Go then, go and come back.
The field is ours, thanks be to God, yours and mine."

162.

So Roland leaves him, walks the field all alone,
seeks in the valleys, and seeks in the mountains.
He found Gerin, and Gerer his companion,
and then he found Berenger and Otun,
Anseïs and Sansun, and on that field
he found Gerard the old of Roussillon;
and caried them, brave man, all, one by one,
came back to the Archbishop with these French dead,
and set them down in ranks before his knees.
The Archbishop cannot keep from weeping,
raises his hand and makes his bendiction;
and said: "Lords, Lords, it was your terrible hour.

May the Glorious God set all your souls
among the holy flowers of Paradise!
Here is my own death, Lords, pressing on me,
I shall not see our mighty Emperor."

163.

And Roland leaves, seeks in the field again;
he has found Oliver, his companion,
held him tight in his arms against his chest;
came back to the Archbishop, laid Oliver
down on a shield among the other dead.
The Archbishop absolved him, signed him with the Cross.
And pity now and rage and grief increase;
and Roland says: "Oliver, dear companion,
you were the son of the great duke Renier,
who held the march of the vale of Runers.
Lord, for shattering lances, for breaking shields,
for making men great with presumption weak with fright,
for giving life and counsel to good men,
for striking fear in that unbelieving race,
no warrior on earth surpasses you."

164.

Roland the Count, when he sees his peers dead,
and Oliver, whom he had good cause to love,
felt such grief and pity, he begins to weep;
and his face lost its color with what he felt:
a pain so great he cannot keep on standing,
he has no choice, falls fainting to the ground.
Said the Archbishop: "Baron, what grief for you."

165.

The Archbishop, when he saw Roland faint,
felt such pain then as he had never felt;
stretched out his hand and grasped the olifant.
At Rencesvals there is a running stream:
he will go there and fetch some water for Roland;
and turns that way, with small steps, staggering;
he is too weak, he cannot go ahead,
he has no strength: all the blood he has lost.
In less time than a man takes to cross a little field
that great heart fails, he falls forward, falls down;
and Turpin's death comes crushing down on him.

166.

Roland the Count recovers from his faint,
gets to his feet, but stands with pain and grief;
looks down the valley, looks up the mountain, sees:
on the green grass, beyond his companions,
that great and noble man down on the ground,
the Archbishop, whom God sent in His name;
who confesses his sins, lifts up his eyes,
holds up his hands joined together to heaven,
and prays to God: grant him that Paradise.
Turpin is dead, King Charles' good warrior.
In great battles, in beautiful sermons
he was ever a champion against the pagans.
Now God grant Turpin's soul His holy blessing. AOI.

167.

Roland the Count sees the Archbishop down,
sees the bowels fallen out of his body,
and the brain boiling down from his forehead.
Turpin has crossed his hands upon his chest
beneath the collarbone, those fine white hands.
Roland speaks the lament, after the custom
followed in his land: aloud, with all his heart:
"My noble lord, you great and well-born warrior,
I commend you today to the God of Glory,
whom none will ever serve with a sweeter will.
Since the Apostles no prophet the like of you[5]
arose to keep the faith and draw men to it.
May your soul know no suffering or want,
and behold the gate open to Paradise."

168.

Now Roland feels that death is very near.
His brain comes spilling out through his two ears;
prays to God for his peers: let them be called;
and for himself, to the angel Gabriel;
took the olifant: there must be no reproach!
took Durendal his sword in his other hand,
and farther than a crossbow's farthest shot
he walks toward Spain, into a fallow land,
and climbs a hill: there beneath two fine trees
stand four great blocks of stone, all are of marble;

5. Compare Deuteronomy, 34:10, on the death of Moses.

and he fell back, to earth, on the green grass,
has fainted there, for death is very near.

169.

High are the hills, and high, high are the trees;
there stand four blocks of stone, gleaming of marble.
Count Roland falls fainting on the green grass,
and is watched, all this time, by a Saracen:
who has feigned death and lies now with the others,
has smeared blood on his face and on his body;
and quickly now gets to his feet and runs—
a handsome man, strong, brave, and so crazed with pride
that he does something mad and dies for it:
laid hands on Roland, and on the arms of Roland,
and cried: "Conquered! Charles's nephew conquered!
I'll carry this sword home to Arabia!"
As he draws it, the Count begins to come round.

170.

Now Roland feels: *someone taking his sword!*
opened his eyes, and had one word for him:
"I don't know you, you aren't one of ours";
grasps that olifant that he will never lose,
strikes on the helm beset with gems in gold,
shatters the steel, and the head, and the bones,
sent his two eyes flying out of his head,
dumped him over stretched out at his feet dead;
and said: "You nobody! how could you dare
lay hands on me—rightly or wrongly: how?
Who'll hear of this and not call you a fool?
Ah! the bell-mouth of the olifant is smashed,
the crystal and the gold fallen away."

171.

Now Roland the Count feels: his sight is gone;
gets on his feet, draws on his final strength,
the color on his face lost now for good.
Before him stands a rock; and on that dark rock
in rage and bitterness he strikes ten blows:
the steel blade grates, it will not break, it stands unmarked.
"Ah!" said the Count, "Blessed Mary, your help!
Ah Durendal, good sword, your unlucky day,
for I am lost and cannot keep you in my care.
The battles I have won, fighting with you,
the mighty lands that holding you I conquered,

that Charles rules now, our King, whose beard is white!
Now you fall to another: it must not be
a man who'd run before another man!
For a long while a good vassal held you:
there'll never be the like in France's holy land."

172.

Roland strikes down on that rock of Cerritania:
the steel blade grates, will not break, stands unmarked.
Now when he sees he can never break that sword,
Roland speaks the lament, in his own presence:
"Ah Durendal, how beautiful and bright!
so full of light, all on fire in the sun!
King Charles was in the vales of Moriane
when God sent his angel and commanded him,
from heaven, to give you to a captain count.
That great and noble King girded it on me.
And with this sword I won Anjou and Brittany,
I won Poitou, I won Le Maine for Charles,
and Normandy, that land where men are free,
I won Provence and Aquitaine with this,
and Lombardy, and every field of Romagna,
I won Bavaria, and all of Flanders,
all of Poland, and Bulgaria, for Charles,
Constantinople, which pledged him loyalty,
and Saxony, where he does as he wills;
and with this sword I won Scotland and Ireland,
and England,[6] his chamber, his own domain—
the lands, the nations I conquered with this sword,
for Charles, who rules them now, whose beard is white!
Now, for this sword, I am pained with grief and rage:
Let it not fall to pagans! Let me die first!
Our Father God, save France from that dishonor."

173.

Roland the Count strikes down on a dark rock,
and the rock breaks, breaks more than I can tell,
and the blade grates, but Durendal will not break,
the sword leaped up, rebounded toward the sky.
The Count, when he sees that sword will not be broken,
softly, in his own presence, speaks the lament:
"Ah Durendal, beautiful, and most sacred,
the holy relics in this golden pommel!
Saint Peter's tooth and blood of Saint Basile,
a lock of hair of my lord Saint Denis,

6. Of course Roland's claims are exaggerated, but the poet may not have known that!

and a fragment of blessed Mary's robe:
your power must not fall to the pagans,
you must be served by Christian warriors.
May no coward ever come to hold you!
It was with you I conquered those great lands
that Charles has in his keeping, whose beard is white,
the Emperor's lands, that make him rich and strong."

174.

Now Roland feels: death coming over him,
death descending from his temples to his heart.
He came running underneath a pine tree
and there stretched out, face down, on the green grass,
lays beneath him his sword and the olifant.
He turned his head toward the Saracen hosts,
and this is why: with all his heart he wants
King Charles the Great and all his men to say,
he died, that noble Count, a conqueror;
makes confession, beats his breast often, so feebly,
offers his glove, for all his sins, to God. AOI.

175.

Now Roland feels that his time has run out;
he lies on a steep hill, his face toward Spain;
and with one of his hands he beat his breast:
"Almighty God, *mea culpa* in thy sight,[7]
forgive my sins, both the great and the small,
sins I committed from the hour I was born
until this day, in which I lie struck down."
And then he held his right glove out to God.
Angels descend from heaven and stand by him. AOI.

176.

Count Roland lay stretched out beneath a pine;
he turned his face toward the land of Spain,
began to remember many things now:
how many lands, brave man, he had conquered;
and he remembered: sweet France, the men of his line,
remembered Charles, his lord, who fostered him:
cannot keep, remembering, from weeping, sighing;
but would not be unmindful of himself:
he confesses his sins, prays God for mercy:
"Loyal Father, you who never failed us,

7. See Psalm 51:4.

who resurrected Saint Lazarus from the dead,
and saved your servant Daniel from the lions:[8]
now save the soul of me from every peril
for the sins I committed while I still lived."
Then he held out his right glove to his Lord:
Saint Gabriel took the glove from his hand.
He held his head bowed down upon his arm,
he is gone, his two hands joined, to his end.
Then God sent him his angel Cherubin[9]
and Saint Michael, angel of the sea's Peril;
and with these two there came Saint Gabriel:
they bear Count Roland's soul to Paradise.

* * *

8. See Daniel, 6:12–23. For the raising of Lazarus, see the Gospel of St. John, 11:1–44.
9. The poet seems to have regarded this as the name of a single angel.

MARIE DE FRANCE

So far as we know, the first woman to write poetry in French was Marie de France, who lived in the last third of the twelfth century. As often with medieval authors, the name does not identify her with any specific historical figure; but it indicates that she was a French native. Her works show that she was associated in some way with the court of King Henry II of England, husband of the famous Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine. Marie was probably familiar with English as well as Latin and French. A versatile writer, she produced works in three varieties of literature: fables, visions of purgatory, and *lais*. She may or may not have been the first author of Breton *lais* and thus have given a designation to the genre. These were comparatively short narratives based in varying degrees on a story or song circulated by traveling entertainers (*jongleurs*) from the northwestern province of France known as Brittany. These were presumably in Breton, originally the Celtic language of Brittany, but none have come down to us. For French and English poets, a Breton *lai* was a narrative of moderate length recounting an event remarkable in some way, often associated with the magical or miraculous; most often, the "adventure" involves what we should call romantic love. Thus *Eliduc*, the longest of Marie's dozen *lais*, has been called a story of a man with two wives. In that respect it recalls the better-known story of Tristan and the two Isoldes. As Marie rightly says, her tale centers on the two women; it's a pity that her change of the title to *Guildelüec and Guilliadun* has not prevailed in literary history.

Our poem, in 1,184 eight-syllable rhyming lines, tells a fairly complicated story in a simple, straightforward way. Setting and background, royal courts, and warfare provide a light framework and milieu; focus and concentration are on the diverse emotions of the protagonists and the conflicts of

loyalties that arise among them. As in medieval romance generally, love is treated sympathetically, but Marie has her own way when it comes to getting her lovers into and out of their difficulties. She spends more effort on the sudden rapture of the princess Guilliadun over the foreign knight Eliduc, her introspection, her confidences and planning with the page, etc., than on the response of the knight. Contrary to the situation in many romances, they do not become physical lovers; the princess hopes for marriage; Eliduc does not tell her that he already has a wife. That disclosure comes only when a sailor accuses her of wickedly seeking another woman's husband and hence of responsibility for the storm which threatens the lives of all on board; the shock all but—and apparently—kills her. The management of overall plot is admirable here. No less remarkable is the understanding and selflessness shown by Guildelüec, who amiably takes vows as a nun—thereby renouncing her rights as a wife. Thus the lovers are able to marry, and Marie accords them many years of happiness together. Finally, they in their turn renounce the world and end their lives respectively in monastery and convent. Thus, by a skillfully devised plot and careful—if slightly improbable—characterization, the author reconciles the claims of love with those of traditional morality and the Christian religion.

Eliduc[1]

I am going to give you the full story of a very old Celtic tale, at least as I've been able to understand the truth of it.

In Brittany there was once a knight called Eliduc. He was a model of his type, one of the bravest men in the country, and he had a wife of excellent and influential family, as finely bred as she was faithful to him. They lived happily for several years, since it was a marriage of truth and love. But then a war broke out and he went away to join the fighting. There he fell in love with a girl, a ravishingly pretty princess called Guilliadun. The Celtic name of the wife who stayed at home was Guildelüec, and so the story is called *Guildelüec and Guilliadun* after their names. Its original title was *Eliduc*, but it was changed because it's really about the two women. Now I'll tell you exactly how it all happened.

Eliduc's overlord was the king of Brittany, who was very fond of the knight and looked after his interests. Eliduc served him faithfully—whenever the king had to go abroad, Eliduc was left in charge of his territories, and kept them safe by his military skills. He got many favors in return. He was allowed to hunt in the royal forests. No gamekeeper, even the most resolute, dared stand in his way or complain about him. But other people's envy of his good luck did its usual work. He was slandered and traduced, and brought into bad relations with the king. Finally he was dismissed from the court without

1. Translated by John Fowles. The punctuation ". . ." does not indicate omissions from this text.

any reason. Left in the dark, Eliduc repeatedly asked to be allowed to defend himself before the king—the slanders were lies, he had served the king well, and happily so. But no answer came from the court. Convinced he would never get a hearing, Eliduc decided to go into exile. So he went home and called together all his friends. He told them how things lay with the king, of the anger toward him. Eliduc had done the best he could and there was no justice in the royal resentment. When the plowman gets the rough edge of his master's tongue, the peasants have a proverb: *Never trust a great man's love.* If someone in Eliduc's position is sensible, he puts more trust in the love of his neighbors. So now he says[2] he's sick of Brittany, he'll cross the sea to England and amuse himself there for a while. He'll leave his wife at home; have his servants take care of her, along with his friends.

Once it was made, he kept to this decision. He fitted himself—and the ten horsemen he took with him—out handsomely for the journey. His friends were very sad to see him go, and as for his wife . . . she accompanied him for the first part of the journey, in tears that she was losing him. But he swore solemnly that he would stay true to her. Then he says good-bye and rides straight on to the sea. There he takes ship, crosses successfully and arrives at the port of Totnes.[3]

There were several kings in that part of England, and they were at war. Toward Exeter in this country there lived a very powerful old man. He had no male heir, simply an unmarried daughter. This explained the present war: because he had refused her hand to an equal from another dynasty, the other king was putting all his land to the sack. He had trapped the old king in one of his fortified cities.[4] No one there had the courage to go out and join combat, general or single, with the invader. Eliduc heard about all this and decided that since there was war he would stay in those parts instead of going on. He wanted to help the besieged king, who was getting into worse and worse trouble and faced with ruin and disaster. He would hire himself out as a mercenary.[5]

He sent messengers to the king, explaining in a letter that he had left his own country and had come to help him; but he was at the king's disposal and if he didn't want Eliduc's services, then Eliduc asked only for safe-conduct through his lands, so that he could go

2. The shifts to the narrative present (like those into dialogue) are all in the original. [Translator's note.] 3. On the southern coast of England. 4. The text says "in a castle," but it seems clear that Exeter, then a walled city, is meant. Marie would have known of its importance in West Saxon times and of William the Conqueror's siege of 1068. [Translator's note.] 5. . . . *en soudees remaneir.* The knight *soudoyer* has to be understood (at least in romance) in a far more honorable, and honor driven, sense then in the contemporary or even the Renaissance use of "mercenary." Perhaps the Japanese samurai is the best equivalent. [Translator's note.] Similarly, the Knight of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* was an honorable mercenary; see the *General Prologue*, ll. 46–65.

and offer his fighting abilities somewhere else. When the king saw the messengers, he was delighted and welcomed them warmly. He summoned the castle commander and ordered that an escort be provided immediately for Eliduc and that he should be brought to him. Then the king had lodgings arranged. All that was necessary for a month's stay was also provided.

The escort were armed and horsed and sent to fetch Eliduc. He was received with great honor, having made the journey without trouble. His lodging was with a rich townsman, a decent and well-mannered man who gave up his tapestry-hung best room to the knight. Eliduc had a good meal prepared and invited to it all the other anxious knights[6] who were quartered in the city. He forbade his own men, even the most grabbing, to accept any gift or wages for the first forty days.

On his third day at Exeter the cry ran through the city that the enemy had arrived and were all over the surrounding countryside—and already preparing an attack on the city gates. Eliduc heard the uproar from the panicking townspeople and immediately donned armor. His companions did the same. There were fourteen other knights capable of fighting in the town, the rest being wounded, or captured. Seeing Eliduc mount his horse, they go to their lodgings and put on their own armor as well. They won't wait to be called, they'll go out of the gates with him.

"We'll ride with you, sir," they now say. "And whatever you do, we'll do the same."

Eliduc answers. "My thanks. Is there anyone here who knows an ambush place? A defile? Somewhere where we might catch them hopping? If we wait here, we'll get a good fight. But we have no advantage. Has anyone a better plan?"

"There's a narrow cart road, sir. Beside that wood by the flax field over there. When they've got enough loot, they'll return by it. They ride back carelessly from such work, as a rule. Like that they're asking for a quick death."

It could be over in a flash; and much damage done.

"My friends," said Eliduc, "one thing for certain. Nothing venture, even when things look hopeless, then nothing gain—either in war or reputation. You're all the king's men, you owe him complete loyalty. So follow me. Wherever I go, and do as I do. I promise you there won't be setbacks if I can help it. We may not get any loot. But we'll never be forgotten if we beat the enemy today."

His confidence spread to the other knights and they led him to the wood. There they hid by the road and waited for the enemy to return from their raid. Eliduc had planned everything, showed them how

6. Anxious because of their precarious or uncertain status.

they should charge at the gallop and what to cry. When the enemy reached the narrow place, Eliduc shouted the battle challenge, then cried to his friends to fight well. They struck hard, and gave no quarter. Taken by surprise, the enemy were soon broken and put to flight. The engagement was brief. They captured the officer in command and many other knights, whom they entrust to their squires. Eliduc's side had had twenty-five men, and they took thirty of the enemy. They also took a great deal of armor, and a quantity of other valuable things. Now they return triumphantly to the city, full of this splendid victory. The king was there on a tower, desperately anxious for his men. He complained bitterly, having convinced himself that Eliduc was a traitor and had lost him all his knights.

They come in a crowd, some laden, others bound—many more on the return than at the going out, which was why the king was misled and stayed in doubt and suspense. He orders the city gates closed and the people up on the walls, bows and other weapons at the ready. But they have no need of them. Eliduc's party had sent a squire galloping on ahead to explain what had happened. The man told the king about the Breton mercenary, how he had driven the enemy away, how well he had conducted himself. There was never a better handler of arms on horseback. He had personally captured the enemy commander and taken twenty-nine prisoners, besides wounding and killing many others.

When the king hears the good news, he's beside himself with joy. He came down from the tower and went to meet Eliduc; then thanked him for all he had done and gave him all the prisoners for ransoming. Eliduc shared out the armor among the other knights, keeping no more for his own men than three horses that had been allocated to them. He distributed everything else, even his own rightful part as well, among the prisoners and the other people.

After this exploit the king made Eliduc his favorite. He retained him and his companions for a whole year and Eliduc gave his oath of faithful service. He then became the protector of the king's lands.

The king's young daughter heard all about Eliduc and his splendid actions—how good-looking he was, such a proud knight, how civilized and openhanded. She sent one of her personal pages to request, to *beg* Eliduc to come and amuse her. They must talk, get to know each other, and she would be very hurt if he didn't come. Eliduc replies: of course he'll come, he looks forward very much to meeting her. He got on his horse; and taking a servant with him, he goes to chat with the girl. When he's at the door of her room, he sends the page ahead. He doesn't barge in, but waits a little, till the page comes back. Then with gentle expression, sincere face and perfect good manners he addressed the young lady formally and thanked her for having invited him to visit her. Guilliadun was very pretty, and she

took him by the hand and led him to a couch, where they sat and talked of this and that. She kept stealing looks at him . . . his face, his body, his every expression . . . and said to herself how attractive he was, how close to her ideal man. Love fires his arrow, she falls headlong in love. She goes pale, she sighs, but she can't declare herself, in case he despises her for it.

Eliduc stayed a long time, but in the end took his leave and went away. Guilliadun was very unwilling to let him go, but there it was. He returned to his lodgings, unsmiling and very thoughtful. The girl alarmed him, since she was the king's daughter and he the king's servant. She had seemed so shy, yet subtly accused him of something. He feels badly done by[7]—to have been so long in the country, yet not to have seen her once till now. Yet when he said that to himself, he felt ashamed. He remembered his wife, and how he had promised to behave as a husband should.

Now she had met him, the girl wanted to make Eliduc her lover. She had never liked a man more—if only she can, if only he'll agree. All night she was awake thinking of him, and had neither rest nor sleep. The next morning she got up at dawn and went to a window and called down to her page. Then she revealed everything to him.

"Dear God," she says, "I'm in such a state, I've fallen into such a trap. I love the new mercenary. Eliduc. Who's fought so brilliantly. I haven't slept a wink all night, my eyes just wouldn't shut. If he's really in love with me, if he'll only show he's serious, I'll do anything he likes. And there's so much to hope for—he could be king here one day. I'm mad about him. He's so intelligent, so easy-mannered. If he doesn't love me, I'll die of despair."

When he'd heard all she had to say, the young page gave her good advice: no need to give up hope so soon.

"My lady, if you're in love with him, then let him know it. Send him a belt or a ribbon—or a ring. To see if it pleases him. If he's happy to accept the gift, looks glad to heard from you, then you're in. He loves you. And show me an emperor who wouldn't dance for joy if he knew you fancied him."

The girl mulled over this advice.

"But how shall I know just by a gift whether he really wants me? You don't realize. A gentleman has to accept, whether he likes the sender or not. One has to take such things with good grace. I should loathe it if he made fun of me. But perhaps you could learn something from his expression. So get ready. Quickly. And go."

"I am ready."

"Take him this gold ring. And here, give him my belt. And be very warm when you greet him for me."

7. The Old French is less specific: it is too bad it turned out they hadn't met.

The page turned away, leaving her in such a state that she very nearly calls him back. Nevertheless she lets him go—and then begins to rave to herself.

"Oh God, I've fallen in love with a foreigner! I don't even know if he's of good family. Whether he won't suddenly disappear. I shall be left in despair. I'm insane to have made it all so obvious. I'd never even spoken with him before yesterday, and now I'm throwing myself at him. I think he'll just despise me. No he won't, if he's nice he'll like me for it. It's all in the lap of the gods now. If he doesn't care for me at all, I shall feel such a fool. I'll never be happy again, as long as I live."

Meanwhile, as she agonized on like that, the page rode fast on his way. He found Eliduc and gave him in private the kind of greetings the girl had asked. Then he handed him the little ring and the belt. The knight had thanked him, then put the ring on his finger and fastened the belt[8] around his waist. But he said nothing else to the page, asked him nothing—except that he offered him his own ring and belt in return. But the page didn't accept them and went away back to his young mistress. He found her in her room; then passed on Eliduc's return of greetings and thanks.

"For pity's sake, don't hide the truth. Does he really love me?"

"I think so. He wouldn't deceive you. In my opinion he's playing polite and being shrewd—he knows how to hide his feelings. I said hallo to him for you and gave him the presents. He put the belt on himself, and was rather careful to get it right. Then the ring on his finger. I didn't say anything else to him. Or he to me."

"But did he realize what it meant? Because if he didn't, I'm lost!"

"I honestly don't know. But if you must have my solemn opinion, then, well, since he didn't turn up his nose at what you sent, he doesn't exactly . . . hate you?"

"Stop teasing me, you cheeky boy! I'm perfectly well aware he doesn't hate me. How could I ever hurt him? Except by loving him so much. But if he does, he deserves to die. Until I've spoken with him myself, I won't have anything to do with him. Either through you or anyone else. I'll show him myself how wanting him tears me apart. But if only I knew how long he was staying here!"

"Lady, the king has him under contract for a year. That ought to be time enough to show him how you feel?"

When she heard Eliduc wasn't going away, Guilliadun was in ecstasy: how wonderful that he must stay! What she didn't know was the torment Eliduc had been in from the moment he set eyes on her. Fear had dealt him a cruel hand—that promise to his wife when he left home, that he'd never look at another woman. Now his heart

8. The fashionable belt of the Middle Ages had links, with a hook at one end. It was fastened with a free end left hanging at the side.

was in a vise. He wanted to stay faithful. But nothing could hide the fact that he had hopelessly fallen for Guilliadun and her prettiness. To see her again and talk with her, kiss her and hold her in his arms . . . yet he could never show her this longing, which would disgrace him—on the one hand for breaking his promise to his wife, on the other because of his relationship with the king. He was torn in two; then mounted his horse, and havered no more. He calls his friends to him, then goes to the castle to speak to the king. If it can be managed, he will see the girl—and that is why he hurries so.

The king has just risen from table and gone to his daughter's rooms, and now he's begun to play chess with a knight from overseas. On the other side of the chessboard, his daughter had to show the moves. Eliduc came forward. The king greeted him kindly and made Eliduc sit beside him. He spoke to his daughter.

"My dear, you must get to know this gentleman. And pay him every honor. There's no finer knight in the country."

The girl was delighted to hear this command from her father. She stands up, invites Eliduc to sit with her well away from the others. Both are struck dumb with love. She dared not explain herself to him, and he was afraid to speak as well . . . except to thank her for the presents she had sent him: he had never liked a present so much. She tells him she is pleased that he is pleased. Then suddenly why she sent him the ring, and her belt as well—that her body was his, she couldn't resist, she loved him to madness, she gave herself to his every wish. If she couldn't have him, he knew, he must know it was true, no other man would ever have her.

Now it was Eliduc's turn.

"Princess, I'm so happy that you love me. All joy. That you should like me so much—how could I feel otherwise? I shan't ever forget it. You know I'm promised to your father for a year, under oath that I shan't leave till the war's ended. Then I shall go home. Provided you'll let me. I don't want to stay here."

"Eliduc, I'm so grateful for your frankness. You're so honest, you know such a lot. Long before you go you'll have decided what to do with me. I love you, I trust you more than anything else in the world."

They knew now that they were sure of each other; and on that occasion no more was said.

Eliduc goes back to his lodgings, enchanted at how well things have turned out. He can talk as often as he likes with Guilliadun, they're wildly in love.

He now occupied himself so well with the war that he captured the enemy king, and liberated the old king's country. His military reputation grew, as did that of his ingenuity and public generosity. On this side of his life everything went very well.

But during this same time the king of Brittany had sent three messengers over the sea to find Eliduc. Things at home were in a very bad way, and getting worse. All his strong points were under siege, his lands being put to the sword. With increasing bitterness, the king regretted having driven Eliduc away. His judgment had been distorted by the malicious advice he had listened to. Already he had thrown the treacherous clique who had blackened Eliduc and intrigued against him into permanent exile. Now, in his hour of great need, he commanded, he summoned, he begged Eliduc—in the name of the trust that had existed between them ever since the knight first paid homage to him—to come and save the situation. He was in the direst straits.

Eliduc read this news. It distressed him deeply. He thought of Guilliadun. He loved her now to the anguished depths of his being, and she felt the same for him. But there had been no madness between them—nothing improper, theirs was no casual affair. Caressing and talking, giving each other lovely presents—the passionate feeling between them hadn't gone beyond that. She kept it so on purpose, because of what she hoped. She thought he'd be entirely hers, and hers alone, if she played her cards right.

She did not know there was a wife.

"Alas," thinks Eliduc to himself, "I've gone astray. I've stayed too long here. It was cursed, the day I first set eyes on this country. I've fallen head over heels in love. And she with me. If I have to say farewell to her now, one of us will die. Perhaps both. And yet I must go, the king of Brittany's letter commands it, and there's my promise to him. To say nothing of the one I swore my wife. I must pull myself together. I can't stay any longer, I have no alternative. If I were to marry Guilliadun, the Church would never stand for it. In all ways it's a mess. And oh God, to think of never seeing her again! I must be open with her, whatever the cost. I'll do whatever she wants, whichever way she sees it. Her father has got a decent peace, no one wants war with him anymore. I'll plead the king of Brittany's need and ask for permission to leave before the day's out. It was what was agreed—I'd go to him as soon as we had peace here. I'll see Guilliadun and explain the whole business. Then she can tell me what she wants, and I'll do my best to make it come true."

Without further delay, Eliduc went to the king to seek leave. He explained the situation in Brittany and showed him the letter the king there had sent him—the cry for help. The old king reads the command and realizes he will lose Eliduc. He is very upset and worried. He offered him a share of his possessions, a third of his heritage, his treasury—if he'll only stay, he'll do so much for him that Eliduc will be eternally grateful.

But Eliduc stayed firm.

"At this juncture, since my king's in danger and he's taken such trouble to find me, I must go to his assistance. Nothing would make me stop here. But if you ever need my services again, I'll willingly return—and bring plenty of other knights with me."

At that the king thanked him and gave him leave to go without further argument. He puts all his household possessions at Eliduc's disposal—gold and silver, hounds and horses and beautiful silk. Eliduc took no more than he needed. Then he politely told the king that he would like very much to speak with his daughter, if it were allowed.

"Consent is a pleasure," said the king.

Eliduc sends a young lady ahead to open the door of Guilliandun's room. Then he goes in to speak with her. When she saw him, she cried out his name and passionately clung to him. Then they discussed his problem, and he explained briefly the necessity for his journey. But when he had made it all clear, and yet pointedly still not asked for her permission to leave, for his freedom, she nearly fainted with the shock. Her face went white. When Eliduc sees the agony she is in, he begins to go mad. He keeps kissing her mouth and begins to cry in sympathy. At last he takes her in his arms and holds her until she recovers.

"You sweetest thing, oh God, listen—you're life and death to me, you're my whole existence. That's why I've come. So that we can talk about it, and trust each other. I must go home. I've got your father's permission. But I'll do whatever you want. Whatever may happen to me."

"Then take me with you, if you don't want to stay! If you don't, I'll kill myself. Nothing good or happy will ever happen to me again."

Gently Eliduc tells her how much he loves her; how beautiful she is. "But I've solemnly sworn to obey your father. If I take you away with me I'll be breaking my oath to him before its term is over. I swear, I promise you with all my heart that if you'll let me leave you now for a while, but name a day on which I must come back, then nothing on earth will stop me doing so—as long as I'm alive and in good health. My life's entirely in your hands."

She loved him so much. So she gave him a final date, a day by which he must return and take her away. They parted in tears and misery, exchanging their gold rings and tenderly kissing each other.

Eliduc rode to the sea. The wind was good and the crossing quick. When he gets home, the king of Brittany is overjoyed, and so are Eliduc's relations and friends and everyone else—and especially his wife, who remained as attractive and worthy of him as ever. But all the time Eliduc stayed turned in on himself, because of the shock of his love affair in England. Nothing he saw gave him any pleasure, he wouldn't smile—he'll never be happy till he sees Guilliadun again.

His wife was very depressed by his secretive behavior, since she had no idea what caused it. She felt sorry for herself; kept asking if he hadn't heard from someone that she'd misbehaved while he was abroad. She'll willingly defend herself before the world, whenever he wants.

"My lady, no one's accused you of anything bad. But I've solemnly sworn to the king in the country where I've been that I shall return to him. He has great need of me. I told him I'd be on my way within a week, as soon as the king of Brittany had peace. I've got a huge task ahead of me before I can return. I can't take pleasure in anything at all until I've got back there. I *will* not break promises."

And that was all he told his wife. He went to join the king of Brittany and helped him greatly. The king adopted his strategy and saved his kingdom. But when the date approached that Guilliadun had named, Eliduc intervened to make peace. He agreed to all the terms the enemy wanted,[9] then he got ready to travel and picked his companions—two nephews he was fond of and one of his pages, a boy who had known what was going on and had carried messages between Eliduc and Guilliadun. Besides them, only his squires; he didn't want anyone else. He made these companions swear to keep the secret.

He waits no longer, puts to sea and soon arrives in Totnes. At last he was back where he was so longed for. Eliduc was very cunning. He found an inn well away from the harbor, since he was very anxious not to be seen . . . traced and recognized. He got his page ready and sent him to Guilliadun to tell her he had returned and kept strictly to his promise. By night, when darkness had fallen, she must slip out of the city; the page would escort her and Eliduc come to meet her. The boy changed into a disguise and went all the way on foot straight to Exeter. He cleverly found a way to get into her private apartments; then greeted the princess and told her her lover had come back. He found her sad and hopeless, but when she hears the news she breaks down and begins to cry, then kisses and kisses the page. He told her she must leave with him that evening; and they spent the whole day planning their escape in every detail.

When night had come, they stole cautiously out of the city alone together. They were terrified someone might see them. She wore a silk dress delicately embroidered in gold and a short cloak.

About a bowshot from the city gate there was a copse enclosed in a fine garden. Eliduc, who had come to fetch her, waited under the hedge. The page led her to the place. Eliduc sprang down from his horse and kissed her: such joy to meet again. He helped her onto a horse, then mounted his own and took her bridle. They rode quickly

9. The Old French says that he reconciled the enemy (to the king).

away, back to the port of Totnes, and boarded the ship at once: no other passengers but Eliduc's men and his beloved Guilliadun. They had favorable winds and settled weather, but when they came near the coast of Brittany they ran into a storm. A contrary wind drove them out away from the harbor. Then the mast split and broke, and they lost all the sails. They prayed in despair—to God, to St. Nicholas and St. Clement—to Our Lady, that she might invoke Christ's protection for them, save them from drowning and bring them to land. Backward and forward they were driven along the coast, the storm raging around them. One of the sailors began to shout.

"What are we doing? My lord, it's the girl you've brought aboard who's going to drown us all. We'll never reach land. You have a proper wife at home. But now you want another woman. It's against God and the law. Against all decency and religion. So let's throw her in the sea, and save our skins."

Eliduc hears what the man cries, and nearly goes berserk.

"You son of a whore, you fiend, you rat—shut your mouth! If she goes into the sea, I'll make you pay for it!"

He held Guilliadun in his arms, gave her what comfort he could. She was seasick, and riven by what she'd just heard: that her lover had a wife at home. She fainted and fell to the deck, deathly pale; and stayed like that, without breath or sign of consciousness. Eliduc knew she was only there because of him, and sincerely thought she was dead. He was in agony. He stood up and rushed at the sailor and struck him down with an oar. The man collapsed to the deck and Eliduc kicked the body over the side, where the waves took it away. As soon as he had done that, he went to the helm. There he steered and held the ship so well that they came to the harbor and land. When they were safely in, he cast anchor and had the gangway let down. Still Guilliadun lay unconscious, her only appearance that of death. Eliduc wept without stop—if he had had his way, he would have been dead with her. He asked his companions their advice, where he could carry her. He refused to leave her side until she was buried with every honor and full ritual, and laid to rest in holy ground. She was a king's daughter, it was her due. But his men were at a loss and could suggest nothing. Eliduc began to think for himself. His own house was not far from the sea, not a day's ride away. There was a forest around it, some thirty miles across. A saintly hermit had lived there for forty years and had a chapel. Eliduc had often spoken with him.

I'll take her there, Eliduc said to himself, I'll bury her in his chapel. Then bestow land and found an abbey or a monastery. Nuns or canons, who can pray for her every day, may God have mercy on her soul.

He had horses brought and ordered everyone to mount, then made

them promise they would never betray him. He carried Guilliandun's body in front of him, on his own horse. They took the most direct road and soon entered the forest. At last they came to the chapel, and called and knocked. But no voice answered and the door stayed closed. Eliduc made one of his men climb in and open it. They found a fresh tomb: the pure and saintly hermit had died that previous week. They stood there sad and dismayed. The men wanted to prepare the grave in which Eliduc must leave Guilliadun forever, but he made them withdraw outside the chapel.

"This isn't right. I need advice first from the experts on how I can glorify this place with an abbey or a convent. For now we'll lay Guilliadun before the altar and leave her in God's care."

He had bedding brought and they quickly made a resting place for the girl; then laid her there, and left her for dead. But when Eliduc came to leave the chapel, he thought he would die of pain. He kissed her eyes, her face.

"Darling heart, may it please God I'll never bear arms again or live in the outer world. I damn the day you ever saw me. Dear gentle thing, why did you come with me? Not even a queen could have loved me more trustingly. More deeply. My heart breaks for you. On the day I bury you, I'll enter a monastery. Then come here every day and weep all my desolation out on your tomb."

Abruptly then he turned from the girl's body and closed the chapel door.

He had sent a messenger on ahead to tell his wife he was coming, but tired and worn. Full of happiness at the news, she dressed to meet him; and welcomed him back affectionately. But she had little joy of it. Eliduc gave her not a single smile or a kind word. No one dared to ask why. He stayed like that for a couple of days—each early morning, having heard mass, he took the road to the forest and the chapel where Guilliadun lay . . . still unconscious, without breathing, no sign of life. Yet something greatly puzzled him: she had hardly lost color, her skin stayed pink and white, only very faintly pale. In profound despair. Eliduc wept and prayed for her soul. Then having done that, he returned home.

The following day, when he came out of the church after mass, there was a spy—a young servant his wife had promised horses and arms to if he could follow at a distance and see which way his master went. The lad did as she ordered. He rides into the forest after Eliduc without being seen. He watched well, saw how Eliduc went into the chapel, and heard the state he was in. As soon as Eliduc came out, the servant went home and told his mistress everything—all the sounds of anguish her husband had made inside the chapel. From being resentful, she now felt touched.

"We'll go there as soon as possible and search the place. Your

master must be off soon to court, to confer with the king. The hermit died some time ago. I know Eludic was very fond of him, but that wouldn't make him behave like this. Not show such grief."

Thus for the time being she left the mystery.

That very same afternoon Eliduc set off to speak with the king of Brittany. His wife took the servant with her and he led her to the hermitage chapel. As soon as she went in she saw the bed and the girl lying on it, as fresh as a first rose. She pulled back the covering and revealed the slender body, the slim arms, the white hands with their long and delicately smooth-skinned fingers. She knew the truth at once—why Eliduc had his tragic face. She called the servant forward and showed him the miraculous corpse.

"Do you see this girl? She's as lovely as a jewel. She's my husband's mistress. That's why he's so miserable. Somehow it doesn't shock me. So pretty . . . to have died so young. I feel only pity for her. And I still love him. It's a tragedy for us all."

She began to cry, in sympathy for Guilliadun. But as she sat by the deathbed with tears in her eyes a weasel darts out from beneath the altar. The servant struck at it with a stick to stop it running over the corpse. He killed it, then threw the small body into the middle of the chancel floor. It had not been there long when its mate appeared and saw where it lay. The living animal ran around the dead one's head and touched it several times with a foot. But when this failed, it seemed distressed. Suddenly it ran out of the chapel into the forest grass. There it picked a deep red flower with its teeth, then carried it quickly back and placed it in the mouth of the weasel the servant had killed. Instantly the animal came back to life. The wife had watched all this, and now she cried out to the servant.

"Catch it! Throw, boy! Don't let it escape!"

He hurled his stick and hit the weasel. The blossom fell from between its teeth. Eliduc's wife went and picked it up, then returned and placed the exquisite red flower in Guilliadun's mouth. For a second or two nothing happened, but then the girl stirred, sighed, and opened her eyes.[1]

"Good lord," she murmured, "how long I've slept!"

When the wife heard her speak, she thanked heaven. Then she asked Guilliadun who she was.

"My lady, I'm British born, the daughter of a king there. I fell hopelessly in love with a knight, a brave mercenary called Eliduc. He eloped with me. But he was wicked, he deceived me. He had a wife all the time. He never told me, never gave me the least hint. When I heard the truth, I fainted with the agony of it. Now he's brutally

1. Abundant parallels from folklore represent an animal as having the gift of immortality—or being able to restore life after apparent death.

left me helpless here in a foreign country. He tricked me, I don't know what will become of me. Women are mad to trust in men."

"My dear," said the lady, "he's been quite inconsolable. I can assure you of that. He thinks you're dead, he's been mad with grief. He's come here to look at you every day. But obviously you've always been unconscious. I'm his real wife, and I'm deeply sorry for him. He was so unhappy . . . I wanted to find out where he was disappearing to, so I had him followed, and that's how I found you. And now I'm glad you're alive after all. I'm going to take you away with me: And give you back to him. I'll tell the world he's not to blame for anything. Then I shall take the veil."

She spoke so comfortingly that Guilliadun went home with her. The wife made the servant get ready and sent him after Eliduc. He rode hard and soon came up with him. The lad greeted Eliduc respectfully, then tells him the whole story. Eliduc leaps on a horse, without waiting for his friends. That same night he was home, and found Guilliadun restored to life. He gently thanks his wife, he's in his seventh heaven, he's never known such happiness. He can't stop kissing Guilliadun; and she keeps kissing him shyly back. They can't hide their joy at being reunited. When Eliduc's wife saw how things stood, she told her husband her plans. She asked his formal permission for a separation, she wished to become a nun and serve God. He must give her some of his land and she would found an abbey on it. And then he must marry the girl he loved so much, since it was neither decent nor proper, besides being against the law, to live with two wives. Eliduc did not try to argue with her; he'll do exactly as she wants and give her the land.

In the same woodlands near the castle that held the hermitage chapel he had a church built, and all the other offices of a nunnery. Then he settled a great deal of property and other possessions on it. When everything was ready, his wife took the veil, along with thirty other nuns. Thus she established her order and her new way of life.

Eliduc married Guilliadun. The wedding was celebrated with great pomp and circumstance, and for a long time they lived happily together in a perfect harmony of love. They gave a great deal away and performed many good deeds, so much so that in the end they also turned religious. After great deliberation and forethought, Eliduc had a church built on the other side of his castle and endowed it with all his money and the greater part of his estate. He appointed servants and other religious people to look after the order and its buildings. When all was ready, he delays no more: he surrenders himself with his servants to omnipotent God. And Guilliadun, whom he loved so much, he sent to join his first wife. Guildelüec received her as if she were her own sister and did her great honor, teaching her how to serve God

and live the religious life of the order. They prayed for the salvation of Eliduc's soul, and in his turn he prayed for both of them. He found out by messengers how they were, how they comforted each other. All three tried in their own ways to love God with true faith; and in the end, by the mercy of God in whom all truth reposes, each died a peaceful death.

The noble Celts composed this story long ago to enshrine the strange adventure of these three. May it never be forgotten!

DANTE ALIGHIERI

1265–1321

The greatest poem of the Middle Ages, called by its author a comedy and designated by later centuries *The Divine Comedy (La divina commedia)*, was written in the early fourteenth century. The poet, Dante Alighieri, was born in late May 1265, in Florence, Italy. In 1291 he married Gemma Donati, by whom he had two sons and one or two daughters. In 1295 he was a member of the "people's council" of Florence, and in 1300 served for two months, the usual term, as one of the six priors, or magistrates, of Florence. In 1302 the Blacks, opponents of the Whites (a political group with which Dante was affiliated), seized power in Florence, and he, with other White leaders, was exiled. Dante had gone to Rome on a mission to Pope Boniface in 1301, and as the decree of banishment was soon coupled with a condemnation to execution by fire (on false charges of corruption in office), he never returned to his native city. The last twenty years of his life, from 1301 to 1321, were spent in exile in various parts of Italy and possibly elsewhere. He died at Ravenna in September 1321.

The New Life was probably written about 1292. It consists of sonnets and odes with a prose account and running commentary by the poet; the poems were mostly inspired by Beatrice. *The Banquet*, of uncertain date, unfinished, is a work of encyclopedic scope in the form of a prose commentary on a series of the poet's odes *(canzoni)*. *On the Vernacular Language*, in Latin prose, of uncertain date, unfinished, is an essay on language and poetry, especially on the dialects of Italy and Provence; it is of great linguistic and literary interest. *On Single Government*, in Latin prose, of uncertain date, presents a closely reasoned defense of world government, together with an attempt to demonstrate the independent status of the Holy Roman Empire and the Papacy.

The Divine Comedy (begun ca. 1301) was apparently finished shortly before Dante's death in 1321. The poem is in many ways both the supreme and the centrally representative expression of medieval man in imaginative literature. But to appreciate the poem adequately in this light a reader must know it in its entirety, since it is an organic whole designed with the utmost symmetry. The present volume contains the entire *Inferno* and several cantos from the other two divisions. It will be best to look rapidly at

the general plan and then concentrate on the part included in this book.

The three great divisions of the poem, *Hell (Inferno)*, *Purgatory (Purgatorio)*, and *Paradise (Paradiso)*, are of identical length; each of the last two has thirty-three cantos, and the first, the *Inferno*, has thirty-four; but the opening canto is a prologue to the entire poem. The total, one hundred, is the square of ten, regarded in the thought of the time as a perfect number. The three divisions correspond in number to the Trinity. Nine, the square of three, figures centrally in the interior structure of each of the three divisions. In Hell, the lost souls are arranged in three main groups, and occupy nine circles. Most of the circles are themselves subdivided. Hell itself is a funnel-shaped opening in the earth extending from the surface to the center. Dante's journey thus takes him steadily downward through the nine concentric circles. The progression is from the least to the greatest types of evil; all the souls are irrevocably condemned, but all are not intrinsically equal in the degree or nature of their sinfulness. Thus, as we follow Dante in his descent, we find first an ante-Hell, the abode of those who refused to choose between right and wrong; then the boundary river, Acheron; then a circle for virtuous pagans who knew not Christ; and then a series of circles occupied by those guilty of sins of self-indulgence, or Incontinence, of all kinds. These include the illicit lovers, the gluttons, the hoarders and spendthrifts, and those of violent or sullen disposition. Comparable classes and subclasses are found within the other two main groups of sinners, those guilty respectively of Violence and of Fraud, the latter including treachery and treason. At the bottom is the fallen angel, Satan, or Lucifer.

Purgatory is situated on a lofty mountain rising on an island in the sea. It is divided into the ante-Purgatory, which is the lower half of the mountain; Purgatory proper, just above; and the Earthly Paradise, or Garden of Eden, at the summit. Purgatory proper is arranged in a series of seven ledges encircling the mountain, each devoted to the purification of souls from particular kinds of sinful disposition—Pride, Envy, Anger, Sloth, Avarice, Gluttony, and Illicit Love. These seven divisions, plus the ante-Purgatory and the Earthly Paradise, make a total of nine.

The *Paradise* takes us, in ascending order, through the circles of the seven planets of medieval astronomy, the moon, Mercury, Venus, the sun, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn; then through the circles of the fixed stars and the *primum mobile*, or outermost circle, which moves the others; and finally to the Empyrean, or Heaven itself, the abode of God, the angels, and the redeemed souls. Again we have nine circles, besides the Empyrean, inclusion of which would give a total of ten. Such is the vast design and scope of *The Divine Comedy* as a whole.

INFERNO

The poem itself begins with action, not outline; explanations come along in suitable places; they are part of the traveler's experience. We shall do well to follow the hint. The incidents recounted in Canto I of the *Inferno* are concrete and definite; their literal meaning is perfectly plain. As critics have often said, Dante is a highly visual poet; he gives us clear pictures or images. Beginning with a man lost in a wood, hindered by three beasts from escape by his own effort, the canto might well be the start of a tale of unusual but

quite earthly adventures. But when the stranger Dante meets identifies himself as the shade of the poet Virgil and offers to conduct him through realms which, though not named, can only be Hell and Purgatory, we realize that there is a meaning beyond the one which appears on the surface. We recognize that the wood, the mountain, the sun, and the three beasts, though casually introduced, are not casual features of the scene. They represent something other than themselves; they are symbols. In the light of the entire poem, it is usually possible to tell what these other things are, and in this volume the headnotes and footnotes identify them. Occasionally, however, there is doubt. What do the three beasts stand for? A lack of certainty is not a serious disadvantage to readers; they should regard it as a challenge to reach a correct decision for themselves. Indeed, if they go on to read the entire poem, they may arrive at an identification that seems sounder and more consistent with the work as a whole than those proposed. Meanwhile, there is no ambiguity about the animals themselves; they are the satisfying and specific images of poetry.

The simple style of this first canto may surprise readers who have been told that *The Divine Comedy* is one of the five or six great poems of European literature, especially if they assume that it will sound like an epic. For Dante begins with neither the splendor of Homer nor the stateliness of Virgil nor the grandeur of Milton. Indeed, except for the use of verse, Canto I seems more like a narrative by Defoe or Swift, particularly at the outset. It is quiet, factual, economical; it convinces us by its air of serious simplicity. Dante called the poem a comedy, in accordance with the use of the term in his day, not only because it began in misery and ended in happiness, but also because in that literary form a sustained loftiness of style was not requisite. In other words, he is free to use the whole range of style, from the humblest, including the colloquial and the humorous, to the highest. There is, indeed, a great variety of tone in the poem. Yet readers will doubtless eventually agree that Dante strikes the right note *for him* at the beginning. Variation will result chiefly from change in intensity, achieved by differing degrees of concentration and repetition—rather than from a shift to the "grand style." This unpretentious manner is, we see, most suitable to a prolonged work of serious fiction in which the author is the central character. For *The Divine Comedy* is not primarily a Cook's tour of the world of the dead; it is an account of the effect of such a journey on the man who takes it—Dante. It is a record of his moral and spiritual experience of illumination, regeneration, and beatitude. We are interested partly because of the unique and individual character of the traveler—Dante as the man he was, the man revealed in the poem—and partly because the experience of the author is imaginatively available and meaningful to all of us.

In Canto IV we come to the first of the nine concentric circles of Hell. Here are the noble heroes, wise philosophers, and inspired poets of the ancient—and medieval—pagan world. They are excluded from Heaven because they knew nothing of Christ and his religion. This fate may seem harsh to us, but the orthodox view recognized only one gate to Heaven. These spirits suffer no punishment, Virgil (who is one of them) tells Dante, only "without hope, we live on in desire." Here Dante's fervent pity and sympathy at once nourish and mirror the reader's; but there is no rebellion

against God's decree. Further explanation, and thereby justification, in Dante's view, will come as the poem progresses toward its goal.

With Canto V we reach the second circle, the first of those containing souls guilty of active sin unrepented at the time of death, and hence suffering a penalty in Hell. Here, therefore, is found the contemptuous and monstrous judge Minos, another figure taken from classical myth and freely adapted to Dante's purposes. The souls assigned to the second circle are those guilty of unlawful love. The poet's method here, as throughout the journey, is first to point out a number of prominent figures who would be familiar to his fourteenth-century readers, and then to concentrate attention on a very few, one or two in each circle, telling more about them and eliciting his own story from each. In general, Dante lets the place and condition in which the sinners are found serve as a minimum essential of information. For the penalties in the various circles are of many different kinds. Their fundamental characteristic is appropriateness to the particular sin; this is one of the principal differences between the punishments in Dante's Hell and the miscellaneous and arbitrary horrors of many accounts of the place. In Dante the penalties symbolize the sin. Thus the illicit lovers of the second circle are continually blown about by storm winds, for their sin consisted in the surrender of reason to lawless passions.

Here we find Paolo and Francesca, the best-known figures of the entire *Divine Comedy*. Like all the human beings presented in the poem, they actually existed. They lived in Italy about the time of Dante's childhood and early youth, and were slain by Francesca's husband, a brother of Paolo. Dante's method, it is hence clear, is not to build up an allegorical cast of personified abstractions. Instead of, say, Passion and Rebellion, he portrays Paolo and Francesca. They represent, or symbolize, sinful love by example. They show how an intrinsically noble emotion, love, if contrary to God's law, can bring two essentially fine persons to damnation and spiritual ruin. The tenderness and the sympathy with which the story is told are famous. But its pathos, and Dante's personal response of overwhelming pity, should not blind us to the *justice* of the penalty. The poet who describes himself as fainting at the end of Francesca's recital is the same man who consigned her to Hell. His purpose is partly to portray the attractiveness of sin, an especially congenial theme when *this* is the sin involved—both for Dante and for most readers. But although Dante allows the lovers the bitter sweetness of inseparability in Hell, the modern "romantic" idea that union anywhere is sufficient happiness for lovers does not even occur to him. Paolo and Francesca indeed have their love; but they have lost God and thus corrupted their personalities—their inmost selves—from order into anarchy; they are the reverse of happy. In a sense, they have what they wanted, they continue in the lawless condition which they chose on earth. But that condition, seen from the point of view of eternity, is not bliss; it is, in effect, Hell.

In Canto X we are among the heretics in their flaming tomb in the sixth circle. Situated within the walled city of Dis—the capital, as it were, of Hell—this circle is a kind of border between the upper Hell (devoted to punishments for Incontinence) and the lower (concerned with Violence and Fraud). Here Dante portrays the proud aristocrat Farinata and his associate, the elder Cavalcante, father of Dante's closest friend. Their crime is heresy,

a flagrant aspect of intellectual pride. But there is a nobility in Farinata's pride; Dante, like the reader, admires the splendid self-sufficiency of a man who, in this situation, can seem "to hold all Hell in disrespect." And the essence of the aristocratic nature is distilled in his address to Dante as "the great soul stared almost contemptuously, / before he asked: 'Of what line do you come?' " and in his abrupt resumption of the conversation interrupted by Cavalcante. Alongside the haughtiness of Farinata, Dante sets the pathetic—and mistaken—grief of Cavalcante for his son; each portrait gains in effect by the extreme contrast.

Canto XIII shows us one group of those guilty of Violence; for the suicides have been violent against themselves. Here they are turned into monstrous trees, their misery finding expression when a bough is plucked. In the eyes of the Church, suicide was murder, in no way diminished by the fact that the slayer and the victim were the same. By representing in Pier delle Vigne a man who had every human motive to end his life, Dante achieves the deepest pathos and evokes our shuddering pity. As Francesca displays in her dramatic monologue the charm and the potential weakness of her character, as Farinata's manner of speech portrays his nature, so Pier delle Vigne by his exact and legal-sounding language lets us see the careful, methodical counselor whose sense of logic and sense of justice were so outraged that he saw no point in enduring life any longer. His judgment is still unimpaired; he does not reproach his king, only the jealous courtiers who misled him. The Wood of the Suicides is one of the greatest—among many admirable—examples of landscape in Hell assimilated to theme and situation.

Canto XV describes the meeting of Dante and his venerable teacher and adviser, the scholar Brunetto Latini. We are in another ring of the seventh circle, among more of those who have sinned through Violence. The impact of this scene results from the contrast between the dignity of the man and the indignity of his condition in hell, and by the tact with which both he and Dante ignore it for the moment. Brunetto, with the others guilty of homosexual vice, must move continually along a sandy desert under a shower of fiery flakes. Dante accords him the utmost respect and expresses his gratitude in the warmest terms; and something like their earthly relationship of teacher and pupil is re-enacted, for Brunetto is keenly interested in Dante's prospects in life. In the final image of Brunetto running, not like the loser, but like the winner of a race, Dante extracts dignity and victory out of indignity itself.

The presence of people like those we have been reviewing will remind the reader that Hell is not reserved exclusively for arrant ruffians, hoodlums, and scoundrels. They are there, of course; but so are many "nice," many charming, and some noble and great, men and women. These are in Hell because they preferred something else—no matter what—to God; at the moment of death they were therefore in rebellion against Him. God and Heaven would not be congenial to them, *as they are and as He is*; and there is no acceptable repentance after death. Hence they go on unchanged—only now experiencing the harsher aspects of the sin in which they chose to live.

In Canto XVII the travelers are carried on the back of the flying monster Geryon down the deep descent from the seventh to the eighth circle. With the face of a just man and the body of a serpent, Geryon symbolizes Fraud.

He is one of the most exciting figures in Hell. In an age before ferris wheels and airplanes, he gives our poets a ride that anticipates some of the terrifying thrill which a young child may feel in an airplane journey. The eighth circle is subdivided into ten chasms or trenches (Malebolge), each with its own kind of sinners: seducers and panders; flatterers; simoniacs (buyers and sellers of appointments in the Church); sorcerers; grafters; hypocrites; thieves; evil counselors; trouble-makers; forgers, and impostors.

Most readers will agree that the punishments here fit the crimes; indeed, reflection will usually intensify this conviction. It is a long catalogue of iniquity; much, but not all, is sordid. Dante has avoided monotony not only by the vividness and intensity of the separate scenes but also by their ingenious variety and by the frequent changes of pace in the narrative. The satirical situation and fierce denunciation of the simoniacs is followed by the quiet horror of the sorcerers with twisted necks. The hilarious episode of the grafters precedes the encounter with the solemn, slow-walking hypocrites; and these are succeeded by the macabre serpent-transformations of the thieves. Nevertheless, our steadily deepening descent in hell gradually produces a sense of oppressiveness. This is appropriate and deliberate; it is a part of Dante's total design. But he recognizes the need of momentary relief, a breath of fresh air, a reminder of the world above. These he provides, for example, in the long simile describing the shipyard in Venice (the opening of Canto XXI) or the picture of the peasant and his two sallies outside on a winter morning (the opening of Canto XXIV).

The episode of the grafters (Cantos XXI and XXII) probably has biographical relevance for Dante. During his absence from Florence on business of state, the opposing political party seized power and sentenced Dante to death if he should return to Florence. The quite unfounded charge against him was misappropriation of public funds. In these cantos Dante cuts a ludicrous figure: fearful, cowering, in constant danger from the demons. He escapes their clutches, first by a distraction and then by belated vigilance. The whole sequence affords an oblique and amusing view of an actual episode. It is worth noting also that here, and here only, in the poem, we find ourselves in the kind of hell known in popular lore and anecdote, with winged devils playing rough jokes on their human prey. Scenes, style, and language alike here show one extreme of the range of the poem—the "low" comic. Dante very unobtrusively indicates his awareness of this by the contrasting allusions found in Canto XX, line 113 and Canto XXI, line 2.

Cantos XXVI and XXVII take us among the wicked counselors, who occupy the eighth chasm, or subdivision, of the eighth circle. Appearing at a distance like fireflies in a summer valley, these souls are wrapped in individual, or occasionally twin, flames. Fire is a fit punishment for those who used the flame of intellect to accomplish evil. When the two poets approach more closely, Virgil identifies one flame as that of Ulysses (Odysseus) and Diomede, who burn together. Among the deceptions devised by Ulysses was the wooden horse, which made possible the capture of Troy. It will strike the reader as strange that a man should suffer for his powers as a military tactician. But the Greeks were enemies of the Trojans, whom the Romans and later most of the nations of Western Europe regarded as their ancestors. Ulysses was on the wrong side, and was responsible for his deeds; but Dante mingles

with his condemnation an admiration of the man's mental powers. Ulysses remains aloof; he does not converse with Dante, like most of the souls we have met. Instead, as Dorothy Sayers puts it in the notes to her translation of the poem, Virgil conjures the flame into monologue. Thus we are told how Ulysses determined not to return home after the Trojan War but to explore the western ocean instead. In this narrative, apparently invented by Dante, Ulysses becomes the type of the adventuring and searching spirit of man; the voyage is an act of the mind and soul as well as the body. When he has sailed within sight of a mountainous island, his ship is wrecked by a storm and he perishes. Since, as other parts of the poem indicate, this is the island of Purgatory, the episode clearly has symbolic significance. On this island is the Earthly Paradise, or Garden of Eden, lost to man by the sin of Adam. Man, unassisted by divine grace—pagan man, represented by Ulysses—cannot regain it by his own intelligence, although the effort toward that end is noble in itself.

The other evil counselor, Guido da Montefeltro, talks fluently in Canto XXVII; he shows a quite earthly eagerness for news, crafty, garrulous old intriguer that he is. It is a neat irony that, in spite of his deserved reputation for cleverness, Dante shows him twice deceived: first on earth, as he himself relates, and now in Hell—he does not want his story known and is convinced that Dante will never return to earth to tell it. He sketches in detail, with recollective acidity, the steps by which the pope led him, an aging and reformed man, to return for a moment to his old ways. He even includes the contest of St. Francis and the devil for his soul at his death, along with the devil's bitter witticism: you didn't think I was a logician, perhaps!

In Cantos XXXII and XXXIII we have reached the ninth and last circle, where the traitors are immersed in ice that symbolizes their unfeeling hearts. At the end of one canto we are shown the horror of Ugolino gnawing the skull of his enemy Ruggieri, both partly fastened in the ice. Dante does not concentrate on the acts which have put either man in Hell. Instead he lets Ugolino tell us, in the next canto, why his hatred of Ruggieri is so implacable. The fearful pathos, the power, and at the same time the restraint and compression of this narrative make it one of the finest episodes in the poem.

The last canto, Canto XXXIV, shows us the enormous shape of the fallen angel, Satan, fixed at the bottom of Hell, where the motion of his wings freezes the ice in which we have found the traitors immersed. In one of his three mouths he holds Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Christ; in the other two are Brutus and Cassius, who plotted the assassination of Julius Caesar. Dante did not regard them, as we generally do today, as perhaps misguided patriots; to him they were the destroyers of a providentially ordained ruler. Readers who remember Milton's *Paradise Lost* may be surprised at the absence of any interior presentation of Satan. One critic regrets that his suffering is not shown as different from that of the other inhabitants of Hell. But the fact is that his suffering is not presented at all; he is not a person, to Dante, but an object, a part of the machinery and geography of Hell. For *The Divine Comedy* is occupied exclusively with human sin, human redemption, and human beatitude.

PURGATORY

At the beginning of the *Purgatory*, Dante and Virgil have once more reached the surface of the earth and can look up and see the sky and the stars. Their long climb from the bottom of Hell, where they left Satan, has brought them out on the shore of the mountain-island of Purgatory. The scene and the situation are presented by Dante with a bold and happy use of imaginative symbols. Guided by Reason in the person of Virgil, Dante, a man still in the earthly life, has looked closely at sin and evil—in Hell—and turned away from them, and is now in search of the means of self-correction and purification. He arrives on the island shore, just before dawn, to find the reverend figure of Cato acting as guardian of the mountain. The austerely glorious figure of Cato, his face illumined by rays from stars representing the pagan virtues of Prudence, Temperance, Fortitude, and Justice, embodies the highest moral and ethical ideal available to man without divine revelation, pre- or post-Christian. Dante meets him, appropriately, before dawn—before the sun of God's illumination has risen. These elements in the situation, together with the reference to his sojourn with Marcia, his wife, in the circle of virtuous pagans in Hell, make Cato a remarkable transition or border symbol, standing both between Hell and Purgatory and between Greco-Roman philosophy and ethics and the dispensation of the Old and New Testaments.

These opening cantos admirably set quite a new tone in the second great division of the poem. They show us joy and brightness, cheer and hope, contrasting totally with the darkness and misery of Hell. They show us an angel arriving with a cargo of souls, all joyfully singing. They accustom us to a different set of attitudes, a different kind of people, and especially, they portray the naïveté, the almost childlike lack of intellectual and moral sophistication, the need of orientation, which characterize the penitent soul at this point in its progress to perfection. As yet uninstructed and spiritually immature, it looks back, seeking to carry on the harmless but no longer suitable delights of earthly life. Dante—and Virgil—share this simplicity to the full.

Cantos III–XVIII, not included in this book, take the reader along the slopes of the lower half of the mountain—the ante-Purgatory, where some of the souls must wait for varying periods of time (and for different reasons) before entering Purgatory itself—and through four of the seven terraces, those devoted to purgation from Pride, Envy, Anger, and Sloth. In Canto XIX we go on to the fifth of the ledges encircling the mountain, that in which the souls are purified of Avarice. There we meet Pope Adrian, one of Dante's most vivid illustrations of the anguish of purification. Concisely he sketches for Dante the poignant story of his late conversion (to the reality of the Christian life), his repentance, and his present hard penance. Only when, after a life of self-seeking, he had attained the pinnacle of the papacy did disillusionment come—and spiritual discovery: "I saw no heart's rest there, nor ease from strife." Now he recognizes the equity of the reforming penalty:

> We would not raise our eyes to the shining spheres
> but kept them turned to mundane things: so Justice
> bends them to earth here in this place of tears.

Dante, on learning from Adrian's words that he was a pope, has knelt down in respect. But Adrian, perceiving this without lifting his eyes from the ground, peremptorily corrects Dante: there are no popes here. All the hierarchies and social orders of earth are annihilated in Purgatory—and, we may add, the hierarchy of Heaven is not that of earth. Having answered Dante's questions, Adrian bids him go on—he hinders the task of penitence. Finally, remembering that Dante had offered to carry news of him to those possibly dear to him on earth, which might lead to helpful prayers, the old man adds that he has only a niece there who, if not corrupted by the bad example of his family, could possibly help him. But for this soul, absorbed in his penance, the earth has receded far away, and Heaven is not yet attained; he is essentially alone with his suffering.

The remaining parts of the *Purgatory* included in this book, Cantos XXVII, XXX, and XXXI, add a dimension to Dante's role in the poem. He is, as has been said, the protagonist throughout; the journey and all its disclosures are carried out for his benefit. In Hell, to be sure, he could do little except look and learn; yet his emotional education through the revelation of perfected evil was a large and positive achievement. As a candidate for salvation, he has learned to abhor sin more completely in proportion as he has been shown its real nature; while, as a man of flesh and blood, he has felt alternate pity and hate for the sinners. Along the penitential ledges of Purgatory he has partially assimilated himself to the penitents; he has felt humility while among those purging themselves of Pride, and generosity among those seeking to root out Envy from their natures. On the seventh terrace, he has recognized an even closer kinship with those engaged in refining their love by fire. But now this same fire, it develops, is the boundary between Purgatory and the Earthly Paradise at the top of the mountain. To reach that goal, Dante must go through the fire. Remembering "human bodies / I once saw burned," he is overcome by a terrible fear. The encouraging words of the angel guardian of the ledge, the assurances of Virgil, who reminds him of perils safely passed— neither avail to move him until he is told that Beatrice is beyond the wall of flame. Then his resistance melts and he perseveres through the frightful but harmless fire. It is now nearly sunset, when all ascent ceases, but next morning Dante takes the few last steps to the Earthly Paradise. Here Virgil, who has guided him through Hell and Purgatory, gives him a farewell benediction. Dante, says Virgil, has explored evil in its final effects (Hell) and the means of correcting the human inclinations that produce it (in Purgatory). His regenerated will is now truly free, and he may fearlessly follow its direction. He no longer needs the guidance of a teacher of morality (Virgil) nor a political structure ("crown") nor an ecclesiastical institution ("mitre"). In short, he has regained the condition of man before the Fall.

These words apply to Dante in his role as a kind of Everyman, representing whoever has fully discerned the nature of evil and wholly freed himself from the impulses to sin. They apply to every soul when it completes the experience of Purgatory; if they did not, the soul would not be ready to go to Heaven, to enter the presence of God. But obviously they cannot apply, actually and practically, to any man still living on earth. That they were not meant as a literal description of Dante the Italian poet and political exile

from Florence is clear enough from the events of Cantos XXX and XXXI. For if Dante has already perfected himself by penance, why should he now, in the scenes with Beatrice, repeat the painful experience of rebuke, confession, and satisfaction? It is this latter series of incidents that constitutes Dante's personal, individual experience of correction and purification.

In the midst of the celestial pageant that moves before Dante in the Earthly Paradise appears a lady whom he instantly recognizes as one who was the object of his idealizing love when she lived as a woman on earth. Turning excitedly to confide this to Virgil, he cannot find him anywhere, and is stricken with grief. Presently the Lady names herself as Beatrice—whom the reader will remember for two reasons: she sent Virgil to guide her endangered servant, Dante, through Hell and Purgatory; and to see her Dante forced himself to go through the barrier of fire. There is no cause to doubt that, like the other human beings in the poem, Beatrice is an actual person transformed by the shaping imagination of the poet. What she was to Dante in her earthly life he tells us in the *New Life (Vita nuova)*, written not long after her death in 1290. She was an incarnation of beauty and virtue; simply by existing, she engrossed the young Dante's ardent but remote devotion; her smile or greeting left him in trembling rapture. This was the full extent of the relationship between them. But the poems in the *New Life* are mostly inspired by the thought of her, whether on earth or in heaven. In short, she was a real woman who, even in this world, was an ideal for Dante, and after death became an even more glorious image of goodness and divine wisdom. The last section of the *New Life* records Dante's resolution to devote a great work to her, when he shall be qualified to achieve it; *The Divine Comedy* is that work. We have seen that he makes her the instigator of the imaginary journey through two realms of the life after death and the motive for his endurance of the fire. Now, as successor to Virgil, she comes to guide him herself through the heavenly paradise. In the same way that Virgil is Reason without ceasing to be Virgil, Beatrice fulfills the role of Divine Revelation without ceasing to be Beatrice.

It is in this dual character, part beloved woman and part the voice of divine wisdom, that Beatrice, in Canto XXXI, unsparingly rebukes Dante. He had loved her mortal beauty as an image of the immortal; when death destroyed it, his devotion ought thenceforth to have fixed itself on the immortal and indestructible virtue of which that beauty had been the image. Instead, he turned aside to the lure of material things. Dante accepts the reproach with the utmost contrition. It is quite probable that this episode is based on some actual lapse, in Dante's life, from his highest moral ideal. These passages, then, recount his own personal experience of purgation, the autobiographical analogue of the penitence and purification portrayed on the mountain as a whole.

PARADISE

Like the invocations of *Paradise Lost*, that with which Dante begins the third division of his poem expresses his sense of the loftiness of the theme. Like Milton, he is venturing things unattempted hitherto in prose or rhyme. The three invocations of *The Divine Comedy* are incremental; the first (in Canto II of the *Hell*) is brief and unobtrusive, the second (in Canto I of the *Pur-*

gatory) more extended, and the third (in Canto I of the *Paradise*) by its earnestness and solemnity indicates the epic stature, though not epic form, which he expects the poem to attain. The *Paradise* offers us an imagined experience of the entire celestial universe as it was charted by medieval astronomy. In that cosmology, the sun, the moon, and the rest, though immensely distant, had not retreated from the earth according to the scale established by modern knowledge. Dante's world is geocentric; the planetary circles, including those of the sun and moon, revolve about the earth, as does the circle of the stars—as does, in fact, everything except the "real" Heaven, or Empyrean, the abode of God and the saints and angels. The *Paradise* is the chronicle of an ascent from planet to planet, until finally Dante is in the Empyrean itself. In each planet a group of redeemed and perfected souls, come from their proper dwelling in the Empyrean, are present to converse with Dante and his guide, Beatrice. Their successive discussions set forth the essentials of Christian doctrine, along with the fundamental scientific concepts of the time; and they themselves exemplify various kinds and degrees of beatitude. For Dante—and the reader—the experience is educational, morally edifying, and spiritually preparatory for the vision with which the poem ends. In Canto III Dante learns of the hierarchy of souls in Heaven; not all are equal, indeed, no two are identical in bliss; yet each is completely satisfied, fulfilled, and happy—"in His will is our peace." Piccarda, the not wholly blameless nun who speaks these words, is among the souls encountered in the moon, the group of lowest rank in Heaven. From these we rise to higher and higher kinds of blessed souls, each rejoicing wholly in God in its predestined way and in accordance with its capacity.

When all the cycles of the cosmos have been traversed, we come, in Canto XXXI, to Heaven itself, the real home of the blessed. Here the souls are arranged in the form of a great white rose; God is at the center—an ineffable brightness—and the souls have the aspect of rows of petals. Here Beatrice, who has set forth the truths of Divine Revelation throughout the journey, goes back to her place in Heaven, and St. Bernard, the great mystic of the twelfth century, becomes Dante's guide, or rather sponsor. For what remains is that Dante should be vouchsafed a vision in which, for an instant, he may see God as He really is—in so far as his human capacity enables him to do so. The last canto, Canto XXXIII, opens with Bernard's prayer to the Virgin Mary for intercession in Dante's behalf. There is no religious lyric poetry of greater depth or simplicity or beauty than this prayer; its intimacy, tenderness, and humility are consummate.

To obtain, to endure, such a vision is just within the limit of Dante's powers. It transports him into an utterly different kind of being; it leaves him with the memory of an overpowering but indescribable experience. For of course no mystic can ever reveal the content of his vision; it does not belong to the order of reportable things. Dante can only tell us that he discerned with direct but momentary certitude the identity of God as inclusive of man and of universal love, and that he knew himself to be at that instant one with Him.

The Divine Comedy thus ends both quietly and climactically. For this union with God was the purpose of the entire long and arduous journey. This is the good which St. Thomas Aquinas, and Boethius before him,

pointed out as the goal of man, as of the entire creation. But what the philosophers prove, Dante experiences, imaginatively. And we reach both center and summit of the medieval structure of human life in proportion as we can follow the record of that experience.

DANTE IN ITALIAN

This book presents the *Inferno* complete, together with several cantos of the *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* in English translation. Our translator is the contemporary American poet John Ciardi. As with some other poems in the book, the reader may find it interesting to have a brief look at the Italian text, so here are the opening lines of the *Inferno* in the original language.

Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita
mi retrovai per una selva oscura
ché la diritta via era smarrita.

Ah, quanto a dir qual era è cosa dura
esta selva selvaggia e aspra e forte
che nel pensier rinova la paura!

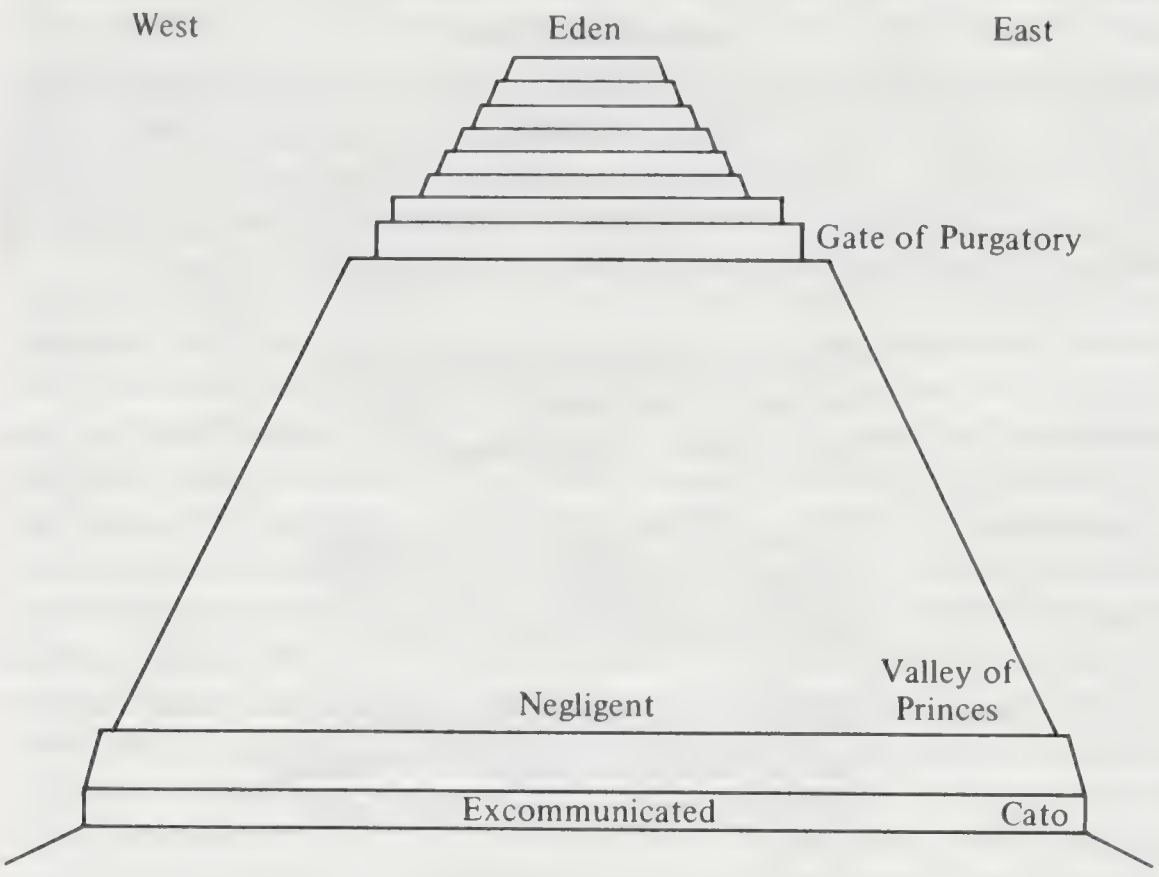
Tant'è amara che poco è più morte;
ma per trattar del ben ch'io vi trovai,
dirò dell'altre cose ch'i' v'ho scorte.

Io non so ben ridir com'io v'entrai,
tant'era pieno di sonno a quel punto
che la verace via abbandonai.

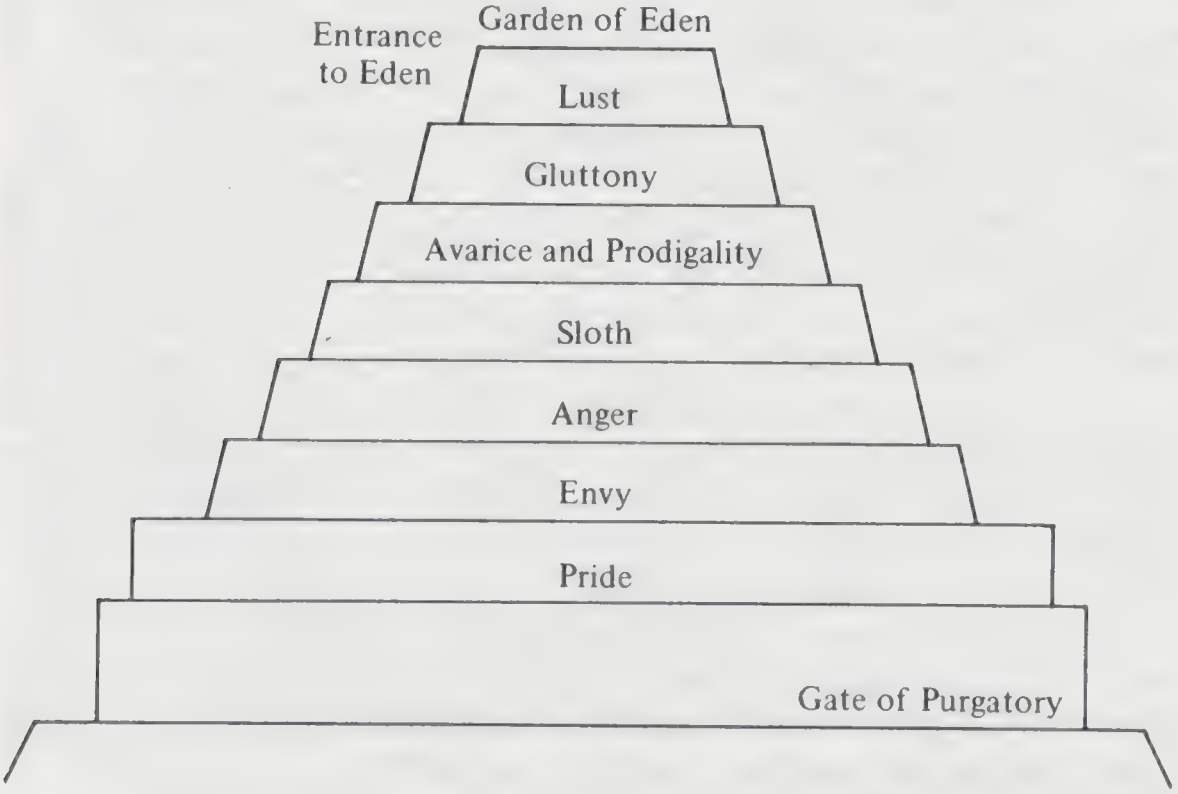
The individual lines are metrically similar to most lines in Chaucer or Shakespeare; they regularly have five metrical feet, each consisting of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed one, or vice versa, with the possibility of an additional unstressed syllable or two somewhere within the line. But the most notable metrical feature of the *Divine Comedy* is the pattern of rhymes, or the *terza rima*. Thus the lines form groups of three: *vita* in the first line above rhymes with the last two syllables of *smarrita* in the third line, while *oscura* in the second line rhymes with *dura* in the first line and *paura* in the third line of the next group. Thus the groups are independent units interlocked by the sequence of rhymes. This overall structure reminds the reader of the Christian Trinity: God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; it is one expression of the poet's religious devotion. In his translation Ciardi maintains the separation into groups of three lines: *astray* in the first line rhymes with *I say* in the third. But he does not keep the interlocking rhyme scheme: *myself* in line two of the first group does not rhyme with *drear* and *fear* in the second group. The sound structure of the Italian language makes Dante's rhyme patterns easier than this arrangement would be in an English poem. Attempts to reproduce it entirely have not been very successful in our language.

The best sources are T. S. Eliot, "Dante," most easily available in his *Selected Essays* (1932); George Santayana, "Dante," in *Three Philosophical*

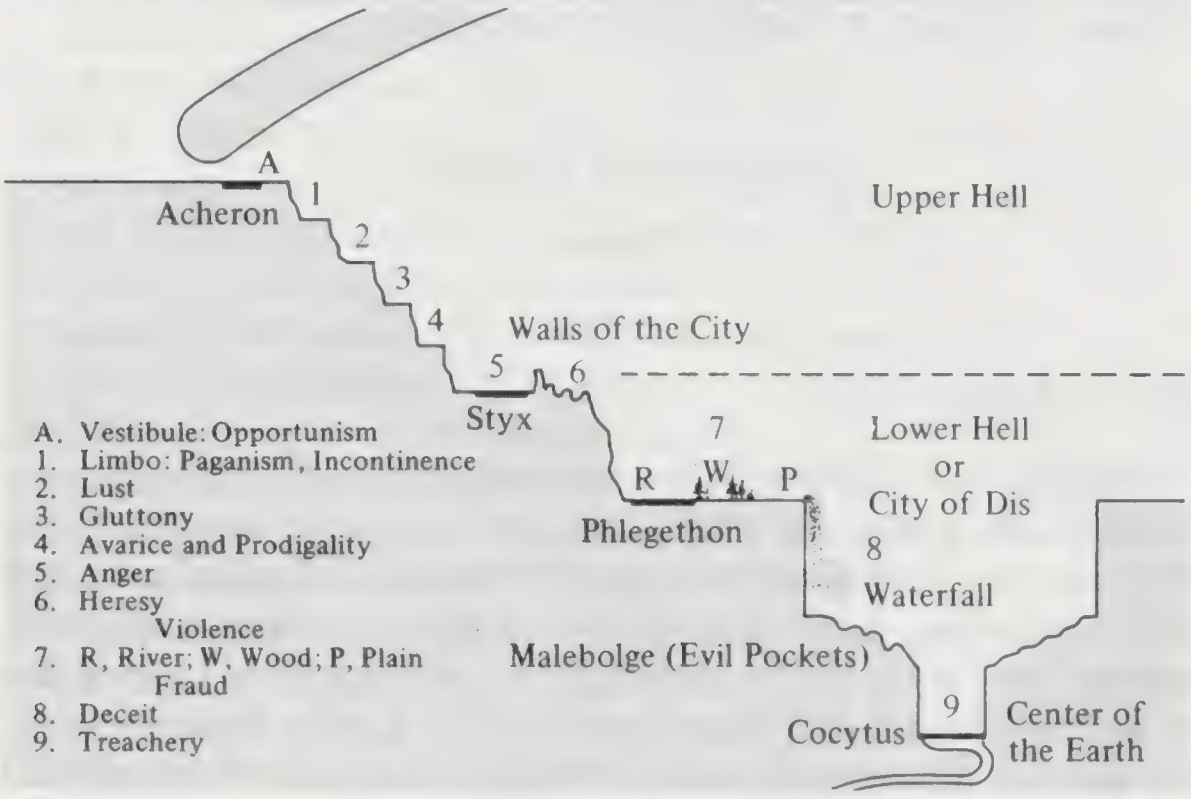
Island of Purgatory



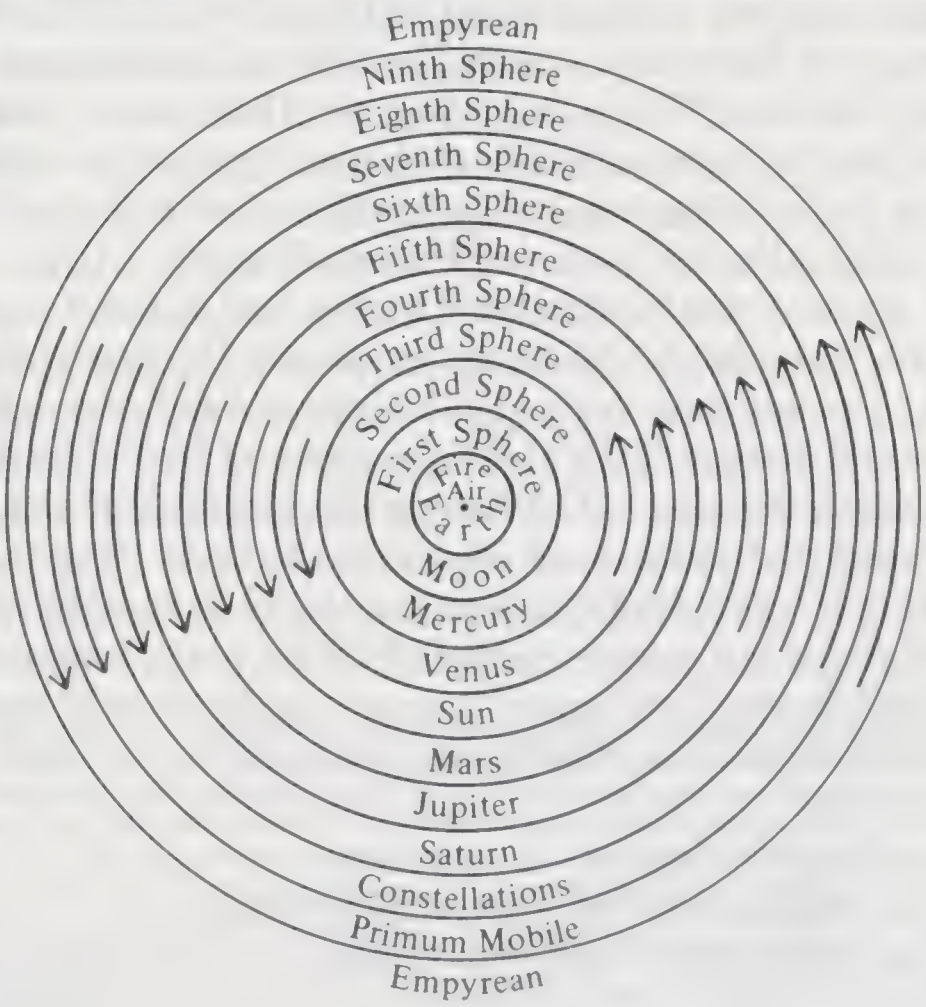
Eden and Purgatory



The Slope of Hell



The Heavenly Spheres



Poets (1910); and the introduction and notes by Dorothy Sayers to her translation of the *Inferno* (1949). See also her *Introductory Papers on Dante* (1954) and *Further Papers on Dante* (1957). Also helpful is Michele Barbi, *Life of Dante*, translated by Paul G. Ruggiers, 1954. Recent studies include R. Hollander, *Allegory in Dante's "Commedia"* (1969).

The Divine Comedy[1]

Inferno

CANTO I

The Dark Wood of Error

Midway in his allotted threescore years and ten, Dante comes to himself with a start and realizes that he has strayed from the True Way into the Dark Wood of Error (Worldliness). As soon as he has realized his loss, Dante lifts his eyes and sees the first light of the sunrise (the Sun is the Symbol of Divine Illumination) lighting the shoulders of a little hill (The Mount of Joy). It is the Easter Season, the time of resurrection, and the sun is in its equinoctial rebirth. This juxtaposition of joyous symbols fills Dante with hope and he sets out at once to climb directly up the Mount of Joy, but almost immediately his way is blocked by the Three Beasts of Worldliness: The Leopard of Malice and Fraud, The Lion of Violence and Ambition, and The She-Wolf of Incontinence. These beasts, and especially the She-Wolf, drive him back despairing into the darkness of error. But just as all seems lost, a figure appears to him. It is the shade of Virgil, Dante's symbol of Human Reason.

Virgil explains that he has been sent to lead Dante from error. There can, however, be no direct ascent past the beasts: the man who would escape them must go a longer and harder way. First he must descend through Hell (The Recognition of Sin), then he must ascend through Purgatory (The Renunciation of Sin), and only then may he reach the pinnacle of joy and come to the Light of God. Virgil offers to guide Dante, but only as far as Human Reason can go. Another guide (Beatrice, symbol of Divine Love) must take over for the final ascent, for Human Reason is self-limited. Dante submits himself joyously to Virgil's guidance and they move off.

Midway in our life's journey,[2] I went astray
from the straight road and woke to find myself
alone in a dark wood. How shall I say

1. The *Inferno* complete, with selections from the *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*. Translated, with notes and commentary, by John Ciardi. 2. The Biblical life span is three-score years and ten. The action opens in Dante's thirty-fifth year, i.e., A.D. 1300.

what wood that was! I never saw so drear,
so rank, so arduous a wilderness!
Its very memory gives a shape to fear.
Death could scarce be more bitter than that place!
But since it came to good, I will recount
all that I found revealed there by God's grace.
How I came to it I cannot rightly say,
so drugged and loose with sleep had I become
when I first wandered there from the True Way.
But at the far end of that valley of evil
whose maze had sapped my very heart with fear,
I found myself before a little hill
and lifted up my eyes. Its shoulders glowed
already with the sweet rays of that planet[3]
whose virtue leads men straight on every road,
and the shining strengthened me against the fright
whose agony had wracked the lake of my heart
through all the terrors of that piteous night.
Just as a swimmer, who with his last breath
flounders ashore from perilous seas, might turn
to memorize the wide water of his death—
so did I turn, my soul still fugitive
from death's surviving image, to stare down
that pass that none had ever left alive.
And there I lay to rest from my heart's race
till calm and breath returned to me. Then rose
and pushed up that dead slope at such a pace
each footfall rose above the last.[4] And lo!
almost at the beginning of the rise
I faced a spotted Leopard, all tremor and flow
and gaudy pelt. And it would not pass, but stood
so blocking my every turn that time and again
I was on the verge of turning back to the wood.
This fell at the first widening of the dawn
as the sun was climbing Aries with those stars
that rode with him to light the new creation.[5]

3. The sun. Ptolemaic astronomers considered it a planet. It is also symbolic of God as He who lights man's way. 4. The literal rendering would be: "So that the fixed foot was ever the lower." "Fixed" has often been translated "right" and an ingenious reasoning can support that reading, but a simpler explanation offers itself and seems more competent: Dante is saying that he climbed with such zeal and haste that every footfall carried him above the last despite the steepness of the climb. At a slow pace, on the other hand, the rear foot might be brought up only as far as the forward foot. 5. The medieval tradition had it that the sun was in Aries at the time of the Creation. The significance of the astronomical and religious conjunction is an important part of Dante's intended allegory. It is just before dawn of Good Friday A.D. 1300 when he awakens in the Dark Wood. Thus his new life begins under Aries, the sign of creation, at dawn (rebirth) and in the Easter season (resurrection). Moreover the moon is full and the sun is in the equinox, conditions that did not fall together on any Friday of 1300. Dante is obviously constructing poetically the perfect Easter as a symbol of his new awakening.

Thus the holy hour and the sweet season
  of commemoration did much to arm my fear
  of that bright murderous beast with their good omen.
Yet not so much but what I shook with dread
  at sight of a great Lion that broke upon me
  raging with hunger, its enormous head
held high as if to strike a mortal terror
  into the very air. And down his track,
  a She-Wolf drove upon me, a starved horror
ravening and wasted beyond all belief.[6]
  She seemed a rack for avarice, gaunt and craving.
  Oh many the souls she has brought to endless grief!
She brought such heaviness upon my spirit
  at sight of her savagery and desperation,
  I died from every hope of that high summit.
And like a miser—eager in acquisition
  but desperate in self-reproach when Fortune's wheel
  turns to the hour of his loss—all tears and attrition
I wavered back; and still the beast pursued,
  forcing herself against me bit by bit
  till I slid back into the sunless wood.
And as I fell to my soul's ruin, a presence
  gathered before me on the discolored air,
  the figure of one who seemed hoarse from long silence.
At sight of him in that friendless waste I cried:
  "Have pity on me, whatever thing you are,
  whether shade or living man." And it replied:
"Not man, though man I once was, and my blood
  was Lombard, both my parents Mantuan.
  I was born, though late, *sub Julio*,[7] and bred
in Rome under Augustus in the noon
  of the false and lying gods. I was a poet
  and sang of old Anchises' noble son[8]
who came to Rome after the burning of Troy.
  But you—why do *you* return to these distresses
  instead of climbing that shining Mount of Joy
which is the seat and first cause of man's bliss?"
  "And are you then that Virgil and that fountain
  of purest speech?" My voice grew tremulous:
"Glory and light of poets! now may that zeal

6. These three beasts undoubtedly are taken from *Jeremiah* v, 6. Many additional and incidental interpretations have been advanced for them, but the central interpretation must remain as noted. They foreshadow the three divisions of Hell (incontinence, violence, and fraud) which Virgil explains at length in Canto XI, 16–111. I am not at all sure but what the She-Wolf is better interpreted as Fraud and the Leopard as Incontinence. Good arguments can be offered either way. 7. *sub Julio:* In the reign of Julius Caesar. 8. Aeneas.

and love's apprenticeship that I poured out
on your heroic verses serve me well!
For you are my true master and first author,
the sole maker from whom I drew the breath
of that sweet style whose measures have brought me honor.
See there, immortal sage, the beast I flee.
For my soul's salvation, I beg you, guard me from her,
for she has struck a mortal tremor through me."
And he replied, seeing my soul in tears:
"He must go by another way who would escape
this wilderness, for that mad beast that fleers
before you there, suffers no man to pass.
She tracks down all, kills all, and knows no glut,
but, feeding, she grows hungrier than she was.
She mates with any beast, and will mate with more
before the Greyhound[9] comes to hunt her down.
He will not feed on lands nor loot, but honor
and love and wisdom will make straight his way.
He will rise between Feltro and Feltro, and in him
shall be the resurrection and new day
of that sad Italy for which Nisus died,
and Turnus, and Euryalus, and the maid Camilla.[1]
He shall hunt her through every nation of sick pride
till she is driven back forever to Hell
whence Envy first released her on the world.
Therefore, for your own good, I think it well
you follow me and I will be your guide
and lead you forth through an eternal place.
There you shall see the ancient spirits tried
in endless pain, and hear their lamentation
as each bemoans the second death[2] of souls.
Next you shall see upon a burning mountain
souls in fire and yet content in fire,
knowing that whensoever it may be
they yet will mount into the blessed choir.
To which, if it is still your wish to climb,
a worthier spirit shall be sent to guide you.
With her shall I leave you, for the King of Time,
who reigns on high, forbids me to come there

9. Almost certainly refers to Can Grande della Scala (1290–1329), great Italian leader born in Verona, which lies between the towns of Feltre and Montefeltro. 1. All were killed in the war between the Trojans and the Latians when, according to legend, Aeneas led the survivors of Troy into Italy. Nisus and Euryalus (*Aeneid* IX) were Trojan comrades-in-arms who died together. Camilla (*Aeneid* XI) was the daughter of the Latian king and one of the warrior women. She was killed in a horse charge against the Trojans after displaying great gallantry. Turnus (*Aeneid* XII) was killed by Aeneas in a duel. 2. Damnation. "This is the second death, even the lake of fire." (*Revelation* XX, 14)

since, living, I rebelled against his law.[3]
He rules the waters and the land and air
and there holds court, his city and his throne.
Oh blessed are they he chooses!" And I to him:
"Poet, by that God to you unknown,
lead me this way. Beyond this present ill
and worse to dread, lead me to Peter's gate[4]
and be my guide through the sad halls of Hell."
And he then: "Follow." And he moved ahead
in silence, and I followed where he led.

CANTO II

The Descent

It is evening of the first day (Friday). Dante is following Virgil and finds himself tired and despairing. How can he be worthy of such a vision as Virgil has described? He hesitates and seems about to abandon his first purpose.

To comfort him Virgil explains how Beatrice descended to him in Limbo and told him of her concern for Dante. It is she, the symbol of Divine Love, who sends Virgil to lead Dante from error. She has come into Hell itself on this errand, for Dante cannot come to Divine Love unaided; Reason must lead him. Moreover Beatrice has been sent with the prayers of the Virgin Mary (Compassion), and of Saint Lucia (Divine Light). Rachel (The Contemplative Life) also figures in the heavenly scene which Virgil recounts.

Virgil explains all this and reproaches Dante: how can he hesitate longer when such heavenly powers are concerned for him, and Virgil himself has promised to lead him safely?

Dante understands at once that such forces cannot fail him, and his spirits rise in joyous anticipation.

The light was departing. The brown air drew down
all the earth's creatures, calling them to rest
from their day-roving, as I, one man alone,
prepared myself to face the double war
of the journey and the pity, which memory
shall here set down, nor hesitate, nor err.
O Muses! O High Genius! Be my aid!

3. Salvation is only through Christ in Dante's theology. Virgil lived and died before the establishment of Christ's teachings in Rome, and cannot therefore enter Heaven. 4. The gate of Purgatory. (See *Purgatorio* IX, 76 ff.) The gate is guarded by an angel with a gleaming sword. The angel is Peter's vicar (Peter, the first Pope, symbolized all Popes; i.e., Christ's vicar on earth) and is entrusted with the two great keys. Some commentators argue that this is the gate of Paradise, but Dante mentions no gate beyond this one in his ascent to Heaven. It should be remembered, too, that those who pass the gate of Purgatory have effectively entered Heaven.

O Memory, recorder of the vision,
here shall your true nobility be displayed!
Thus I began: "Poet, you who must guide me,
before you trust me to that arduous passage,
look to me and look through me—can I be worthy?
You sang how the father of Sylvius,[5] while still
in corruptible flesh won to that other world,
crossing with mortal sense the immortal sill.
But if the Adversary of all Evil
weighing his consequence and who and what
should issue from him, treated him so well—
that cannot seem unfitting to thinking men,
since he was chosen father of Mother Rome
and of her Empire by God's will and token.
Both, to speak strictly, were founded and foreknown
as the established Seat of Holiness
for the successors of Great Peter's throne.
In that quest, which your verses celebrate,
he learned those mysteries from which arose
his victory and Rome's apostolate.
There later came the chosen vessel, Paul,
bearing the confirmation of that Faith
which is the one true door to life eternal.
But I—how should I dare? By whose permission?
I am not Aeneas. *I* am not Paul.
Who could believe me worthy of the vision?
How, then, may I presume to this high quest
and not fear my own brashness? You are wise
and will grasp what my poor words can but suggest."
As one who unwills what he wills, will stay
strong purposes with feeble second thoughts
until he spells all his first zeal away—
so I hung back and balked on that dim coast
till thinking had worn out my enterprise,
so stout at starting and so early lost.

5. Aeneas. Lines 13–30 are a fair example of the way in which Dante absorbed pagan themes into his Catholicism. According to Virgil, Aeneas is the son of mortal Anchises and of Venus. Venus, in her son's interest, secures a prophecy and a promise from Jove to the effect that Aeneas is to found a royal line that shall rule the world. After the burning of Troy, Aeneas is directed by various signs to sail for the Latian lands (Italy) where his destiny awaits him. After many misadventures, he is compelled (like Dante) to descend to the underworld of the dead. There he finds his father's shade, and there he is shown the shades of the great kings that are to stem from him (*Aeneid* VI, 921 ff.). Among them are Romulus, Julius Caesar, and Augustus Caesar. The full glory of the Roman Empire is also foreshadowed to him. Dante, however, continues the Virgilian theme and includes in the predestination not only the Roman Empire but the Holy Roman Empire and its Church. Thus what Virgil presented as an arrangement of Jove, a concession to the son of Venus, becomes part of the divine scheme of the Catholic God, and Aeneas is cast as a direct forerunner of Peter and Paul.

"I understand from your words and the look in your eyes,"
that shadow of magnificence answered me,
"your soul is sunken in that cowardice
that bears down many men, turning their course
and resolution by imagined perils,
as his own shadow turns the frightened horse.
To free you of this dread I will tell you all
of why I came to you and what I heard
when first I pitied you. I was a soul
among the souls of Limbo,[6] when a Lady
so blessed and so beautiful, I prayed her
to order and command my will, called to me.
Her eyes were kindled from the lamps of Heaven.
Her voice reached through me, tender, sweet, and low.
An angel's voice, a music of its own:
'O gracious Mantuan whose melodies
live in earth's memory and shall live on
till the last motion ceases in the skies,
my dearest friend, and fortune's foe, has strayed
onto a friendless shore and stands beset
by such distresses that he turns afraid
from the True Way, and news of him in Heaven
rumors my dread he is already lost.
I come, afraid that I am too-late risen.
Fly to him and with your high counsel, pity,
and with whatever need be for his good
and soul's salvation, help him, and solace me.
It is I, Beatrice, who send you to him.
I come from the blessed height for which I yearn.
Love called me here. When amid Seraphim
I stand again before my Lord, your praises
shall sound in Heaven.' She paused, and I began:
'O Lady of that only grace that raises
feeble mankind within its mortal cycle
above all other works God's will has placed
within the heaven of the smallest circle;[7]
so welcome is your command that to my sense,
were it already fulfilled, it would yet seem tardy.

6. See Canto IV, lines 31–45, where Virgil explains his state in Hell. 7. The moon. "Heaven" here is used in its astronomical sense. All within that circle is the earth. According to the Ptolemaic system the earth was the center of creation and was surrounded by nine heavenly spheres (nine heavens) concentrically placed around it. The moon was the first of these, and therefore the smallest. A cross section of this universe could be represented by drawing nine concentric circles (at varying distances about the earth as a center). Going outward from the center these circles would indicate, in order, the spheres of: The Moon, Mercury, Venus, The Sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, The Fixed Stars, and The Primum Mobile. Beyond the Primum Mobile lies the Empyrean.

I understand, and am all obedience.
But tell me how you dare to venture thus
so far from the wide heaven of your joy
to which your thoughts yearn back from this abyss.'
'Since what you ask,' she answered me, 'probes near
the root of all, I will say briefly only
how I have come through Hell's pit without fear.
Know then, O waiting and compassionate soul,
that is to fear which has the power to harm,
and nothing else is fearful even in Hell.
I am so made by God's all-seeing mercy
your anguish does not touch me, and the flame
of this great burning has no power upon me.
There is a Lady in Heaven so concerned
for him I send you to, that for her sake
the strict decree is broken. She has turned
and called Lucia[8] to her wish and mercy
saying: 'Thy faithful one is sorely pressed;
in his distresses I commend him to thee.'
Lucia, that soul of light and foe of all
cruelty, rose and came to me at once
where I was sitting with the ancient Rachel,[9]
saying to me: 'Beatrice, true praise of God,
why dost thou not help him who loved thee so
that for thy sake he left the vulgar crowd?
Dost thou not hear his cries? Canst thou not see
the death he wrestles with beside that river
no ocean can surpass for rage and fury?'
No soul of earth was ever as rapt to seek
its good or flee its injury as I was—
when I had heard my sweet Lucia speak—
to descend from Heaven and my blessed seat
to you, laying my trust in that high speech
that honors you and all who honor it.'
She spoke and turned away to hide a tear
that, shining, urged me faster. So I came
and freed you from the beast that drove you there,
blocking the near way to the Heavenly Height.
And now what ails you? Why do you lag? Why
this heartsick hesitation and pale fright
when three such blessed Ladies lean from Heaven
in their concern for you and my own pledge
of the great good that waits you has been given?"

8. Allegorically she represents Divine Light. Her name in Italian inevitably suggests "luce" (light), and she is the patron saint of eyesight. 9. Represents the Contemplative Life.

As flowerlets drooped and puckered in the night
  turn up to the returning sun and spread
  their petals wide on his new warmth and light—
just so my wilted spirits rose again
  and such a heat of zeal surged through my veins
  that I was born anew. Thus I began:
"Blesséd be that Lady of infinite pity,
  and blesséd be thy taxed and courteous spirit
  that came so promptly on the word she gave thee.
Thy words have moved my heart to its first purpose.
  My Guide! My Lord! My Master! Now lead on:
  one will shall serve the two of us in this."
He turned when I had spoken, and at his back
I entered on that hard and perilous track.

CANTO III

The Vestibule of Hell The Opportunists

The Poets pass the Gate of Hell and are immediately assailed by cries of anguish. Dante sees the first of the souls in torment. They are The Opportunists, those souls who in life were neither for good nor evil but only for themselves. Mixed with them are those outcasts who took no sides in the Rebellion of the Angels. They are neither in Hell nor out of it. Eternally unclassified, they race round and round pursuing a wavering banner that runs forever before them through the dirty air; and as they run they are pursued by swarms of wasps and hornets, who sting them and produce a constant flow of blood and putrid matter which trickles down the bodies of the sinners and is feasted upon by loathsome worms and maggots who coat the ground.

The law of Dante's Hell is the law of symbolic retribution. As they sinned so are they punished. They took no sides, therefore they are given no place. As they pursued the ever-shifting illusion of their own advantage, changing their courses with every changing wind, so they pursue eternally an elusive, ever-shifting banner. As their sin was a darkness, so they move in darkness. As their own guilty conscience pursued them, so they are pursued by swarms of wasps and hornets. And as their actions were a moral filth, so they run eternally through the filth of worms and maggots which they themselves feed.

Dante recognizes several, among them Pope Celestine V, but without delaying to speak to any of these souls, the Poets move on to Acheron, the first of the rivers of Hell. Here the newly-arrived souls of the damned gather and wait for monstrous Charon to ferry them over to punishment. Charon recognizes Dante as a living man and angrily refuses him passage. Virgil forces Charon to serve them, but

Dante swoons with terror, and does not reawaken until he is on the other side.

I AM THE WAY INTO THE CITY OF WOE.
I AM THE WAY TO A FORSAKEN PEOPLE.
I AM THE WAY INTO ETERNAL SORROW.
SACRED JUSTICE MOVED MY ARCHITECT.
I WAS RAISED HERE BY DIVINE OMNIPOTENCE,
PRIMORDIAL LOVE AND ULTIMATE INTELLECT.
ONLY THOSE ELEMENTS TIME CANNOT WEAR[1]
WERE MADE BEFORE ME, AND BEYOND TIME I STAND.[2]
ABANDON ALL HOPE YE WHO ENTER HERE.[3]
These mysteries I read cut into stone
above a gate. And turning I said: "Master,
what is the meaning of this harsh inscription?"
And he then as initiate to novice:
"Here must you put by all division of spirit
and gather your soul against all cowardice.
This is the place I told you to expect.
Here you shall pass among the fallen people,
souls who have lost the good of intellect."
So saying, he put forth his hand to me,
and with a gentle and encouraging smile
he led me through the gate of mystery.
Here sighs and cries and wails coiled and recoiled
on the starless air, spilling my soul to tears.
A confusion of tongues and monstrous accents toiled
in pain and anger. Voices hoarse and shrill
and sounds of blows, all intermingled, raised
tumult and pandemonium that still
whirls on the air forever dirty with it
as if a whirlwind sucked at sand. And I,
holding my head in horror, cried: "Sweet Spirit,
what souls are these who run through this black haze?"
And he to me: "These are the nearly soulless
whose lives concluded neither blame nor praise.
They are mixed here with that despicable corps
of angels who were neither for God nor Satan,
but only for themselves. The High Creator
scourged them from Heaven for its perfect beauty,
and Hell will not receive them since the wicked

1. The Angels, the Empyrean, and the First Matter are the elements time cannot wear, for they will last to all time. Man, however, in his mortal state, is not eternal. The Gate of Hell, therefore, was created before man. 2. So odious is sin to God that there can be no end to its just punishment. 3. The admonition, of course, is to the damned and not to those who come on Heaven-sent errands.

might feel some glory over them." And I:
"Master, what gnaws at them so hideously
their lamentation stuns the very air?"
"They have no hope of death," he answered me,
"and in their blind and unattaining state
their miserable lives have sunk so low
that they must envy every other fate.
No word of them survives their living season.
Mercy and Justice deny them even a name.
Let us not speak of them: look, and pass on."
I saw a banner there upon the mist.
Circling and circling, it seemed to scorn all pause.
So it ran on, and still behind it pressed
a never-ending rout of souls in pain.
I had not thought death had undone so many
as passed before me in that mournful train.
And some I knew among them; last of all
I recognized the shadow of that soul
who, in his cowardice, made the Great Denial.[4]
At once I understood for certain: these
were of that retrograde and faithless crew
hateful to God and to His enemies.
These wretches never born and never dead
ran naked in a swarm of wasps and hornets
that goaded them the more the more they fled,
and made their faces stream with bloody gouts
of pus and tears that dribbled to their feet
to be swallowed there by loathsome worms and maggots.
Then looking onward I made out a throng
assembled on the beach of a wide river,
whereupon I turned to him: "Master, I long
to know what souls these are, and what strange usage
makes them as eager to cross as they seem to be
in this infected light." At which the Sage:
"All this shall be made known to you when we stand
on the joyless beach of Acheron." And I
cast down my eyes, sensing a reprimand

4. This is almost certainly intended to be Celestine V, who became Pope in 1294. He was a man of saintly life, but allowed himself to be convinced by a priest named Benedetto that his soul was in danger since no man could live in the world without being damned. In fear for his soul he withdrew from all worldly affairs and renounced the papacy. Benedetto promptly assumed the mantle himself and became Boniface VIII, a Pope who became for Dante a symbol of all the worst corruptions of the church. Dante also blamed Boniface and his intrigues for many of the evils that befell Florence. We shall learn in Canto XIX that the fires of Hell are waiting for Boniface in the pit of the Simoniacs, and we shall be given further evidence of his corruption in Canto XXVII. Celestine's great guilt is that his cowardice (in selfish terror for his own welfare) served as the door through which so much evil entered the church.

in what he said, and so walked at his side
in silence and ashamed until we came
through the dead cavern to that sunless tide.
There, steering toward us in an ancient ferry
came an old man[5] with a white bush of hair,
bellowing: "Woe to you depraved souls! Bury
here and forever all hope of Paradise:
I come to lead you to the other shore,
into eternal dark, into fire and ice.
And you who are living yet, I say begone
from these who are dead." But when he saw me stand
against his violence he began again:
"By other windings and by other steerage
shall you cross to that other shore. Not here! Not here!
A lighter craft than mine must give you passage."[6]
And my Guide to him: "Charon, bite back your spleen:
this has been willed where what is willed must be,
and is not yours to ask what it may mean."
The steersman of that marsh of ruined souls,
who wore a wheel of flame around each eye,
stifled the rage that shook his woolly jowls.
But those unmanned and naked spirits there
turned pale with fear and their teeth began to chatter
at sound of his crude bellow. In despair
they blasphemed God,[7] their parents, their time on earth,
the race of Adam, and the day and the hour
and the place and the seed and the womb that gave them birth.
But all together they drew to that grim shore
where all must come who lose the fear of God.
Weeping and cursing they come for evermore,
and demon Charon with eyes like burning coals
herds them in, and with a whistling oar
flails on the stragglers to his wake of souls.
As leaves in autumn loosen and stream down
until the branch stands bare above its tatters
spread on the rustling ground, so one by one
the evil seed of Adam in its Fall
cast themselves, at his signal, from the shore
and streamed away like birds who hear their call.
So they are gone over that shadowy water,

5. Charon. He is the ferryman of dead souls across the Acheron in all classical mythology. 6. Charon recognizes Dante not only as a living man but as a soul in grace, and knows, therefore, that the Infernal Ferry was not intended for him. He is probably referring to the fact that souls destined for Purgatory and Heaven assemble not at his ferry point, but on the banks of the Tiber, from which they are transported by an Angel. 7. The souls of the damned are not permitted to repent, for repentance is a divine grace.

and always before they reach the other shore
a new noise stirs on this, and new throngs gather.
"My son," the courteous Master said to me,
"all who die in the shadow of God's wrath
converge to this from every clime and country.
And all pass over eagerly, for here
Divine Justice transforms and spurs them so
their dread turns wish: they yearn for what they fear.[8]
No soul in Grace comes ever to this crossing;
therefore if Charon rages at your presence
you will understand the reason for his cursing."
When he had spoken, all the twilight country
shook so violently, the terror of it
bathes me with sweat even in memory:
the tear-soaked ground gave out a sigh of wind
that spewed itself in flame on a red sky,
and all my shuttered senses left me. Blind,
like one whom sleep comes over in a swoon,
I stumbled into darkness and went down.[9]

CANTO IV

Circle One: Limbo The Virtuous Pagans

Dante wakes to find himself across Acheron. The Poets are now on the brink of Hell itself, which Dante conceives as a great funnel-shaped cave lying below the northern hemisphere with its bottom point at the earth's center. Around this great circular depression runs a series of ledges, each of which Dante calls a Circle. Each circle is assigned to the punishment of one category of sin.

As soon as Dante's strength returns, the Poets begin to cross the First Circle. Here they find the Virtuous Pagans. They were born without the light of Christ's revelation, and, therefore, they cannot come into the light of God, but they are not tormented. Their only pain is that they have no hope.

Ahead of them Dante sights a great dome of light, and a voice trumpets through the darkness welcoming Virgil back, for this is his eternal place in Hell. Immediately the great Poets of all time appear—

8. Hell (allegorically Sin) is what the souls of the damned really wish for. Hell is their actual and deliberate choice, for divine grace is denied to none who wish for it in their hearts. The damned must, in fact, deliberately harden their hearts to God in order to become damned. Christ's grace is sufficient to save all who wish for it. 9. This device (repeated at the end of Canto V) serves a double purpose. The first is technical: Dante uses it to cover a transition. We are never told how he crossed Acheron, for that would involve certain narrative matters he can better deal with when he crosses Styx in Canto VII. The second is to provide a point of departure for a theme that is carried through the entire descent: the theme of Dante's emotional reaction to Hell. These two swoons early in the descent show him most susceptible to the grief about him. As he descends, pity leaves him, and he even goes so far as to add to the torments of one sinner. The allegory is clear: we must harden ourselves against every sympathy for sin.

Homer, Horace, Ovid, and Lucan. They greet Virgil, and they make Dante a sixth in their company.

With them Dante enters the Citadel of Human Reason and sees before his eyes the Master Souls of Pagan Antiquity gathered on a green, and illuminated by the radiance of Human Reason. This is the highest state man can achieve without God, and the glory of it dazzles Dante, but he knows also that it is nothing compared to the glory of God.

A monstrous clap of thunder broke apart
the swoon that stuffed my head; like one awakened
by violent hands, I leaped up with a start.
And having risen; rested and renewed,
I studied out the landmarks of the gloom
to find my bearings there as best I could.
And I found I stood on the very brink of the valley
called the Dolorous Abyss, the desolate chasm
where rolls the thunder of Hell's eternal cry,
so depthless-deep and nebulous and dim
that stare as I might into its frightful pit
it gave me back no feature and no bottom.
Death-pale,[1] the Poet spoke: "Now let us go
into the blind world waiting here below us.
I will lead the way and you shall follow."
And I, sick with alarm at his new pallor,
cried out, "How can I go this way when you
who are my strength in doubt turn pale with terror?"
And he: "The pain of these below us here,
drains the color from my face for pity,
and leaves this pallor you mistake for fear.
Now let us go, for a long road awaits us."
So he entered and so he led me in
to the first circle and ledge of the abyss.
No tortured wailing rose to greet us here
but sounds of sighing rose from every side,
sending a tremor through the timeless air,
a grief breathed out of untormented sadness,
the passive state of those who dwelled apart,
men, women, children—a dim and endless congress.
And the Master said to me: "You do not question
what souls these are that suffer here before you?
I wish you to know before you travel on

1. Virgil is most likely affected here by the return to his own place in Hell. "The pain of these below" then (line 19) would be the pain of his own group in Limbo (the Virtuous Pagans) rather than the total of Hell's suffering.

that these were sinless. And still their merits fail,
for they lacked Baptism's grace, which is the door
of the true faith *you* were born to. Their birth fell
before the age of the Christian mysteries,
and so they did not worship God's Trinity
in fullest duty. I am one of these.
For such defects are we lost, though spared the fire
and suffering Hell in one affliction only:
that without hope we live on in desire."
I thought how many worthy souls there were
suspended in that Limbo, and a weight
closed on my heart for what the noblest suffer.
"Instruct me, Master and most noble Sir,"
I prayed him then, "better to understand
the perfect creed that conquers every error:
has any, by his own or another's merit,
gone ever from this place to blessedness?"
He sensed my inner question and answered it:
"I was still new to this estate of tears
when a Mighty One[2] descended here among us,
crowned with the sign of His victorious years.
He took from us the shade of our first parent,
of Abel, his pure son, of ancient Noah,
of Moses, the bringer of law, the obedient.
Father Abraham, David the King,
Israel with his father and his children,
Rachel, the holy vessel of His blessing,
and many more He chose for elevation
among the elect. And before these, you must know,
no human soul had ever won salvation."
We had not paused as he spoke, but held our road
and passed meanwhile beyond a press of souls
crowded about like trees in a thick wood.
And we had not traveled far from where I woke
when I made out a radiance before us
that struck away a hemisphere of dark.
We were still some distance back in the long night,
yet near enough that I half-saw, half-sensed,
what quality of souls lived in that light.
"O ornament of wisdom and of art,
what souls are these whose merit lights their way

2. Christ. His name is never directly uttered in Hell. *Descended here*: The legend of the Harrowing of Hell is Apocryphal. It is based on I *Peter* iii, 19: "He went and preached unto the spirits in prison." The legend is that Christ in the glory of His resurrection descended into Limbo and took with Him to Heaven the first human souls to be saved. The event would, accordingly, have occurred in A.D. 33 or 34. Virgil died in 19 B.C.

even in Hell. What joy sets them apart?"
And he to me: "The signature of honor
they left on earth is recognized in Heaven
and wins them ease in Hell out of God's favor."
And as he spoke a voice rang on the air:
"Honor the Prince of Poets; the soul and glory
that went from us returns. He is here! He is here!"
The cry ceased and the echo passed from hearing;
I saw four mighty presences come toward us
with neither joy nor sorrow in their bearing.
"Note well," my Master said as they came on,
"that soul that leads the rest with sword in hand
as if he were their captain and champion.
It is Homer, singing master of the earth.
Next after him is Horace, the satirist,
Ovid is third, and Lucan is the fourth.
Since all of these have part in the high name
the voice proclaimed, calling me Prince of Poets,
the honor that they do me honors them."
So I saw gathered at the edge of light
the masters of that highest school whose song
outsoars all others like an eagle's flight.
And after they had talked together a while,
they turned and welcomed me most graciously,
at which I saw my approving Master smile.
And they honored me far beyond courtesy,
for they included me in their own number,
making me sixth in that high company.
So we moved toward the light, and as we passed
we spoke of things as well omitted here
as it was sweet to touch on there. At last
we reached the base of a great Citadel
circled by seven towering battlements
and by a sweet brook flowing round them all.[3]
This we passed over as if it were firm ground.[4]

3. The most likely allegory is that the Citadel represents philosophy (that is, human reason without the light of God) surrounded by seven walls which represent the seven liberal arts, or the seven sciences, or the seven virtues. Note that Human Reason makes a light of its own, but that it is a light in darkness and forever separated from the glory of God's light. The *sweet brook flowing* round them all has been interpreted in many ways. Clearly fundamental, however, is the fact that it divides those in the Citadel (those who wish to know) from those in the outer darkness.
4. Since Dante still has his body, and since all others in Hell are incorporeal shades, there is a recurring narrative problem in the *Inferno* (and through the rest of the *Commedia*): how does flesh act in contact with spirit? In the *Purgatorio* Dante attempts to embrace the spirit of Casella and his arms pass through him as if he were empty air. In the Third Circle, below (Canto VI, 34–36), Dante steps on some of the spirits lying in the slush and his foot passes right through them. (The original lines offer several possible readings of which I have preferred this one.) And at other times Virgil, also a spirit, picks Dante up and carries him bodily. It is clear, too, that Dante means the spirits of Hell to be weightless. When Virgil steps into Phlegyas' bark (Canto VIII) it does not settle

Through seven gates I entered with those sages
and came to a green meadow blooming round.
There with a solemn and majestic poise
stood many people gathered in the light,
speaking infrequently and with muted voice.
Past that enameled green we six withdrew
into a luminous and open height
from which each soul among them stood in view.
And there directly before me on the green
the master souls of time were shown to me.
I glory in the glory I have seen![5]
Electra stood in a great company
among whom I saw Hector and Aeneas
and Caesar in armor with his falcon's eye.
I saw Camilla, and the Queen Amazon
across the field. I saw the Latian King
seated there with his daughter by his throne.
And the good Brutus who overthrew the Tarquin:
Lucrezia, Julia, Marcia, and Cornelia;
and, by himself apart, the Saladin.
And raising my eyes a little I saw on high
Aristotle, the master of those who know,
ringed by the great souls of philosophy.
All wait upon him for their honor and his.
I saw Socrates and Plato at his side
before all others there. Democritus
who ascribes the world to chance, Diogenes,
and with him there Thales, Anaxagoras,
Zeno, Heraclitus, Empedocles.

into the water, but it does when Dante's living body steps aboard. There is no narrative reason why Dante should not sink into the waters of this stream and Dante follows no fixed rule in dealing with such phenomena, often suiting the physical action to the allegorical need. Here, the moat probably symbolizes some requirement (The Will to Know) which he and the other poets meet without difficulty. 5. The inhabitants of the citadel fall into three main groups: 1. *The heroes and heroines*: All of these it must be noted were associated with the Trojans and their Roman descendants. The Electra Dante mentions here is not the sister of Orestes (see Euripides' *Electra*) but the daughter of Atlas and the mother of Dardanus, the founder of Troy. 2. *The philosophers*: Most of this group is made up of philosophers whose teachings were, at least in part, acceptable to church scholarship. Democritus, however, "who ascribed the world to chance," would clearly be an exception. The group is best interpreted, therefore, as representing the highest achievements of Human Reason unaided by Divine Love. *Plato and Aristotle*: Through a considerable part of the Middle Ages Plato was held to be the fountainhead of all scholarship, but in Dante's time practically all learning was based on Aristotelian theory as interpreted through the many commentaries. *Linus*: the Italian is "Lino" and for it some commentators read "Livio" (Livy). 3. *The naturalists*: They are less well known today. In Dante's time their place in scholarship more or less corresponded to the role of the theoretician and historian of science in our universities. *Avicenna* (his major work was in the eleventh century) and *Averrhoës* (twelfth century) were Arabian philosophers and physicians especially famous in Dante's time for their commentaries on Aristotle. *Great Commentary*: has the force of a title, i.e., The Great Commentary as distinguished from many lesser commentaries. *The Saladin*: This is the famous Saladin who was defeated by Richard the Lion-Heart, and whose great qualities as a ruler became a legend in medieval Europe.

And I saw the wise collector and analyst—
Dioscorides I mean. I saw Orpheus there,
Tully, Linus, Seneca the moralist,
Euclid the geometer, and Ptolemy,
Hippocrates, Galen, Avicenna,
and Averrhoës of the Great Commentary.
I cannot count so much nobility;
my longer theme pursues me so that often
the word falls short of the reality.
The company of six is reduced by four.
My Master leads me by another road
out of that serenity to the roar
and trembling air of Hell. I pass from light
into the kingdom of eternal night.

CANTO V

Circle Two The Carnal

The Poets leave Limbo and enter the Second Circle. Here begin the torments of Hell proper, and here, blocking the way, sits Minos, the dread and semi-bestial judge of the damned who assigns to each soul its eternal torment. He orders the Poets back; but Virgil silences him as he earlier silenced Charon, and the Poets move on.

They find themselves on a dark ledge swept by a great whirlwind, which spins within it the souls of the Carnal, those who betrayed reason to their appetites. Their sin was to abandon themselves to the tempest of their passions: so they are swept forever in the tempest of Hell, forever denied the light of reason and of God. Virgil identifies many among them. Semiramis is there, and Dido, Cleopatra, Helen, Achilles, Paris, and Tristan. Dante sees Paolo and Francesca swept together, and in the name of love he calls to them to tell their sad story. They pause from their eternal flight to come to him, and Francesca tells their history while Paolo weeps at her side. Dante is so stricken by compassion at their tragic tale that he swoons once again.

So we went down to the second ledge alone;
a smaller circle[6] of so much greater pain
the voice of the damned rose in a bestial moan.
There Minos[7] sits, grinning, grotesque, and hale.

6. The pit of Hell tapers like a funnel. The circles of ledges accordingly grow smaller as they descend. 7. The son of Europa and of Zeus who descended to her in the form of a bull. Minos became a mythological king of Crete, so famous for his wisdom and justice that after death his soul was made judge of the dead. Virgil presents him fulfilling the same office at Aeneas' descent to the underworld. Dante, however, transforms him into an irate and hideous monster with a tail. The transformation may have been suggested by the form Zeus assumed for the rape of Europa—the monster is certainly bullish enough here—but the obvious purpose of the brutalization is to present a figure symbolic of the guilty conscience of the wretches who come before it to make their confessions.

He examines each lost soul as it arrives
and delivers his verdict with his coiling tail.
That is to say, when the ill-fated soul
appears before him it confesses all,
and that grim sorter of the dark and foul
decides which place in Hell shall be its end,
then wraps his twitching tail about himself
one coil for each degree it must descend.
The soul descends and others take its place:
each crowds in its turn to judgment, each confesses,
each hears its doom and falls away through space.
"O you who come into this camp of woe,"
cried Minos when he saw me turn away
without awaiting his judgment, "watch where you go
once you have entered here, and to whom you turn!
Do not be misled by that wide and easy passage!"
And my Guide to him: "That is not your concern;
it is his fate to enter every door.
This has been willed where what is willed must be,
and is not yours to question. Say no more."
Now the choir of anguish, like a wound,
strikes through the tortured air. Now I have come
to Hell's full lamentation, sound beyond sound.
I came to a place stripped bare of every light
and roaring on the naked dark like seas
wracked by a war of winds. Their hellish flight
of storm and counterstorm through time foregone,
sweeps the souls of the damned before its charge.
Whirling and battering it drives them on,
and when they pass the ruined gap of Hell[8]
through which we had come, their shrieks begin anew.
There they blaspheme the power of God eternal.
And this, I learned, was the never ending flight
of those who sinned in the flesh, the carnal and lusty
who betrayed reason to their appetite.
As the wings of wintering starlings bear them on
in their great wheeling flights, just so the blast
wherries these evil souls through time foregone.
Here, there, up, down, they whirl and, whirling, strain
with never a hope of hope to comfort them,
not of release, but even of less pain.

8. See note to Canto IV, 53. At the time of the Harrowing of Hell a great earthquake shook the underworld shattering rocks and cliffs. Ruins resulting from the same shock are noted in Canto XII, 34, and Canto XXI, 112 ff. At the beginning of Canto XXIV, the Poets leave the *bolgia* of the Hypocrites by climbing the ruined slabs of a bridge that was shattered by this earthquake.

As cranes go over sounding their harsh cry,
leaving the long streak of their flight in air,
so come these spirits, wailing as they fly.
And watching their shadows lashed by wind, I cried:
"Master, what souls are these the very air
lashes with its black whips from side to side?"
"The first of these whose history you would know,"
he answered me, "was Empress of many tongues.[9]
Mad sensuality corrupted her so
that to hide the guilt of her debauchery
she licensed all depravity alike,
and lust and law were one in her decree.
She is Semiramis of whom the tale is told
how she married Ninus and succeeded him
to the throne of that wide land the Sultans hold.
The other is Dido;[1] faithless to the ashes
of Sichaeus, she killed herself for love.
The next whom the eternal tempest lashes
is sense-drugged Cleopatra. See Helen there,
from whom such ill arose. And great Achilles,[2]
who fought at last with love in the house of prayer.
And Paris. And Tristan." As they whirled above
he pointed out more than a thousand shades
of those torn from the mortal life by love.
I stood there while my Teacher one by one
named the great knights and ladies of dim time;
and I was swept by pity and confusion.
At last I spoke: "Poet, I should be glad
to speak a word with those two swept together
so lightly on the wind and still so sad."[3]
And he to me: "Watch them. When next they pass,

9. Semiramis, a legendary queen of Assyria who assumed full power at the death of her husband, Ninus. 1. Queen and founder of Carthage. She had vowed to remain faithful to her husband, Sichaeus, but she fell in love with Aeneas. When Aeneas abandoned her she stabbed herself on a funeral pyre she had had prepared. According to Dante's own system of punishments, she should be in the Seventh Circle (Canto XIII) with the suicides. The only clue Dante gives to the tempering of her punishment is his statement that "she killed herself for love." Dante always seems readiest to forgive in that name. 2. He is placed among this company because of his passion for Polyxena, the daughter of Priam. For love of her, he agreed to desert the Greeks and to join the Trojans, but when he went to the temple for the wedding (according to the legend Dante has followed) he was killed by Paris. 3. Paolo and Francesca. In 1275 Giovanni Malatesta of Rimini, called Giovanni the Lame, a somewhat deformed but brave and powerful warrior, made a political marriage with Francesca, daughter of Guido da Polenta of Ravenna. Francesca came to Rimini and there an amour grew between her and Giovanni's younger brother Paolo. Despite the fact that Paolo had married in 1269 and had become the father of two daughters by 1275, his affair with Francesca continued for many years. It was sometime between 1283 and 1286 that Giovanni surprised them in Francesca's bedroom and killed both of them. Around these facts the legend has grown that Paolo was sent by Giovanni as his proxy to the marriage, that Francesca thought he was her real bridegroom and accordingly gave him her heart irrevocably at first sight. The legend obviously increases the pathos, but nothing in Dante gives it support.

call to them in the name of love that drives
and damns them here. In that name they will pause."
Thus, as soon as the wind in its wild course
brought them around, I called: "O wearied souls!
if none forbid it, pause and speak to us."
As mating doves that love calls to their nest
glide through the air with motionless raised wings,
borne by the sweet desire that fills each breast—
Just so those spirits turned on the torn sky
from the band where Dido whirls across the air;
such was the power of pity in my cry.
"O living creature, gracious, kind, and good,
going this pilgrimage through the sick night,
visiting us who stained the earth with blood,
were the King of Time our friend, we would pray His peace
on you who have pitied us. As long as the wind
will let us pause, ask of us what you please.
The town where I was born lies by the shore
where the Po descends into its ocean rest
with its attendant streams in one long murmur.
Love, which in gentlest hearts will soonest bloom
seized my lover with passion for that sweet body
from which I was torn unshriven to my doom.
Love, which permits no loved one not to love,
took me so strongly with delight in him
that we are one in Hell, as we were above.[4]
Love led us to one death. In the depths of Hell
Caïna waits for him[5] who took our lives."
This was the piteous tale they stopped to tell.
And when I had heard those world-offended lovers
I bowed my head. At last the Poet spoke:
"What painful thoughts are these your lowered brow covers?"
When at length I answered, I began: "Alas!
What sweetest thoughts, what green and young desire
led these two lovers to this sorry pass."
Then turning to those spirits once again,
I said: "Francesca, what you suffer here

4. At many points of *The Inferno* Dante makes clear the principle that the souls of the damned are locked so blindly into their own guilt that none can feel sympathy for another, or find any pleasure in the presence of another. The temptation of many readers is to interpret this line romantically: i.e., that the love of Paolo and Francesca survives Hell itself. The more Dantean interpretation, however, is that they add to one another's anguish (a) as mutual reminders of their sin, and (b) as insubstantial shades of the bodies for which they once felt such great passion.
5. Giovanni Malatesta was still alive at the writing. His fate is already decided, however, and upon his death, his soul will fall to Caïna, the first ring of the last circle (Canto XXXII), where lie those who performed arts of treachery against their kin.

melts me to tears of pity and of pain.
But tell me: in the time of your sweet sighs
by what appearances found love the way
to lure you to his perilous paradise?"
And she: "The double grief of a lost bliss
is to recall its happy hour in pain.
Your Guide and Teacher knows the truth of this.
But if there is indeed a soul in Hell
to ask of the beginning of our love
out of his pity, I will weep and tell:
On a day for dalliance we read the rhyme
of Lancelot,[6] how love had mastered him.
We were alone with innocence and dim time.[7]
Pause after pause that high old story drew
our eyes together while we blushed and paled;
but it was one soft passage overthrew
our caution and our hearts. For when we read
how her fond smile was kissed by such a lover,
he who is one with me alive and dead
breathed on my lips the tremor of his kiss.
That book, and he who wrote it, was a pander.[8]
That day we read no further." As she said this,
the other spirit, who stood by her, wept
so piteously, I felt my senses reel
and faint away with anguish. I was swept
by such a swoon as death is, and I fell,
as a corpse might fall, to the dead floor of Hell.

CANTO VI

Circle Three The Gluttons

Dante recovers from his swoon and finds himself in the Third Circle. A great storm of putrefaction falls incessantly, a mixture of stinking snow and freezing rain, which forms into a vile slush underfoot. Everything about this Circle suggests a gigantic garbage dump. The souls of the damned lie in the icy paste, swollen and obscene, and Cerberus, the ravenous three-headed dog of Hell, stands guard over them, ripping and tearing them with his claws and teeth.

These are the Gluttons. In life they made no higher use of the

6. The story exists in many forms. The details Dante makes use of are from an Old French version. 7. The original simply reads "We were alone, suspecting nothing." "Dim time" is rhyme-forced, but not wholly outside the legitimate implications of the original, I hope. The old courtly romance may well be thought of as happening in the dim ancient days. The apology, of course, comes after the fact: one does the possible, then argues for justification, and there probably is none. 8. "Galeotto," the Italian word for "pander," is also the Italian rendering of the name of Gallehault, who in the French Romance Dante refers to here, urged Lancelot and Guinevere on to love.

gifts of God than to wallow in food and drink, producers of nothing but garbage and offal. Here they lie through all eternity, themselves like garbage, half-buried in fetid slush, while Cerberus slavers over them as they in life slavered over their food.

As the Poets pass, one of the speakers sits up and addresses Dante. He is Ciacco, The Hog, a citizen of Dante's own Florence. He recognizes Dante and asks eagerly for news of what is happening there. With the foreknowledge of the damned, Ciacco then utters the first of the political prophecies that are to become a recurring theme of the Inferno. The poets then move on toward the next Circle, at the edge of which they encounter the monster Plutus.

My senses had reeled from me out of pity
for the sorrow of those kinsmen and lost lovers.
Now they return, and waking gradually,
I see new torments and new souls in pain
about me everywhere. Wherever I turn
away from grief I turn to grief again.
I am in the Third Circle of the torments.
Here to all time with neither pause nor change
the frozen rain of Hell descends in torrents.
Huge hailstones, dirty water, and black snow
pour from the dismal air to putrefy
the putrid slush that waits for them below.
Here monstrous Cerberus,[9] the ravening beast,
howls through his triple throats like a mad dog
over the spirits sunk in that foul paste.
His eyes are red, his beard is greased with phlegm,
his belly is swollen, and his hands are claws
to rip the wretches and flay and mangle them.
And they, too, howl like dogs in the freezing storm,
turning and turning from it as if they thought
one naked side could keep the other warm.
When Cerberus discovered us in that swill
his dragon-jaws yawed wide, his lips drew back
in a grin of fangs. No limb of him was still.
My Guide bent down and seized in either fist
a clod of the stinking dirt that festered there
and flung them down the gullet of the beast.
As a hungry cur will set the echoes raving

9. In classical mythology Cerberus appears as a three-headed dog. His master was Pluto, king of the Underworld. Cerberus was placed at the Gate of the Underworld to allow all to enter, but none to escape. His three heads and his ravenous disposition make him an apt symbol of gluttony. *Like a mad dog:* Dante seems clearly to have visualized him as a half-human monster. The beard (line 16) suggests that at least one of his three heads is human, and many illuminated manuscripts so represent him.

and then fall still when he is thrown a bone,
all of his clamor being in his craving,
so the three ugly heads of Cerberus,
whose yowling at those wretches deafened them,
choked on their putrid sops and stopped their fuss.
We made our way across the sodden mess
of souls the rain beat down, and when our steps
fell on a body, they sank through emptiness.
All those illusions of being seemed to lie
drowned in the slush; until one wraith among them
sat up abruptly and called as I passed by:
"O you who are led this journey through the shade
of Hell's abyss, do you recall this face?
You had been made before I was unmade."[1]
And I: "Perhaps the pain you suffer here
distorts your image from my recollection.
I do not know you as you now appear."
And he to me: "Your own city, so rife
with hatred that the bitter cup flows over
was mine too in that other, clearer life.
Your citizens nicknamed me Ciacco, The Hog:
gluttony was my offense, and for it
I lie here rotting like a swollen log.
Nor am I lost in this alone; all these
you see about you in this painful death
have wallowed in the same indecencies."
I answered him: "Ciacco, your agony
weighs on my heart and calls my soul to tears;
But tell me, if you can, what is to be
for the citizens of that divided state,
and whether there are honest men among them,
and for what reasons we are torn by hate."
And he then: "After many words given and taken
it shall come to blood; White shall rise over Black
and rout the dark lord's force, battered and shaken.
Then it shall come to pass within three suns
that the fallen shall arise, and by the power
of one now gripped by many hesitations
Black shall ride on White for many years,
loading it down with burdens and oppressions
and humbling of proud names and helpless tears.
Two are honest, but none will heed them. There,

1. That is, "you were born before I died." The further implication is that they must have seen one another in Florence, a city one can still walk across in twenty minutes, and around in a very few hours. Dante certainly would have known everyone in Florence.

pride, avarice, and envy are the tongues
men know and heed, a Babel of despair."[2]
Here he broke off his mournful prophecy.
And I to him: "Still let me urge you on
to speak a little further and instruct me:
Farinata and Tegghiaio, men of good blood,
Jacopo Rusticucci, Arrigo, Mosca,[3]
and the others who set their hearts on doing good—
where are they now whose high deeds might be-gem
the crown of kings? I long to know their fate.
Does Heaven soothe or Hell envenom them?"
And he: "They lie below in a blacker lair.
A heavier guilt draws them to greater pain.
If you descend so far you may see them there.
But when you move again among the living,
oh speak my name to the memory of men![4]
Having answered all, I say no more." And giving
his head a shake, he looked up at my face
cross-eyed, then bowed his head and fell away
among the other blind souls of that place.
And my Guide to me: "He will not wake again
until the angel trumpet sounds the day
on which the host shall come to judge all men.
Then shall each soul before the seat of Mercy
return to its sad grave and flesh and form
to hear the edict of Eternity."
So we picked our slow way among the shades
and the filthy rain, speaking of life to come.
"Master," I said, "when the great clarion fades

2. This is the first of the political prophecies that are to become a recurring theme of the *Inferno*. (It is the second if we include the political symbolism of the Greyhound in Canto I.) Dante is, of course, writing after these events have all taken place. At Easter time of 1300, however, the events were in the future.

The Whites and the Blacks of Ciacco's prophecy should not be confused with the Guelphs and the Ghibellines. The internal strife between the Guelphs and the Ghibellines ended with the total defeat of the Ghibellines. By the end of the 13th century that strife had passed. But very shortly a new feud began in Florence between White Guelphs and Black Guelphs. A rather gruesome murder perpetrated by Focaccio de' Cancellieri became the cause of new strife between two branches of the Cancellieri family. On May 1 of 1300 the White Guelphs (Dante's party) drove the Black Guelphs from Florence in bloody fighting. Two years later, however ("within three suns"), the Blacks, aided by Dante's detested Boniface VIII, returned and expelled most of the prominent Whites, among them Dante; for he had been a member of the Priorate (City Council) that issued a decree banishing the leaders of both sides. This was the beginning of Dante's long exile from Florence. 3. Farinata will appear in Canto X among the Heretics: Tegghiaio and Jacopo Rusticucci, in Canto XVI with the homosexuals, Mosca in Canto XXVIII with the sowers of discord. Arrigo does not appear again and he has not been positively identified. Dante probably refers here to Arrigo (or Oderigo) dei Fifanti, one of those who took part in the murder of Buondelmonte (Canto XXVIII, line 106, note). 4. Excepting those shades in the lowest depths of Hell whose sins are so shameful that they wish only to be forgotten, all of the damned are eager to be remembered on earth. The concept of the family name and of its survival in the memories of men were matters of first importance among Italians of Dante's time, and expressions of essentially the same attitude are common in Italy today.

into the voice of thundering Omniscience,
what of these agonies? Will they be the same,
or more, or less, after the final sentence?"
And he to me: "Look to your science[5] again
where it is written: the more a thing is perfect
the more it feels of pleasure and of pain.
As for these souls, though they can never soar
to true perfection, still in the new time
they will be nearer it than they were before."
And so we walked the rim of the great ledge
speaking of pain and joy, and of much more
that I will not repeat, and reached the edge
where the descent begins. There, suddenly,
we came on Plutus, the great enemy.

CANTO VII

Circle Four *The Hoarders and the Wasters*
Circle Five *The Wrathful and the Sullen*

Plutus menaces the Poets, but once more Virgil shows himself more powerful than the rages of Hell's monsters. The Poets enter the Fourth Circle and find what seems to be a war in progress.

The sinners are divided into two raging mobs, each soul among them straining madly at a great boulder-like weight. The two mobs meet, clashing their weights against one another, after which they separate, pushing the great weights apart, and begin over again.

One mob is made up of the Hoarders, the other of the Wasters. In life, they lacked all moderation in regulating their expenses; they destroyed the light of God within themselves by thinking of nothing but money. Thus in death, their souls are encumbered by dead weights (mundanity) and one excess serves to punish the other. Their souls, moreover, have become so dimmed and awry in their fruitless rages that there is no hope of recognizing any among them.

The Poets pass on while Virgil explains the function of Dame Fortune in the Divine Scheme. As he finishes (it is past midnight now of Good Friday) they reach the inner edge of the ledge and come to a Black Spring which bubbles murkily over the rocks to form the Marsh of Styx, which is the Fifth Circle, the last station of the Upper Hell.

Across the marsh they see countless souls attacking one another in the foul slime. These are the Wrathful and the symbolism of their punishment is obvious. Virgil also points out to Dante certain bubbles rising from the slime and informs him that below that mud lie

5. "Science" to the man of Dante's time meant specifically "the writings of Aristotle and the commentaries upon them."

entombed the souls of the Sullen. In life they refused to welcome the sweet light of the Sun (Divine Illumination) and in death they are buried forever below the stinking waters of the Styx, gargling the words of an endless chant in a grotesque parody of singing a hymn.

"Papa Satán, Papa Satán, aleppy,"[6]
Plutus[7] clucked and stuttered in his rage;
and my all-knowing Guide, to comfort me:
"Do not be startled, for no power of his,
however he may lord it over the damned,
may hinder your descent through this abyss."
And turning to that carnival of bloat
cried: "Peace, you wolf of Hell. Choke back your bile
and let its venom blister your own throat.
Our passage through this pit is willed on high
by that same Throne that loosed the angel wrath
of Michael on ambition and mutiny."
As puffed out sails fall when the mast gives way
and flutter to a self-convulsing heap—
so collapsed Plutus into that dead clay.
Thus we descended the dark scarp of Hell
to which all the evil of the Universe
comes home at last, into the Fourth Great Circle
and ledge of the abyss. O Holy Justice,
who could relate the agonies I saw!
What guilt is man that he can come to this?
Just as the surge Charybdis[8] hurls to sea
crashes and breaks upon its countersurge,
so these shades dance and crash eternally.
Here, too, I saw a nation of lost souls,
far more than were above: they strained their chests
against enormous weights, and with mad howls
rolled them at one another. Then in haste
they rolled them back, one party shouting out:
"Why do you hoard?" and the other: "Why do you waste?"

6. Virgil, the all-knowing, may understand these words, but no one familiar with merely human languages has deciphered them. In Canto XXXI the monster Nimrod utters a similar meaningless jargon, and Virgil there cites it as evidence of the dimness of his mind. Gibberish is certainly a characteristic appropriate to monsters, and since Dante takes pains to make the reference to Satan apparent in the gibberish, it is obviously infernal and debased, and that is almost certainly all he intended.

The word "papa" as used here probably means "Pope" rather than "father." "Il papa santo" is the Pope. "Papa Satán" would be his opposite number. In the original the last word is "aleppe." On the assumption that jargon translates jargon I have twisted it a bit to rhyme with "me." 7. In Greek mythology, Plutus was the God of Wealth. Many commentators suggest that Dante confused him with Pluto, the son of Saturn and God of the Underworld. But in that case, Plutus would be identical with Lucifer himself and would require a central place in Hell, whereas the classical function of Plutus as God of Material Wealth makes him the ideal overseer of the miserly and the prodigal. 8. A famous whirlpool in the Straits of Sicily.

So back around that ring they puff and blow,
each faction to its course, until they reach
opposite sides, and screaming as they go
the madmen turn and start their weights again
to crash against the maniacs. And I,
watching, felt my heart contract with pain.
"Master," I said, "what people can these be?
And all those tonsured ones there on our left—
is it possible they *all* were of the clergy?"
And he: "In the first life beneath the sun
they were so skewed and squinteyed in their minds
their misering or extravagance mocked all reason.
The voice of each clamors its own excess
when lust meets lust at the two points of the circle
where opposite guilts meet in their wretchedness.
These tonsured wraiths of greed were priests indeed,
the popes and cardinals, for it is in these
the weed of avarice sows its rankest seed."
And I to him: "Master, among this crew
surely I should be able to make out
the fallen image of some soul I knew."
And he to me: "This is a lost ambition.
In their sordid lives they labored to be blind,
and now their souls have dimmed past recognition.
All their eternity is to butt and bray:
one crew will stand tight-fisted, the other stripped
of its very hair at the bar of Judgment Day.
Hoarding and squandering wasted all their light
and brought them screaming to this brawl of wraiths.
You need no words of mine to grasp their plight.
Now may you see the fleeting vanity
of the goods of Fortune for which men tear down
all that they are, to build a mockery.
Not all the gold that is or ever was
under the sky could buy for one of these
exhausted souls the fraction of a pause."
"Master," I said, "tell me—now that you touch
on this Dame Fortune[9]—what *is* she, that she holds
the good things of the world within her clutch?"
And he to me: "O credulous mankind,
is there one error that has wooed and lost you?

9. A central figure in medieval mythology. She is almost invariably represented as a female figure holding an ever-revolving wheel symbolic of Chance. Dante incorporates her into his scheme of the Universe, ranking her among the angels, and giving her a special office in the service of the Catholic God.

Now listen, and strike error from your mind:
That king whose perfect wisdom transcends all,
made the heavens and posted angels on them
to guide the eternal light that it might fall
from every sphere to every sphere the same.
He made earth's splendors by a like decree
and posted as their minister this high Dame,
the Lady of Permutations. All earth's gear
she changes from nation to nation, from house to house,
in changeless change through every turning year.
No mortal power may stay her spinning wheel.
The nations rise and fall by her decree.
None may foresee where she will set her heel:[1]
she passes, and things pass. Man's mortal reason
cannot encompass her. She rules her sphere
as the other gods[2] rule theirs. Season by season
her changes change her changes endlessly,
and those whose turn has come press on her so,
she must be swift by hard necessity.
And this is she so railed at and reviled
that even her debtors in the joys of time
blaspheme her name. Their oaths are bitter and wild,
but she in her beatitude does not hear.
Among the Primal Beings of God's joy
she breathes her blessedness and wheels her sphere.
But the stars that marked our starting fall away.[3]
We must go deeper into greater pain,
for it is not permitted that we stay."
And crossing over to the chasm's edge
we came to a spring[4] that boiled and overflowed
through a great crevice worn into the ledge.
By that foul water, black from its very source,
we found a nightmare path among the rocks
and followed the dark stream along its course.
Beyond its rocky race and wild descent
the river floods and forms a marsh called Styx,[5]

1. A literal translation of the original would be "She is hidden like a snake in the grass." To avoid the comic overtone of that figure in English, I have substituted another figure which I believe expresses Dante's intent without destroying his tone. 2. Dante can only mean here "the other angels and ministers of God." 3. It is now past midnight of Good Friday. 4. All the waters of Hell derive from one source (see Canto XIV, lines 12 following). This black spring must therefore be the waters of Acheron boiling out of some subterranean passage. 5. The river Styx figures variously in classic mythology, but usually (and in later myths always) as a river of the Underworld. Dante, to heighten his symbolism, makes it a filthy marsh. This marsh marks the first great division of Hell. Between Acheron and Styx are punished the sins of Incontinence (the Sins of the She-Wolf). This is the Upper Hell. Beyond Styx rise the flaming walls of the infernal city of Dis, within which are punished Violence and Fraud (the sins of the Lion, and the Sins of the Leopard).

a dreary swampland, vaporous and malignant.
And I, intent on all our passage touched,
made out a swarm of spirits in that bog
savage with anger, naked, slime-besmutched.
They thumped at one another in that slime
with hands and feet, and they butted, and they bit
as if each would tear the other limb from limb.
And my kind Sage: "My son, behold the souls
of those who lived in wrath. And do you see
the broken surfaces of those water-holes
on every hand, boiling as if in pain?
There are souls beneath that water. Fixed in slime
they speak their piece, end it, and start again:
'Sullen were we in the air made sweet by the Sun;
in the glory of his shining our hearts poured
a bitter smoke. Sullen were we begun;
sullen we lie forever in this ditch.'
This litany they gargle in their throats
as if they sang, but lacked the words and pitch."
Then circling on along that filthy wallow,
we picked our way between the bank and fen,
keeping our eyes on those foul souls that swallow
the slime of Hell. And so at last we came
to foot of a Great Tower that has no name.[6]

CANTO VIII

Circle Five: Styx The Wrathful, Phlegyas
Circle Six: Dis The Fallen Angels

The Poets stand at the edge of the swamp, and a mysterious signal flames from the great tower. It is answered from the darkness of the other side, and almost immediately the Poets see Phlegyas, the Boatman of Styx, racing toward them across the water, fast as a flying arrow. He comes avidly, thinking to find new souls for torment, and he howls with rage when he discovers the Poets. Once again, however, Virgil conquers wrath with a word and Phlegyas reluctantly gives them passage.

As they are crossing, a muddy soul rises before them. It is Filippo Argenti, one of the Wrathful. Dante recognizes him despite the filth with which he is covered, and he berates him soundly, even wishing to see him tormented further. Virgil approves Dante's disdain and, as if in answer to Dante's wrath, Argenti is suddenly set upon by all the other sinners present, who fall upon him and rip him to pieces.

6. No special significance need be attributed to the Tower. It serves as a signaling point for calling the ferryman from Dis.

The boat meanwhile has sped on, and before Argenti's screams have died away, Dante sees the flaming red towers of Dis, the Capital of Hell. The great walls of the iron city block the way to the Lower Hell. Properly speaking, all the rest of Hell lies within the city walls, which separate the Upper and the Lower Hell.

Phlegyas deposits them at a great Iron Gate which they find to be guarded by the Rebellious Angels. These creatures of Ultimate Evil, rebels against God Himself, refuse to let the Poets pass. Even Virgil is powerless against them, for Human Reason by itself cannot cope with the essence of Evil. Only Divine Aid can bring hope. Virgil accordingly sends up a prayer for assistance and waits anxiously for a Heavenly Messenger to appear.

Returning to my theme,[7] I say we came
to the foot of a Great Tower; but long before
we reached it through the marsh, two horns of flame
flared from the summit, one from either side,
and then, far off, so far we scarce could see it
across the mist, another flame replied.
I turned to that sea of all intelligence
saying: "What is this signal and counter-signal?
Who is it speaks with fire across this distance?"
And he then: "Look across the filthy slew:
you may already see the one they summon,
if the swamp vapors do not hide him from you."
No twanging bowspring ever shot an arrow
that bored the air it rode dead to the mark
more swiftly than the flying skiff whose prow
shot toward us over the polluted channel
with a single steersman at the helm who called:
"So, do I have you at last, you whelp of Hell?"
"Phlegyas, Phlegyas,"[8] said my Lord and Guide,
"this time you waste your breath: you have us only
for the time it takes to cross to the other side."
Phlegyas, the madman, blew his rage among
those muddy marshes like a cheat deceived,
or like a fool at some imagined wrong.

7. There is evidence that Dante stopped writing for a longer or shorter period between the seventh and eighth cantos. None of the evidence is conclusive but it is quite clear that the plan of the *Inferno* changes from here on. Up to this point the Circles have been described in one canto apiece. If this was Dante's original plan, Hell would have been concluded in five more cantos, since there are only Nine Circles in all. But in the later journey the Eighth Circle alone occupies thirteen cantos. Dante's phrase may be simply transitional, but it certainly marks a change in the plan of the poem. 8. Mythological King of Boeotia. He was the son of Ares (Mars) by a human mother. Angry at Apollo, who had seduced his daughter (Aesculapius was born of this union), he set fire to Apollo's temple at Delphi. For this offense, the God killed him and threw his soul into Hades under sentence of eternal torment. Dante's choice of a ferryman is especially apt. Phlegyas is the link between the Wrathful (to whom his paternity relates him) and the Rebellious Angels who menaced God (as he menaced Apollo).

My Guide, whom all the fiend's noise could not nettle,
boarded the skiff, motioning me to follow:
and not till I stepped aboard did it seem to settle[9]
into the water. At once we left the shore,
that ancient hull riding more heavily
than it had ridden in all of time before
And as we ran on that dead swamp, the slime
rose before me, and from it a voice cried:
"Who are you that come here before your time?"
And I replied: "If I come, I do not remain.
But you, who are *you*, so fallen and so foul?"
And he: "I am one who weeps." And I then:
"May you weep and wail to all eternity,
for I know you, hell-dog, filthy as you are."[1]
Then he stretched both hands to the boat, but warily
the Master shoved him back, crying, "Down! Down!
with the other dogs!" Then he embraced me saying:
"Indignant spirit, I kiss you as you frown.
Blessed be she who bore you.[2] In world and time
this one was haughtier yet. Not one unbending
graces his memory. Here is his shadow in slime.
How many living now, chancellors of wrath,
shall come to lie here in this pigmire,
leaving a curse to be their aftermath!"
And I: "Master, it would suit my whim
to see the wretch scrubbed down into the swill
before we leave this stinking sink and him."
And he to me: "Before the other side
shows through the mist, you shall have all you ask.
This is a wish that should be gratified."
And shortly after, I saw the loathsome spirit
so mangled by a swarm of muddy wraiths
that to this day I praise and thank God for it.
"After Filippo Argenti!" all cried together.
The maddog Florentine wheeled at their cry
and bit himself for rage. I saw them gather.

9. Because of his living weight. 1. Filippo Argenti was one of the Adimari family, who were bitter political enemies of Dante. Dante's savagery toward him was probably intended in part as an insult to the family. He pays them off again in the Paradiso when he has Cacciaguida call them "The insolent gang that makes itself a dragon to chase those who run away, but is sweet as a lamb to any who show their teeth—or their purse." 2. These were Luke's words to Christ. To have Virgil apply them to Dante after such violence seems shocking, even though the expression is reasonably common in Italian. But Dante does not use such devices lightly. The *Commedia*, it must be remembered, is a vision of the progress of man's soul toward perfection. In being contemptuous of Wrath, Dante is purging it from his soul. He is thereby growing nearer to perfection, and Virgil, who has said nothing in the past when Dante showed pity for other sinners (though Virgil will later take him to task for daring to pity those whom God has shut off from pity), welcomes this sign of relentless rejection. Only by a ruthless enmity toward evil may the soul be purified.

And there we left him. And I say no more.
But such a wailing beat upon my ears,
I strained my eyes ahead to the far shore.
"My son," the Master said, "the City called Dis[3]
lies just ahead, the heavy citizens,
the swarming crowds of Hell's metropolis."
And I then: "Master, I already see
the glow of its red mosques,[4] as if they came
hot from the forge to smolder in this valley."
And my all-knowing Guide: "They are eternal
flues to eternal fire that rages in them
and makes them glow across this lower Hell."
And as he spoke we entered the vast moat
of the sepulchre. Its wall seemed made of iron
and towered above us in our little boat.
We circled through what seemed an endless distance
before the boatman ran his prow ashore
crying: "Out! Out! Get out! This is the entrance."
Above the gates more than a thousand shades
of spirits purged from Heaven[5] for its glory
cried angrily: "Who is it that invades
Death's Kingdom in his life?" My Lord and Guide
advanced a step before me with a sign
that he wished to speak to some of them aside.
They quieted somewhat, and one called, "Come,
but come alone. And tell that other one,
who thought to walk so blithely through death's kingdom,
he may go back along the same fool's way
he came by. Let him try his living luck.
You who are dead can come only to stay."
Reader, judge for yourself, how each black word
fell on my ears to sink into my heart:
I lost hope of returning to the world.
"O my beloved Master, my Guide in peril,
who time and time again[6] have seen me safely
along this way, and turned the power of evil,
stand by me now," I cried, "in my heart's fright.
And if the dead forbid our journey to them,
let us go back together toward the light."
My Guide then, in the greatness of his spirit:

3. Pluto, King of the Underworld of ancient mythology, was sometimes called Dis. This, then, is his city, the metropolis of Satan. 4. To a European of Dante's time a mosque would seem the perversion of a church, the impious counterpart of the House of God, just as Satan is God's impious counterpart. 5. The Rebellious Angels. We have already seen, on the other side of Acheron, the Angels who sinned by refusing to take sides. 6. A literal translation of the original would read "more than seven times." "Seven" is used here as an indeterminate number indicating simply "quite a number of times." Italian makes rather free use of such numbers.

"Take heart. Nothing can take our passage from us
when such a power has given warrant for it.
Wait here and feed your soul while I am gone
on comfort and good hope; I will not leave you
to wander in this underworld alone."
So the sweet Guide and Father leaves[7] me here,
and I stay on in doubt with yes and no
dividing all my heart to hope and fear.
I could not hear my Lord's words, but the pack
that gathered round him suddenly broke away
howling and jostling and went pouring back,
slamming the towering gate hard in his face.
That great Soul stood alone outside the wall.
Then he came back; his pain showed in his pace.
His eyes were fixed upon the ground, his brow
had sagged from its assurance. He sighed aloud:
"Who has forbidden me the halls of sorrow?"
And to me he said: "You need not be cast down
by my vexation, for whatever plot
these fiends may lay against us, we will go on.
This insolence of theirs is nothing new:
they showed it once at a less secret gate[8]
that still stands open for all that they could do—
the same gate where you read the dead inscription;
and through it at this moment a Great One[9] comes.
Already he has passed it and moves down
ledge by dark ledge. He is one who needs no guide,
and at his touch all gates must spring aside."

CANTO IX

Circle Six The Heretics

At the Gate of Dis the Poets wait in dread. Virgil tries to hide his anxiety from Dante, but both realize that without Divine Aid they will surely be lost. To add to their terrors Three Infernal Furies, symbols of Eternal Remorse, appear on a near-by tower, from which they threaten the Poets and call for Medusa to come and change them to stone. Virgil at once commands Dante to turn and shut his eyes. To make doubly sure, Virgil himself places his hands over

7. Dante shifts tenses more freely than English readers are accustomed to. 8. The Gate of Hell. According to an early medieval tradition, these demons gathered at the outer gate to oppose the descent of Christ into Limbo at the time of the Harrowing of Hell, but Christ broke the door open and it has remained so ever since. The service of the Mass for Holy Saturday still sings *Hodie portas mortis et seras pariter Salvator noster disrupit.* (On this day our Saviour broke open the door of the dead and its lock as well.) 9. A Messenger of Heaven. He is described in the next Canto.

Dante's eyes, for there is an Evil upon which man must not look if he is to be saved.

But at the moment of greatest anxiety a storm shakes the dirty air of Hell and the sinners in the marsh begin to scatter like frightened Frogs. The Heavenly Messenger is approaching. He appears walking majestically through Hell, looking neither to right nor to left. With a touch he throws open the Gate of Dis while his words scatter the Rebellious Angels. Then he returns as he came.

The Poets now enter the gate unopposed and find themselves in the Sixth Circle. Here they find a countryside like a vast cemetery. Tombs of every size stretch out before them, each with its lid lying beside it, and each wrapped in flames. Cries of anguish sound endlessly from the entombed dead.

This is the torment of the Heretics of every cult. By Heretic, Dante means specifically those who did violence to God by denying immortality. Since they taught that the soul dies with the body, so their punishment is an eternal grave in the fiery morgue of God's wrath.

My face had paled to a mask of cowardice
when I saw my Guide turn back. The sight of it
the sooner brought the color back to his.
He stood apart like one who strains to hear
what he cannot see, for the eye could not reach far
across the vapors of that midnight air.
"Yet surely we were meant to pass these tombs,"
he said aloud. "If not . . . so much was promised . . .
Oh how time hangs and drags till our aid comes!"
I saw too well how the words with which he ended
covered his start, and even perhaps I drew
a worse conclusion from that then he intended.
"Tell me, Master, does anyone ever come
from the first ledge,[1] whose only punishment
is hope cut off, into this dreary bottom?"
I put this question to him, still in fear
of what his broken speech might mean; and he:
"Rarely do any of us enter here.
Once before, it is true, I crossed through Hell
conjured by cruel Erichtho[2] who recalled
the spirits to their bodies. Her dark spell
forced me, newly stripped of my mortal part,
to enter through this gate and summon out

1. Limbo. 2. A sorceress drawn from Lucan (*Pharsalia* VI, 508ff).

a spirit from Judaíca.[3] Take heart,
That is the last depth and the darkest lair
and the farthest from Heaven which encircles all,
and at that time I came back even from there.
The marsh from which the stinking gasses bubble
lies all about this capital of sorrow
whose gates we may not pass now without trouble."
All this and more he expounded; but the rest
was lost on me, for suddenly my attention
was drawn to the turret with the fiery crest
where all at once three hellish and inhuman
Furies[4] sprang to view, bloodstained and wild.
Their limbs and gestures hinted they were women.
Belts of greenest hydras wound and wound
about their waists, and snakes and horned serpents
grew from their heads like matted hair and bound
their horrid brows. My Master, who well knew
the handmaids of the Queen of Woe,[5] cried: "Look:
the terrible Erinyes of Hecate's crew.
That is Megaera to the left of the tower.
Alecto is the one who raves on the right.
Tisiphone stands between." And he said no more.
With their palms they beat their brows, with their nails they clawed
their bleeding breasts. And such mad wails broke from them
that I drew close to the Poet, overawed.
And all together screamed, looking down at me:
"Call Medusa that we may change him to stone!
Too lightly we let Theseus go free."[6]
"Turn your back and keep your eyes shut tight;
for should the Gorgon come and you look at her,
never again would you return to the light."
This was my Guide's command. And he turned me about
himself, and would not trust my hands alone,
but, with his placed on mine, held my eyes shut.

3. Judaïca (or Judecca) is the final pit of Hell. Erichtho called up the spirit in order to foretell the outcome of the campaign between Pompey and Caesar. There is no trace of the legend in which Virgil is chosen for the descent; Virgil, in fact, was still alive at the time of the battle of Pharsalia. 4. Or Erinyes. In classical mythology they were especially malignant spirits who pursued and tormented those who had violated fundamental taboos (desecration of temples, murder of kin, etc.). They are apt symbols of the guilty conscience of the damned. 5. Proserpine (or Hecate) was the wife of Pluto, and therefore Queen of the Underworld. 6. Theseus and Pirithous tried to kidnap Hecate. Pirithous was killed in the attempt and Theseus was punished by being chained to a great rock. He was later set free by Hercules, who descended to his rescue in defiance of all the powers of Hell. The meaning of the Furies' cry is that Dante must be made an example of. Had they punished Theseus properly, men would have acquired more respect for their powers and would not still be attempting to invade the Underworld. *The Gorgon.* She turned to stone whoever looked at her.

Men of sound intellect and probity,
weigh with good understanding what lies hidden
behind the veil of my strange allegory![7]
Suddenly there broke on the dirty swell
of the dark marsh a squall of terrible sound
that sent a tremor through both shores of Hell;
a sound as if two continents of air,
one frigid and one scorching, clashed head on
in a war of winds that stripped the forests bare,
ripped off whole boughs and blew them helter skelter
along the range of dust it raised before it
making the beasts and shepherds run for shelter.
The Master freed my eyes. "Now turn," he said,
"and fix your nerve of vision on the foam
there where the smoke is thickest and most acrid."
As frogs before the snake that hunts them down
churn up their pond in flight, until the last
squats on the bottom as if turned to stone—
so I saw more than a thousand ruined souls
scatter away from one who crossed dry-shod
the Stygian marsh into Hell's burning bowels.
With his left hand he fanned away the dreary
vapors of that sink as he approached;
and only of that annoyance did he seem weary.
Clearly he was a Messenger from God's Throne,
and I turned to my Guide; but he made me a sign
that I should keep my silence and bow down.
Ah, what scorn breathed from that Angel-presence!
He reached the gate of Dis and with a wand
he waved it open, for there was no resistance.
"Outcasts of Heaven, you twice-loathsome crew,"
he cried upon that terrible sill of Hell,
"how does this insolence still live in you?
Why do you set yourselves against that Throne
whose Will none can deny, and which, times past,
has added to your pain for each rebellion?
Why do you butt against Fate's ordinance?
Your Cerberus, if you recall, still wears
his throat and chin peeled for such arrogance."[8]
Then he turned back through the same filthy tide
by which he had come. He did not speak to us,

7. Most commentators take this to mean the allegory of the Three Furies, but the lines apply as aptly to the allegory that follows. Dante probably meant both. Almost certainly, too, "my strange allegory" refers to the whole *Commedia*. 8. When Cerberus opposed the fated entrance of Hercules into Hell, Hercules threw a chain about his neck and dragged him to the upperworld. Cerberus' throat, according to Dante, is still peeled raw from it.

but went his way like one preoccupied
by other presences than those before him.
And we moved toward the city, fearing nothing
after his holy words. Straight through the dim
and open gate we entered unopposed.
And I, eager to learn what new estate
of Hell those burning fortress walls enclosed,
began to look about the very moment
we were inside, and I saw on every hand
a countryside of sorrow and new torment.
As at Arles where the Rhone sinks into stagnant marshes,
as at Pola[9] by the Quarnaro Gulf, whose waters
close Italy and wash her farthest reaches,
the uneven tombs cover the even plain—
such fields I saw here, spread in all directions,
except that here the tombs were chests of pain:
for, in a ring around each tomb, great fires
raised every wall to a red heat. No smith
works hotter iron in his forge. The biers
stood with their lids upraised, and from their pits
an anguished moaning rose on the dead air
from the desolation of tormented spirits.
And I: "Master, what shades are these who lie
buried in these chests and fill the air
with such a painful and unending cry?"
"These are the arch-heretics of all cults,
with all their followers," he replied. "Far more
than you would think lie stuffed into these vaults.
Like lies with like in every heresy,
and the monuments are fired, some more, some less;
to each depravity its own degree."
He turned then, and I followed through that night
between the wall and the torments, bearing right.[1]

CANTO X

Circle Six The Heretics

As the Poets pass on, one of the damned hears Dante speaking, recognizes him as a Tuscan, and calls to him from one of the fiery

9. *Arles . . . Pola:* Situated as indicated on the Rhone and the Quarnaro Gulf respectively, these cities were the sites of great cemeteries dating back to the time of Rome. The Quarnaro Gulf is the body of water on which Fiume is situated. 1. Through all of Hell the Poets bear left in their descent with only two exceptions, the first in their approach to the Heretics, the second in their approach to Geryon, the monster of fraud (see XVII, note 4 below). Note that both these exceptions occur at a major division of the *Inferno*. There is no satisfactory explanation of Dante's allegorical intent in making these exceptions.

tombs. A moment later he appears. He is Farinata degli Uberti, a great war-chief of the Tuscan Ghibellines. The majesty and power of his bearing seem to diminish Hell itself. He asks Dante's lineage and recognizes him as an enemy. They begin to talk politics, but are interrupted by another shade, who rises from the same tomb.

This one is Cavalcante dei Cavalcanti, father of Guido Cavalcanti, a contemporary poet. If it is genius that leads Dante on his great journey, the shade asks, why is Guido not with him? Can Dante presume to a greater genius than Guido's? Dante replies that he comes this way only with the aid of powers Guido has not sought. His reply is a classic example of many-leveled symbolism as well as an overt criticism of a rival poet. The senior Cavalcanti mistakenly infers from Dante's reply that Guido is dead, and swoons back into the flames.

Farinata, who has not deigned to notice his fellow-sinner, continues from the exact point at which he had been interrupted. It is as if he refuses to recognize the flames in which he is shrouded. He proceeds to prophesy Dante's banishment from Florence, he defends his part in Florentine politics, and then, in answer to Dante's question, he explains how it is that the damned can foresee the future but have no knowledge of the present. He then names others who share his tomb, and Dante takes his leave with considerable respect for his great enemy, pausing only long enough to leave word for Cavalcanti that Guido is still alive.

We go by a secret path along the rim
of the dark city, between the wall and the torments.
My Master leads me and I follow him.
"Supreme Virtue, who through this impious land
wheel me at will down these dark gyres," I said,
"speak to me, for I wish to understand.
Tell me, Master, is it permitted to see
the souls within these tombs? The lids are raised,
and no one stands on guard." And he to me:
"All shall be sealed forever on the day
these souls return here from Jehosaphat[2]
with the bodies they have given once to clay.
In this dark corner of the morgue of wrath
lie Epicurus[3] and his followers,
who make the soul share in the body's death.
And here you shall be granted presently

2. A valley outside Jerusalem. The popular belief that it would serve as the scene of the Last Judgment was based on *Joel* iii, 2, 12. 3. The Greek philosopher. The central aim of his philosophy was to achieve happiness, which he defined as the absence of pain. For Dante this doctrine meant the denial of the Eternal life, since the whole aim of the Epicurean was temporal happiness.

not only your spoken wish, but that other as well,[4]
which you had thought perhaps to hide from me."
And I: "Except to speak my thoughts in few
and modest words, as I learned from your example,
dear Guide, I do not hide my heart from you."
"O Tuscan, who go living through this place
speaking so decorously,[5] may it please you pause
a moment on your way, for by the grace
of that high speech in which I hear your birth,
I know you for a son of that noble city
which perhaps I vexed too much in my time on earth."
These words broke without warning from inside
one of the burning arks. Caught by surprise,
I turned in fear and drew close to my Guide.
And he: "Turn around. What are you doing? Look there:
it is Farinata[6] rising from the flames.
From the waist up his shade will be made clear."
My eyes were fixed on him already. Erect,
he rose above the flame, great chest, great brow;
he seemed to hold all Hell in disrespect.
My Guide's prompt hands urged me among the dim
and smoking sepulchres to that great figure,
and he said to me: "Mind how you speak to him."
And when I stood alone at the foot of the tomb,
the great soul stared almost contemptuously,
before he asked: "Of what line do you come?"
Because I wished to obey, I did not hide
anything from him: whereupon, as he listened,
he raised his brows a little, then replied:
"Bitter enemies, were they to me,
to my fathers, and to my party, so that twice
I sent them scattering from high Italy."

4. "All knowing" Virgil is frequently presented as being able to read Dante's mind. The "other wish" is almost certainly Dante's desire to speak to someone from Florence with whom he could discuss politics. Many prominent Florentines were Epicureans. 5. Florence lies in the province of Tuscany. Italian, to an extent unknown in America, is a language of dialects, all of them readily identifiable even when they are not well understood by the hearer. Dante's native Tuscan has become the main source of modern official Italian. Two very common sayings still current in Italy are: "*Lingua toscana, lingua di Dio*" (the Tuscan tongue is the language of God) and—to express the perfection of Italian speech—"*Lingua toscana in bocca romana* (the Tuscan tongue in a Roman mouth). 6. Farinata degli Uberti was head of the ancient noble house of the Uberti. He became leader of the Ghibellines of Florence in 1239, and played a large part in expelling the Guelphs in 1248. The Guelphs returned in 1251, but Farinata remained. His arrogant desire to rule singlehanded led to difficulties, however, and he was expelled in 1258. With the aid of the Manfredi of Siena, he gathered a large force and defeated the Guelphs at Montaperti on the River Arbia in 1260. Re-entering Florence in triumph, he again expelled the Guelphs, but at the Diet of Empoli, held by the victors after the battle of Montaperti, he alone rose in open counsel to resist the general sentiment that Florence should be razed. He died in Florence in 1264. In 1266 the Guelphs once more returned and crushed forever the power of the Uberti, destroying their palaces and issuing special decrees against persons of the Uberti line. In 1283 a decree of heresy was published against Farinata.

"If they were scattered, still from every part
they formed again and returned both times," I answered,
"but yours have not yet wholly learned that art."
At this another shade[7] rose gradually,
visible to the chin. It had raised itself,
I think, upon its knees, and it looked around me
as if it expected to find through that black air
that blew about me, another traveler.
And weeping when it found no other there,
turned back. "And if," it cried, "you travel through
this dungeon of the blind by power of genius,
where is my son? why is he not with you?"
And I to him: "Not by myself[8] am I borne
this terrible way. I am led by him who waits there,
and whom perhaps your Guido held in scorn."
For by his words and the manner of his torment
I knew his name already, and could, therefore,
answer both what he asked and what he meant.
Instantly he rose to his full height:
"He *held?* What is it you say? Is he dead, then?
Do his eyes no longer fill with that sweet light?"
And when he saw that I delayed a bit
in answering his question, he fell backwards
into the flame, and rose no more from it.
But that majestic spirit at whose call
I had first paused there, did not change expression,
nor so much as turn his face to watch him fall.
"And if," going on from his last words, he said,
"men of my line have yet to learn that art,
that burns me deeper than this flaming bed.
But the face of her who reigns in Hell[9] shall not
be fifty times rekindled in its course
before you learn what griefs attend that art.
And as you hope to find the world again,
tell me: why is that populace[1] so savage
in the edicts they pronounce against my strain?"
And I to him: "The havoc and the carnage
that dyed the Arbia red at Montaperti
have caused these angry cries in our assemblage."

7. Cavalcante dei Cavalcanti was a famous Epicurean ("like lies with like"). He was the father of Guido Cavalcanti, a poet and friend of Dante. Guido was also Farinata's son-in-law. 8. Cavalcanti assumes that the resources of human genius are all that are necessary for such a journey. (It is an assumption that well fits his character as an Epicurean.) Dante replies as a man of religion that other aid is necessary. 9. Hecate or Proserpine. She is also the moon goddess. The sense of this prophecy, therefore, is that Dante will be exiled within fifty full moons. Dante was banished from Florence in 1302, well within the fifty months of the prophecy. 1. The Florentines.

He sighed and shook his head. "I was not alone
in that affair," he said, "nor certainly
would I have joined the rest without good reason.
But I *was* alone at that time when every other
consented to the death of Florence; I
alone with open face defended her."
"Ah, so may your soul sometime have rest,"
I begged him, "solve the riddle that pursues me
through this dark place and leaves my mind perplexed:
you seem to see in advance all time's intent,
if I have heard and understood correctly;
but you seem to lack all knowledge of the present."
"We see asquint, like those whose twisted sight
can make out only the far-off," he said,
"for the King of All still grants us that much light.
When things draw near, or happen, we perceive
nothing of them. Except what others bring us
we have no news of those who are alive.
So may you understand that all we know
will be dead forever from that day and hour
when the Portal of the Future is swung to."
Then, as if stricken by regret, I said:
"Now, therefore, will you tell that fallen one
who asked about his son, that he is not dead,
and that, if I did not reply more quickly,
it was because my mind was occupied
with this confusion you have solved for me."
And now my Guide was calling me. In haste,
therefore, I begged that mighty shade to name
the others who lay with him in that chest.
And he: "More than a thousand cram this tomb.
The second Frederick[2] is here, and the Cardinal
of the Ubaldini.[3] Of the rest let us be dumb."
And he disappeared without more said, and I
turned back and made my way to the ancient Poet,
pondering the words of the dark prophecy.
He moved along, and then, when we had started,
he turned and said to me, "What troubles you?
Why do you look so vacant and downhearted?"

2. The Emperor Frederick II. In Canto XIII Dante has Pier delle Vigne speak of him as one worthy of honor, but he was commonly reputed to be an Epicurean. 3. In the original Dante refers to him simply as "il Cardinale." Ottaviano degli Ubaldini (born *circa* 1209, died 1273) became a Cardinal in 1245, but his energies seem to have been directed exclusively to money and political intrigue. When he was refused an important loan by the Ghibellines, he is reported by many historians as having remarked: "I may say that if I have a soul, I have lost it in the cause of the Ghibellines, and no one of them will help me now." The words "If I have a soul" would be enough to make him guilty in Dante's eyes of the charge of heresy.

And I told him. And he replied: "Well may you bear
those words in mind." Then, pausing, raised a finger:
"Now pay attention to what I tell you here:
when finally you stand before the ray
of that Sweet Lady[4] whose bright eye sees all,
from her you will learn the turnings of your way."
So saying, he bore left, turning his back
on the flaming walls, and we passed deeper yet
into the city of pain, along a track
that plunged down like a scar into a sink
which sickened us already with its stink.

CANTO XI

Circle Six The Heretics

The Poets reach the inner edge of the Sixth Circle and find a great jumble of rocks that had once been a cliff, but which has fallen into rubble as the result of the great earthquake that shook Hell when Christ died. Below them lies the Seventh Circle, and so fetid is the air that arises from it that the Poets cower for shelter behind a great tomb until their breaths can grow accustomed to the stench.

Dante finds an inscription on the lid of the tomb labeling it as the place in Hell of Pope Anastasius.

Virgil takes advantage of the delay to outline in detail The Division of the Lower Hell, a theological discourse based on *The Ethics* and *The Physics* of Aristotle with subsequent medieval interpretations. Virgil explains also why it is that the Incontinent are not punished within the walls of Dis, and rather ingeniously sets forth the reasons why Usury is an act of Violence against Art, which is the child of Nature and hence the Grandchild of God. (By "Art," Dante means the arts and crafts by which man draws from nature, i.e., Industry.)

As he concludes he rises and urges Dante on. By means known only to Virgil, he is aware of the motion of the stars and from them he sees that it is about two hours before Sunrise of Holy Saturday.

We came to the edge of an enormous sink
rimmed by a circle of great broken boulders.[5]
Here we found ghastlier gangs. And here the stink
thrown up by the abyss so overpowered us
that we drew back, cowering behind the wall
of one of the great tombs; and standing thus,
I saw an inscription in the stone, and read:

4. Beatrice. 5. These boulders were broken from the earthquake that shook Hell at the death of Christ.

"I guard Anastasius, once Pope,
he whom Photinus[6] led from the straight road."
"Before we travel on to that blind pit
we must delay until our sense grows used
to its foul breath, and then we will not mind it,"
my Master said. And I then: "Let us find
some compensation for the time of waiting."
And he: "You shall see I have just that in mind.
My son," he began, "there are below this wall
three smaller circles,[7] each in its degree
like those you are about to leave, and all
are crammed with God's accurst. Accordingly,
that you may understand their sins at sight,
I will explain how each is prisoned, and why.
Malice is the sin most hated by God.
And the aim of malice is to injure others
whether by fraud or violence. But since fraud
is the vice of which man alone is capable,
God loathes it most. Therefore, the fraudulent
are placed below, and their torment is more painful.
The first below are the violent. But as violence
sins in three persons, so is that circle formed
of three descending rounds of crueler torments.
Against God, self, and neighbor is violence shown.
Against their persons and their goods, I say,
as you shall hear set forth with open reason.
Murder and mayhem are the violation
of the person of one's neighbor: and of his goods;
harassment, plunder, arson, and extortion.
Therefore, homicides, and those who strike
in malice—destroyers and plunderers—all lie
in that first round, and like suffers with like.
A man may lay violent hands upon his own
person and substance; so in that second round
eternally in vain repentance moan
the suicides and all who gamble away
and waste the good and substance of their lives
and weep in that sweet time when they should be gay.

6. Anastasius II was Pope from 496 to 498. This was the time of schism between the Eastern (Greek) and Western (Roman) churches. Photinus, deacon of Thessalonica, was of the Greek church and held to the Acacian heresy, which denied the divine paternity of Christ. Dante follows the report that Anastasius gave communion to Photinus, thereby countenancing his heresy. Dante's sources, however, had probably confused Anastasius II, the Pope, with Anastasius I, who was Emperor from 491 to 518. It was the Emperor Anastasius who was persuaded by Photinus to accept the Acacian heresy. 7. The Poets are now at the cliff that bounds the Sixth Circle. Below them lies Circles Seven, Eight, and Nine. They are smaller in circumference, being closer to the center, but they are all intricately subdivided, and will be treated at much greater length than were the Circles of Upper Hell.

Violence may be offered the deity
in the heart that blasphemes and refuses Him
and scorns the gifts of Nature, her beauty and bounty.
Therefore, the smallest round brands with its mark
both Sodom and Cahors,[8] and all who rail
at God and His commands in their hearts' dark.
Fraud, which is a canker to every conscience,
may be practiced by a man on those who trust him,
and on those who have reposed no confidence.
The latter mode seems only to deny
the bond of love which all men have from Nature;
therefore within the second circle lie
simoniacs, sycophants, and hypocrites,
falsifiers, thieves, and sorcerers,
grafters, pimps, and all such filthy cheats.
The former mode of fraud not only denies
the bond of Nature, but the special trust
added by bonds of friendship or blood-ties.
Hence, at the center point of all creation,[9]
in the smallest circle, on which Dis is founded,
the traitors lie in endless expiation."
"Master," I said, "the clarity of your mind
impresses all you touch; I see quite clearly
the orders of this dark pit of the blind.
But tell me: those who lie in the swamp's bowels,
those the wind blows about, those the rain beats,
and those who meet and clash with such mad howls[1]—
why are *they* not punished in the rust-red city[2]
if God's wrath be upon them? and if it is not,
why must they grieve through all eternity?"
And he: "Why does your understanding stray
so far from its own habit? or can it be
your thoughts are turned along some other way?
Have you forgotten that your *Ethics*[3] states
the three main dispositions of the soul
that lead to those offenses Heaven hates—
incontinence, malice, and bestiality?
and how incontinence offends God least
and earns least blame from Justice and Charity?
Now if you weigh this doctrine and recall

8. Both these cities are used as symbols for the sins that are said to have flourished within them. Sodom (Genesis xix) is, of course, identified with unnatural sex practices. Cahors, a city in southern France, was notorious in the Middle Ages for its usurers. 9. In the Ptolemaic system the earth was the center of the Universe. In Dante's geography, the bottom of Hell is the center of the earth. 1. These are, of course, the sinners of the Upper Hell. 2. Dis. All of Lower Hell is within the city walls. 3. *The Ethics* of Aristotle.

exactly who they are whose punishment
lies in that upper Hell outside the wall,
you will understand at once why they are confined
apart from these fierce wraiths, and why less anger
beats down on them from the Eternal Mind."
"O sun which clears all mists from troubled sight,
such joy attends your rising that I feel
as grateful to the dark as to the light.
Go back a little further," I said, "to where
you spoke of usury as an offense
against God's goodness. How is that made clear?"
"Philosophy makes plain by many reasons,"
he answered me, "to those who heed her teachings,
how all of Nature,—her laws, her fruits, her seasons,—
springs from the Ultimate Intellect and Its art:
and if you read your *Physics*[4] with due care,
you will note, not many pages from the start,
that Art strives after her by imitation,
as the disciple imitates the master;
Art, as it were, is the Grandchild of Creation.
By this, recalling the Old Testament
near the beginning of Genesis, you will see
that in the will of Providence, man was meant
to labor and to prosper. But usurers,
by seeking their increase in other ways,
scorn Nature in herself and her followers.
But come, for it is my wish now to go on:
the wheel turns and the Wain lies over Caurus,[5]
the Fish are quivering low on the horizon,
and there beyond us runs the road we go
down the dark scarp into the depths below."

CANTO XII

Circle Seven: Round One The Violent Against Neighbors

The Poets begin the descent of the fallen rock wall, having first to evade the Minotaur, who menaces them. Virgil tricks him and the Poets hurry by.

Below them they see the River of Blood, which marks the First

4. *The Physics* of Aristotle. 5. The Wain is the constellation of the Great Bear. Caurus was the northwest wind in classical mythology. Hence the constellation of the Great Bear now lies in the northwest. The Fish is the constellation and zodiacal sign of Pisces. It is just appearing over the horizon. The next sign of the zodiac is Aries. We know from Canto I that the sun is in Aries, and since the twelve signs of the zodiac each cover two hours of the day, it must now be about two hours before dawn. It is, therefore, approximately 4:00 A.M. of Holy Saturday. The stars are not visible in Hell, but throughout the *Inferno* Virgil reads them by some special power which Dante does not explain.

Round of the Seventh Circle as detailed in the previous Canto. Here are punished the Violent Against Their Neighbors, great war-makers, cruel tyrants, highwaymen—all who shed the blood of their fellowmen. As they wallowed in blood during their lives, so they are immersed in the boiling blood forever, each according to the degree of his guilt, while fierce Centaurs patrol the banks, ready to shoot with their arrows any sinner who raises himself out of the boiling blood beyond the limits permitted him. Alexander the Great is here, up to his lashes in the blood, and with him Attila, the Scourge of God. They are immersed in the deepest part of the river, which grows shallower as it circles to the other side of the ledge, then deepens again.

The Poets are challenged by the Centaurs, but Virgil wins a safe conduct from Chiron, their chief, who assigns Nessus to guide them and to bear them across the shallows of the boiling blood. Nessus carries them across at the point where it is only ankle deep and immediately leaves them and returns to his patrol.

The scene that opened from the edge of the pit
was mountainous, and such a desolation
that every eye would shun the sight of it:
a ruin like the Slides of Mark[6] near Trent
on the bank of the Adige, the result of an earthquake
or of some massive fault in the escarpment—
for, from the point on the peak where the mountain split
to the plain below, the rock is so badly shattered
a man at the top might make a rough stair of it.[7]
Such was the passage down the steep, and there
at the very top, at the edge of the broken cleft,
lay spread the Infamy of Crete,[8] the heir
of bestiality and the lecherous queen
who hid in a wooden cow. And when he saw us,
he gnawed his own flesh in a fit of spleen.
And my Master mocked: "How you do pump your breath!
Do you think, perhaps, it is the Duke of Athens,

6. *Li Slavoni di Marco* are about two miles from Rovereto (between Verona and Trent) on the left bank of the River Adige. 7. I am defeated in all attempts to convey Dante's emphasis in any sort of a verse line. The sense of the original: "It might provide some sort of a way down for one who started at the top, but (by implication) would not be climbable from below." 8. This is the infamous Minotaur of classical mythology. His mother was Pasiphaë, wife of Minos, the King of Crete. She conceived an unnatural passion for a bull, and in order to mate with it, she crept into a wooden cow. From this union the Minotaur was born, half-man, half-beast. King Minos kept him in an ingenious labyrinth from which he could not escape. When Androgeos, the son of King Minos, was killed by the Athenians, Minos exacted an annual tribute of seven maidens and seven youths. These were annually turned into the labyrinth and there were devoured by the Minotaur. The monster was finally killed by Theseus, Duke of Athens. He was aided by Ariadne, daughter of Minos (and half-sister of the monster). She gave Theseus a ball of cord to unwind as he entered the labyrinth and a sword with which to kill the Minotaur.

who in the world above served up your death?
Off with you, monster; this one does not come
instructed by your sister, but of himself
to observe your punishment in the lost kingdom."
As a bull that breaks its chains just when the knife
has struck its death-blow, cannot stand nor run
but leaps from side to side with its last life—
so danced the Minotaur, and my shrewd Guide
cried out: "Run now! While he is blind with rage!
Into the pass, quick, and get over the side!"
So we went down across the shale and slate
of that ruined rock, which often slid and shifted
under me at the touch of living weight.
I moved on, deep in thought; and my Guide to me:
"You are wondering perhaps about this ruin
which is guarded by the beast upon whose fury
I played just now. I should tell you that when last
I came this dark way to the depths of Hell,
this rock had not yet felt the ruinous blast.[9]
But certainly, if I am not mistaken,
it was just before the coming of Him who took
the souls from Limbo, that all Hell was shaken
so that I thought the universe felt love
and all its elements moved toward harmony,
whereby the world of matter, as some believe,
has often plunged to chaos.[1] It was then,
that here and elsewhere in the pits of Hell,
the ancient rock was stricken and broke open.
But turn your eyes to the valley; there we shall find
the river of boiling blood[2] in which are steeped
all who struck down their fellow men." Oh blind!
Oh ignorant, self-seeking cupidity
which spurs us so in the short mortal life
and steeps us so through all eternity!
I saw an arching fosse that was the bed
of a winding river circling through the plain
exactly as my Guide and Lord had said.

9. According to *Matthew* xxvii, 51, an earthquake shook the earth at the moment of Christ's death. These stones, Dante lets us know, were broken off in that earthquake. We shall find other effects of the same shock in the Eighth Circle. It is worth noting also that both the Upper (See Canto V, 34) and the Lower Hell begin with evidences of this ruin. For details of Virgil's first descent see notes to Canto IX. 1. The Greek philosopher, Empedocles, taught that the universe existed by the counter-balance (discord or mutual repulsion) of its elements. Should the elemental matter feel harmony (love or mutual attraction) all would fly together into chaos. 2. Phlegethon, the river that circles through the First Round of the Seventh Circle, then sluices through the wood of the suicides (the Second Round) and the burning sands (Third Round) to spew over the Great Cliff into the Eighth Circle, and so, eventually, to the bottom of Hell (Cocytus).

A file of Centaurs[3] galloped in the space
between the bank and the cliff, well armed with arrows,
riding as once on earth they rode to the chase.
And seeing us descend, that straggling band
halted, and three of them moved out toward us,
their long bows and their shafts already in hand.
And one of them cried out while still below:
"To what pain are you sent down that dark coast?
Answer from where you stand, or I draw the bow!"
"Chiron[4] is standing there hard by your side;
our answer will be to him. This wrath of yours
was always your own worst fate," my Guide replied.
And to me he said: "That is Nessus, who died in the wood
for insulting Dejanira.[5] At his death
he plotted his revenge in his own blood.
The one in the middle staring at his chest
is the mighty Chiron, he who nursed Achilles:
the other is Pholus,[6] fiercer than all the rest.
They run by that stream in thousands, snapping their bows
at any wraith who dares to raise himself
out of the blood more than his guilt allows."
We drew near those swift beasts. In a thoughtful pause
Chiron drew an arrow, and with its notch
he pushed his great beard back along his jaws.
And when he had thus uncovered the huge pouches
of his lips, he said to his fellows: "Have you noticed
how the one who walks behind moves what he touches?
That is not how the dead go." My good Guide,
already standing by the monstrous breast
in which the two mixed natures joined, replied:
"It is true he lives; in his necessity
I alone must lead him through this valley.
Fate brings him here, not curiosity.
From singing Alleluia the sublime
spirit[7] who sends me came. He is no bandit.

3. Creatures of classical mythology, half-horse, half-men. They were skilled and savage hunters, creatures of passion and violence. Like the Minotaur, they are symbols of the bestial-human, and as such, they are fittingly chosen as the tormentors of these sinners. 4. The son of Saturn and of the nymph Philira. He was the wisest and most just of the Centaurs and reputedly was the teacher of Achilles and of other Greek heroes to whom he imparted great skill in bearing arms, medicine, astronomy, music, and augury. Dante places him far down in Hell with the others of his kind, but though he draws Chiron's coarseness, he also grants him a kind of majestic understanding. 5. Nessus carried travelers across the River Evenus for hire. He was hired to ferry Dejanira, the wife of Hercules, and tried to abduct her, but Hercules killed him with a poisoned arrow. While Nessus was dying, he whispered to Dejanira that a shirt stained with his poisoned blood would act as a love charm should Hercules' affections stray. When Hercules fell in love with Iole, Dejanira sent him a shirt stained with the Centaur's blood. The shirt poisoned Hercules and he died in agony. 6. A number of classical poets mention Pholus but very little else is known of him. 7. Beatrice.

Nor am I one who ever stooped to crime.
But in the name of the Power by which I go
this sunken way across the floor of Hell,
assign us one of your troop whom we may follow,
that he may guide us to the ford, and there
carry across on his back the one I lead,
for he is not a spirit to move through air."
Chiron turned his head on his right breast[8]
and said to Nessus: "Go with them, and guide them,
and turn back any others that would contest
their passage." So we moved beside our guide
along the bank of the scalding purple river
in which the shrieking wraiths were boiled and dyed.
Some stood up to their lashes in that torrent,
and as we passed them the huge Centaur said:
"These were the kings of bloodshed and despoilment.
Here they pay for their ferocity.
Here is Alexander.[9] And Dionysius,
who brought long years of grief to Sicily.
That brow you see with the hair as black as night
is Azzolino;[1] and that beside him, the blonde,
is Opizzo da Esti,[2] who had his mortal light
blown out by his own stepson." I turned then
to speak to the Poet but he raised a hand:
"Let him be the teacher now, and I will listen."
Further on, the Centaur stopped beside
a group of spirits steeped as far as the throat
in the race of boiling blood, and there our guide
pointed out a sinner who stood alone:
"That one before God's altar pierced a heart
still honored on the Thames."[3] And he passed on.
We came in sight of some who were allowed
to raise the head and all the chest from the river,
and I recognized many there. Thus, as we followed
along the stream of blood, its level fell

8. The right is the side of virtue and honor. In Chiron it probably signifies his human side as opposed to his bestial side. 9. Alexander the Great. *Dionysius:* Dionysius I (died 367 B.C.) and his son, Dionysius II (died 343), were tyrants of Sicily. Both were infamous as prototypes of the bloodthirsty and exorbitant ruler. Dante may intend either or both. 1. Ezzelino da Romano, Count of Onora (1194–1259). The cruelest of the Ghibelline tyrants. In 1236 Frederick II appointed Ezzelino his vicar in Padua. Ezzelino became especially infamous for his bloody treatment of the Paduans, whom he slaughtered in great numbers. 2. Marquis of Ferrara (1264–1293). The account of his life is confused. One must accept Dante's facts as given. 3. The sinner indicated is Guy de Montfort. His father, Simon de Montfort, was a leader of the barons who rebelled against Henry III and was killed at the battle of Evesham (1265) by Prince Edward (later Edward I). In 1271, Guy (then Vicar General of Tuscany) avenged his father's death by murdering Henry's nephew (who was also named Henry). The crime was openly committed in a church at Viterbo. The murdered Henry's heart was sealed in a casket and sent to London, where it was accorded various honors.

until it cooked no more than the feet of the damned.
And here we crossed the ford to deeper Hell.
"Just as you see the boiling stream grow shallow
along this side," the Centaur said to us
when we stood on the other bank, "I would have you know
that on the other, the bottom sinks anew
more and more, until it comes again
full circle to the place where the tyrants stew.
It is there that Holy Justice spends its wrath
on Sextus[4] and Pyrrhus through eternity,
and on Attila,[5] who was a scourge on earth:
and everlastingly milks out the tears
of Rinier da Corento and Rinier Pazzo,[6]
those two assassins who for many years
stalked the highways, bloody and abhorred."
And with that he started back across the ford.

CANTO XIII

Circle Seven: Round Two The Violent Against Themselves

Nessus carries the Poets across the river of boiling blood and leaves them in the Second Round of the Seventh Circle, The Wood of the Suicides. Here are punished those who destroyed their own lives and those who destroyed their substance.

The souls of the Suicides are encased in thorny trees whose leaves are eaten by the odious Harpies, the overseers of these damned. When the Harpies feed upon them, damaging their leaves and limbs, the wound bleeds. Only as long as the blood flows are the souls of the trees able to speak. Thus, they who destroyed their own bodies are denied a human form; and just as the supreme expression of their lives was self-destruction, so they are permitted to speak only through that which tears and destroys them. Only through their own blood do they find voice. And to add one more dimension to the symbolism, it is the Harpies—defilers of all they touch—who give them their eternally recurring wounds.

The Poets pause before one tree and speak with the soul of Pier delle Vigne. In the same wood they see Jacomo da Sant' Andrea, and Lano da Siena, two famous Squanderers and Destroyers of Goods pursued by a pack of savage hounds. The hounds overtake Sant' Andrea, tear him to pieces and go off carrying his limbs in their

4. Probably the younger son of Pompey the Great. His piracy is mentioned in Lucan (*Pharsalia*, VI, 420–422). *Pyrrhus:* Pyrrhus, the son of Achilles, was especially bloodthirsty at the sack of Troy. Pyrrhus, King of Epirus (319–372 B.C.), waged relentless and bloody war against the Greeks and Romans. Either may be intended. 5. King of the Huns from 433 to 453. He was called the Scourge of God. 6. Both were especially bloodthirsty robber-barons of the thirteenth century.

teeth, a self-evident symbolic retribution for the violence with which these sinners destroyed their substance in the world. After this scene of horror, Dante speaks to an Unknown Florentine Suicide whose soul is inside the bush which was torn by the hound pack when it leaped upon Sant' Andrea.

Nessus had not yet reached the other shore
when we moved on into a pathless wood
that twisted upward from Hell's broken floor.
Its foliage was not verdant, but nearly black.
The unhealthy branches, gnarled and warped and tangled,
bore poison thorns instead of fruit. The track
of those wild beasts that shun the open spaces
men till between Cecina and Corneto
runs through no rougher nor more tangled places.[7]
Here nest the odious Harpies[8] of whom my Master
wrote how they drove Aeneas and his companions
from the Strophades with prophecies of disaster.
Their wings are wide, their feet clawed, their huge bellies
covered with feathers, their necks and faces human.
They croak eternally in the unnatural trees.
"Before going on, I would have you understand,"
my Guide began, "we are in the second round
and shall be till we reach the burning sand.[9]
Therefore look carefully and you will see
things in this wood, which, if I told them to you
would shake the confidence you have placed in me."
I heard cries of lamentation rise and spill
on every hand, but saw no souls in pain
in all that waste; and, puzzled, I stood still.
I think perhaps he thought that I was thinking[1]
those cries rose from among the twisted roots
through which the spirits of the damned were slinking
to hide from us. Therefore my Master said:
"If you break off a twig, what you will learn

7. The reference here is to the Maremma district of Tuscany which lies between the mountains and the sea. The river Cecina is the northern boundary of this district; Corneto is on the river Marta, which forms the southern boundary. It is a wild district of marsh and forest. 8. These hideous birds with the faces of malign women were often associated with the Erinyes (Furies). Their original function in mythology was to snatch away the souls of men at the command of the Gods. Later, they were portrayed as defilers of food, and, by extension, of everything they touched. The islands of the Strophades were their legendary abode. Aeneas and his men landed there and fought with the Harpies, who drove them back and pronounced a prophecy of unbearable famine upon them. 9. The Third Round of this Circle. 1. The original is "*Cred' io ch'ei credette ch'io credesse.*" This sort of word play was considered quite elegant by medieval rhetoricians and by the ornate Sicilian School of poetry. Dante's style is based on a rejection of all such devices in favor of a sparse and direct diction. The best explanation of this unusual instance seems to be that Dante is anticipating his talk with Pier delle Vigne, a rhetorician who, as we shall see, delights in this sort of locution.

will drive what you are thinking from your head."
Puzzled, I raised my hand a bit and slowly
broke off a branchlet from an enormous thorn:
and the great trunk of it cried: "Why do you break me?"
And after blood had darkened all the bowl
of the wound, it cried again: "Why do you tear me?
Is there no pity left in any soul?
Men we were, and now we are changed to sticks;
well might your hand have been more merciful
were we no more than souls of lice and ticks."
As a green branch with one end all aflame
will hiss and sputter sap out of the other
as the air escapes—so from that trunk there came
words and blood together, gout by gout.
Startled, I dropped the branch that I was holding
and stood transfixed by fear, half turned about
to my Master, who replied: "O wounded soul,
could he have believed before what he has seen
in my verses only,[2] you would yet be whole,
for his hand would never have been raised against you.
But knowing this truth could never be believed
till it was seen, I urged him on to do
what grieves me now; and I beg to know your name,
that to make you some amends in the sweet world
when he returns, he may refresh your fame."
And the trunk: "So sweet those words to me that I
cannot be still, and may it not annoy you
if I seem somewhat lengthy in reply.
I am he who held both keys to Frederick's heart,[3]
locking, unlocking with so deft a touch
that scarce another soul had any part
in his most secret thoughts. Through every strife
I was so faithful to my glorious office
that for it I gave up both sleep and life.
That harlot, Envy, who on Caesar's[4] face

2. The *Aeneid*, Book III, describes a similar bleeding plant. There, Aeneas pulls at a myrtle growing on a Thracian hillside. It bleeds where he breaks it and a voice cries out of the ground. It is the voice of Polydorus, son of Priam and friend of Aeneas. He had been treacherously murdered by the Thracian king. 3. Pier delle Vigne 1190–1249. A famous and once-powerful minister of Emperor Frederick II. He enjoyed Frederick's whole confidence until 1247 when he was accused of treachery and was imprisoned and blinded. He committed suicide to escape further torture. (For Frederick see Canto X.) Pier delle Vigne was famous for his eloquence and for his mastery of the ornate Provençal-inspired Sicilian School of Italian Poetry, and Dante styles his speech accordingly. It is worth noting, however, that the style changes abruptly in the middle of line 72. There, his courtly preamble finished, delle Vigne speaks from the heart, simply and passionately. *Who held both keys:* The phrasing unmistakably suggests the Papal keys; delle Vigne may be suggesting that he was to Frederick as the Pope is to God. 4. Frederick II was of course Caesar of the Roman Empire, but in this generalized context "Caesar" seems to be used as a generic term for any great ruler, i.e., "The harlot, Envy, never turns her attention from those in power."

keeps fixed forever her adulterous stare,
the common plague and vice of court and palace,
inflamed all minds against me. These inflamed
so inflamed him that all my happy honors
were changed to mourning. Then, unjustly blamed,
my soul, in scorn, and thinking to be free
of scorn in death, made me at last, though just,
unjust to myself. By the new roots[5] of this tree
I swear to you that never in word or spirit
did I break faith to my lord and emperor
who was so worthy of honor in his merit.
If either of you return to the world, speak for me,
to vindicate in the memory of men
one who lies prostrate from the blows of Envy."
The Poet stood. Then turned. "Since he is silent,"
he said to me, "do not you waste this hour,
if you wish to ask about his life or torment."
And I replied: "Question him for my part,
on whatever you think I would do well to hear;
I could not, such compassion chokes my heart."
The Poet began again: "That this man may
with all his heart do for you what your words
entreat him to, imprisoned spirit, I pray,
tell us how the soul is bound and bent
into these knots, and whether any ever
frees itself from such imprisonment."
At that the trunk blew powerfully, and then
the wind became a voice that spoke these words:
"Briefly is the answer given: when
out of the flesh from which it tore itself,
the violent spirit comes to punishment,
Minos assigns it to the seventh shelf.
It falls into the wood, and landing there,
wherever fortune flings it,[6] it strikes root,
and there it sprouts, lusty as any tare,
shoots up a sapling, and becomes a tree.
The Harpies, feeding on its leaves then, give it
pain and pain's outlet simultaneously.[7]
Like the rest, we shall go for our husks on Judgment Day,
but not that we may wear them, for it is not just
that a man be given what he throws away.
Here shall we drag them and in this mournful glade

5. Pier delle Vigne had only been in Hell fifty-one years, a short enough time on the scale of eternity. 6. Just as the soul of the suicide refused to accept divine regulation of its mortal life span, so eternal justice takes no special heed of where the soul falls. 7. Suicide also gives pain and its outlet simultaneously.

our bodies will dangle to the end of time,
each on the thorns of its tormented shade."
We waited by the trunk, but it said no more;
and waiting, we were startled by a noise
that grew through all the wood. Just such a roar
and trembling as one feels when the boar and chase
approach his stand, the beasts and branches crashing
and clashing in the heat of the fierce race.
And there on the left, running so violently
they broke off every twig in the dark wood,
two torn and naked wraiths went plunging by me.
The leader cried, "Come now, O Death! Come now!"
And the other, seeing that he was outrun
cried out: "Your legs were not so ready, Lano,[8]
in the jousts at the Toppo." And suddenly in his rush,
perhaps because his breath was failing him,
he hid himself inside a thorny bush
and cowered among its leaves. Then at his back,
the wood leaped with black bitches, swift as greyhounds
escaping from their leash, and all the pack
sprang on him; with their fangs they opened him
and tore him savagely, and then withdrew,
carrying his body with them, limb by limb.
Then, taking me by the hand across the wood,
my Master led me toward the bush. Lamenting,
all its fractures blew out words and blood:
"O Jacomo da Sant' Andrea!"[9] it said,
"what have you gained in making me your screen?
What part had I in the foul life you led?"
And when my Master had drawn up to it
he said: "Who were you, who through all your wounds
blow out your blood with your lament, sad spirit?"
And he to us: "You who have come to see
how the outrageous mangling of these hounds
has torn my boughs and stripped my leaves from me,
O heap them round my ruin! I was born
in the city that tore down Mars and raised the Baptist.[1]

8. Lano da Siena, a famous squanderer. He died at the ford of the river Toppo near Arezzo in 1287 in a battle against the Aretines. Boccaccio writes that he deliberately courted death having squandered all his great wealth and being unwilling to live on in poverty. Thus his companion's jeer probably means: "You were not so ready to run then, Lano: why are you running now?"
9. A Paduan with an infamous lust for laying waste his own goods and those of his neighbors. Arson was his favorite prank. On one occasion, to celebrate the arrival of certain noble guests, he set fire to all the workers' huts and outbuildings of his estate. He was murdered in 1239, probably by assassins hired by Ezzolino (for whom see Canto XII). 1. Florence. Mars was the first patron of the city and when the Florentines were converted to Christianity they pulled down his equestrian statue and built a church on the site of his temple. The statue of Mars was placed on a tower beside the Arno. When Totila (see note to line 150) destroyed Florence the tower fell into

On that account the God of War has sworn
her sorrow shall not end. And were it not
that something of his image still survives
on the bridge across the Arno, some have thought
those citizens who of their love and pain
afterwards rebuilt it from the ashes
left by Attila,[2] would have worked in vain.
I am one who has no tale to tell:
I made myself a gibbet of my own lintel."

CANTO XIV

Circle Seven: Round Three The Violent Against God, Nature, and Art

Dante, in pity, restores the torn leaves to the soul of his countryman and the Poets move on to the next round, a great Plain of Burning Sand upon which there descends an eternal slow Rain of Fire. Here, scorched by fire from above and below, are three classes of sinners suffering differing degrees of exposure to the fire. The Blasphemers (The Violent Against God) are stretched supine upon the sand, the Sodomites (The Violent Against Nature) run in endless circles, and the Usurers (The Violent Against Art, which is the Grandchild of God) huddle on the sands.

The Poets find Capaneus stretched out on the sands, the chief sinner of that place. He is still blaspheming God. They continue along the edge of the Wood of the Suicides and come to a blood-red rill which flows boiling from the Wood and crosses the burning plain. Virgil explains the miraculous power of its waters and discourses on the Old Man of Crete and the origin of all the rivers of Hell.

The symbolism of the burning plain is obviously centered in sterility (the desert image) and wrath (the fire image). Blasphemy, sodomy, and usury are all unnatural and sterile actions: thus the unbearing desert is the eternity of these sinners; and thus the rain, which in nature should be fertile and cool, descends as fire. Capaneus, moreover, is subjected not to the wrath of nature (the sands below) and the wrath of God (the fire from above), but is tortured most by his own inner violence, which is the root of blasphemy.

Love of that land that was our common source
moved me to tears; I gathered up the leaves
and gave them back. He was already hoarse.

the Arno and the statue with it. Legend has it that Florence could never have been rebuilt had not the mutilated statue been rescued. It was placed on the Ponte Vecchio but was carried away in the flood of 1333. 2. Dante confuses Attila with Totila, King of the Ostrogoths (died 552). He destroyed Florence in 542. Attila (d. 453), King of the Huns, destroyed many cities of northern Italy, but not Florence.

We came to the edge of the forest where one goes
from the second round to the third, and there we saw
what fearful arts the hand of Justice knows.
To make these new things wholly clear, I say
we came to a plain whose soil repels all roots.
The wood of misery rings it the same way
the wood itself is ringed by the red fosse.
We paused at its edge: the ground was burning sand,
just such a waste as Cato marched across.[3]
O endless wrath of God: how utterly
thou shouldst become a terror to all men
who read the frightful truths revealed to me!
Enormous herds of naked souls I saw,
lamenting till their eyes were burned of tears;
they seemed condemned by an unequal law,
for some were stretched supine upon the ground,
some squatted with their arms about themselves,
and others without pause roamed round and round.
Most numerous were those that roamed the plain.
Far fewer were the souls stretched on the sand,
but moved to louder cries by greater pain.
And over all that sand on which they lay
or crouched or roamed, great flakes of flame fell slowly
as snow falls in the Alps on a windless day.
Like those Alexander met in the hot regions
of India, flames raining from the sky
to fall still unextinguished on his legions:
whereat he formed his ranks, and at their head
set the example, trampling the hot ground
for fear the tongues of fire might join and spread—[4]
just so in Hell descended the long rain
upon the damned, kindling the sand like tinder
under a flint and steel, doubling the pain.
In a never-ending fit upon those sands,
the arms of the damned twitched all about their bodies,
now here, now there, brushing away the brands.
"Poet," I said, "master of every dread
we have encountered, other than those fiends
who sallied from the last gate of the dead—
who is that wraith who lies along the rim
and sets his face against the fire in scorn,

3. In 47 B.C., Cato of Utica led an army across the Libyan desert. Lucan described the march in *Pharsalia* IX, 587 ff. 4. This incident of Alexander the Great's campaign in India is described in *De Meteoris* of Albertus Magnus and was taken by him with considerable alteration from a letter reputedly sent to Aristotle by Alexander.

so that the rain seems not to mellow him?"
And he himself,[5] hearing what I had said
to my Guide and Lord concerning him, replied:
"What I was living, the same am I now, dead.
Though Jupiter wear out his sooty smith
from whom on my last day he snatched in anger
the jagged thunderbolt he pierced me with;
though he wear out the others one by one
who labor at the forge at Mongibello[6]
crying again 'Help! Help! Help me, good Vulcan!'
as he did at Phlegra[7] and hurl down endlessly
with all the power of Heaven in his arm,
small satisfaction would he win from me."
At this my Guide spoke with such vehemence
as I had not heard from him in all of Hell:
"O Capaneus, by your insolence
you are made to suffer as much fire inside
as falls upon you. Only your own rage
could be fit torment for your sullen pride."
Then he turned to me more gently. "That," he said,
"was one of the Seven who laid siege to Thebes.
Living, he scorned God, and among the dead
he scorns Him yet. He thinks he may detest
God's power too easily, but as I told him,
his slobber is a fit badge for his breast.
Now follow me; and mind for your own good
you do not step upon the burning sand,
but keep well back along the edge of the wood."
We walked in silence then till we reached a rill
that gushes from the wood;[8] it ran so red
the memory sends a shudder through me still.
As from the Bulicame[9] springs the stream
the sinful women keep to their own use;
so down the sand the rill flowed out in steam.
The bed and both its banks were petrified,

5. Capaneus, one of the seven captains who warred on Thebes. As he scaled the walls of Thebes, Capaneus defied Jove to protect them. Jove replied with a thunderbolt that killed the blasphemer with his blasphemy still on his lips. (Statius, *Thebiad* x, 845 ff.) 6. Mt. Etna. Vulcan was believed to have his smithy inside the volcano. 7. At the battle of Phlegra in Thessaly the Titans tried to storm Olympus. Jove drove them back with the help of the thunderbolts Vulcan forged for him. 8. The rill, still blood-red and still boiling, is the overflow of Phlegethon which descends across the Wood of the Suicides and the Burning Plain to plunge over the Great Cliff into the Eighth Circle. It is clearly a water of marvels, for it not only petrifies the sands over which it flows, but its clouds of steam quench all the flames above its course. 9. A hot sulphur spring near Viterbo. The choice is strikingly apt, for the waters of the Bulicame not only boil and steam but have a distinctly reddish tint as a consequence of their mineral content. A part of the Bulicame flows out through what was once a quarter reserved to prostitutes; and they were given special rights to the water, since they were not permitted to use the public baths.

as were its margins; thus I knew at once
our passage through the sand lay by its side.
"Among all other wonders I have shown you
since we came through the gate denied to none,
nothing your eyes have seen is equal to
the marvel of the rill by which we stand,
for it stifles all the flames above its course
as it flows out across the burning sand."
So spoke my Guide across the flickering light,
and I begged him to bestow on me the food
for which he had given me the appetite.
"In the middle of the sea, and gone to waste,
there lies a country known as Crete," he said,
"under whose king the ancient world was chaste.
Once Rhea[1] chose it as the secret crypt
and cradle of her son; and better to hide him,
her Corybantes raised a din when he wept.
An ancient giant[2] stands in the mountain's core.
He keeps his shoulder turned toward Damietta,
and looks toward Rome as if it were his mirror.
His head is made of gold; of silverwork
his breast and both his arms, of polished brass
the rest of his great torso to the fork.
He is of chosen iron from there down,
except that his right foot is terra cotta;
it is this foot he rests more weight upon.
Every part except the gold is split
by a great fissure from which endless tears
drip down and hollow out the mountain's pit.
Their course sinks to this pit from stone to stone,

1. Wife of Saturn (Cronos) and mother of Jove (Zeus). It had been prophesied to Saturn that one of his own children would dethrone him. To nullify the prophecy Saturn devoured each of his children at birth. On the birth of Jove, Rhea duped Saturn by letting him bolt down a stone wrapped in baby clothes. After this tribute to her husband's appetite she hid the infant on Mount Ida in Crete. There she posted her Corybantes (or Bacchantes) as guards and instructed them to set up a great din whenever the baby cried. Thus Saturn would not hear him. The Corybantic dances of the ancient Greeks were based on the frenzied shouting and clashing of swords on shields with which the Corybantes protected the infant Jove. 2. This is the Old Man of Crete. The original of this figure occurs in *Daniel* ii, 32–34, where it is told by Daniel as Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Dante follows the details of the original closely but adds a few of his own and a totally different interpretation. In Dante each metal represents one of the ages of man, each deteriorating from the Golden Age of Innocence. The left foot, terminating the Age of Iron, is the Holy Roman Empire. The right foot, of terra cotta, is the Roman Catholic Church, a more fragile base than the left, but the one upon which the greater weight descends. The tears of the woes of man are a Dantean detail: they flow down the great fissure that defaces all but the Golden Age. Thus, starting in woe, they flow through man's decline, into the hollow of the mountain and become the waters of all Hell. Dante's other major addition is the site and position of the figure: equidistant from the three continents, the Old Man stands at a sort of center of Time, his back turned to Damietta in Egypt (here symbolizing the East, the past, the birth of religion) and fixes his gaze upon Rome (the West, the future, the Catholic Church). It is certainly the most elaborately worked single symbol in the *Inferno*.

to the end of all descent, and disappear
into Cocytus.[3] You shall see what sink that is
with your own eyes. I pass it in silence here."
And I to him: "But if these waters flow
from the world above, why is this rill met only
along this shelf?" And he to me: "You know
the place is round, and though you have come deep
into the valley through the many circles,
always bearing left along the steep,
you have not traveled any circle through
its total round; hence when new things appear
from time to time, that hardly should surprise you."
And I: "Where shall we find Phlegethon's course?
And Lethe's? One you omit, and of the other
you only say the tear-flood is its source."
"In all you ask of me you please me truly,"
he answered, "but the red and boiling water
should answer the first question you put to me
and you shall stand by Lethe, but far hence:
there, where the spirits go to wash themselves
when their guilt has been removed by penitence."
And then he said: "Now it is time to quit
this edge of shade: follow close after me
along the rill, and do not stray from it;
for the unburning margins form a lane,
and by them we may cross the burning plain."

CANTO XV

Circle Seven: Round Three The Violent Against Nature

Protected by the marvelous powers of the boiling rill, the Poets walk along its banks across the burning plain. The Wood of the Suicides is behind them; the Great Cliff at whose foot lies the Eighth Circle is before them.

They pass one of the roving bands of Sodomites. One of the sinners stops Dante, and with great difficulty the Poet recognizes him under his baked features as Ser Brunetto Latino. This is a reunion with a dearly-loved man and writer, one who had considerably influenced Dante's own development, and Dante addresses him with great and sorrowful affection, paying him the highest tribute offered to any sinner in the Inferno. Brunetto prophesies Dante's sufferings at the hands of the Florentines, gives an account of the souls that move with him through the fire, and finally, under Divine Compulsion, races off across the plain.

3. The frozen lake that lies at the bottom of Hell. (See Cantos XXXII–XXXIV.)

We go by one of the stone margins now
and the steam of the rivulet makes a shade above it,
guarding the stream and banks from the flaming snow.
As the Flemings in the lowland between Bruges
and Wissant, under constant threat of the sea,
erect their great dikes to hold back the deluge;[4]
as the Paduans along the shores of the Brent
build levees to protect their towns and castles
lest Chiarentana drown in the spring torrent—
to the same plan, though not so wide nor high,[5]
did the engineer, whoever he may have been,
design the margin we were crossing by.
Already we were so far from the wood
that even had I turned to look at it,
I could not have made it out from where I stood,
when a company of shades came into sight
walking beside the bank. They stared at us
as men at evening by the new moon's light
stare at one another when they pass by
on a dark road, pointing their eyebrows toward us
as an old tailor squints at his needle's eye.
Stared at so closely by that ghostly crew,
I was recognized by one who seized the hem
of my skirt and said: "Wonder of wonders! You?"
And I, when he stretched out his arm to me,
searched his baked features closely, till at last
I traced his image from my memory
in spite of the burnt crust, and bending near
to put my face closer to his, at last
I answered: "Ser Brunetto, are *you* here?"[6]
"O my son! may it not displease you," he cried,
"if Brunetto Latino leave his company
and turn and walk a little by your side."
And I to him: "With all my soul I ask it.
Or let us sit together, if it please him
who is my Guide and leads me through this pit."

4. Dante compares the banks of the rill of Phlegethon to the dikes built by the Flemings to hold back the sea, and to those built by the Paduans to hold back the spring floods of the river Brent. Chiarentana (Latin: Clarentana) was a Duchy of the Middle Ages. Its territory included the headwaters of the Brent (Brenta). 5. Their width is never precisely specified, but we shall see when Dante walks along speaking to Ser Brunetto (line 40) that their height is about that of a man. 6. Born between 1210 and 1230, died 1294. A prominent Florentine Guelph who held, among many other posts, that of notary, whence the title *Ser* (sometimes *Sere*). He was not Dante's schoolmaster as many have supposed—he was much too busy and important a man for that. Dante's use of the word "master" is to indicate spiritual indebtedness to Brunetto and his works. It is worth noting that Dante addresses him in Italian as "voi" instead of using the less respectful "tu" form. Farinata is the only other sinner so addressed in the *Inferno*. Brunetto's two principal books, both of which Dante admires, were the prose *Livre dou Tresor* (*The Book of the Treasure*) and the poetic *Tesoretta* (*The Little Treasure*). Dante learned a number of his devices from the allegorical journey which forms the *Tesoretto*.

"My son!" he said, "whoever of this train
pauses a moment, must lie a hundred years
forbidden to brush off the burning rain.
Therefore, go on; I will walk at your hem,[7]
and then rejoin my company, which goes
mourning eternal loss in eternal flame."
I did not dare descend to his own level
but kept my head inclined, as one who walks
in reverence meditating good and evil.
"What brings you here before your own last day?
What fortune or what destiny?" he began.
"And who is he that leads you this dark way?"
"Up there in the happy life I went astray
in a valley," I replied, "before I had reached
the fullness of my years. Only yesterday
at dawn I turned from it. This spirit showed
himself to me as I was turning back,
and guides me home again along this road."
And he: "Follow your star, for if in all
of the sweet life I saw one truth shine clearly,
you cannot miss your glorious arrival.
And had I lived to do what I meant to do,
I would have cheered and seconded your work,
observing Heaven so well disposed toward you.
But that ungrateful and malignant stock
that came down from Fiesole of old
and still smacks of the mountain and the rock,
for your good works will be your enemy.[8]
And there is cause: the sweet fig is not meant
to bear its fruit beside the bitter sorb-tree.[9]
Even the old adage calls them blind,[1]
an envious, proud, and avaricious people:
see that you root their customs from your mind.
It is written in your stars, and will come to pass,
that your honours shall make both sides hunger for you:[2]

7. Dante is standing on the dike at approximately the level of Brunetto's head and he cannot descend because of the rain of fire and the burning sands. 8. The ancient Etruscan city of Fiesole was situated on a hill about three miles north of the present site of Florence. According to legend, Fiesole had taken the side of Catiline in his war with Julius Caesar. Caesar destroyed the town and set up a new city called Florence on the Arno, peopling it with Romans and Fiesolans. The Romans were the aristocracy of the new city, but the Fiesolans were a majority. Dante ascribes the endless bloody conflicts of Florence largely to the internal strife between these two strains. His scorn of the Fiesolans is obvious in this passage. Dante proudly proclaimed his descent from the Roman strain. 9. A species of tart apple. 1. The source of this proverbial expression, "Blind as a Florentine," can no longer be traced with any assurance, though many incidents from Florentine history suggest possible sources. 2. Brunetto can scarcely mean that both sides will hunger to welcome the support of a man of Dante's distinction. Rather, that both sides will hunger to destroy him. (See also lines 94–95. Dante obviously accepts this as another dark prophecy.)

but the goat shall never reach to crop that grass.
Let the beasts of Fiesole[3] devour their get
like sows, but never let them touch the plant,
if among their rankness any springs up yet,
in which is born again the holy seed
of the Romans who remained among their rabble
when Florence made a new nest for their greed."
"Ah, had I all my wish," I answered then,
"you would not yet be banished from the world
in which you were a radiance among men,
for that sweet image, gentle and paternal,
you were to me in the world when hour by hour
you taught me how man makes himself eternal,
lives in my mind, and now strikes to my heart;
and while I live, the gratitude I owe it
will speak to men out of my life and art.
What you have told me of my course, I write
by another text I save to show a Lady[4]
who will judge these matters, if I reach her height.
This much I would have you know: so long, I say,
as nothing in my conscience troubles me
I am prepared for Fortune, come what may.
Twice already in the eternal shade
I have heard this prophecy;[5] but let Fortune turn
her wheel as she please, and the countryman his spade."
My guiding spirit paused at my last word
and, turning right about, stood eye to eye
to say to me: "Well heeded is well heard."
But I did not reply to him, going on
with Ser Brunetto to ask him who was with him
in the hot sands, the best-born and best known.
And he to me: "Of some who share this walk
it is good to know; of the rest let us say nothing,
for the time would be too short for so much talk.
In brief, we all were clerks and men of worth,
great men of letters, scholars of renown;
all by the one same crime defiled on earth.
Priscian moves there along the wearisome
sad way, and Francesco d'Accorso,[6] and also there,
if you had any longing for such scum,

3. The Fiesolans themselves. 4. Beatrice. 5. The prophecies of Ciacco (Canto VI) and of Farinata (Canto X) are the other two places at which Dante's exile and suffering are foretold. Dante replies that come what may he will remain true to his purpose through all affliction; and Virgil turns to look proudly at his pupil uttering a proverb: "*Bene ascolta chi la nota*," i.e., "Well heeded is well heard." 6. Florentine scholar. He served as a professor at Bologna and, from 1273 to 1280, at Oxford. He died in Bologna in 1294.

you might have seen that one the Servant of Servants[7]
sent from the Arno to the Bacchiglione
where he left his unnatural organ wrapped in cerements.
I would say more, but there across the sand
a new smoke rises and new people come,
and I must run to be with my own band.
Remember my *Treasure*, in which I still live on:
I ask no more." He turned then, and he seemed,
across that plain, like one of those who run
for the green cloth at Verona; and of those,
more like the one who wins, than those who lose.

CANTO XVI

Circle Seven: Round Three The Violent Against Nature and Art

The Poets arrive within hearing of the waterfall that plunges over the Great Cliff into the Eighth Circle. The sound is still a distant throbbing when three wraiths, recognizing Dante's Florentine dress, detach themselves from their band and come running toward him. They are Jacopo Rusticucci, Guido Guerra, and Tegghiaio Aldobrandi, all of them Florentines whose policies and personalities Dante admired. Rusticucci and Tegghiaio have already been mentioned in a highly complimentary way in Dante's talk with Ciacco (Canto VI).

The sinners ask for news of Florence, and Dante replies with a passionate lament for her present degradation. The three wraiths return to their band and the Poets continue to the top of the falls. Here, at Virgil's command, Dante removes a Cord from about his waist and Virgil drops it over the edge of the abyss. As if in answer to a signal, a great distorted shape comes swimming up through the dirty air of the pit.

We could already hear the rumbling drive
of the waterfall in its plunge to the next circle,
a murmur like the throbbing of a hive,
when three shades turned together on the plain,
breaking toward us from a company

7. Dante's old enemy, Boniface VIII. *Survus servorum* is technically a correct papal title, but there is certainly a touch of irony in Dante's application of it in this context. In 1295 Boniface transferred Bishop Andrea de'Mozzi from the Bishopric of Florence (on the Arno) to that of Vicenza (on the Bacchiglione). The transference was reputedly brought about at the request of the Bishop's brother, Tommaso de' Mozzi of Florence, who wished to remove from his sight the spectacle of his brother's stupidity and unnatural vices.

that went its way to torture in that rain.
They cried with one voice as they ran toward me:
"Wait, oh wait, for by your dress you seem
a voyager from our own tainted country."
Ah! what wounds I saw, some new, some old,
branded upon their bodies! Even now
the pain of it in memory turns me cold.
My Teacher heard their cries, and turning-to,
stood face to face. "Do as they ask," he said,
"for these are souls to whom respect is due;
and were it not for the darting flames that hem
our narrow passage in, I should have said
it were more fitting you ran after them."
We paused, and they began their ancient wail
over again, and when they stood below us
they formed themselves into a moving wheel.
As naked and anointed champions do
in feeling out their grasp and their advantage
before they close in for the thrust or blow—
so circling, each one stared up at my height,
and as their feet moved left around the circle,
their necks kept turning backward to the right.
"If the misery of this place, and our unkempt
and scorched appearance," one of them began,
"bring us and what we pray into contempt,
still may our earthly fame move you to tell
who and what you are, who so securely
set your live feet to the dead dusts of Hell.
This peeled and naked soul who runs before me
around this wheel, was higher than you think
there in the world, in honor and degree.
Guido Guerra[2] was the name he bore,
the good Gualdrada's[3] grandson. In his life
he won great fame in counsel and in war.
The other who behind me treads this sand

2. Around 1220–1272. A valiant leader of the Guelphs (hence his name which signifies Guido of War) despite his Ghibelline origin as one of the counts of Guidi. It is a curious fact, considering the prominence of Guido, that Dante is the only writer to label him a sodomite. 3. The legend of "the good Gualdrada," Guido Guerra's grandmother, is a typical example of the medieval talent for embroidery. She was the daughter of Bellincione Berti de' Ravignana. The legend is that Emperor Otto IV saw her in church and, attracted by her beauty, asked who she was. Bellincione replied that she was the daughter of one whose soul would be made glad to have the Emperor salute her with a kiss. The young-lady-of-all-virtues, hearing her father's words, declared that no man might kiss her unless he were her husband. Otto was so impressed by the modesty and propriety of this remark that he married her to one of his noblemen and settled a large estate upon the couple. It was from this marriage that the counts Guidi de Modigliano (among them Guido Guerra) were said to descend. Unfortunately for the legend, Otto's first visit to Italy was in 1209, and surviving records show that Count Guido had already had two children by his wife Gualdrada as early as 1202.

was Tegghiaio Aldobrandi,[4] whose good counsels
the world would have done well to understand.
And I who share their torment, in my life
was Jacopo Rusticucci;[5] above all
I owe my sorrows to a savage wife."
I would have thrown myself to the plain below
had I been sheltered from the falling fire;
and I think my Teacher would have let me go.
But seeing I should be burned and cooked, my fear
overcame the first impulse of my heart
to leap down and embrace them then and there.
"No contempt," I said, "but the compassion
that seizes on my soul and memory
at the thought of you tormented in this fashion—
it was grief that choked my speech when through the scorching
air of this pit my Lord announced to me
that such men as you are might be approaching.
I am of your own land, and I have always
heard with affection and rehearsed with honor
your name and the good deeds of your happier days.
Led by my Guide and his truth, I leave the gall
and go for the sweet apples of delight.
But first I must descend to the center of all."
"So may your soul and body long continue
together on the way you go," he answered,
"and the honor of your days shine after you—
tell me if courtesy and valor raise
their banners in our city as of old,
or has the glory faded from its days?
For Borsiere,[6] who is newly come among us
and yonder goes with our companions in pain,
taunts us with such reports, and his words have stung us."
"O Florence! your sudden wealth and your upstart
rabble, dissolute and overweening,
already set you weeping in your heart!"
I cried with face upraised, and on the sand

4. Date of birth unknown. He died shortly before 1266. A valiant knight of the family degli Adimari of the Guelph nobles. With Guido Guerra he advised the Florentines not to move against the Sienese at the disastrous battle of Montaperti (See Farinata, Canto X), knowing that the Sienese had been heavily reinforced by mercenaries. It is probably these good counsels that "the world would have done well to understand." This is another case in which Dante is the only writer to bring the charge of sodomy. 5. Dates of birth and death unknown, but mention of him exists in Florentine records of 1235, 1236, 1254, and 1266. A rich and respected Florentine knight. Dante's account of his sin and of its cause is the only record and it remains unsupported: no details of his life are known. 6. "Borsiere" in Italian means "pursemaker," and the legend has grown without verification or likelihood that this was his origin. He was a courtier, a peacemaker, and an arranger of marriages. Boccaccio speaks of him in highly honorable terms in the Eighth Tale of the First Day of the *Decameron*.

those three sad spirits looked at one another
like men who hear the truth and understand.
"If this be your manner of speaking, and if you can
satisfy others with such ease and grace,"
they said as one, "we hail a happy man.
Therefore, if you win through this gloomy pass
and climb again to see the heaven of stars;
when it rejoices you to say 'I was',
speak of us to the living." They parted then,
breaking their turning wheel, and as they vanished
over the plain, their legs seemed wings. "Amen"
could not have been pronounced between their start
and their disappearance over the rim of sand.
And then it pleased my Master to depart.
A little way beyond we felt the quiver
and roar of the cascade, so close that speech
would have been drowned in thunder. As that river—[7]
the first one on the left of the Apennines
to have a path of its own from Monte Veso
to the Adriatic Sea—which, as it twines
is called the Acquacheta from its source
until it nears Forli, and then is known
as the Montone in its further course—
resounds from the mountain in a single leap
there above San Benedetto dell'Alpe
where a thousand falls might fit into the steep;
so down from a sheer bank, in one enormous
plunge, the tainted water roared so loud
a little longer there would have deafened us.
I had a cord bound round me like a belt[8]
which I had once thought I might put to use
to snare the leopard with the gaudy pelt.
When at my Guide's command I had unbound
its loops from about my habit, I gathered it
and held it out to him all coiled and wound.

7. The water course described by Dante and made up of the Acquacheta and the Montone flows directly into the sea without draining into the Po. The placement of it as "first on the left of the Apennines" has been shown by Casella to result from the peculiar orientation of the maps of Dante's time. The "river" has its source and course along a line running almost exactly northwest from Florence. San Benedetto dell' Alpe is a small monastery situated on that line about twenty-five miles from Florence. 8. As might be expected many ingenious explanations have been advanced to account for the sudden appearance of this cord. It is frequently claimed, but without proof, that Dante had been a minor friar of the Franciscans but had left without taking vows. The explanation continues that he had clung to the habit of wearing the white cord of the Franciscans, which he now produces with the information that he had once intended to use it to snare the Leopard. One invention is probably as good as another. What seems obvious is that the narrative required some sort of device for signaling the monster, and that to meet his narrative need, Dante suddenly invented the business of the cord.

He bent far back to his right, and throwing it
out from the edge, sent it in a long arc
into the bottomless darkness of the pit.
"Now surely some unusual event,"
I said to myself, "must follow this new signal
upon which my good Guide is so intent."
Ah, how cautiously a man should breathe
near those who see not only what we do,
but have the sense which reads the mind beneath!
He said to me: "You will soon see arise
what I await, and what you wonder at;
soon you will see the thing before your eyes."
To the truth which will seem falsehood every man
who would not be called a liar while speaking fact
should learn to seal his lips as best he can.
But here I cannot be still: Reader, I swear
by the lines of my Comedy—so may it live—
that I saw swimming up through that foul air
a shape to astonish the most doughty soul,
a shape like one returning through the sea
from working loose an anchor run afoul
of something on the bottom—so it rose,
its arms spread upward and its feet drawn close.

CANTO XVII

Circle Seven: Round Three The Violent Against Art. Geryon

The monstrous shape lands on the brink and Virgil salutes it ironically. It is Geryon, the Monster of Fraud. Virgil announces that they must fly down from the cliff on the back of this monster. While Virgil negotiates for their passage, Dante is sent to examine the Usurers (The Violent Against Art).

These sinners sit in a crouch along the edge of the burning plain that approaches the cliff. Each of them has a leather purse around his neck, and each purse is blazoned with a coat of arms. Their eyes, gushing with tears, are forever fixed on these purses. Dante recognizes none of these sinners, but their coats of arms are unmistakably those of well-known Florentine families.

Having understood who they are and the reason for their present condition, Dante cuts short his excursion and returns to find Virgil mounted on the back of Geryon. Dante joins his Master and they fly down from the great cliff.

Their flight carries them from the Hell of the Violent and the Bestial (The Sins of the Lion) into the Hell of the Fraudulent and Malicious (The Sins of the Leopard).

"Now see the sharp-tailed beast that mounts the brink.
He passes mountains, breaks through walls and weapons.
Behold the beast that makes the whole world stink."[9]
These were the words my Master spoke to me;
then signaled the weird beast to come to ground
close to the sheer end of our rocky levee.
The filthy prototype of Fraud drew near
and settled his head and breast upon the edge
of the dark cliff, but let his tail hang clear.
His face was innocent of every guile,
benign and just in feature and expression;
and under it his body was half reptile.
His two great paws were hairy to the armpits;
all his back and breast and both his flanks
were figured with bright knots and subtle circlets:
never was such a tapestry of bloom
woven on earth by Tartar or by Turk,[1]
nor by Arachne[2] at her flowering loom.
As a ferry sometimes lies along the strand,
part beached and part afloat; and as the beaver,[3]
up yonder in the guzzling Germans' land,
squats halfway up the bank when a fight is on—
just so lay that most ravenous of beasts
on the rim which bounds the burning sand with stone.
His tail twitched in the void beyond that lip,
thrashing, and twisting up the envenomed fork
which, like a scorpion's stinger, armed the tip.
My Guide said: "It is time now we drew near
that monster." And descending on the right[4]
we moved ten paces outward to be clear
of sand and flames. And when we were beside him,
I saw upon the sand a bit beyond us

9. Geryon, a mythical king of Spain represented as a giant with three heads and three bodies. He was killed by Hercules, who coveted the king's cattle. A later tradition represents him as killing and robbing strangers whom he lured into his realm. It is probably on this account that Dante chose him as the prototype of fraud, though in a radically altered bodily form. Some of the details of Dante's Geryon may be drawn from *Revelation* ix, 9–20, but most of them are almost certainly his own invention: a monster with the general shape of a dragon but with the tail of a scorpion, hairy arms, a gaudily-marked reptilian body, and the face of a just and honest man. 1. These were the most skilled weavers of Dante's time. 2. She was so famous as a spinner and weaver that she challenged Minerva to a weaving contest. There are various accounts of what happened in the contest, but all of them end with the goddess so moved to anger that she changed Arachne into a spider. 3. Dante's description of the beaver is probably drawn from some old bestiary or natural history. It may be based on the medieval belief that the beaver fished by crouching on the bank, scooping the fish out with its tail. *The guzzling Germans*: The heavy drinking of the Germans was proverbial in the Middle Ages and far back into antiquity. 4. The Poets had crossed on the right bank of the rill. In the course of Geryon's flight they will be carried to the other side of the falls, thus continuing their course to the left. It should be noted that inside the walls of Dis, approaching the second great division of Hell (as here the third) they also moved to the right. No satisfactory reason can be given for these exceptions.

some people crouching close beside the brim.[5]
The Master paused. "That you may take with you
the full experience of this round," he said,
"go now and see the last state of that crew.
But let your talk be brief, and I will stay
and reason with this beast till you return,
that his strong back may serve us on our way."
So further yet along the outer edge
of the seventh circle I moved on alone.
And came to the sad people of the ledge.
Their eyes burst with their grief; their smoking hands
jerked about their bodies, warding off
now the flames and now the burning sands.
Dogs in summer bit by fleas and gadflies,
jerking their snouts about, twitching their paws
now here, now there, behave no otherwise.
I examined several faces there among
that sooty throng, and I saw none I knew;
but I observed that from each neck there hung
an enormous purse, each marked with its own beast
and its own colors like a coat of arms.
On these their streaming eyes appeared to feast.
Looking about, I saw one purse display
azure on or, a kind of lion;[6] another,
on a blood red field, a goose whiter than whey.[7]
And one that bore a huge and swollen sow
azure on field argent[8] said to me:
"What are you doing in this pit of sorrow?
Leave us alone! And since you have not yet died,
I'll have you know my neighbor Vitaliano[9]
has a place reserved for him here at my side.
A Paduan among Florentines, I sit here
while hour by hour they nearly deafen me
shouting: 'Send us the sovereign cavalier
with the purse of the three goats!' "[1] He half arose,

5. The Usurers. Virgil explains in Canto XI why they sin against Art, which is the Grandchild of God. They are the third and final category of the Violent against God and His works. 6. The arms of the Gianfigliazzi of Florence were a lion azure on a field of gold. The sinner bearing this purse must be Catello di Rosso Gianfigliazzi, who set up as a usurer in France and was made a knight on his return to Florence. 7. A white goose on a red field was the arms of the noble Ghibelline family of the Ubriachi, or Ebriachi, of Florence. The wearer is probably Ciappo Ubriachi, a notorious usurer. 8. These are the arms of the Scrovegni of Padua. The bearer is probably Reginaldo Scrovegni. 9. Vitaliano di Iacopo Vitaliani, another Paduan. 1. Giovanni di Buiamonte was esteemed in Florence as "the sovereign cavalier" and was chosen for many high offices. He was a usurer and a gambler who lost great sums at play. Dante's intent is clearly to bewail the decay of standards which permits Florence to honor so highly a man for whom Hell is waiting so dismally. Buiamonte was of the Becchi family whose arms were three black goats on a gold field. "Becchi" in Italian is the plural form of the word for "goat."

twisted his mouth, and darted out his tongue
for all the world like an ox licking its nose.
And I, afraid that any longer stay
would anger him who had warned me to be brief,
left those exhausted souls without delay.
Returned, I found my Guide already mounted
upon the rump of that monstrosity.
He said to me: "Now must you be undaunted:
this beast must be our stairway to the pit:
mount it in front, and I will ride between
you and the tail, lest you be poisoned by it."
Like one so close to the quartanary chill[2]
that his nails are already pale and his flesh trembles
at the very sight of shade or a cool rill—
so did I tremble at each frightful word.
But his scolding filled me with that shame that makes
the servant brave in the presence of his lord.
I mounted the great shoulders of that freak
and tried to say "Now help me to hold on!"
But my voice clicked in my throat and I could not speak.
But no sooner had I settled where he placed me
than he, my stay, my comfort, and my courage
in other perils, gathered and embraced me.
Then he called out: "Now, Geryon, we are ready:
bear well in mind that his is living weight
and make your circles wide and your flight steady."
As a small ship slides from a beaching or its pier,
backward, backward—so that monster slipped
back from the rim. And when he had drawn clear
he swung about, and stretching out his tail
he worked it like an eel, and with his paws
he gathered in the air, while I turned pale.
I think there was no greater fear the day
Phaeton[3] let loose the reins and burned the sky
along the great scar of the Milky Way,
nor when Icarus, too close to the sun's track
felt the wax melt, unfeathering his lions,
and heard his father cry "Turn back! Turn back!"—[4]

2. Quartan fever is an ague that runs a four-day cycle with symptoms roughly like those of malaria. At the approach of the chill, Dante intends his figure to say, any thought of coolness strikes terror into the shivering victim. 3. Son of Apollo who drove the chariot of the sun. Phaeton begged his father for a chance to drive the chariot himself but he lost control of the horses and Zeus killed him with a thunderbolt for fear the whole earth would catch fire. The scar left in the sky by the runaway horses is marked by the Milky Way. 4. Daedalus, the father of Icarus, made wings for himself and his son and they flew into the sky, but Icarus, ignoring his father's commands, flew too close to the sun. The heat melted the wax with which the wings were fastened and Icarus fell into the Aegean and was drowned.

than I felt when I found myself in air,
afloat in space with nothing visible
but the enormous beast that bore me there.
Slowly, slowly, he swims on through space,
wheels and descends, but I can sense it only
by the way the wind blows upward past my face.
Already on the right I heard the swell
and thunder of the whirlpool. Looking down
I leaned my head out and stared into Hell.
I trembled again at the prospect of dismounting
and cowered in on myself, for I saw fires
on every hand, and I heard a long lamenting.
And then I saw—till then I had but felt it—
the course of our down-spiral to the horrors
that rose to us from all sides of the pit.
As a flight-worn falcon sinks down wearily
though neither bird nor lure has signalled it,[5]
the falconer crying out: "What! spent already!"—
then turns and in a hundred spinning gyres
sulks from her master's call, sullen and proud—
so to that bottom lit by endless fires
the monster Geryon circled and fell,
setting us down at the foot of the precipice
of ragged rock on the eighth shelf of Hell.
And once freed of our weight, he shot from there
into the dark like an arrow into air.

CANTO XVIII

Circle Eight (Malebolge) The Fraudulent and Malicious
Bolgia One The Panderers and Seducers
Bolgia Two The Flatterers

Dismounted from Geryon, the Poets find themselves in the Eighth Circle, called Malebolge (The Evil Ditches). This is the upper half of the Hell of the Fraudulent and Malicious. Malebolge is a great circle of stone that slopes like an amphitheater. The slopes are divided into ten concentric ditches; and within these ditches, each with his own kind, are punished those guilty of Simple Fraud.

A series of stone dikes runs like spokes from the edge of the great cliff face to the center of the place, and these serve as bridges.

The Poets bear left toward the first ditch, and Dante observes below him and to his right the sinners of the first bolgia, The Panderers

5. Falcons, when sent aloft, were trained to circle until sighting a bird, or until signaled back by the lure (a stuffed bird). Flight-weary, Dante's metaphoric falcon sinks bit by bit, rebelling against his training and sulking away from his master in wide slow circles.

and Seducers. These make two files, one along either bank of the ditch, and are driven at an endless fast walk by horned demons who hurry them along with great lashes. In life these sinners goaded others on to serve their own foul purposes; so in Hell are they driven in their turn. The horned demons who drive them symbolize the sinners' own vicious natures, embodiments of their own guilty consciences. Dante may or may not have intended the horns of the demons to symbolize cuckoldry and adultery.

The Poets see Venedico Caccianemico and Jason in the first pit, and pass on to the second, where they find the souls of the Flatterers sunk in excrement, the true equivalent of their false flatteries on earth. They observe Alessio Interminelli and Thaïs, and pass on.

There is in Hell a vast and sloping ground
called Malebolge,[6] a lost place of stone
as black as the great cliff that seals it round.
Precisely in the center of that space
there yawns a well extremely wide and deep.[7]
I shall discuss it in its proper place.
The border that remains between the well-pit
and the great cliff forms an enormous circle,
and ten descending troughs are cut in it,
offering a general prospect like the ground
that lies around one of those ancient castles
whose walls are girded many times around
by concentric moats. And just as, from the portal,
the castle's bridges run from moat to moat
to the last bank; so from the great rock wall
across the embankments and the ditches, high
and narrow cliffs run to the central well,
which cuts and gathers them like radii.
Here, shaken from the back of Geryon,
we found ourselves. My Guide kept to the left
and I walked after him. So we moved on.
Below, on my right, and filling the first ditch
along both banks, new souls in pain appeared,
new torments, and new devils black as pitch.
All of these sinners were naked; on our side
of the middle they walked toward us; on the other,
in our direction, but with swifter stride.
Just so the Romans, because of the great throng

6. *Bolgia* in Italian equals "ditch" or "pouch." That combination of meanings is not possible in a single English word, but it is well to bear in mind that Dante intended both meanings: not only a ditch of evil, but a pouch full of it, a filthy treasure of ill-gotten souls. 7. This is the final pit of Hell, and in it are punished the Treacherous (those Guilty of Compound Fraud). Cantos XXIX–XXXIV will deal with this part of Hell.

in the year of the Jubilee, divide the bridge[8]
in order that the crowds may pass along,
so that all face the Castle as they go
on one side toward St. Peter's, while on the other,
all move along facing toward Mount Giordano.
And everywhere along that hideous track
I saw horned demons with enormous lashes
move through those souls, scourging them on the back.
Ah, how the stragglers of that long rout stirred
their legs quick-march at the first crack of the lash!
Certainly no one waited a second, or third!
As we went on, one face in that procession
caught my eye and I said: "That sinner there:
It is certainly not the first time I've seen that one."
I stopped, therefore, to study him, and my Guide
out of his kindness waited, and even allowed me
to walk back a few steps at the sinner's side.
And that flayed spirit, seeing me turn around,
thought to hide his face, but I called to him:
"You there, that walk along with your eyes on the ground—
if those are not false features, then I know you
as Venedico Caccianemico of Bologna:[9]
what brings you here among this pretty crew?"
And he replied: "I speak unwillingly,
but something in your living voice, in which
I hear the world again, stirs and compels me.
It was I who brought the fair Ghisola 'round
to serve the will and lust of the Marquis,
however sordid that old tale may sound.
There are many more from Bologna who weep away
eternity in this ditch; we fill it so
there are not as many tongues that are taught to say
'sipa'[1] in all the land that lies between
the Reno and the Saveno, as you must know
from the many tales of our avarice and spleen."
And as he spoke, one of those lashes fell
across his back, and a demon cried, "Move on,
you pimp, there are no women here to sell."

8. Boniface VIII had proclaimed 1300 a Jubilee Year, and consequently throngs of pilgrims had come to Rome. Since the date of the vision is also 1300, the Roman throngs are moving back and forth across the Tiber via Ponte Castello Sant' Angelo at the very time Dante is watching the sinners in Hell. 9. To win the favor of the Marquis Obbizo da Este of Ferrara, Caccianemico acted as the procurer of his own sister Ghisola, called "la bella" or "Ghisolabella." 1. Bolognese dialect for "si," i.e., "yes." Bologna lies between the Savena and the Reno. This is a master taunt at Bologna as a city of panderers and seducers, for it clearly means that the Bolognese then living on earth were fewer in number than the Bolognese dead who had been assigned to this *bolgia*.

Turning away then, I rejoined my Guide.
We came in a few steps to a raised ridge
that made a passage to the other side.
This we climbed easily, and turning right
along the jagged crest, we left behind
the eternal circling of those souls in flight.
And when we reached the part at which the stone
was tunneled for the passage of the scourged,
my Guide said, "Stop a minute and look down
on these other misbegotten wraiths of sin.
You have not seen their faces, for they moved
in the same direction we were headed in."
So from that bridge we looked down on the throng
that hurried toward us on the other side.
Here, too, the whiplash hurried them along.
And the good Master, studying that train,
said: "Look there, at that great soul that approaches
and seems to shed no tears for all his pain—
what kingliness moves with him even in Hell!
It is Jason,[2] who by courage and good advice
made off with the Colchian Ram. Later it fell
that he passed Lemnos, where the women of wrath,
enraged by Venus' curse that drove their lovers
out of their arms, put all their males to death.
There with his honeyed tongue and his dishonest
lover's wiles, he gulled Hypsipyle,
who, in the slaughter, had gulled all the rest.
And there he left her, pregnant and forsaken.
Such guilt condemns him to such punishment;
and also for Medea is vengenace taken.
All seducers march here to the whip.
And let us say no more about this valley
and those it closes in its stony grip."
We had already come to where the walk
crosses the second bank, from which it lifts
another arch, spanning from rock to rock.
Here we heard people whine in the next chasm,
and knock and thump themselves with open palms,

2. Leader of the Argonauts. He carried off the Colchian Ram (*i.e.*, The Golden Fleece). "The good advice" that helped him win the fleece was given by Medea, daughter of the King of Colchis, whom Jason took with him and later abandoned for Creusa ("Also for Medea is vengeance taken.") In the course of his very Grecian life, Jason had previously seduced Hypsipyle and deserted her to continue his voyage after the fleece. She was one of the women of Lemnos whom Aphrodite, because they no longer worshiped her, cursed with a foul smell which made them unbearable to their husbands and lovers. The women took their epic revenge by banding together to kill all their males, but Hypsipyle managed to save her father, King Thoas, by pretending to the women that she had already killed him.

and blubber through their snouts as if in a spasm.
Steaming from that pit, a vapour rose
over the banks, crusting them with a slime
that sickened my eyes and hammered at my nose.
That chasm sinks so deep we could not sight
its bottom anywhere until we climbed
along the rock arch to its greatest height.
Once there, I peered down; and I saw long lines
of people in a river of excrement
that seemed the overflow of the world's latrines.
I saw among the felons of that pit
one wraith who might or might not have been tonsured—
one could not tell, he was so smeared with shit.
He bellowed: "You there, why do you stare at me
more than at all the others in this stew?"
And I to him: "Because if memory
serves me, I knew you when your hair was dry.
You are Alessio Interminelli da Lucca.[3]
That's why I pick you from this filthy fry."
And he then, beating himself on his clown's head:
"Down to this have the flatteries I sold
the living sunk me here among the dead."
And my Guide prompted then: "Lean forward a bit
and look beyond him, there—do you see that one
scratching herself with dungy nails, the strumpet
who fidgets to her feet, then to a crouch?
It is the whore Thaïs[4] who told her lover
when he sent to ask her, 'Do you thank me much?'
'Much? Nay, past all believing!' And with this
let us turn from the sight of this abyss."

CANTO XIX

Circle Eight: Bolgia Three The Simoniacs

Dante comes upon the Simoniacs (sellers of ecclesiastic favors and offices) and his heart overflows with the wrath he feels against those who corrupt the things of God. This *bolgia* is lined with round tube-like holes and the sinners are placed in them upside down with the

3. One of the noble family of the Interminelli or Interminei, a prominent White family of Lucca. About all that is known of Alessio is the fact that he was still alive in 1295. 4. The flattery uttered by Thaïs is put into her mouth by Terence in his *Eunuchus* (Act II, 1:1–2). Thaïs' lover had sent her a slave, and later sent a servant to ask if she thanked him much. *Magnas vero agere gratias Thais mihi?* The servant reported her as answering *Ingentes!* Cicero later commented on the passage as an example of immoderate flattery, and Dante's conception of Thaïs probably springs from this source. (*De Amicitia*, 26.)

soles of their feet ablaze. The heat of the blaze is proportioned to their guilt.

The holes in which these sinners are placed are debased equivalents of the baptismal fonts common in the cities of Northern Italy and the sinners' confinement in them is temporary: as new sinners arrive, the souls drop through the bottom of their holes and disappear eternally into the crevices of the rock.

As always, the punishment is a symbolic retribution. Just as the Simoniacs made a mock of holy office, so are they turned upside down in a mockery of the baptismal font. Just as they made a mockery of the holy water of baptism, so is their hellish baptism by fire, after which they are wholly immersed in the crevices below. The oily fire that licks at their soles may also suggest a travesty on the oil used in Extreme Unction (last rites for the dying).

Virgil carries Dante down an almost sheer ledge and lets him speak to one who is the chief sinner of that place, Pope Nicholas III. Dante delivers himself of another stirring denunciation of those who have corrupted church office, and Virgil carries him back up the steep ledge toward the Fourth Bolgia.

O Simon Magus![5] O you wretched crew
who follow him, pandering for silver and gold
the things of God which should be wedded to
love and righteousness! O thieves for hire,
now must the trump of judgment sound your doom
here in the third fosse of the rim of fire!
We had already made our way across
to the next grave, and to that part of the bridge[6]
which hangs above the mid-point of the fosse.
O Sovereign Wisdom, how Thine art doth shine
in Heaven, on Earth, and in the Evil World![7]
How justly doth Thy power judge and assign!
I saw along the walls and on the ground
long rows of holes cut in the livid stone;
all were cut to a size, and all were round.
They seemed to be exactly the same size
as those in the font of my beautiful San Giovanni,
built to protect the priests who come to baptize;[8]

5. Simon the Samarian magician (see Acts viii, 9–24) from whom the word "Simony" derives. Upon his conversion to Christianity he offered to buy the power to administer the Holy Ghost and was severely rebuked by Peter. 6. The Center point, obviously the best observation point. *The next grave*: The next *bolgia*. 7. Hell. 8. It was the custom in Dante's time to baptize only on Holy Saturday and on Pentecost. These occasions were naturally thronged, therefore, and to protect the priests a special font was built in the Baptistry of San Giovanni with marble stands for the priests, who were thus protected from both the crowds and the water in which they immersed those to be baptized. The Baptistry is still standing, but the font is no longer in it. A similar font still exists, however, in the Baptistry at Pisa.

(one of which, not so long since, I broke open
to rescue a boy who was wedged and drowning in it.
Be this enough to undeceive all men.)[9]
From every mouth a sinner's legs stuck out
as far as the calf. The soles were all ablaze
and the joints of the legs quivered and writhed about.
Withes and tethers would have snapped in their throes.
As oiled things blaze upon the surface only,
so did they burn from the heels to the points of their toes.
"Master," I said, "who is that one in the fire
who writhes and quivers more than all the others?[1]
From him the ruddy flames seem to leap higher."
And he to me: "If you wish me to carry you down
along that lower bank, you may learn from him
who he is, and the evil he has done."
And I: "What you will, I will. You are my lord
and know I depart in nothing from your wish;
and you know my mind beyond my spoken word."
We moved to the fourth ridge, and turning left
my Guide descended by a jagged path
into the strait and perforated cleft.
Thus the good Master bore me down the dim
and rocky slope, and did not put me down
till we reached the one whose legs did penance for him.
"Whoever you are, sad spirit," I began,
"who lie here with your head below your heels
and planted like a stake—speak if you can."
I stood like a friar who gives the sacrament
to a hired assassin, who, fixed in the hole,
recalls him, and delays his death a moment.[2]
"Are you there already, Boniface?[3] Are you there
already?" he cried. "By several years the writ
has lied. And all that gold, and all that care—
are you already sated with the treasure
for which you dared to turn on the Sweet Lady

9. In these lines Dante is replying to a charge of sacrilege that had been rumored against him. One day a boy playing in the baptismal font became jammed in the marble tube and could not be extricated. To save the boy from drowning, Dante took it upon himself to smash the tube.
1. The fire is proportioned to the guilt of the sinner. These are obviously the feet of the chief sinner of this *bolgia*. In a moment we shall discover that he is Pope Nicholas III. 2. Persons convicted of murdering for hire were sometimes executed by being buried alive upside down. If the friar were called back at the last moment, he should have to bend over the hole in which the man is fixed upside down awaiting the first shovelful of earth. 3. The speaker is Pope Nicholas III, Giovanni Gaetano degli Orsini, Pope from 1277–1280. His presence here is self-explanatory. He is awaiting the arrival of his successor, Boniface VIII, who will take his place in the stone tube and who will in turn be replaced by Clement V, a Pope even more corrupt than Boniface. With the foresight of the damned he had read the date of Boniface's death (1303) in the Book of Fate. Mistaking Dante for Boniface, he thinks his foresight has erred by three years, since it is now 1300.

and trick and pluck and bleed her at your pleasure?"
I stood like one caught in some raillery,
not understanding what is said to him,
lost for an answer to such mockery.
Then Virgil said. "Say to him: 'I am not he,
I am not who you think.' " And I replied
as my good Master had instructed me.
The sinner's feet jerked madly; then again
his voice rose, this time choked with sighs and tears,
and said at last: "What do you want of me then?
If to know who I am drives you so fearfully
that you descend the bank to ask it, know
that the Great Mantle[4] was once hung upon me.
And in truth I was a son of the She-Bear,[5]
so sly and eager to push my whelps ahead,
that I pursed wealth above, and myself here.[6]
Beneath my head are dragged all who have gone
before me in buying and selling holy office;
there they cower in fissures of the stone.
I too shall be plunged down when that great cheat
for whom I took you comes here in his turn.
Longer already have I baked my feet
and been planted upside-down, than he shall be
before the west sends down a lawless Shepherd[7]
of uglier deeds to cover him and me.
He will be a new Jason of the Maccabees;
and just as that king bent to his high priests' will,
so shall the French king do as this one please."
Maybe—I cannot say—I grew too brash
at this point, for when he had finished speaking
I said: "Indeed! Now tell me how much cash
our Lord required of Peter in guarantee
before he put the keys into his keeping?
Surely he asked nothing but 'Follow me!'
Nor did Peter, nor the others, ask silver or gold
of Matthew when they chose him for the place
the despicable and damned apostle sold.[8]

4. Of the Papacy. 5. Nicholas' family name, degli Orsini, means in Italian "of the bear cubs." 6. A play on the second meaning of *bolgia* (i.e., "purse"). "Just as I put wealth in my purse when alive, so am I put in this foul purse now that I am dead." 7. Clement V, Pope from 1305 to 1314. He came from Gascony (the West) and was involved in many intrigues with the King of France. It was Clement V who moved the Papal See to Avignon where it remained until 1377. He is compared to Jason (see Maccabees iv, 7ff.) who bought an appointment as High Priest of the Jews from King Antiochus and thereupon introduced pagan and venal practices into the office in much the same way as Clement used his influence with Philip of France to secure and corrupt his high office. Clement will succeed Boniface in Hell because Boniface's successor, Benedictus XI (1303–1304), was a good and holy man. 8. Upon the expulsion of Judas from the band of Apostles, Matthias was chosen in his place.

Therefore stay as you are; this hole well fits you—
and keep a good guard on the ill-won wealth
that once made you so bold toward Charles of Anjou.[9]
And were it not that I am still constrained
by the reverence I owe to the Great Keys[1]
you held in life, I should not have refrained
from using other words and sharper still;
for this avarice of yours grieves all the world,
tramples the virtuous, and exalts the evil.
Of such as you was the Evangelist's[2] vision
when he saw She who Sits upon the Waters
locked with the Kings of earth in fornication.
She was born with seven heads and ten enormous
and shining horns strengthened and made her glad
as long as love and virtue pleased her spouse.
Gold and silver are the gods you adore!
In what are you different from the idolator,
save that he worships one, and you a score?
Ah Constantine, what evil marked the hour—
not of your conversion, but of the fee
the first rich Father[3] took from you in dower!"
And as I sang him this tune, he began to twitch
and kick both feet out wildly, as if in rage
or gnawed by conscience—little matter which.
And I think, indeed, it pleased my Guide: his look
was all approval as he stood beside me
intent upon each word of truth I spoke.
He approached, and with both arms he lifted me,
and when he had gathered me against his breast,
remounted the rocky path out of the valley,
nor did he tire of holding me clasped to him,
until we reached the topmost point of the arch
which crosses from the fourth to the fifth rim

9. The seventh son of Louis VIII of France. Charles became King of Naples and of Sicily largely through the good offices of Pope Urban IV and later of Clement IV. Nicholas III withdrew the high favor his predecessors had shown Charles, but the exact nature and extent of his opposition are open to dispute. Dante probably believed, as did many of his contemporaries, that Nicholas instigated the massacre called the Sicilian Vespers, in which the Sicilians overthrew the rule of Charles and held a general slaughter of the French who had been their masters. The Sicilian Vespers, however, was a popular and spontaneous uprising, and it did not occur until Nicholas had been dead for two years. 1. Of the Papacy. 2. St. John the Evangelist. His vision of She who sits upon the waters is set forth in *Revelation* xvii. The Evangelist intended it as a vision of Pagan Rome, but Dante interprets it as a vision of the Roman Church in its simoniacal corruption. The seven heads are the seven sacraments; the ten horns, the ten commandments. 3. Silvester (Pope from 314 to 355). Before him the Popes possessed nothing, but when Constantine was converted and Catholicism became the official religion of the Empire, the church began to acquire wealth. Dante and the scholars of his time believed, according to a document called "The Donation of Constantine," that the Emperor had moved his Empire to the East in order to leave sovereignty of the West to the Church. The document was not shown to be a forgery until the fifteenth century.

of the pits of woe. Arrived upon the bridge,
he tenderly set down the heavy burden
he had been pleased to carry up that ledge
which would have been hard climbing for a goat.
Here I looked down on still another moat.

CANTO XX

Circle Eight: Bolgia Four The Fortune Tellers and Diviners

Dante stands in the middle of the bridge over the Fourth Bolgia and looks down at the souls of the Fortune Tellers and Diviners. Here are the souls of all those who attempted by forbidden arts to look into the future. Among these damned are: Amphiareus, Tiresias, Aruns, Manto, Eurypylus, Michael Scott, Guido Bonatti, and Asdente.

Characteristically, the sin of these wretches is reversed upon them: their punishment is to have their heads turned backwards on their bodies and to be compelled to walk backwards through all eternity, their eyes blinded with tears. Thus, those who sought to penetrate the future cannot even see in front of themselves; they attempted to move themselves forward in time, so must they go backwards through all eternity; and as the arts of sorcery are a distortion of God's law, so are their bodies distorted in Hell.

No more need be said of them: Dante names them, and passes on to fill the Canto with a lengthy account of the founding of Virgil's native city of Mantua.

Now must I sing new griefs, and my verses strain
to form the matter of the Twentieth Canto
of Canticle One,[4] the Canticle of Pain.
My vantage point[5] permitted a clear view
of the depths of the pit below: a desolation
bathed with the tears of its tormented crew,
who moved about the circle of the pit
at about the pace of a litany procession.[6]
Silent and weeping, they wound round and round it.
And when I looked down from their faces,[7] I saw
that each of them was hideously distorted
between the top of the chest and the lines of the jaw;
for the face was reversed on the neck, and they came on

4. *The Inferno.* The other Canticles are, of course, *The Purgatorio* and *The Paradiso.* 5. Virgil, it will be recalled, had set Dante down on the bridge across the Fourth Bolgia. 6. The litanies are chanted not only in church (before the mass), but sometimes in procession, the priest chanting the prayers and the marchers the response. As one might gather from the context, the processions move very slowly. 7. A typically Dantean conception. Dante often writes as if the eye pin-pointed on one feature of a figure seen at a distance. The pin-point must then be deliberately shifted before the next feature can be observed. As far as I know, this stylistic device is peculiar to Dante.

backwards, staring backwards at their loins,[8]
for to look before them was forbidden. Someone,
sometime, in the grip of a palsy may have been
distorted so, but never to my knowledge;
nor do I believe the like was ever seen.
Reader, so may God grant you to understand
my poem and profit from it, ask yourself
how I could check my tears, when near at hand
I saw the image of our humanity
distorted so that the tears that burst from their eyes
ran down the cleft of their buttocks. Certainly
I wept. I leaned against the jagged face
of a rock and wept so that my Guide said: "Still?
Still like the other fools? There is no place
for pity here. Who is more arrogant
within his soul, who is more impious
than one who dares to sorrow at God's judgment?
Lift up your eyes, lift up your eyes and see
him the earth swallowed before all the Thebans,
at which they cried out: 'Whither do you flee,
Amphiareus?[9] Why do you leave the field?'
And he fell headlong through the gaping earth
to the feet of Minos, where all sin must yield.
Observe how he has made a breast of his back.
In life he wished to see too far before him,
and now he must crab backwards round this track.
And see Tiresias,[1] who by his arts
succeeded in changing himself from man to woman,
transforming all his limbs and all his parts;
later he had to strike the two twined serpents
once again with his conjurer's wand before
he could resume his manly lineaments.
And there is Aruns,[2] his back to that one's belly,
the same who in the mountains of the Luni
tilled by the people of Carrara's valley,
made a white marble cave his den, and there
with unobstructed view observed the sea

8. General usage seems to have lost sight of the fact that the first meaning of "loin" is "that part of a human being or quadruped on either side of the spinal column between the hipbone and the false ribs." (Webster.) 9. Another of the seven Captains who fought against Thebes (v. Capaneus, Canto XIV). Statius (*Thebaid* VII, 690 ff. and VIII, 8 ff.) tells how he foresaw his own death in this war, and attempted to run away from it, but was swallowed in his flight by an earthquake. I have Romanized his name from "Amphiaraus." 1. A Theban diviner and magician. Ovid (*Metamorphoses* III) tells how he came on two twined serpents, struck them apart with his stick, and was thereupon transformed into a woman. Seven years later he came on two serpents similarly entwined, struck them apart, and was changed back. 2. An Etruscan soothsayer (see Lucan, *Pharsalia* I, 580 ff.). He foretold the war between Pompey and Julius Caesar, and also that it would end with Caesar's victory and Pompey's death. *Luni*: Also *Luna*. An ancient Etruscan city. *Carrara's valley*: The Carrarese valley is famous for its white (Carrara) marble.

and the turning constellations year by year.
And she whose unbound hair flows back to hide
her breasts—which you cannot see—and who also wears
all of her hairy parts on that other side,
was Manto, who searched countries far and near,
then settled where I was born.[3] In that connection
there is a story I would have you hear.
Tiresias was her sire. After his death,
Thebes, the city of Bacchus, became enslaved,
and for many years she roamed about the earth.
High in sweet Italy, under the Alps that shut
the Tyrolean gate of Germany, there lies
a lake known as Benacus[4] roundabout.
Through endless falls, more than a thousand and one,
Mount Appennine from Garda to Val Cammonica
is freshened by the waters that flow down
into the lake. At its center is a place
where the Bishops of Brescia, Trentine, and Verona
might all give benediction with equal grace.
Peschiera, the beautiful fortress, strong in war
against the Brescians and the Bergamese,
sits at the lowest point along that shore.
There, the waters Benacus cannot hold
within its bosom, spill and form a river
that winds away through pastures green and gold.
But once the water gathers its full flow,
it is called Mincius rather than Benacus
from there to Governo, where it joins the Po.
Still near its source, it strikes a plain, and there
it slows and spreads, forming an ancient marsh
which in the summer heats pollutes the air.
The terrible virgin, passing there by chance,
saw dry land at the center of the mire,
untilled, devoid of all inhabitants.
There, shunning all communion with mankind,
she settled with the ministers of her arts,
and there she lived, and there she left behind
her vacant corpse. Later the scattered men
who lived nearby assembled on that spot
since it was well defended by the fen.
Over those whited bones they raised the city,
and for her who had chosen the place before all others

3. Dante's version of the founding of Mantua is based on a reference in the *Aeneid* X, 198–200.
4. The ancient name for the famous Lago di Garda, which lies a short distance north of Mantua. The other places named in this passage lie around Lago di Garda. On an island in the lake the three dioceses mentioned in line 68 conjoined. All three bishops, therefore, had jurisdiction on the island.

they named it—with no further augury—
Mantua. Far more people lived there once—
before sheer madness prompted Casalodi
to let Pinamonte play him for a dunce.[5]
Therefore, I charge you, should you ever hear
other accounts of this, to let no falsehood
confuse the truth which I have just made clear."
And I to him: "Master, within my soul
your word is certainty, and any other
would seem like the dead lumps of burned out coal.
But tell me of those people moving down
to join the rest. Are any worth my noting?
For my mind keeps coming back to that alone."
And he: "That one whose beard spreads like a fleece
over his swarthy shoulders, was an augur
in the days when so few males remained in Greece
that even the cradles were all but empty of sons.
He chose the time for cutting the cable at Aulis,
and Calchas joined him in those divinations.
He is Eurypylus.[6] I sing him somewhere
in my High Tragedy; you will know the place
who know the whole of it. The other there,
the one beside him with the skinny shanks
was Michael Scott,[7] who mastered every trick
of magic fraud, a prince of mountebanks.
See Guido Bonatti[8] there; and see Asdente,
who now would be wishing he had stuck to his last,
but repents too late, though he repents aplenty.
And see on every hand the wretched hags
who left their spinning and sewing for soothsaying
and casting of spells with herbs, and dolls, and rags.
But come: Cain with his bush of thorns[9] appears

5. Albert, Count of Casalodi and Lord of Mantua, let himself be persuaded by Pinamonte de Buonaccorsi to banish the nobles from Mantua as a source of danger to his rule. Once the nobles had departed, Pinamonte headed a rebellion against the weakened lord and took over the city himself. 6. According to Greek custom an augur was summoned before each voyage to choose the exact propitious moment for departure (cutting the cables). Dante has Virgil imply that Eurypylus and Calchas were selected to choose the moment for Agamemnon's departure from Aulis to Troy. Actually, according to the *Aeneid*, Eurypylus was not at Aulis. The *Aeneid* (II, 110 ff.) tells how Eurypylus and Calchas were both consulted in choosing the moment for the departure from Troy. Dante seems to have confused the two incidents. *Even the cradles were all but empty of sons:* At the time of the Trojan Wars, Greece was said to be so empty of males that scarcely any were to be found even in the cradles. 7. An Irish scholar of the first half of the thirteenth century. His studies were largely in the occult. Sir Walter Scott refers to him in *The Lay of the Last Minstrel.* 8. A thirteenth-century astrologer of Forli. He was court astrologer to Guido da Montefeltro (see Canto XXVII) advising him in his wars. *Asdente:* A shoemaker of Parma who turned diviner and won wide fame for his forecastings in the last half of the thirteenth century. 9. The Moon. Cain with a bush of thorns was the medieval equivalent of our Man in the Moon. Dante seems to mean by "Seville" the whole area of Spain and the Straits of Gibraltar (Pillars of Hercules), which were believed to be the western limit of the world. The moon is setting (i.e., it appears on the western waves) on the morning of Holy Saturday, 1300.

already on the wave below Seville,
above the boundary of the hemispheres;
and the moon was full already yesternight.
as you must well remember from the wood,
for it certainly did not harm you when its light
shone down upon your way before the dawn."
And as he spoke to me, we traveled on.

CANTO XXI

Circle Eight: Bolgia Five The Grafters

The Poets move on, talking as they go, and arrive at the Fifth Bolgia. Here the Grafters are sunk in boiling pitch and guarded by Demons, who tear them to pieces with claws and grappling hooks if they catch them above the surface of the pitch.

The sticky pitch is symbolic of the sticky fingers of the Grafters. It serves also to hide them from sight, as their sinful dealings on earth were hidden from men's eyes. The demons, too, suggest symbolic possibilities, for they are armed with grappling hooks and are forever ready to rend and tear all they can get their hands on.

The Poets watch a demon arrive with a grafting Senator of Lucca and fling him into the pitch where the demons set upon him.

To protect Dante from their wrath, Virgil hides him behind some jagged rocks and goes ahead alone to negotiate with the demons. They set upon him like a pack of mastiffs, but Virgil secures a safe-conduct from their leader, Malacoda. Thereupon Virgil calls Dante from hiding, and they are about to set off when they discover that the Bridge Across the Sixth Bolgia lies shattered. Malacoda tells them there is another further on and sends a squad of demons to escort them. Their adventures with the demons continue through the next Canto.

These two Cantos may conveniently be remembered as the Gargoyle Cantos. If the total *Commedia* is built like a cathedral (as so many critics have suggested), it is here certainly that Dante attaches his grotesqueries. At no other point in the *Commedia* does Dante give such free rein to his coarsest style.

Thus talking of things which my Comedy does not care
to sing, we passed from one arch to the next
until we stood upon its summit. There
we checked our steps to study the next fosse
and the next vain lamentations of Malebolge;
awesomely dark and desolate it was.
As in the Venetian arsenal,[1] the winter through

1. The arsenal was not only an arms manufactory but a great center of shipbuilding and repairing.

there boils the sticky pitch to caulk the seams
of the sea-battered bottoms when no crew
can put to sea—instead of which, one starts
to build its ship anew, one plugs the planks
which have been sprung in many foreign parts;
some hammer at a mast, some at a rib;
some make new oars, some braid and coil new lines;
one patches up the mainsail, one the jib—
so, but by Art Divine and not by fire,
a viscid pitch boiled in the fosse below
and coated all the bank with gluey mire.
I saw the pitch; but I saw nothing in it
except the enormous bubbles of its boiling,
which swelled and sank, like breathing, through all the pit.
And as I stood and stared into that sink,
my Master cried, "Take care!" and drew me back
from my exposed position on the brink.
I turned like one who cannot wait to see
the thing he dreads, and who, in sudden fright,
runs while he looks, his curiosity
competing with his terror—and at my back
I saw a figure that came running toward us
across the ridge, a Demon huge and black.
Ah what a face he had, all hate and wildness!
Galloping so, with his great wings outspread
he seemed the embodiment of all bitterness.
Across each high-hunched shoulder he had thrown
one haunch of a sinner, whom he held in place
with a great talon round each ankle bone.
"Blacktalons[2] of our bridge," he began to roar,
"I bring you one of Santa Zita's[3] Elders!
Scrub him down while I go back for more:
I planted a harvest of them in that city:
everyone there is a grafter except Bonturo.[4]
There 'Yes' is 'No' and 'No' is 'Yes' for a fee."
Down the sinner plunged, and at once the Demon
spun from the cliff; no mastiff ever sprang
more eager from the leash to chase a felon.
Down plunged the sinner and sank to reappear
with his backside arched and his face and both his feet

2. The original is Malebranche, i.e., "Evil Claws." 3. The patron saint of the city of Lucca. "One of Santa Zita's Elders" would therefore equal "One of Lucca's Senators" (i.e., aldermen). Commentators have searched the records of Luccan aldermen who died on Holy Saturday of 1300, and one Martino Bottaio has been suggested as the newcomer, but there is no evidence that Dante had a specific man in mind. More probably he meant simply to underscore the fact that Lucca was a city of grafters, just as Bologna was represented as a city of panderers and seducers. 4. Bonturo Dati, a politician of Lucca. The phrase is ironic: Bonturo was the most avid grafter of them all.

glued to the pitch, almost as if in prayer.
But the Demons under the bridge, who guard that place
and the sinners who are thrown to them, bawled out:
"You're out of bounds here for the Sacred Face:[5]
this is no dip in the Serchio: take your look
and then get down in the pitch. And stay below
unless you want a taste of a grappling hook."
Then they raked him with more than a hundred hooks
bellowing: "Here you dance below the covers.
Graft all you can there: no one checks your books."
They dipped him down into that pitch exactly
as a chef makes scullery boys dip meat in a boiler,
holding it with their hooks from floating free.
And the Master said: "*You* had best not be seen[6]
by these Fiends till I am ready. Crouch down here.
One of these rocks will serve you as a screen.
And whatever violence you see done to me,
you have no cause to fear. I know these matters:
I have been through this once and come back safely."
With that, he walked on past the end of the bridge;
and it wanted all his courage to look calm
from the moment he arrived on the sixth ridge.
With that same storm and fury that arouses
all the house when the hounds leap at a tramp
who suddenly falls to pleading where he pauses—
so rushed those Fiends from below, and all the pack
pointed their gleaming pitchforks at my Guide.
But he stood fast and cried to them: "Stand back!
Before those hooks and grapples make too free,
send up one of your crew to hear me out,
then ask yourselves if you still care to rip me."
All cried as one: "Let Malacoda[7] go."
So the pack stood and one of them came forward,
saying: "What good does he think *this* will do?"
"Do you think, Malacoda," my good Master said,
"you would see me here, having arrived this far
already, safe from you and every dread,
without Divine Will and propitious Fate?

5. *Il volto santo* was an ancient wooden image of Christ venerated by the Luccanese. These ironies and the grotesqueness of the Elder's appearance mark the beginning of the gargoyle dance that swells and rolls through this canto and the next. *Serchio:* A river near Lucca. 6. It is only in the passage through this Bolgia, out of the total journey, that Dante presents himself as being in physical danger. Since his dismissal from office and his exile from Florence (on pain of death if he return) was based on a false charge of grafting, the reference is pointedly autobiographical. 7. The name equals "Bad Tail," or "Evil Tail." He is the captain of these grim and semi-military police. I have not translated his name as I have those of the other fiends, since I cannot see that it offers any real difficulty to an English reader.

Let me pass on, for it is willed in Heaven
that I must show another this dread state."
The Demon stood there on the flinty brim,
so taken aback he let his pitchfork drop;
then said to the others: "Take care not to harm him!"
"O you crouched like a cat," my Guide called to me,
"among the jagged rock piles of the bridge,
come down to me, for now you may come safely."
Hearing him, I hurried down the ledge;
and the Demons all pressed forward when I appeared,
so that I feared they might not keep their pledge.
So once I saw the Pisan infantry
march out under truce from the fortress at Caprona,
staring in fright at the ranks of the enemy.[8]
I pressed the whole of my body against my Guide,
and not for an instant did I take my eyes
from those black fiends who scowled on every side.
They swung their forks saying to one another:
"Shall I give him a touch in the rump?" and answering:
"Sure; give him a taste to pay him for his bother."
But the Demon who was talking to my Guide
turned round and cried to him: "At ease there, Snatcher!"
And then to us: "There's no road on this side:
the arch lies all in pieces in the pit.
If you *must* go on, follow along this ridge;
there's another cliff to cross by just beyond it.[9]
In just five hours it will be, since the bridge fell,
a thousand two hundred sixty-six years and a day;[1]
that was the time the big quake shook all Hell.
I'll send a squad of my boys along that way
to see if anyone's airing himself below:
you can go with them: there will be no foul play.
Front and center here, Grizzly and Hellken,"

8. A Tuscan army attacked the fortress of Caprona near Pisa in 1289 and after fierce fighting the Pisan defenders were promised a safe-conduct if they would surrender. Dante was probably serving with the Tuscans (the opening lines of the next Canto certainly suggest that he had seen military service). In some accounts it is reported that the Tuscans massacred the Pisans despite their promised safe-conduct—an ominous analogy if true. In any case the emerging Pisans would be sufficiently familiar with the treacheries of Italian politics to feel profoundly uneasy at being surrounded by their enemies under such conditions. 9. Malacoda is lying, as the Poets will discover: all the bridges across the Sixth Bolgia have fallen as a result of the earthquake that shook Hell at the death of Christ. 1. Christ died on Good Friday of the year 34, and it is now Holy Saturday of the year 1300, five hours before the hour of his death. Many commentators (and Dante himself in the *Convivio*) place the hour of Christ's death at exactly noon. Accordingly, it would now be 7:00 A.M. of Holy Saturday—exactly eight minutes since the Poets left the bridge over the Fourth Bolgia (at moonset). In the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, however, the hour of Christ's death is precisely stated as 3:00 P.M. Dante would certainly be familiar with the Synoptic Gospels, and on that authority it would now be 10:00 A.M.

he began to order them. "You too, Deaddog.
Curlybeard, take charge of a squad of ten.
Take Grafter and Dragontooth along with you.
Pigtusk, Catclaw, Cramper, and Crazyred.
Keep a sharp lookout on the boiling glue
as you move along, and see that these gentlemen
are not molested until they reach the crag
where they can find a way across the den."
"In the name of heaven, Master," I cried, "what sort
of guides are these? Let us go on alone
if you know the way. Who can trust such an escort!
If you are as wary as you used to be
you surely see them grind their teeth at us,
and knot their beetle brows so threateningly."
And he: "I do not like this fear in you.
Let them gnash and knot as they please; they menace only
the sticky wretches simmering in that stew."
They turned along the left bank in a line;
but before they started, all of them together
had stuck their pointed tongues out as a sign
to their Captain that they wished permission to pass,
and he had made a trumpet of his ass.

CANTO XXII

Circle Eight: Bolgia Five The Grafters

The poets set off with their escorts of demons. Dante sees the Grafters lying in the pitch like frogs in water with only their muzzles out. They disappear as soon as they sight the demons and only a ripple on the surface betrays their presence.

One of the Grafters, An Unidentified Navarrese, ducks too late and is seized by the demons who are about to claw him, but Curlybeard holds them back while Virgil questions him. The wretch speaks of his fellow sinners, Friar Gomita and Michel Zanche, while the uncontrollable demons rake him from time to time with their hooks.

The Navarrese offers to lure some of his fellow sufferers into the hands of the demons, and when his plan is accepted he plunges into the pitch and escapes. Hellken and Grizzly fly after him, but too late. They start a brawl in mid-air and fall into the pitch themselves. Curlybeard immediately organizes a rescue party and the Poets, fearing the bad temper of the frustrated demons, take advantage of the confusion to slip away.

I have seen horsemen breaking camp. I have seen
the beginning of the assault, the march and muster,

and at times the retreat and riot. I have been
where chargers trampled your land, O Aretines![2]
I have seen columns of foragers, shocks of tourney,
and running of tilts.[3] I have seen the endless lines
march to bells,[4] drums, trumpets, from far and near.
I have seen them march on signals from a castle.[5]
I have seen them march with native and foreign gear.
But never yet have I seen horse or foot,
nor ship in range of land nor sight of star,
take its direction from so low a toot.
We went with the ten Fiends—ah, savage crew!—
but "In church with saints; with stewpots in the tavern,"
as the old proverb wisely bids us do.
All my attention was fixed upon the pitch:
to observe the people who were boiling in it,
and the customs and the punishments of that ditch.
As dolphins surface and begin to flip
their arched backs from the sea, warning the sailors
to fall-to and begin to secure ship—[6]
So now and then, some soul, to ease his pain.
showed us a glimpse of his back above the pitch
and quick as lightning disappeared again.
And as, at the edge of a ditch, frogs squat about
hiding their feet and bodies in the water,
leaving only their muzzles sticking out—
so stood the sinners in that dismal ditch;
but as Curlybeard approached, only a ripple
showed where they had ducked back into the pitch.
I saw—the dread of it haunts me to this day—
one linger a bit too long, as it sometimes happens
one frog remains when another spurts away;
and Catclaw, who was nearest, ran a hook
through the sinner's pitchy hair and hauled him in.
He looked like an otter dripping from the brook.
I knew the names of all the Fiends by then;
I had made a note of them at the first muster,
and, marching, had listened and checked them over again.

2. The people of Arezzo. In 1289 the Guelphs of Florence and Lucca defeated the Ghibellines of Arrezo at Campaldino. Dante was present with the Guelphs, though probably as an observer and not as a warrior. 3. A tourney was contested by groups of knights in a field; a tilt by individuals who tried to unhorse one another across a barrier. 4. The army of each town was equipped with a chariot on which bells were mounted. Signals could be given by the bells and special decorations made the chariot stand out in battle. It served therefore as a rallying point. 5. When troops were in sight of their castle their movements could be directed from the towers—by banners in daytime and by fires at night, much as some naval signals are still given today. 6. It was a common belief that when dolphins began to leap around a ship they were warning the sailors of an approaching storm.

"Hey, Crazyred," the crew of Demons cried
all together, "give him a taste of your claws.
Dig him open a little. Off with his hide."
And I then: "Master, can you find out, please,
the name and history of that luckless one
who has fallen into the hands of his enemies?"
My Guide approached that wraith from the hot tar
and asked him whence he came. The wretch replied:
"I was born and raised in the Kingdom of Navarre.
My mother placed me in service to a knight;
for she had borne me to a squanderer
who killed himself when he ran through his birthright.
Then I became a domestic in the service
of good King Thibault.[7] There I began to graft,
and I account for it in this hot crevice."
And Pigtusk, who at the ends of his lower lip
shot forth two teeth more terrible than a boar's,
made the wretch feel how one of them could rip.
The mouse had come among bad cats, but here
Curlybeard locked arms around him crying:
"While I've got hold of him the rest stand clear!"
And turning his face to my Guide: "If you want to ask him
anything else," he added, "ask away
before the others tear him limb from limb."
And my Guide to the sinner; "I should like to know
if among the other souls beneath the pitch
are any Italians'?"[8] And the wretch: "Just now
I left a shade who came from parts near by.
Would I were still in the pitch with him, for then
these hooks would not be giving me cause to cry."
And suddenly Grafter bellowed in great heat:
"We've stood enough!" And he hooked the sinner's arm
and, raking it, ripped off a chunk of meat.
Then Dragontooth wanted to play, too, reaching down
for a catch at the sinner's legs; but Curlybeard
wheeled round and round with a terrifying frown,
and when the Fiends had somewhat given ground
and calmed a little, my Guide, without delay,
asked the wretch, who was staring at his wound:
"Who was the sinner from whom you say you made

7. Thibault II was King of Navarre, a realm that lay in what is now northern Spain. 8. Dante uses the term *Latino* strictly speaking, a person from the area of ancient Latium, now (roughly) Lazio, the province in which Rome is located. It was against the Latians that Aeneas fought on coming to Italy. More generally, Dante uses the term for any southern Italian. Here, however, the usage seems precise, since the sinner refers to "points near by" and means Sardinia. Rome is the point in Italy closest to Sardinia.

your evil-starred departure to come ashore
among these Fiends?" And the wretch: "It was the shade
of Friar Gomita of Gallura,[9] the crooked stem
of every Fraud: when his master's enemies
were in his hands, he won high praise from them.
He took their money without case or docket,
and let them go. He was in all his dealings
no petty bursar, but a kingly pocket.
With him, his endless crony in the fosse,
is Don Michel Zanche of Logodoro;[1]
they babble about Sardinia without pause.
But look! See that fiend grinning at your side!
There is much more that I should like to tell you,
but oh, I think he means to grate my hide!"
But their grim sergeant wheeled, sensing foul play,
and turning on Cramper, who seemed set to strike,
ordered: "Clear off, you buzzard. Clear off, I say!"
"If either of you would like to see and hear
Tuscans or Lombards," the pale sinner said,
"I can lure them out of hiding if you'll stand clear
and let me sit here at the edge of the ditch,
and get all these Blacktalons out of sight;
for while they're here, no one will leave the pitch.
In exchange for myself, I can fish you up as pretty
a mess of souls as you like. I have only to whistle
the way we do when one of us gets free."
Deaddog raised his snout as he listened to him;
then, shaking his head, said, "Listen to the grafter
spinning his tricks so he can jump from the brim!"
And the sticky wretch, who was all treachery:
"Oh I am more than tricky when there's a chance
to see my friends in greater misery."
Hellken, against the will of all the crew,
could hold no longer. "If you jump," he said
to the scheming wretch, "I won't come after you
at a gallop, but like a hawk after a mouse.
We'll clear the edge and hide behind the bank:
let's see if you're trickster enough for all of us."
Reader, here is new game! The Fiends withdrew
from the bank's edge, and Deaddog, who at first

9. In 1300 Sardinia was a Pisan possession, and was divided into four districts, of which Gallura was the northeast. Friar Gomita administered Gallura for his own considerable profit. He was hanged by the Pisan governor when he was found guilty of taking bribes to let prisoners escape.
1. He was made Vicar of Logodoro when the King of Sardinia went off to war. The King was captured and did not return. Michel maneuvered a divorce for the Queen and married her himself. About 1290 he was murdered by his son-in-law, Branca d'Oria (see Canto XXXIII).

was most against it, led the savage crew.
The Navarrese chose his moment carefully:
and planting both his feet against the ground,
he leaped, and in an instant he was free.
The Fiends were stung with shame, and of the lot
Hellken most, who had been the cause of it.
He leaped out madly bellowing: "You're caught!"
but little good it did him; terror pressed
harder than wings; the sinner dove from sight
and the Fiend in full flight had to raise his breast.
A duck, when the falcon dives, will disappear
exactly so, all in a flash, while he
returns defeated and weary up the air.
Grizzly, in a rage at the sinner's flight,
flew after Hellken, hoping the wraith would escape,
so he might find an excuse to start a fight.
And as soon as the grafter sank below the pitch,
Grizzly turned his talons against Hellken,
locked with him claw to claw above the ditch.
But Hellken was sparrowhawk enough for two
and clawed him well; and ripping one another,
they plunged together into the hot stew.
The heat broke up the brawl immediately,
but their wings were smeared with pitch and they could not rise.
Curlybeard, upset as his company,
commanded four to fly to the other coast
at once with all their grapples. At top speed
the Fiends divided, each one to his post.
Some on the near edge, some along the far,
they stretched their hooks out to the clotted pair
who were already cooked deep through the scar
of their first burn. And turning to one side
we slipped off, leaving them thus occupied.

CANTO XXIII

Circle Eight: Bolgia Six The Hypocrites

The Poets are pursued by the Fiends and escape them by sliding down the sloping bank of the next pit. They are now in the Sixth Bolgia. Here the Hypocrites, weighted down by great leaden robes, walk eternally round and round a narrow track. The robes are brilliantly gilded on the outside and are shaped like a monk's habit, for the hypocrite's outward appearance shines brightly and passes for holiness, but under that show lies the terrible weight of his deceit which the soul must bear through all eternity.

The Poets talk to Two Jovial Friars and come upon Caiaphas, the chief sinner of that place. Caiaphas was the High Priest of the Jews who counseled the Pharisees to crucify Jesus in the name of public expedience. He is punished by being himself crucified to the floor of Hell by three great stakes, and in such a position that every passing sinner must walk upon him. Thus he must suffer upon his own body the weight of all the world's hypocrisy, as Christ suffered upon his body the pain of all the world's sins.

The Jovial Friars tell Virgil how he may climb from the pit, and Virgil discovers that Malacoda lied to him about the bridges over the Sixth Bolgia.

Silent, apart, and unattended we went
as Minor Friars go when they walk abroad,
one following the other. The incident
recalled the fable of the Mouse and the Frog
that Aesop tells.[2] For compared attentively
point by point, "pig" is no closer to "hog"
than the one case to the other. And as one thought
springs from another, so the comparison
gave birth to a new concern, at which I caught
my breath in fear. This thought ran through my mind:
"These Fiends, through us, have been made ridiculous,
and have suffered insult and injury of a kind
to make them smart. Unless we take good care—
now rage is added to their natural spleen—
they will hunt us down as greyhounds hunt the hare."
Already I felt my scalp grow tight with fear.
I was staring back in terror as I said:
"Master, unless we find concealment here
and soon, I dread the rage of the Fiends: already
they are yelping on our trail: I imagine them
so vividly I can hear them now." And he:
"Were I a pane of leaded glass,[3] I could not
summon your outward look more instantly
into myself, than I do your inner thought.
Your fears were mixed already with my own
with the same suggestion and the same dark look;

2. The fable was not by Aesop, but was attributed to him in Dante's time: A mouse comes to a body of water and wonders how to cross. A frog, thinking to drown the mouse, offers to ferry him, but the mouse is afraid he will fall off. The frog thereupon suggests that the mouse tie himself to one of the frog's feet. In this way they start across, but in the middle the frog dives from under the mouse, who struggles desperately to stay afloat while the frog tries to pull him under. A hawk sees the mouse struggling and swoops down and seizes him; but since the frog is tied to the mouse, it too is carried away, and so both of them are devoured. The mouse would be the Navarrese Grafter. The frog would be the two fiends, Grizzly and Hellken. By seeking to harm the Navarrese they came to grief themselves. 3. A mirror. Mirrors were backed with lead in Dante's time.

so that of both I form one resolution:
the right bank may be sloping: in that case
we may find some way down to the next pit
and so escape from the imagined chase."
He had not finished answering me thus
when, not far off, their giant wings outspread,
I saw the Fiends come charging after us.
Seizing me instantly in his arms, my Guide—
like a mother wakened by a midnight noise
to find a wall of flame at her bedside
(who takes her child and runs, and more concerned
for him than for herself, does not pause even
to throw a wrap about her) raised me, turned,
and down the rugged bank from the high summit
flung himself down supine onto the slope
which walls the upper side of the next pit.
Water that turns the great wheel of a land-mill
never ran faster through the end of a sluice
at the point nearest the paddles[4]—as down that hill
my Guide and Master bore me on his breast,
as if I were not a companion, but a son.
And the soles of his feet had hardly come to rest
on the bed of the depth below, when on the height
we had just left, the Fiends beat their great wings.
But now they gave my Guide no cause for fright;
for the Providence that gave them the fifth pit
to govern as the ministers of Its will,
takes from their souls the power of leaving it.
About us now in the depth of the pit we found
a painted people, weary and defeated.
Slowly, in pain, they paced it round and round.
All wore great cloaks cut to as ample a size
as those worn by the Benedictines of Cluny.[5]
The enormous hoods were drawn over their eyes.
The outside is all dazzle, golden and fair;
the inside, lead, so heavy that Frederick's capes,[6]
compared to these, would seem as light as air.
O weary mantle for eternity!
We turned to the left again along their course,

4. The sharp drop of the sluice makes the water run faster at the point at which it hits the wheel. *Land-mill:* As distinguished from the floating mills common in Dante's time and up to the advent of the steam engine. These were built on rafts that were anchored in the swift-flowing rivers of Northern Italy. 5. The habit of these monks was especially ample and elegant. St. Bernard once wrote ironically to a nephew who had entered this monastery: "If length of sleeves and amplitude of hood made for holiness, what could hold me back from following [your lead]."
6. Frederick II executed persons found guilty of treason by fastening them into a sort of leaden shell. The doomed man was then placed in a cauldron over a fire and the lead was melted around him.

listening to their moans of misery,
but they moved so slowly down that barren strip,
tired by their burden, that our company
was changed at every movement of the hip.
And walking thus, I said: "As we go on,
may it please you to look about among these people
for any whose name or history may be known."
And one who understood Tuscan cried to us there
as we hurried past: "I pray you check your speed.
you who run so fast through the sick air:
it may be I am one who will fit your case."
And at his words my Master turned and said:
"Wait now, then go with him at his own pace."
I waited there, and saw along that track
two souls who seemed in haste to be with me;
but the narrow way and their burden held them back.
When they had reached me down that narrow way
they stared at me in silence and amazement,
then turned to one another. I heard one say:
"This one seems, by the motion of his throat,
to be alive; and if they are dead, how is it
they are allowed to shed the leaden coat?"
And then to me "O Tuscan, come so far
to the college of the sorry hypocrites,
do not disdain to tell us who you are."
And I: "I was born and raised a Florentine
on the green and lovely banks of Arno's waters,
I go with the body that was always mine.
But who are *you*, who sighing as you go
distill in floods of tears that drown your cheeks?
What punishment is this that glitters so?"
"These burnished robes are of thick lead," said one,
"and are hung on us like counterweights, so heavy
that we, their weary fulcrums, creak and groan.
Jovial Friars[7] and Bolognese were we.
We were chosen jointly by your Florentines
to keep the peace,[8] an office usually

7. A nickname given to the military monks of the order of the Glorious Virgin Mary founded at Bologna in 1261. Their original aim was to serve as peacemakers, enforcers of order, and protectors of the weak, but their observance of their rules became so scandalously lax, and their management of worldly affairs so self-seeking, that the order was disbanded by Papal decree.
8. Catalano dei Malavolti (c. 1210–1285), a Guelph, and Loderingo degli Andolo (c. 1210–1293), a Ghibelline, were both Bolognese and, as brothers of the Jovial Friars, both had served as *podestà* (the chief officer charged with keeping the peace) of many cities for varying terms. In 1266 they were jointly appointed to the office of *podestà* of Florence on the theory that a bipartisan administration by men of God would bring peace to the city. Their tenure of office was marked by great violence, however; and they were forced to leave in a matter of months. Modern scholarship has established the fact that they served as instruments of Clement IV's policy in Florence, working at his orders to overthrow the Ghibellines under the guise of an impartial administration.

held by a single man; near the Gardingo[9]
one still may see the sort of peace we kept.
I was called Catalano, he, Loderingo."
I began: "O Friars, your evil . . ."—and then I saw
a figure crucified upon the ground[1]
by three great stakes, and I fell still in awe.
When he saw me there, he began to puff great sighs
into his beard, convulsing all his body;
and Friar Catalano, following my eyes,
said to me: "That one nailed across the road
counselled the Pharisees that it was fitting
one man be tortured for the public good.
Naked he lies fixed there, as you see,
in the path of all who pass; there he must feel
the weight of all through all eternity.
His father-in-law[2] and the others of the Council
which was a seed of wrath to all the Jews,
are similarly staked for the same evil."
Then I saw Virgil marvel[3] for a while
over that soul so ignominiously
stretched on the cross in Hell's eternal exile.
Then, turning, he asked the Friar: "If your law permit,
can you tell us if somewhere along the right
there is some gap in the stone wall of the pit
through which we two may climb to the next brink
without the need of summoning the Black Angels
and forcing them to raise us from this sink?"
He: "Nearer than you hope, there is a bridge
that runs from the great circle of the scarp
and crosses every ditch from ridge to ridge,
except that in this it is broken; but with care
you can mount the ruins which lie along the slope
and make a heap on the bottom." My Guide stood there
motionless for a while with a dark look.
At last he said: "He[4] lied about this business,
who spears the sinners yonder with his hook."
And the Friar: "Once at Bologna I heard the wise
discussing the Devil's sins; among them I heard
that he is a liar and the father of lies."

9. The site of the palace of the Ghibelline family degli Uberti. In the riots resulting from the maladministration of the two Jovial Friars, the Ghibellines were forced out of the city and the Uberti palace was razed. 1. Caiaphas. His words were: "It is expedient that one man shall die for the people and that the whole nation perish not." (John xi, 50). 2. Annas, father-in-law of Caiaphas, was the first before whom Jesus was led upon his arrest. (John xviii, 13). He had Jesus bound and delivered to Caiaphas. 3. Caiaphas had not been there on Virgil's first descent into Hell. 4. Malacoda.

When the sinner had finished speaking, I saw the face
of my sweet Master darken a bit with anger:
he set off at a great stride from that place,
and I turned from that weighted hypocrite
to follow in the prints of his dear feet.

CANTO XXIV

Circle Eight: Bolgia Seven The Thieves

The Poets climb the right bank laboriously, cross the bridge of the Seventh Bolgia and descend the far bank to observe the Thieves. They find the pit full of monstrous reptiles who curl themselves about the sinners like living coils of rope, binding each sinner's hands behind his back, and knotting themselves through the loins. Other reptiles dart about the place, and the Poets see one of them fly through the air and pierce the jugular vein of one sinner who immediately bursts into flames until only ashes remain. From the ashes the sinner reforms painfully.

These are Dante's first observations of the Thieves and will be carried further in the next Canto, but the first allegorical retribution is immediately apparent. Thievery is reptilian in its secrecy; therefore it is punished by reptiles. The hands of the thieves are the agents of their crimes; therefore they are bound forever. And as the thief destroys his fellowmen by making their substance disappear, so is he painfully destroyed and made to disappear, not once but over and over again.

The sinner who has risen from his own ashes reluctantly identifies himself as Vanni Fucci. He tells his story, and to revenge himself for having been forced to reveal his identity he utters a dark prophecy against Dante.

In the turning season of the youthful year,
when the sun is warming his rays beneath Aquarius[5]
and the days and nights already begin to near
their perfect balance; the hoar-frost copies then
the image of his white sister on the ground,
but the first sun wipes away the work of his pen.[6]
The peasants who lack fodder then arise
and look about and see the fields all white,
and hear their lambs bleat; then they smite their thighs,[7]
go back into the house, walk here and there,
pacing, fretting, wondering what to do,

5. The zodiacal sign for the period from January 21 to February 21. The sun is moving north then to approach the vernal equinox (March 21), at which point the days and the nights are equal. The Italian spring comes early, and the first warm days would normally occur under Aquarius.
6. The hoar-frost looks like snow but melts away as soon as the sun strikes it. 7. A common Italian gesture of vexation, about equivalent to smiting the forehead with the palm of the hand.

then come out doors again, and there, despair
falls from them when they see how the earth's face
has changed in so little time, and they take their staffs
and drive their lambs to feed—so in that place
when I saw my Guide and Master's eyebrows lower,
my spirits fell and I was sorely vexed;
and as quickly came the plaster to the sore:
for when he had reached the ruined bridge, he stood
and turned on me that sweet and open look
with which he had greeted me in the dark wood.
When he had paused and studied carefully
the heap of stones, he seemed to reach some plan,
for he turned and opened his arms and lifted me.
Like one who works and calculates ahead,
and is always ready for what happens next—
so, raising me above that dismal bed
to the top of one great slab of the fallen slate,
he chose another saying: "Climb here, but first
test it to see if it will hold your weight."
It was no climb for a lead-hung hypocrite:
for scarcely we—he light and I assisted—
could crawl handhold by handhold from the pit;
and were it not that the bank along this side
was lower than the one down which we had slid,
I at least—I will not speak for my Guide—
would have turned back. But as all of the vast rim
of Malebolge leans toward the lowest well,
so each succeeding valley and each brim
is lower than the last. We climbed the face
and arrived by great exertion to the point
where the last rock had fallen from its place.
My lungs were pumping as if they could not stop;
I thought I could not go on, and I sat exhausted
the instant I had clambered to the top.
"Up on your feet! This is no time to tire!"
my Master cried. "The man who lies asleep
will never waken fame, and his desire
and all his life drift past him like a dream,
and the traces of his memory fade from time
like smoke in air, or ripples on a stream.
Now, therefore, rise. Control your breath, and call
upon the strength of soul that wins all battles
unless it sink in the gross body's fall.
There is a longer ladder yet to climb:
this much is not enough. If you understand me,

show that you mean to profit from your time."
I rose and made my breath appear more steady
than it really was, and I replied: "Lead on
as it pleases you to go: I am strong and ready."
We picked our way up the cliff, a painful climb,[8]
for it was narrower, steeper, and more jagged
than any we had crossed up to that time.
I moved along, talking to hide my faintness,
when a voice that seemed unable to form words
rose from the depths of the next chasm's darkness.
I do not know what it said, though by then the Sage
had led me to the top of the next arch;
but the speaker seemed in a tremendous rage.
I was bending over the brim, but living eyes
could not plumb to the bottom of that dark;
therefore I said, "Master, let me advise
that we cross over and climb down the wall:
for just as I hear the voice without understanding,
so I look down and make out nothing at all."
"I make no other answer than the act,
the Master said: "the only fit reply
to a fit request is silence and the fact."
So we moved down the bridge to the stone pier
that shores the end of the arch on the eighth bank,
and there I saw the chasm's depths made clear;
and there great coils of serpents met my sight,
so hideous a mass that even now
the memory makes my blood run cold with fright.
Let Libya[9] boast no longer, for though its sands
breed chelidrids, jaculi, and phareans,
cenchriads, and two-headed amphisbands,
it never bred such a variety
of vipers, no, not with all Ethiopia
and all the lands that lie by the Red Sea.
Amid that swarm, naked and without hope,
people ran terrified, not even dreaming
of a hole to hide in, or of heliotrope.[1]
Their hands were bound behind by coils of serpents

8. The "top" Dante mentions in line 45 must obviously have been the top of the fallen stone that was once the bridge. There remains the difficult climb up the remainder of the cliff.
9. *Libya . . . Ethiopia . . . lands that lie by the Red Sea:* The desert areas of the Mediterranean shores. Lucan's *Pharsalia* describes the assortment of monsters listed here by Dante. I have rendered their names from Latin to English jabberwocky to avoid problems of pronunciation. In Lucan *chelydri* make their trails smoke and burn, they are amphibious; *jaculi* fly through the air like darts piercing what they hit; *pharese* plow the ground with their tails; *cenchri* waver from side to side when they move; and *amphisboenae* have a head at each end. 1. Not the flower, but the bloodstone, a spotted chalcedony. It was believed to make the wearer invisible.

which thrust their heads and tails between the loins
and bunched in front, a mass of knotted torments.
One of the damned came racing round a boulder,
and as he passed us, a great snake shot up
and bit him where the neck joins with the shoulder.
No mortal pen—however fast it flash
over the page—could write down *o* or *i*
as quickly as he flamed and fell in ash;
and when he was dissolved into a heap
upon the ground, the dust rose of itself
and immediately resumed its former shape.
Precisely so, philosophers declare,
the Phoenix dies and then is born again
when it approaches its five hundredth year.[2]
It lives on tears of balsam and of incense;
in all its life it eats no herb or grain,
and nard and precious myrrh sweeten its cerements.
And as a person fallen in a fit,
possessed by a Demon or some other seizure
that fetters him without his knowing it,
struggles up to his feet and blinks his eyes
(still stupefied by the great agony
he has just passed), and, looking round him, sighs—
such was the sinner when at last he rose.
O Power of God! How dreadful is Thy will
which in its vengeance rains such fearful blows.
Then my Guide asked him who he was. And he
answered reluctantly: "Not long ago
I rained into this gullet from Tuscany.
I am Vanni Fucci,[3] the beast. A mule among men,
I chose the bestial life above the human.
Savage Pistoia was my fitting den."
And I to my Guide: "Detain him a bit longer
and ask what crime it was that sent him here;
I knew him as a man of blood and anger."[4]
The sinner, hearing me, seemed discomforted,
but he turned and fixed his eyes upon my face
with a look of dismal shame; at length he said:

2. The fabulous Phoenix of Arabia was the only one of its kind in the world. Every five hundred years it built a nest of spices and incense which took fire from the heat of the sun and the beating of the Phoenix's wings. The Phoenix was thereupon cremated and was then re-born from its ashes. 3. The bastard son of Fuccio de Lazzeri, a nobleman (Black) of Pistoia. In 1293 with two accomplices he stole the treasure of San Jacopo in the Duomo of San Zeno. Others were accused, and one man spent a year in jail on this charge before the guilty persons were discovered. Vanni Fucci had escaped from Pistoia by then, but his accomplices were convicted. 4. Dante (the traveler within the narrative rather than Dante the author) claims that he did not know Fucci was a thief, but only that he was a man of blood and violence. He should therefore be punished in the Seventh Circle.

"That you have found me out among the strife
and misery of this place, grieves my heart more
than did the day that cut me from my life.
But I am forced to answer truthfully:
I am put down so low because it was I
who stole the treasure from the Sacristy,
for which others once were blamed. But that you may
find less to gloat about if you escape here,
prick up your ears and listen to what I say:
First Pistoia is emptied of the Black,
then Florence changes her party and her laws.
From Valdimagra the God of War brings back
a fiery vapor wrapped in turbid air:
then in a storm of battle at Piceno
the vapor breaks apart the mist, and there
every White shall feel his wounds anew.
And I have told you this that it may grieve you."[5]

CANTO XXV

Circle Eight: Bolgia Seven The Thieves

Vanni's rage mounts to the point where he hurls an ultimate obscenity at God, and the serpents immediately swarm over him, driving him off in great pain. The Centaur, Cacus, his back covered with serpents and a fire-eating dragon, also gives chase to punish the wretch.

Dante then meets Five Noble Thieves of Florence and sees the further retribution visited upon the sinners. Some of the thieves appear first in human form, others as reptiles. All but one of them suffer a painful transformation before Dante's eyes. Agnello appears in human form and is merged with Cianfa, who appears as a six-legged lizard. Buoso appears as a man and changes form with Francesco, who first appears as a tiny reptile. Only Puccio Sciancato remains unchanged, though we are made to understand that his turn will come.

For endless and painful transformation is the final state of the thieves. In life they took the substance of others, transforming it into their own. So in Hell their very bodies are constantly being taken from them, and they are left to steal back a human form from some other sinner. Thus they waver constantly between man and reptile, and no sinner knows what to call his own.

5. In May of 1301 the Whites of Florence joined with the Whites of Pistoia to expel the Pistoian Blacks and destroy their houses. The ejected Blacks fled to Florence and joined forces with the Florentine Blacks. On November 1st of the same year, Charles of Valois took Florence and helped the Blacks drive out the Whites. Piceno was the scene of a battle in which the Blacks of Florence and Lucca combined in 1302 to capture Serravalle, a White strong point near Pistoia.

When he had finished, the thief—to his disgrace—
raised his hands with both fists making figs,[6]
and cried: "Here, God! I throw them in your face!"
Thereat the snakes became my friends, for one
coiled itself about the wretch's neck
as if it were saying: "You shall not go on!"
and another tied his arms behind him again,
knotting its head and tail between his loins
so tight he could not move a finger in pain.
Pistoia! Pistoia! why have you not decreed
to turn yourself to ashes and end your days,
rather than spread the evil of your seed!
In all of Hell's corrupt and sunken halls
I found no shade so arrogant toward God,
not even him who fell from the Theban walls!
Without another word, he fled; and there
I saw a furious Centaur race up, roaring:
"Where is the insolent blasphemer? Where?"
I do not think as many serpents swarm
in all the Maremma as he bore on his back
from the haunch to the first sign of our human form.
Upon his shoulders, just behind his head
a snorting dragon whose hot breath set fire
to all it touched, lay with its wings outspread.
My Guide said: "That is Cacus.[7] Time and again
in the shadow of Mount Aventine he made
a lake of blood upon the Roman plain.
He does not go with his kin by the blood-red fosse
because of the cunning fraud with which he stole
the cattle of Hercules. And thus it was
his thieving stopped, for Hercules found his den
and gave him perhaps a hundred blows with his club,
and of them he did not feel the first ten."
Meanwhile, the Centaur passed along his way,
and three wraiths came. Neither my Guide nor I
knew they were there until we heard them say:

6. An obscene gesture made by closing the hand into a fist with the thumb protruding between the first and second fingers. The fig is an ancient symbol for the vulva, and the protruding thumb is an obvious phallic symbol. The gesture is still current in Italy and has lost none of its obscene significance since Dante's time. 7. The son of Vulcan. He lived in a cave at the foot of Mount Aventine, from which he raided the herds of the cattle of Hercules, which pastured on the Roman plain. Hercules clubbed him to death for his thievery, beating him in rage long after he was dead. Cacus is condemned to the lower pit for his greater crime, instead of guarding Phlegethon with his brother centaurs. Virgil, however, did not describe him as a centaur (V. *Aeneid* VIII, 193–267). Dante's interpretation of him is probably based on the fact that Virgil referred to him as "half-human."

"You there—who are you?" There our talk fell still
and we turned to stare at them. I did not know them,
but by chance it happened, as it often will,
one named another. "Where is Cinfa?" he cried;
"Why has he fallen back?" I placed a finger
across my lips as a signal to my Guide.
Reader, should you doubt what next I tell,
it will be no wonder, for though I saw it happen,
I can scarce believe it possible, even in Hell.
For suddenly, as I watched, I saw a lizard
come darting forward on six great taloned feet
and fasten itself to a sinner from crotch to gizzard.
Its middle feet sank in the sweat and grime
of the wretch's paunch, its forefeet clamped his arms,
its teeth bit through both cheeks. At the same time
its hind feet fastened on the sinner's thighs:
its tail thrust through his legs and closed its coil
over his loins. I saw it with my own eyes!
No ivy ever grew about a tree
as tightly as that monster wove itself
limb by limb about the sinner's body;
they fused like hot wax, and their colors ran
together until neither wretch nor monster
appeared what he had been when he began:
just so, before the running edge of the heat
on a burning page, a brown discoloration
changes to black as the white dies from the sheet.
The other two cried out as they looked on:
"Alas! Alas! Agnello, how you change!
Already you are neither two nor one!"
The two heads had already blurred and blended;
now two new semblances appeared and faded,
one face where neither face began nor ended.
From the four upper limbs of man and beast
two arms were made, then members never seen
grew from the thighs and legs, belly and breast.
Their former likenesses mottled and sank
to something that was both of them and neither;
and so transformed, it slowly left our bank.
As lizards at high noon of a hot day
dart out from hedge to hedge, from shade to shade,
and flash like lightning when they cross the way,
so toward the bowels of the other two,
shot a small monster; livid, furious,

and black as a pepper corn. Its lunge bit through
that part[8] of one of them from which man receives
his earliest nourishment; then it fell back
and lay sprawled out in front of the two thieves.
Its victim stared at it but did not speak:
indeed, he stood there like a post, and yawned
as if lack of sleep, or a fever, had left him weak.
The reptile stared at him, he at the reptile;
from the wound of one and from the other's mouth
two smokes poured out and mingled, dark and vile.
Now let Lucan be still with his history
of poor Sabellus and Nassidius,[9]
and wait to hear what next appeared to me.
Of Cadmus and Arethusa be Ovid silent.
I have no need to envy him those verses
where he makes one a fountain, and one a serpent:
for he never transformed two beings face to face
in such a way that both their natures yielded
their elements each to each, as in this case.
Responding sympathetically to each other,
the reptile cleft his tail into a fork,
and the wounded sinner drew his feet together.
The sinner's legs and thighs began to join:
they grew together so, that soon no trace
of juncture could be seen from toe to loin.
Point by point the reptile's cloven tail
grew to the form of what the sinner lost;
one skin began to soften, one to scale.
The armpits swallowed the arms, and the short shank
of the reptile's forefeet simultaneously
lengthened by as much as the man's arms shrank.
Its hind feet twisted round themselves and grew
the member man conceals; meanwhile the wretch
from his one member generated two.
The smoke swelled up about them all the while:
it tanned one skin and bleached the other; it stripped
the hair from the man and grew it on the reptile.
While one fell to his belly, the other rose
without once shifting the locked evil eyes
below which they changed snouts as they changed pose.
The face of the standing one drew up and in

8. The navel. 9. In *Pharsalia* (IX, 761 ff.) Lucan relates how Sabellus and Nassidius, two soldiers of the army Cato led across the Libyan desert, were bitten by monsters. Sabellus melted into a puddle and Nassidius swelled until he popped his coat of mail. In his *Metamorphoses*, Ovid wrote how Cadmus was changed into a serpent (IV, 562–603) and how Arethusa was changed into a fountain (V, 572–661).

toward the temples, and from the excess matter
that gathered there, ears grew from the smooth skin;
while of the matter left below the eyes
the excess became a nose, at the same time
forming the lips to an appropriate size.
Here the face of the prostrate felon slips,
sharpens into a snout, and withdraws its ears
as a snail pulls in its horns. Between its lips
the tongue, once formed for speech, thrusts out a fork;
the forked tongue of the other heals and draws
into his mouth. The smoke has done its work.
The soul that had become a beast went flitting
and hissing over the stones, and after it
the other walked along talking and spitting.
Then turning his new shoulders, said to the one
that still remained: "It is Buoso's turn to go
crawling along this road as I have done."
Thus did the ballast of the seventh hold
shift and reshift; and may the strangeness of it
excuse my pen if the tale is strangely told.
And though all this confused me, they did not flee
so cunningly but what I was aware
that it was Puccio Sciancato alone of the three
that first appeared, who kept his old form still.
The other was he for whom you weep, Gaville.[1]

CANTO XXVI

Circle Eight: Bolgia Eight The Evil Counselors

Dante turns from the Thieves toward the Evil Counselors of the next Bolgia, and between the two he addresses a passionate lament to Florence prophesying the griefs that will befall her from these two sins. At the purported time of the Vision, it will be recalled, Dante was a Chief Magistrate of Florence and was forced into exile by men he had reason to consider both thieves and evil counselors. He seems prompted, in fact, to say much more on this score, but he restrains himself when he comes in sight of the sinners of the next Bolgia, for they are a moral symbolism, all men of gift who abused their genius, perverting it to wiles and stratagems. Seeing them in Hell he knows his must be another road: his way shall not be by deception.

So the Poets move on and Dante observes the Eighth Bolgia in detail. Here the Evil Counselors move about endlessly, hidden from

1. Francesco dei Cavalcanti. He was killed by the people of Gaville (a village in the Valley of the Arno). His kinsmen rallied immediately to avenge his death, and many of the townsmen of Gaville were killed in the resulting feud.

view inside great flames. Their sin was to abuse the gifts of the Almighty, to steal his virtues for low purposes. And as they stole from God in their lives and worked by hidden ways, so are they stolen from sight and hidden in the great flames which are their own guilty consciences. And as, in most instances at least, they sinned by glibness of tongue, so are the flames made into a fiery travesty of tongues.

Among the others, the Poets see a great doubleheaded flame, and discover that Ulysses and Diomede are punished together within it. Virgil addresses the flame, and through its wavering tongue Ulysses narrates an unforgettable tale of his last voyage and death.

Joy to you, Florence, that your banners swell,
beating their proud wings over land and sea.
and that your name expands through all of Hell!
Among the thieves I found five who had been
your citizens, to my shame; nor yet shall you
mount to great honor peopling such a den!
But if the truth is dreamed of toward the morning,[2]
you soon shall feel what Prato[3] and the others
wish for you. And were that day of mourning
already come it would not be too soon.
So may it come, since it must! for it will weigh
more heavily on me as I pass my noon.
We left that place. My Guide climbed stone by stone
the natural stair by which we had descended
and drew me after him. So we passed on,
and going our lonely way through that dead land
among the crags and crevices of the cliff,
the foot could make no way without the hand.
I mourned among those rocks, and I mourn again
when memory returns to what I saw:
and more than usually I curb the strain
of my genius, lest it stray from Virtue's course;
so if some star, or a better thing, grant me merit,
may I not find the gift cause for remorse.
As many fireflies as the peasant sees
when he rests on a hill and looks into the valley
(where he tills or gathers grapes or prunes his trees)

2. A semi-proverbial expression. It was a common belief that those dreams that occur just before waking foretell the future. "Morning" here would equal both "the rude awakening" and the potential "dawn of a new day." 3. Not the neighboring town (which was on good terms with Florence) but Cardinal Niccolò da Prato, papal legate from Benedict XI to Florence. In 1304 he tried to reconcile the warring factions, but found that neither side would accept mediation. Since none would be blessed, he cursed all impartially and laid the city under an interdict (i.e., forbade the offering of the sacraments). Shortly after this rejection by the Church, a bridge collapsed in Florence, and later a great fire broke out. Both disasters cost many lives, and both were promptly attributed to the Papal curse.

in that sweet season when the face of him
who lights the world rides north, and at the hour
when the fly yields to the gnat and the air grows dim—
such myriads of flames I saw shine through
the gloom of the eighth abyss when I arrived
at the rim from which its bed comes into view.
As he the bears avenged[4] so fearfully
beheld Elijah's chariot depart—
the horses rise toward heaven—but could not see
more than the flame, a cloudlet in the sky,
once it had risen—so within the fosse
only those flames, forever passing by
were visible, ahead, to right, to left;
for though each steals a sinner's soul from view
not one among them leaves a trace of the theft.
I stood on the bridge, and leaned out from the edge;
so far, that but for a jut of rock I held to
I should have been sent hurtling from the ledge
without being pushed. And seeing me so intent,
my Guide said: "There are souls within those flames;
each sinner swathes himself in his own torment."
"Master," I said, "your words make me more sure,
but I had seen already that it was so
and meant to ask what spirit must endure
the pains of that great flame which splits away
in two great horns, as if it rose from the pyre
where Eteocles and Polynices lay?"[5]
He answered me: "Forever round this path
Ulysses and Diomede[6] move in such dress,
united in pain as once they were in wrath;
there they lament the ambush of the Horse
which was the door through which the noble seed

4. Elisha saw Elijah translated to Heaven in a fiery chariot. Later he was mocked by some children, who called out tauntingly that he should "Go up" as Elijah had. Elisha cursed the children in the name of the Lord, and bears came suddenly upon the children and devoured them. (2 *Kings* ii, 11–24.) 5. Eteocles and Polynices, sons of Oedipus, succeeded jointly to the throne of Thebes, and came to an agreement whereby each one would rule separately for a year at a time. Eteocles ruled the first year and when he refused to surrender the throne at the appointed time, Polynices led the Seven against Thebes in a bloody war. In single combat the two brothers killed one another. Statius (*Thebaid* XII, 429 ff.) wrote that their mutual hatred was so great that when they were placed on the same funeral pyre the very flame of their burning drew apart in two great raging horns. 6. They suffer here for their joint guilt in counseling and carrying out many stratagems which Dante considered evil, though a narrator who was less passionately a partisan of the Trojans might have thought their actions justifiable methods of warfare. Their first sin was the stratagem of the Wooden Horse, as a result of which Troy fell and Aeneas went forth to found the Roman line. The second evil occurred at Scyros. There Ulysses discovered Achilles in female disguise, hidden by his mother, Thetis, so that he would not be taken off to the war. Deidamia was in love with Achilles and had borne him a son. When Ulysses persuaded her lover to sail for Troy, she died of grief. The third count is Ulysses' theft of the sacred statue of Pallas from the Palladium. Upon the statue, it was believed, depended the fate of Troy. Its theft, therefore, would result in Troy's downfall.

of the Romans issued from its holy source;
there they mourn that for Achilles slain
sweet Deidamia weeps even in death;
there they recall the Palladium in their pain."
"Master," I cried, "I pray you and repray
till my prayer becomes a thousand—if these souls
can still speak from the fire, oh let me stay
until the flame draws near! Do not deny me:
You see how fervently I long for it!"
And he to me: "Since what you ask is worthy,
it shall be. But be still and let me speak;
for I know your mind already, and they perhaps
might scorn your manner of speaking, since they were Greek."
And when the flame had come where time and place
seemed fitting to my Guide, I heard him say
these words to it: "O you two souls who pace
together in one flame!—if my days above
won favor in your eyes, if I have earned
however much or little of your love
in writing my High Verses, do not pass by,
but let one of you[7] be pleased to tell where he,
having disappeared from the known world, went to die."
As if it fought the wind, the greater prong
of the ancient flame began to quiver and hum;
then moving its tip as if it were the tongue
that spoke, gave out a voice above the roar.
"When I left Circe,"[8] it said, "who more than a year
detained me near Gaëta long before
Aeneas came and gave the place that name,
not fondness for my son, nor reverence
for my aged father, nor Penelope's[9] claim
to the joys of love, could drive out of my mind
the lust to experience the far-flung world
and the failings and felicities of mankind.
I put out on the high and open sea
with a single ship and only those few souls
who stayed true when the rest deserted me.
As far as Morocco and as far as Spain
I saw both shores;[1] and I saw Sardinia
and the other islands of the open main.

7. Ulysses. He is the figure in the larger horn of the flame (which symbolizes that his guilt, as leader, is greater than that of Diomede). His memorable account of his last voyage and death is purely Dante's invention. 8. She changed Ulysses' men to swine and kept him a prisoner, though with rather exceptional accommodations. *Gaëta:* Southeastern Italian coastal town. According to Virgil (*Aeneid*, VII, 1 ff.) it was earlier named Caieta by Aeneas in honor of his aged nurse. 9. Ulysses' wife. 1. Of the Mediterranean.

I and my men were stiff and slow with age
when we sailed at last into the narrow pass[2]
where, warning all men back from further voyage,
Hercules' Pillars rose upon our sight.
Already I had left Ceuta on the left;
Seville[3] now sank behind me on the right.
'Shipmates,' I said, 'who through a hundred thousand
perils have reached the West, do not deny
to the brief remaining watch our senses stand
experience of the world beyond the sun.
Greeks! You were not born to live like brutes,
but to press on toward manhood and recognition!
With this brief exhortation I made my crew
so eager for the voyage I could hardly
have held them back from it when I was through;
and turning our stern toward morning, our bow toward night,
we bore southwest out of the world of man;
we made wings of our oars for our fool's flight.
That night we raised the other pole ahead
with all its stars, and ours had so declined
it did not rise out of its ocean bed.[4]
Five times since we had dipped our bending oars
beyond the world, the light beneath the moon
had waxed and waned, when dead upon our course
we sighted, dark in space, a peak so tall
I doubted any man had seen the like.[5]
Our cheers were hardly sounded, when a squall
broke hard upon our bow from the new land:
three times it sucked the ship and the sea about
as it pleased Another to order and command.
At the fourth, the poop rose and the bow went down
till the sea closed over us and the light was gone."

CANTO XXVII

Circle Eight: Bolgia Eight The Evil Counselors

The double flame departs at a word from Virgil and behind it appears another which contains the soul of Count Guido da Montefeltro, a Lord of Romagna. He had overheard Virgil speaking Ital-

2. The straits of Gibraltar, formerly called the Pillars of Hercules. They were presumed to be the Western limit beyond which no man could navigate. 3. In Dante's time this was the name given to the general region of Spain. Having passed through the Straits, the men are now in the Atlantic. *Ceuta:* In Africa, opposite Gibraltar. 4. They drove south across the equator, observed the southern stars, and found that the North Star had sunk below the horizon. 5. Purgatory. They sight it after five months of passage. According to Dante's geography, the Northern hemisphere is land and the Southern is all water except for the Mountain of Purgatory which rises above the surface at a point directly opposite Jerusalem.

ian, and the entire flame in which his soul is wrapped quivers with his eagerness to hear recent news of his wartorn country. (As Farinata has already explained, the spirits of the damned have prophetic powers, but lose all track of events as they approach.)

Dante replies with a stately and tragic summary of how things stand in the cities of Romagna. When he has finished, he asks Guido for his story, and Guido recounts his life, and how Boniface VIII persuaded him to sin.

When it had finished speaking, the great flame
stood tall and shook no more. Now, as it left us
with the sweet Poet's license, another[6] came
along that track and our attention turned
to the new flame: a strange and muffled roar
rose from the single tip to which it burned.
As the Sicilian bull[7]—that brazen spit
which bellowed first (and properly enough)
with the lament of him whose file had tuned it—
was made to bellow by its victim's cries
in such a way, that though it was of brass,
it seemed itself to howl and agonize:
so lacking any way through or around
the fire that sealed them in, the mournful words
were changed into its language. When they found
their way up the tip, imparting to it
the same vibration given them in their passage
over the tongue of the concealed sad spirit,
we heard it say: "O you at whom I aim
my voice, and who were speaking Lombard, saying:
'Go now, I ask no more,'[8] just as I came—
though I may come a bit late to my turn,
may it not annoy you to pause and speak a while:
you see it does not annoy me— and I burn.
If you have fallen only recently
to this blind world from that sweet Italy
where I acquired my guilt, I pray you, tell me:
is there peace or war in Romagna? for on earth
I too was of those hills between Urbino

6. Guido da Montefeltro (1223–1298). As head of the Ghibellines of Romagna, he was reputed the wisest and cunningest man in Italy. 7. In the sixth century B.C. Perillus of Athens constructed for Phalaris, Tyrant of Sicily, a metal bull to be used as an instrument of torture. When victims were placed inside it and roasted to death, their screams passed through certain tuned pipes and emerged as a burlesque bellowing of the bull. Phalaris accepted delivery and showed his gratitude by appointing the inventor the bull's first victim. Later Phalaris was overthrown, and he, too, took his turn inside the bull. 8. These are the words with which Virgil dismisses Ulysses and Diomede, his "license."

and the fold from which the Tiber springs to birth."[9]
I was still staring at it from the dim
edge of the pit when my Guide nudged me, saying:
"This one is Italian; *you* speak to him."
My answer was framed already; without pause
I spoke these words to it: "O hidden soul,
your sad Romagna is not and never was
without war in her tyrants' raging blood;
but none flared openly when I left just now.
Ravenna's fortunes stand as they have stood
these many years: Polenta's eagles brood
over her walls, and their pinions cover Cervia.[1]
The city that so valiantly withstood
the French, and raised a mountain of their dead,
feels the Green Claws again.[2] Still in Verrucchio
the Aged Mastiff and his Pup, who shed
Montagna's blood, raven in their old ranges.[3]
The cities of Lamone and Santerno
are led by the white den's Lion, he who changes
his politics with the compass.[4] And as the city
the Savio washes[5] lies between plain and mountain,
so it lives between freedom and tyranny.
Now, I beg you, let us know your name;
do not be harder than one has been to you;
so, too, you will preserve your earthly fame."
And when the flame had roared a while beneath
the ledge on which we stood, it swayed its tip
to and fro, and then gave forth this breath:
"If I believed that my reply were made
to one who could ever climb to the world again,
this flame would shake no more. But since no shade
ever returned—if what I am told is true—
from this blind world into the living light,
without fear of dishonor I answer you.

9. Romagna is the district that runs south from the Po along the east side of the Apennines. Urbino is due east of Florence and roughly south of Rimini. Between Urbino and Florence rise the Coronaro Mountains which contain the headwaters of the Tiber. 1. In 1300 Ravenna was ruled by Guido Vecchio da Polenta, father of Francesca da Rimini. His arms bore an eagle and his domain included the small city of Cervia about twelve miles south of Ravenna. 2. The city is Forlì. In 1282 Guido da Montefeltro defended Forlì from the French, but in 1300 it was under the despotic rule of Sinibaldo degli Ordelaffi, whose arms were a green lion. 3. Verrucchio was the castle of Malatesta and his son Malatestino, Lords of Rimini, whom Dante calls dogs for their cruelty. Montagna de' Parcitati, the leader of Rimini's Ghibellines, was captured by Malatesta in 1295 and murdered in captivity by Malatestino. 4. Maginardo de' Pagani (died 1302) ruled Faenza, on the River Lamone, and Imola, close by the River Santerno. His arms were a blue lion on a white field (hence "the Lion from the white den"). He supported the Ghibellines in the north, but the Guelphs in the south (Florence), changing his politics according to the direction in which he was facing. 5. Cesena. It ruled itself for a number of years, but was taken over by Malatestino in 1314. It lies between Forlì and Rimini.

I was a man of arms: then took the rope
of the Franciscans, hoping to make amends:
and surely I should have won to all my hope
but for the Great Priest[6]—may he rot in Hell!—
who brought me back to all my earlier sins;
and how and why it happened I wish to tell
in my own words: while I was still encased
in the pulp and bone my mother bore, my deeds
were not of the lion but of the fox: I raced
through tangled ways; all wiles were mine from birth,
and I won to such advantage with my arts
that rumor of me reached the ends of the earth.
But when I saw before me all the signs
of the time of life that cautions every man
to lower his sail and gather in his lines,
that which had pleased me once, troubled my spirit,
and penitent and confessed, I became a monk.
Alas! What joy I might have had of it!
It was then the Prince of the New Pharisees[7] drew
his sword and marched upon the Lateran—
and not against the Saracen or the Jew,
for every man that stood against his hand
was a Christian soul: not one had warred on Acre,
nor been a trader in the Sultan's land.[8]
It was he abused his sacred vows and mine:
his Office and the Cord I wore, which once
made those it girded leaner. As Constantine
sent for Silvestro to cure his leprosy,[9]
seeking him out among Soracte's cells;
so this one from his great throne sent for me
to cure the fever of pride that burned his blood.
He demanded my advice, and I kept silent
for his words seemed drunken to me. So it stood
until he said: "Your soul need fear no wound;
I absolve your guilt beforehand; and now teach me
how to smash Penestrino to the ground.
The Gates of Heaven, as you know, are mine

6. Boniface VIII, so called as Pope. 7. Also Boniface. *Marched upon the Lateran*: Boniface had had a long-standing feud with the Colonna family. In 1297 the Colonna walled themselves in a castle twenty-five miles east of Rome at Penestrino (now called Palestrina) in the Lateran. On Guido's advice the Pope offered a fair-sounding amnesty which he had no intention of observing. When the Colonna accepted the terms and left the castle, the Pope destroyed it, leaving the Colonna without a refuge. 8. It was the Saracens who opposed the crusaders at Acre, the Jews who traded in the Sultan's land. 9. In the persecutions of the Christians by the Emperor Constantine, Pope Sylvester I took refuge in the caves of Mount Soracte near Rome. (It is now called Santo Oreste.) Later, according to legend, Constantine was stricken by leprosy and sent for Sylvester, who cured him and converted him to Christianity, in return for which the Emperor was believed to have made the famous "Donation of Constantine." (See Canto XIX.)

to open and shut, for I hold the two Great Keys
so easily let go by Celestine."[1]
His weighty arguments led me to fear
silence was worse than sin. Therefore, I said:
"Holy Father, since you clean me here
of the guilt into which I fall, let it be done:
long promise and short observance[2] is the road
that leads to the sure triumph of your throne."
Later, when I was dead, St. Francis came
to claim my soul,[3] but one of the Black Angels
said: 'Leave him. Do not wrong me. This one's name
went into my book the moment he resolved
to give false counsel. Since then he has been mine,
for who does not repent cannot be absolved;
nor can we admit the possibility
of repenting a thing at the same time it is willed,
for the two acts are contradictory.'
Miserable me! with what contrition
I shuddered when he lifted me, saying: 'Perhaps
you hadn't heard that I was a logician.'
He carried me to Minos: eight times round
his scabby back the monster coiled his tail,
then biting it in rage he pawed the ground
and cried: 'This one is for the thievish fire!'
And, as you see, I am lost accordingly,
grieving in heart as I go in this attire."
His story told, the flame began to toss
and writhe its horn. And so it left, and we
crossed over to the arch of the next fosse
where from the iron treasury of the Lord
the fee of wrath is paid the Sowers of Discord.[4]

CANTO XXVIII

Circle Eight: Bolgia Nine The Sowers of Discord

The Poets come to the edge of the Ninth Bolgia and look down at a parade of hideously mutilated souls. These are the Sowers of Discord, and just as their sin was to rend asunder what God had meant to be united, so are they hacked and torn through all eternity by a great demon with a bloody sword. After each mutilation the souls

1. Celestine V under the persuasion of Boniface abdicated the Papacy. (See Canto III notes.) 2. This is the advice upon which Boniface acted in trapping the Colonna with his hypocritical amnesty. 3. To gather in the soul of one of his monks. *Black Angel:* A devil. 4. I have taken liberties with these lines in the hope of achieving a reasonably tonic final couplet. The literal reading is: "In which the fee is paid to those who, sowing discord, acquire weight (of guilt and pain)."

are compelled to drag their broken bodies around the pit and to return to the demon, for in the course of the circuit their wounds knit in time to be inflicted anew. Thus is the law of retribution observed, each sinner suffering according to his degree.

Among them Dante distinguishes three classes with varying degrees of guilt within each class. First come the Sowers of Religious Discord. Mahomet is chief among them, and appears first, cleft from crotch to chin, with his internal organs dangling between his legs. His son-in-law, Ali, drags on ahead of him, cleft from topknot to chin. These reciprocal wounds symbolize Dante's judgment that, between them, these two sum up the total schism between Christianity and Mohammedanism. The revolting details of Mahomet's condition clearly imply Dante's opinon of that doctrine. Mahomet issues an ironic warning to another schismatic, Fra Dolcino.

Next come the Sowers of Political Discord, among them Pier da Medicina, the Tribune Curio, and Mosca dei Lamberti, each mutilated according to the nature of his sin.

Last of all is Bertrand de Born, Sower of Discord Between Kinsmen. He separated father from son, and for that offense carries his head separated from his body, holding it with one hand by the hair, and swinging it as if it were a lantern to light his dark and endless way. The image of Bertrand raising his head at arm's length in order that it might speak more clearly to the Poets on the ridge is one of the most memorable in the *Inferno*. For some reason that cannot be ascertained, Dante makes these sinners quite eager to be remembered in the world, despite the fact that many who lie above them in Hell were unwilling to be recognized.

Who could describe, even in words set free
of metric and rhyme and a thousand times retold,
the blood and wounds that now were shown to me!
At grief so deep the tongue must wag in vain;
the language of our sense and memory
lacks the vocabulary of such pain.
If one could gather all those who have stood
through all of time on Puglia's[5] fateful soil
and wept for the red running of their blood
in the war of the Trojans;[6] and in that long war
which left so vast a spoil of golden rings,
as we find written in Livy, who does not err;[7]

5. I have used the modern name but some of the events Dante narrates took place in the ancient province of Apulia. The southeastern area of Italy is the scene of all the fighting Dante mentions in the following passage. It is certainly a bloody total of slaughter that Dante calls upon to illustrate his scene. 6. The Romans (descended from the Trojans) fought the native Samnites in a long series of raids and skirmishes from 343–290 B.C. 7. The Punic Wars (264–146 B.C.). Livy writes that in the battle of Cannae (216 B.C.) so many Romans fell that Hannibal gathered three bushels of gold rings from the fingers of the dead and produced them before the Senate at Carthage.

along with those whose bodies felt the wet
and gaping wounds of Robert Guiscard's lances;[8]
with all the rest whose bones are gathered yet
at Ceperano where every last Pugliese
turned traitor;[9] and with those from Tagliacozzo
where Alardo won without weapons[1]—if all these
were gathered, and one showed his limbs run through,
another his lopped off, that could not equal
the mutilations of the ninth pit's crew.
A wine tun when a stave or cant-bar starts
does not split open as wide as one I saw
split from his chin to the mouth with which man farts.
Between his legs all of his red guts hung
with the heart, the lungs, the liver, the gall bladder,
and the shriveled sac that passes shit to the bung.
I stood and stared at him from the stone shelf;
he noticed me and opening his own breast
with both hands cried: "See how I rip myself!
See how Mahomet's mangled and split open!
Ahead of me walks Ali[2] in his tears,
his head cleft from the top-knot to the chin.
And all the other souls that bleed and mourn
along this ditch were sowers of scandal and schism:
as they tore others apart, so are they torn.
Behind us, warden of our mangled horde,
the devil who butchers us and sends us marching
waits to renew our wounds with his long sword
when we have made the circuit of the pit;
for by the time we stand again before him
all the wounds he gave us last have knit.
But who are you that gawk down from that sill—
probably to put off your own descent
to the pit you are sentenced to for your own evil?"
"Death has not come for him, guilt does not drive
his soul to torment," my sweet Guide replied.
"That he may experience all while yet alive
I, who am dead, must lead him through the drear

8. Dante places Guiscard (1015–1085) in the *Paradiso* among the Warriors of God. He fought the Greeks and Saracens in their attempted invasion of Italy. 9. In 1266 the Pugliese under Manfred, King of Sicily, were charged with holding the pass at Ceperano against Charles of Anjou. The Pugliese, probably under Papal pressure, allowed the French free passage, and Charles went on to defeat Manfred at Benevento. Manfred himself was killed in that battle. 1. At Tagliacozzo (1268) in a continuation of the same strife, Charles of Anjou used a stratagem suggested to him by Alard de Valéry and defeated Conradin, nephew of Manfred. "Won without weapons" is certainly an overstatement: what Alardo suggested was a simple but effective concealment of reserve troops. When Conradin seemed to have carried the day and was driving his foes before him, the reserve troops broke on his flank and rear, and defeated Conradin's out-positioned forces. 2. Ali succeeded Mahomet to the Caliphate, but not until three of the disciples had preceded him. Mahomet died in 632, and Ali did not assume the Caliphate until 656.

and darkened halls of Hell, from round to round:
and this is true as my own standing here."
More than a hundred wraiths who were marching under
the sill on which we stood, paused at his words
and stared at me, forgetting pain in wonder.
"And if you do indeed return to see
the sun again, and soon, tell Fra Dolcino[3]
unless he longs to come and march with me
he would do well to check his groceries
before the winter drives him from the hills
and gives the victory to the Novarese."
Mahomet, one foot raised, had paused to say
these words to me. When he had finished speaking
he stretched it out and down, and moved away.
Another—he had his throat slit, and his nose
slashed off as far as the eyebrows, and a wound
where one of his ears had been—standing with those
who stared at me in wonder from the pit,
opened the grinning wound of his red gullet
as if it were a mouth, and said through it:
"O soul unforfeited to misery
and whom—unless I take you for another—
I have seen above in our sweet Italy;
if ever again you see the gentle plain
that slopes down from Vercelli to Marcabò,[4]
remember Pier da Medicina in pain,
and announce this warning to the noblest two
of Fano, Messers Guido and Angiolello:
that unless our foresight sees what is not true
they shall be thrown from their ships into the sea
and drown in the raging tides near La Cattolica
to satisfy a tyrant's treachery.[5]
Neptune never saw so gross a crime
in all the seas from Cyprus to Majorca,
not even in pirate raids, nor the Argive time.[6]
The one-eyed traitor,[7] lord of the demesne

3. In 1300 Fra Dolcino took over the reformist order called the Apostolic Brothers, who preached, among other things, the community of property and of women. Clement V declared them heretical and ordered a crusade against them. The brotherhood retired with its women to an impregnable position in the hills between Novara and Vercelli, but their supplies gave out in the course of a year-long siege, and they were finally starved out in March of 1307. Dolcino and Margaret of Trent, his "Sister in Christ," were burned at the stake at Vercelli the following June.
4. Vercelli is the most western town in Lombardy. Marcabò stands near the mouth of the Po.
5. Malatestino da Rimini (see preceding Canto), in a move to annex the city of Fano, invited Guido del Cassero and Angioletto da Carignano, leading citizens of Fano, to a conference at La Cattolica, a point on the Adriatic midway between Fano and Rimini. At Malatestino's orders the two were thrown overboard off Focara, a headland swept by such dangerous currents that approaching sailors used to offer prayers for a safe crossing. 6. The Greeks were raiders and pirates. *Cyprus . . . Majorca:* These islands are at opposite ends of the Mediterranean. 7. Malatestino.

whose hill and streams one who walks here beside me
will wish eternally he had never seen,
will call them to a parley, but behind
sweet invitations he will work it so
they need not pray against Focara's wind."
And I to him: "If you would have me bear
your name to time, show me the one who found
the sight of that land so harsh, and let me hear
his story and his name." He touched the cheek
of one nearby, forcing the jaws apart,
and said: "This is the one; he cannot speak.
This outcast settled Caesar's doubts that day
beside the Rubicon by telling him:
'A man prepared is a man hurt by delay.' "
Ah, how wretched Curio[8] seemed to me
with a bloody stump in his throat in place of the tongue
which once had dared to speak so recklessly!
And one among them with both arms hacked through
cried out, raising his stumps on the foul air
while the blood bedaubed his face: "Remember, too,
Mosca dei Lamberti,[9] alas, who said
'A thing done has an end!' and with those words
planted the fields of war with Tuscan dead."
"And brought about the death of all your clan!"
I said, and he, stung by new pain on pain,
ran off; and in his grief he seemed a madman.
I stayed to watch those broken instruments,
and I saw a thing so strange I should not dare
to mention it without more evidence
but that my own clear conscience strengthens me,
that good companion that upholds a man
within the armor of his purity.
I saw it there; I seem to see it still—
a body without a head, that moved along
like all the others in that spew and spill.
It held the severed head by its own hair,
swinging it like a lantern in its hand;
and the head looked at us and wept in its despair.
It made itself a lamp of its own head,

8. This is the Roman Tribune Curio, who was banished from Rome by Pompey and joined Caesar's forces, advising him to cross the Rubicon, which was then the boundary between Gaul and the Roman Republic. The crossing constituted invasion, and thus began the Roman Civil War. The Rubicon flows near Rimini. 9. Dante had asked Ciacco (Canto VI) for news of Mosca as a man of good works. Now he finds him, his merit canceled by his greater sin. Buondelmonte dei Buondelmonti had insulted the honor of the Amidei by breaking off his engagement to a daughter of that line in favor of a girl of the Donati. When the Amidei met to discuss what should be done, Mosca spoke for the death of Buondelmonte. The Amidei acted upon his advice and from that murder sprang the bloody feud between the Guelphs and Ghibellines of Florence.

and they were two in one and one in two;
how this can be, He knows who so commanded.
And when it stood directly under us
it raised the head at arm's length toward our bridge
the better to be heard, and swaying thus
it cried: "O living soul in this abyss,
see what a sentence has been passed upon me,
and search all Hell for one to equal this!
When you return to the world, remember me:
I am Bertrand de Born,[1] and it was I
who set the young king on to mutiny,
son against father, father against son
as Achitophel[2] set Absalom and David;
and since I parted those who should be one
in duty and in love, I bear my brain
divided from its source within this trunk;
and walk here where my evil turns to pain,
an eye for an eye to all eternity:
thus is the law of Hell observed in me."

CANTO XXIX

Circle Eight: Bolgia Ten The Falsifiers (Class I, Alchemists)

Dante lingers on the edge of the Ninth Bolgia expecting to see one of his kinsmen, Geri del Bello, among the Sowers of Discord. Virgil, however, hurries him on, since time is short, and as they cross the bridge over the Tenth Bolgia, Virgil explains that he had a glimpse of Geri among the crowd near the bridge and that he had been making threatening gestures at Dante.

The Poets now look into the last Bolgia of the Eighth Circle and see The Falsifiers. They are punished by afflictions of every sense: by darkness, stench, thirst, filth, loathsome diseases, and a shrieking din. Some of them, moreover, run ravening through the pit, tearing others to pieces. Just as in life they corrupted society by their falsifications, so in death these sinners are subjected to a sum of corruptions. In one sense they figure forth what society would be if all falsifiers succeeded—a place where the senses are an affliction (since falsification deceives the senses) rather than a guide, where even the body has no honesty, and where some lie prostrate while others run ravening to prey upon them.

Not all of these details are made clear until the next Canto, for

1. (1140–1215), a great knight and master of the troubadours of Provence. He is said to have instigated a quarrel between Henry II of England and his son Prince Henry, called "The Young King" because he was crowned within his father's lifetime. 2. One of David's counselors, who deserted him to assist the rebellious Absalom. (II Samuel, xv–xvii.)

Dante distinguishes four classes of Falsifiers, and in the present Canto we meet only the first class, The Alchemists, the Falsifiers of Things. Of this class are Griffolino D'arezzo and Capocchio, with both of whom Dante speaks.

The sight of that parade of broken dead
had left my eyes so sotted with their tears
I longed to stay and weep, but Virgil said:
"What are you waiting for? Why do you stare
as if you could not tear your eyes away
from the mutilated shadows passing there?
You did not act so in the other pits.
Consider—if you mean perhaps to count them—
this valley and its train of dismal spirits.
winds twenty-two miles round.[3] The moon already
is under our feet;[4] the time we have is short,
and there is much that you have yet to see."
"Had you known what I was seeking," I replied,
"you might perhaps have given me permission
to stay on longer." (As I spoke, my Guide
had started off already, and I in turn
had moved along behind him; thus, I answered
as we moved along the cliff.) "Within that cavern
upon whose brim I stood so long to stare,
I think a spirit of my own blood mourns
the guilt that sinners find so costly there."
And the Master then: "Hereafter let your mind
turn its attention to more worthy matters
and leave him to his fate among the blind;
for by the bridge and among that shapeless crew
I saw him point to you with threatening gestures,
and I heard him called Geri del Bello.[5] You
were occupied at the time with that headless one
who in his life was master of Altaforte,[6]
and did not look that way; so he moved on."
"O my sweet Guide," I answered. "his death came
by violence and is not yet avenged
by those who share his blood, and, thus, his shame.
For this he surely hates his kin, and, therefore,
as I suppose, he would not speak to me;

3. Another instance of "poetic" rather than "literal" detail. Dante's measurements cannot be made to fit together on any scale map. 4. If the moon, nearly at full, is under their feet, the sun must be overhead. It is therefore approximately noon of Holy Saturday. 5. A cousin of Dante's father. He became embroiled in a quarrel with the Sacchetti of Florence and was murdered. At the time of the writing he had not been avenged by his kinsmen in accord with the clan code of a life for a life. 6. Bertrand de Born was Lord of Hautefort.

and in that he makes me pity him the more."
We spoke of this until we reached the edge
from which, had there been light, we could have seen
the floor of the next pit. Out from that ledge
Malebolge's final cloister lay outspread,
and all of its lay brethren might have been
in sight but for the murk; and from those dead
such shrieks and strangled agonies shrilled through me
like shafts, but barbed with pity, that my hands
flew to my ears. If all the misery
that crams the hospitals of pestilence
in Maremma, Valdichiano, and Sardinia[7]
in the summer months when death sits like a presence
on the marsh air, were dumped into one trench—
that might suggest their pain. And through the screams,
putrid flesh spread up its sickening stench.
Still bearing left we passed from the long sill
to the last bridge of Malebolge. There
the reeking bottom was more visible.
There, High Justice, sacred ministress
of the First Father, reigns eternally
over the falsifiers in their distress.
I doubt it could have been such pain to bear
the sight of the Aeginian people dying[8]
that time when such malignance rode the air
that every beast down to the smallest worm
shriveled and died (it was after that great plague
that the Ancient People, as the poets affirm,
were reborn from the ants)—as it was to see
the spirits lying heaped on one another
in the dank bottom of that fetid valley.
One lay gasping on another's shoulder,
one on another's belly; and some were crawling
on hands and knees among the broken boulders.
Silent, slow step by step, we moved ahead
looking at and listening to those souls
too weak to raise themselves from their stone bed.
I saw two there like pans that are put
one against the other to hold their warmth.
They were covered with great scabs from head to foot.

7. Malarial plague areas. Valdichiano and Maremma were swamp areas of eastern and western Tuscany. 8. Juno, incensed that the nymph Aegina let Jove possess her, set a plague upon the island that bore her name. Every animal and every human died until only Aeacus, the son born to Aegina of Jove, was left. He prayed to his father for aid and Jove repopulated the island by transforming the ants at his son's feet into men. The Aeginians have since been called Myrmidons, from the Greek word for ant (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* VII, 523–660).

No stable boy in a hurry to go home,[9]
or for whom his master waits impatiently,
ever scrubbed harder with his currycomb
than those two spirits of the stinking ditch
scrubbed at themselves with their own bloody claws
to ease the furious burning of the itch.
And as they scrubbed and clawed themselves, their nails
drew down the scabs the way a knife scrapes bream
or some other fish with even larger scales.
"O you," my Guide called out to one, "you there
who rip your scabby mail as if your fingers
were claws and pincers; tell us if this lair
counts any Italians among those who lurk
in its dark depths; so may your busy nails
eternally suffice you for your work."
"We both are Italian whose unending loss
you see before you," he replied in tears.
"But who are you who come to question us?"
"I am a shade," my Guide and Master said,
"who leads this living man from pit to pit
to show him Hell as I have been commanded."
The sinners broke apart as he replied
and turned convulsively to look at me,
as others did who overheard my Guide.
My Master, then, ever concerned for me,
turned and said: "Ask them whatever you wish."
And I said to those two wraiths of misery:
"So may the memory of your names and actions
not die forever from the minds of men
in that first world, but live for many suns,
tell me who you are and of what city;
do not be shamed by your nauseous punishment
into concealing your identity."
"I was a man of Arezzo,"[1] one replied,
"and Albert of Siena had me burned;
but I am not here for the deed for which I died.
It is true that jokingly I said to him once:
'I know how to raise myself and fly through air';
and he—with all the eagerness of a dunce—

9. The literal text would be confusing here. I have translated one possible interpretation of it as offered by Giuseppe Vandelli. The original line is "*ne da colui che mal volentier vegghia*" ("nor by one who unwillingly stays awake," or less literally, but with better force: "nor by one who fights off sleep"). 1. Griffolino D'arezzo, an alchemist who extracted large sums of money from Alberto da Siena on the promise of teaching him to fly like Daedalus. When the Sienese oaf finally discovered he had been tricked, he had his "father," the Bishop of Siena, burn Griffolino as a sorcerer. Griffolino, however, is not punished for sorcery, but for falsification of silver and gold through alchemy.

wanted to learn. Because I could not make
a Daedalus of him—for no other reason—
he had his father burn me at the stake.
But Minos, the infallible, had me hurled
here to the final bolgia of the ten
for the alchemy I practiced in the world."
And I to the Poet: "Was there ever a race
more vain than the Sienese? Even the French,
compared to them, seem full of modest grace."
And the other leper answered mockingly:
"Excepting Stricca, who by careful planning
managed to live and spend so moderately;
and Niccolò, who in his time above
was first of all the shoots in that rank garden
to discover the costly uses of the clove;
and excepting the brilliant company of talents
in which Caccia squandered his vineyards and his woods,
and Abbagliato displayed his intelligence.[2]
But if you wish to know who joins your cry
against the Sienese, study my face
with care and let it make its own reply.
So you will see I am the suffering shadow
of Capocchio,[3] who, by practicing alchemy,
falsified the metals, and you must know,
unless my mortal recollection strays
how good an ape I was of Nature's ways."

CANTO XXX

Circle Eight: Bolgia Ten The Falsifiers (The Remaining Three Classes: Evil Impersonators, Counterfeiters, False Witnesses)

Just as Capocchio finishes speaking, two ravenous spirits come racing through the pit; and one of them, sinking his tusks into Capocchio's neck, drags him away like prey. Capocchio's companion, Griffolino, identifies the two as Gianni Schicchi and Myrrha, who run ravening through the pit through all eternity, snatching at other souls and rending them. These are the Evil Impersonators, Falsifiers of Persons. In life they seized upon the appearance of others, and in death they must run with never a pause, seizing upon the infernal apparition of these souls, while they in turn are preyed upon by their own furies.

2. *Stricca . . . Niccolò . . . Caccia . . . Abbagliato:* All of these Sienese noblemen were members of the Spendthrift Brigade and wasted their substance in competitions of riotous living. Lano (Canto XIII) was also of this company. Niccolò dei Salimbeni discovered some recipe (details unknown) prepared with fabulously expensive spices. 3. Reputedly a Florentine friend of Dante's student days. For practicing alchemy he was burned at the stake at Siena in 1293.

Next the Poets encounter Master Adam, a sinner of the third class, a Falsifier of Money, i.e., a Counterfeiter. Like the alchemists, he is punished by a loathsome disease and he cannot move from where he lies, but his disease is compounded by other afflictions, including an eternity of unbearable thirst. Master Adam identifies two spirits lying beside him as Potiphar's Wife and Sinon the Greek, sinners of the fourth class, The False Witness, i.e., Falsifiers of Words.

Sinon, angered by Master Adam's identification of him, strikes him across the belly with the one arm he is able to move. Master Adam replies in kind, and Dante, fascinated by their continuing exchange of abuse, stands staring at them until Virgil turns on him in great anger, for "The wish to hear such baseness is degrading." Dante burns with shame, and Virgil immediately forgives him because of his great and genuine repentance.

At the time when Juno took her furious
revenge for Semele, striking in rage
again and again at the Theban royal house,[4]
King Athamas, by her contrivance, grew
so mad, that seeing his wife out for an airing
with his two sons, he cried to his retinue:
"Out with the nets there! Nets across the pass!
for I will take this lioness and her cubs!"
And spread his talons, mad and merciless,
and seizing his son Learchus, whirled him round
and brained him on a rock; at which the mother
leaped into the sea with her other son and drowned.
And when the Wheel of Fortune spun about
to humble the all-daring Trojan's pride
so that both king and kingdom were wiped out;
Hecuba[5]—mourning, wretched, and a slave—
having seen Polyxena sacrificed,
and Polydorus dead without a grave;
lost and alone, beside an alien sea,
began to bark and growl like a dog
in the mad seizure of her misery.
But never in Thebes nor Troy were Furies seen
to strike at man or beast in such mad rage

4. As in the case of the Aeginians, Jove begot a son (Bacchus) upon a mortal (Semele, daughter of the King Cadmus of Thebes); and Juno, who obviously could not cope with her husband's excursions directly, turned her fury upon the mortals in a number of godlike ways, among them inducing the madness of King Athamas (Semele's brother-in-law) which Ovid recounts in *Metamorphoses* IV, 512 ff. 5. Wife of King Priam. When Troy fell she was taken to Greece as a slave. En route she was forced to witness the sacrifice of her daughter and to look upon her son lying murdered and unburied. She went mad in her affliction and fell to howling like a dog. Ovid (*Metamorphoses* XIII, 568 ff.) describes her anguish but does not say she was changed into a dog.

as two I saw, pale, naked, and unclean,
who suddenly came running toward us then,
snapping their teeth as they ran, like hungry swine
let out to feed after a night in the pen.
One of them sank his tusks so savagely
into Capocchio's neck, that when he dragged him,
the ditch's rocky bottom tore his belly.
And the Aretine,[6] left trembling by me, said:
"That incubus, in life, was Gianni Schicchi;[7]
here he runs rabid, mangling the other dead."
"So!" I answered, "and so may the other one
not sink its teeth in you, be pleased to tell us
what shade it is before it races on."
And he: "That ancient shade in time above
was Myrrha,[8] vicious daughter of Cinyras
who loved her father with more than rightful love.
She falsified another's form and came
disguised to sin with him just as that other
who runs with her, in order that he might claim
the fabulous lead-mare, lay under disguise
on Buoso Donati's death bed and dictated
a spurious testament to the notaries."
And when the rabid pair had passed from sight,
I turned to observe the other misbegotten
spirits that lay about to left and right.
And there I saw another husk of sin,
who, had his legs been trimmed away at the groin,
would have looked for all the world like a mandolin.
The dropsy's heavy humors, which so bunch
and spread the limbs, had disproportioned him
till his face seemed much too small for his swollen paunch.
He strained his lips apart and thrust them forward
the way a sick man, feverish with thirst,
curls one lip toward the chin and the other upward.
"O you exempt from every punishment
of this grim world (I know not why)," he cried,
"look well upon the misery and debasement

6. Capocchio's companion, Griffolino. 7. Of the Cavalcanti of Florence. When Buoso di Donati (see Canto XXV) died, his son, Simone, persuaded Schicchi to impersonate the dead man and to dictate a will in Simone's favor. Buoso was removed from the death bed, Schicchi took his place in disguise, and the will was dictated to a notary as if Buoso were still alive. Schicchi took advantage of the occasion to make several bequests to himself, including one of a famous and highly-prized mare. 8. Moved by an incestuous passion for her father, the King of Cyprus, she disguised herself and slipped into his bed. After he had mated with her, the king discovered who she was and threatened to kill her but she ran away and was changed into a myrtle. Adonis was born from her trunk. (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* X, 298 ff.)

of him who was Master Adam.[9] In my first
life's time, I had enough to please me: here,
I lack a drop of water for my thirst.
The rivulets that run from the green flanks
of Casentino[1] to the Arno's flood,
spreading their cool sweet moisture through their banks,
run constantly before me, and their plash
and ripple in imagination dries me
more than the disease that eats my flesh.
Inflexible Justice that has forked and spread
my soul like hay, to search it the more closely,
finds in the country where my guilt was bred
this increase of my grief; for there I learned,
there in Romena, to stamp the Baptist's image[2]
on alloyed gold—till I was bound and burned.
But could I see the soul of Guido here,
or of Alessandro, or of their filthy brother,[3]
I would not trade that sight for all the clear
cool flow of Branda's fountain.[4] One of the three—
if those wild wraiths who run here are not lying—
is here already.[5] But small good it does me
when my legs are useless! Were I light enough
to move as much as an inch in a hundred years,
long before this I would have started off
to cull him from the freaks that fill this fosse,
although it winds on for eleven miles
and is no less than half a mile across.
Because of them I lie here in this pig-pen;
it was they persuaded me to stamp the florins
with three carats of alloy." And I then:
"Who are those wretched two sprawled alongside
your right-hand borders, and who seem to smoke
as a washed hand smokes in winter?" He replied:
"They were here when I first rained into this gully,
and have not changed position since, nor may they,
as I believe, to all eternity.
One is the liar who charged young Joseph wrongly:[6]

9. Of Brescia. Under the orders of the Counts Guidi of Romena, he counterfeited Florentine florins of twenty-one rather than twenty-four carat gold, and on such a scale that a currency crisis arose in Northern Italy. He was burned at the stake by the Florentines in 1281. 1. A mountainous district in which the Arno rises. 2. John the Baptist's. As patron of Florence, his image was stamped on the florins. 3. The Counts Guidi. 4. A spring near Romena. The famous fountain of Branda is in Siena, but Adam is speaking of his home country and must mean the spring. 5. Guido died before 1300. 6. Potiphar's wife bore false witness against Joseph (Genesis xxxix, 6–23).

the other, Sinon,[7] the false Greek from Troy.
A burning fever makes them reek so strongly."
And one of the false pair, perhaps offended
by the manner of Master Adam's presentation,
punched him in the rigid and distended
belly—it thundered like a drum—and he
retorted with an arm blow to the face
that seemed delivered no whit less politely,
saying to him: "Although I cannot stir
my swollen legs, I still have a free arm
to use at times when nothing else will answer."
And the other wretch said: "It was not so free
on your last walk to the stake, free as it was
when you were coining." And he of the dropsy:
"That's true enough, but there was less truth in you
when they questioned you at Troy." And Sinon then:
"For every word I uttered that was not true
you uttered enough false coins to fill a bushel:
I am put down here for a single crime,
but you for more than any Fiend in Hell."[8]
"Think of the Horse," replied the swollen shade,
"and may it torture you, perjurer, to recall
that all the world knows the foul part you played."
"And to you the torture of the thirst that fries
and cracks your tongue," said the Greek, "and of the water
that swells your gut like a hedge before your eyes."
And the coiner: "So is your own mouth clogged
with the filth that stuffs and sickens it as always;
if I am parched while my paunch is waterlogged,
you have the fever and your cankered brain;
and were you asked to lap Narcissus' mirror[9]
you would not wait to be invited again."
I was still standing, fixed upon those two
when the Master said to me: "Now keep on looking
a little longer and I quarrel with you."
When I heard my Master raise his voice to me,
I wheeled about with such a start of shame
that I grow pale yet at the memory.
As one trapped in a nightmare that has caught
his sleeping mind, wishes within the dream

7. The Greek who glibly talked the Trojans into taking the Horse inside the city walls (*Aeneid* II, 57–194.) 8. Dante must reckon each false florin as a separate sin. 9. A pool of water. Ovid (*Metamorphoses* III, 407–510) tells how the young Narcissus fell in love with his own reflection in a pool. He remained bent over the reflection till he wasted away and was changed into a flower.

that it were all a dream, as if it were not—
such I became: my voice could not win through
my shame to ask his pardon; while my shame
already won more pardon than I knew.
"Less shame," my Guide said, ever just and kind,
"would wash away a greater fault than yours.
Therefore, put back all sorrow from your mind;
and never forget that I am always by you
should it occur again, as we walk on,
that we find ourselves where others of this crew
fall to such petty wrangling and upbraiding.
The wish to hear such baseness is degrading."

CANTO XXXI

The Central Pit of Malebolge The Giants

Dante's spirits rise again as the Poets approach the Central Pit, a great well, at the bottom of which lies Cocytus, the Ninth and final circle of Hell. Through the darkness Dante sees what appears to be a city of great towers, but as he draws near he discovers that the great shapes he has seen are the Giants and Titans who stand perpetual guard inside the well-pit with the upper halves of their bodies rising above the rim.

Among the Giants, Virgil identifies Nimrod, builder of the Tower of Babel; Ephialtes and Briareus, who warred against the Gods; and Tityos and Typhon, who insulted Jupiter. Also here, but for no specific offense, is Antaeus, and his presence makes it clear that the Giants are placed here less for their particular sins than for their general natures.

These are the sons of earth, embodiments of elemental forces unbalanced by love, desire without restraint and without acknowledgment of moral and theological law. They are symbols of the earth-trace that every devout man must clear from his soul, the unchecked passions of the beast. Raised from the earth, they make the very gods tremble. Now they are returned to the darkness of their origins, guardians of earth's last depth.

At Virgil's persuasion, Antaeus takes the Poets in his huge palm and lowers them gently to the final floor of Hell.

One and the same tongue had first wounded me
so that the blood came rushing to my cheeks,
and then supplied the soothing remedy.
Just so, as I have heard, the magic steel
of the lance that was Achilles' and his father's

could wound at a touch, and, at another, heal.[1]
We turned our backs on the valley and climbed from it
to the top of the stony bank that walls it round,
crossing in silence to the central pit.
Here it was less than night and less than day;
my eyes could make out little through the gloom,
but I heard the shrill note of a trumpet bray
louder than any thunder. As if by force,
it drew my eyes; I stared into the gloom
along the path of the sound back to its source.
After the bloody rout when Charlemagne
had lost the band of Holy Knights, Roland[2]
blew no more terribly for all his pain.
And as I stared through that obscurity,
I saw what seemed a cluster of great towers,
whereat I cried: "Master, what is this city?"
And he: "You are still too far back in the dark
to make out clearly what you think you see;
it is natural that you should miss the mark:
You will see clearly when you reach that place
how much your eyes mislead you at a distance;
I urge you, therefore, to increase your pace."
Then taking my hand in his, my Master said:
"The better to prepare you for strange truth,
let me explain those shapes you see ahead:
they are not towers but giants. They stand in the well
from the navel down; and stationed round its bank
they mount guard on the final pit of Hell."
Just as a man in a fog that starts to clear
begins little by little to piece together
the shapes the vapor crowded from the air—
so, when those shapes grew clearer as I drew
across the darkness to the central brink,
error fled from me; and my terror grew.
For just as at Montereggione[3] the great towers

1. Peleus, father of Achilles, left this magic lance to his son. (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* XIII, 171 ff.) Sonneteers of Dante's time made frequent metaphoric use of this lance: just as the lance could cure and then heal, so could the lady's look destroy with love and her kiss make whole. 2. Nephew of Charlemagne, hero of the French epic poem, the *Song of Roland*. He protected the rear of Charlemagne's column on the return march through the Pyrenees from a war against the Saracens. When he was attacked he was too proud to blow his horn as a signal for help, but as he was dying he blew so prodigious a blast that it was heard by Charlemagne eight miles away. *Band of Holy Knights:* The original is "*la santa gesta*," which may be interpreted as "the holy undertaking." "*Gesta*," however, can also mean "a sworn band or fellowship of men at arms" (such as the Knights of the Round Table), and since it was his Knights, rather than his undertaking, that Charlemagne lost, the second rendering seems more apt in context. 3. A castle in Val d'Elsa near Siena built in 1213. Its walls had a circumference of more than half a kilometer and were crowned by fourteen great towers, most of which are now destroyed.

crown the encircling wall; so the grim giants
whom Jove still threatens when the thunder roars
raised from the rim of stone about that well
the upper halves of their bodies, which loomed up
like turrets through the murky air of Hell.
I had drawn close enough to one already
to make out the great arms along his sides,
the face, the shoulders, the breast, and most of the belly.
Nature, when she destroyed the last exemplars
on which she formed those beasts, surely did well
to take such executioners from Mars.
And if she has not repented the creation
of whales and elephants, the thinking man
will see in that her justice and discretion:
for where the instrument of intelligence
is added to brute power and evil will,
mankind is powerless in its own defense.
His face, it seemed to me, was quite as high
and wide as the bronze pine cone in St. Peter's[4]
with the rest of him proportioned accordingly:
so that the bank, which made an apron for him
from the waist down, still left so much exposed
that three Frieslanders[5] standing on the rim,
one on another, could not have reached his hair;
for to that point at which men's capes are buckled,
thirty good hand-spans[6] of brute bulk rose clear.
"Rafel mahee amek zabi almit,"[7]
began a bellowed chant from the brute mouth
for which no sweeter psalmody was fit.
And my Guide in his direction: "Babbling fool,
stick to your horn and vent yourself with it
when rage or passion stir your stupid soul.
Feel there around your neck, you muddle-head,
and find the cord; and there's the horn itself,
there on your overgrown chest." To me he said:
"His very babbling testifies the wrong
he did on earth: he is Nimrod,[8] through whose evil
mankind no longer speaks a common tongue.
Waste no words on him: it would be foolish.

4. Originally a part of a fountain. In Dante's time it stood in front of the Basilica of St. Peter. It is now inside the Vatican. It stands about thirteen feet high (Scartazzini-Vandelli give the height as four meters) but shows signs of mutilation that indicate it was once higher. 5. The men of Friesland were reputed to be the tallest in Europe. 6. Dante uses the word "palma," which in Italian signifies the spread of the open hand. 7. This line, as Virgil explains below, is Nimrod's gibberish. 8. The first king of Babylon, supposed to have built the Tower of Babel, for which he is punished, in part, by the confusion of his own tongue and understanding. Nothing in the Biblical reference portrays him as one of the earth-giants.

To him all speech is meaningless; as his own,
which no one understands, is simply gibberish."
We moved on, bearing left along the pit,
and a crossbow-shot away we found the next one,
an even huger and more savage spirit.
What master could have bound so gross a beast
I cannot say, but he had his right arm pinned
behind his back, and the left across his breast
by an enormous chain that wound about him
from the neck down, completing five great turns
before it spiraled down below the rim.
"This piece of arrogance," said my Guide to me,
"dared try his strength against the power of Jove;
for which he is rewarded as you see.
He is Ephialtes,[9] who made the great endeavour
with the other giants who alarmed the Gods;
the arms he raised then, now are bound forever."
"Were it possible, I should like to take with me,"
I said to him, "the memory of seeing
the immeasurable Briareus."[1] And he:
"Nearer to hand, you may observe Antaeus[2]
who is able to speak to us, and is not bound.
It is he will set us down in Cocytus,[3]
the bottom of all guilt. The other hulk
stands far beyond our road. He too, is bound
and looks like this one, but with a fiercer sulk."
No earthquake in the fury of its shock
ever seized a tower more violently,
than Ephialtes, hearing, began to rock.
Then I dreaded death as never before;
and I think I could have died for very fear
had I not seen what manacles he wore.
We left the monster, and not far from him
we reached Antaeus, who to his shoulders alone
soared up a good five ells above the rim.
"O soul who once in Zama's fateful vale—

9. Son of Neptune (the sea) and Iphimedia. With his brother, Otus, he warred against the Gods striving to pile Mt. Ossa on Mt. Olympus, and Mt. Pelion on Mt. Ossa. Apollo restored good order by killing the two brothers. 1. Another of the giants who rose against the Olympian Gods. Virgil speaks of him as having a hundred arms and fifty hands (*Aeneid* X, 565–568), but Dante has need only of his size, and of his sin, which he seems to view as a kind of revolt of the angels, just as the action of Ephialtes and Otus may be read as a pagan distortion of the Tower of Babel legend. He was the son of Uranus and Tellus. 2. The son of Neptune and Tellus (the earth). In battle, his strength grew every time he touched the earth, his mother. He was accordingly invincible until Hercules killed him by lifting him over his head and strangling him in mid-air. Lucan (*Pharsalia* IV, 595–660) describes Antaeus' great lion-hunting feat in the valley of Zama where, in a later era, Scipio defeated Hannibal. Antaeus did not join in the rebellion against the Gods and therefore he is not chained. 3. The final pit of Hell.

where Scipio became the heir of glory
when Hannibal and all his troops turned tail—
took more than a thousand lions for your prey;
and in whose memory many still believe
the sons of earth would yet have won the day
had you joined with them against High Olympus—
do not disdain to do us a small service,
but set us down where the cold grips Cocytus.
Would you have us go to Tityos or Typhon?[4]—
this man can give you what is longed for here:
therefore do not refuse him, but bend down.
For he can still make new your memory:
he lives, and awaits long life, unless Grace call him
before his time to his felicity."
Thus my Master to that Tower of Pride;
and the giant without delay reached out the hands
which Hercules had felt, and raised my Guide.
Virgil, when he felt himself so grasped,
called to me: "Come, and I will hold you safe."
And he took me in his arms and held me clasped.
The way the Carisenda[5] seems to one
who looks up from the leaning side when clouds
are going over it from that direction,
making the whole tower seem to topple—so
Antaeus seemed to me in the fraught moment
when I stood clinging, watching from below
as he bent down; while I with heart and soul
wished we had gone some other way, but gently
he set us down inside the final hole
whose ice holds Judas and Lucifer in its grip.
Then straightened like a mast above a ship.

CANTO XXXII

Circle Nine: Cocytus Compound Fraud
Round One: Caïna The Treacherous to Kin
Round Two: Antenora The Treacherous to Country

At the bottom of the well Dante finds himself on a huge frozen lake. This is Cocytus, the Ninth Circle, the fourth and last great water of Hell, and here, fixed in the ice, each according to his guilt, are punished sinners guilty of Treachery Against Those to Whom They Were Bound by Special Ties. The ice is divided into four con-

4. Also sons of Tellus. They offended Jupiter, who had them hurled into the crater of Etna, below which the Lake Tartarus was supposed to lie. 5. A leaning tower of Bologna.

centric rings marked only by the different positions of the damned within the ice.

This is Dante's symbolic equivalent of the final guilt. The treacheries of these souls were denials of love (which is God) and of all human warmth. Only the remorseless dead center of the ice will serve to express their natures. As they denied God's love, so are they furthest removed from the light and warmth of His Sun. As they denied all human ties, so are they bound only by the unyielding ice.

The first round is Caïna, named for Cain. Here lie those who were treacherous against blood ties. They have their necks and heads out of the ice and are permitted to bow their heads—a double boon since it allows them some protection from the freezing gale and, further, allows their tears to fall without freezing their eyes shut. Here Dante sees Alessandro and Napoleone degli Alberti, and he speaks to Camicion, who identifies other sinners of this round.

The second round is Antenora, named for Antenor, the Trojan who was believed to have betrayed his city to the Greeks. Here lie those guilty of Treachery to Country. They, too, have their heads above the ice, but they cannot bend their necks, which are gripped by the ice. Here Dante accidentally kicks the head of Bocca Degli Abbati and then proceeds to treat him with a savagery he had shown to no other soul in Hell. Bocca names some of his fellow traitors, and the Poets pass on to discover two heads frozen together in one hole. One of them is gnawing the nape of the other's neck.

If I had rhymes as harsh and horrible
as the hard fact of that final dismal hole
which bears the weight of all the steeps of Hell,
I might more fully press the sap and substance
from my conception; but since I must do
without them, I begin with some reluctance.
For it is no easy undertaking, I say,
to describe the bottom of the Universe;
nor is it for tongues that only babble child's play.
But may those Ladies of the Heavenly Spring[6]
who helped Amphion wall Thebes, assist my verse,
that the word may be the mirror of the thing.
O most miscreant rabble, you who keep
the stations of that place whose name is pain,
better had you been born as goats or sheep!
We stood now in the dark pit of the well,
far down the slope below the Giant's feet,
and while I still stared up at the great wall,

6. The Muses. They so inspired Amphion's hand upon the lyre that the music charmed blocks of stone out of Mount Cithaeron, and the blocks formed themselves into the walls of Thebes.

I heard a voice cry: "Watch which way you turn:
take care you do not trample on the heads
of the forsworn and miserable brethren."
Whereat I turned and saw beneath my feet
and stretching out ahead, a lake so frozen
it seemed to be made of glass. So thick a sheet
never yet hid the Danube's winter course,
nor, far away beneath the frigid sky,
locked the Don up in its frozen source:
for were Tanbernick and the enormous peak
of Pietrapana[7] to crash down on it,
not even the edges would so much as creak.
The way frogs sit to croak, their muzzles leaning
out of the water, at the time and season
when the peasant woman dreams of her day's gleaning—[8]
Just so the livid dead are sealed in place
up to the part at which they blushed for shame,
and they beat their teeth like storks. Each holds his face
bowed toward the ice, each of them testifies
to the cold with his chattering mouth, to his heart's grief
with tears that flood forever from his eyes.
When I had stared about me, I looked down
and at my feet I saw two clamped together
so tightly that the hair of their heads had grown
together. "Who are you," I said, "who lie
so tightly breast to breast?" They strained their necks,
and when they had raised their heads as if to reply,
the tears their eyes had managed to contain
up to that time gushed out, and the cold froze them
between the lids, sealing them shut again
tighter than any clamp grips wood to wood,
and mad with pain, they fell to butting heads
like billy-goats in a sudden savage mood.
And a wraith who lay to one side and below,
and who had lost both ears to frostbite, said,
his head still bowed: "Why do you watch us so?
If you wish to know who they are[9] who share one doom,
they owned the Bisenzio's valley with their father,
whose name was Albert. They spring from one womb,
and you may search through all Caïna's crew
without discovering in all this waste

7. There is no agreement on the location of the mountain Dante called Tanbernick. Pietrapana, today known as *la Pania*, is in Tuscany. 8. The summer. 9. Alessandro and Napoleone, Counts of Mangona. Among other holdings, they inherited a castle in the Val di Bisenzio. They seemed to have been at odds on all things and finally killed one another in a squabble over their inheritance and their politics (Alessandro was a Guelph and Napoleone a Ghibelline).

a squab more fit for the aspic than these two;
not him whose breast and shadow a single blow
of the great lance of King Arthur pierced with light;[1]
nor yet Focaccia[2] nor this one fastened so
into the ice that his head is all I see,
and whom, if you are Tuscan, you know well—
his name on the earth was Sassol Mascheroni.[3]
And I—to tell you all and so be through—
was Camicion de' Pazzi.[4] I wait for Carlin
beside whose guilt my sins will shine like virtue."
And leaving him,[5] I saw a thousand faces
discolored so by cold, I shudder yet
and always will when I think of those frozen places.
As we approached the center of all weight,
where I went shivering in eternal shade,
whether it was my will, or chance, or fate,
I cannot say, but as I trailed my Guide
among those heads, my foot struck violently
against the face of one.[6] Weeping, it cried:
"Why do you kick me? If you were not sent
to wreak a further vengeance for Montaperti,
why do you add this to my other torment?"
"Master," I said, "grant me a moment's pause
to rid myself of a doubt concerning this one;
then you may hurry me at your own pace."
The Master stopped at once, and through the volley
of foul abuse the wretch poured out, I said:
"Who are you who curse others so?" And he:
"And who are *you* who go through the dead larder
of Antenora kicking the cheeks of others
so hard, that were you alive, you could not kick harder?"
"I *am* alive," I said, "and if you seek fame,
it may be precious to you above all else
that my notes on this descent include your name."
"Exactly the opposite is my wish and hope,"

1. Modred, King Arthur's traitorous nephew. He tried to kill Arthur, but the king struck him a single blow of his lance, and when it was withdrawn, a shaft of light passed through the gaping wound and split the shadow of the falling traitor. 2. Of the Cancellieri of Pistoia. He murdered his cousin (among others) and may have been the principal cause of a great feud that divided the Cancellieri, and split the Guelphs into the White and Black parties. 3. Of the Toschi of Florence. He was appointed guardian of one of his nephews and murdered him to get the inheritance for himself. 4. Alberto Camicion de' Pazzi of Valdarno. He murdered a kinsman. *Carlin*: Carlino de' Pazzi, relative of Alberto. He was charged with defending for the Whites the castle of Piantravigne in Valdarno but surrendered it for a bribe. He belongs therefore in the next lower circle, Antenora, as a traitor to his country, and when he arrives there his greater sin will make Alberto seem almost virtuous by comparison. 5. These words mark the departure from Caïna to Antenora. 6. Bocca degli Abbati, a traitorous Florentine. At the battle of Montaperti (cf. Farinata, Canto X) he hacked off the hand of the Florentine standard bearer. The cavalry, lacking a standard around which it could rally, was soon routed.

he answered. "Let me be; for it's little you know
of how to flatter on this icy slope."
I grabbed the hair of his dog's-ruff and I said:
"Either you tell me truly who you are,
or you won't have a hair left on your head."
And he: "Not though you snatch me bald. I swear
I will not tell my name nor show my face.
Not though you rip until my brain lies bare."
I had a good grip on his hair; already
I had yanked out more than one fistful of it,
while the wretch yelped, but kept his face turned from me;
when another said: "Bocca, what is it ails you?
What the Hell's wrong?[7] Isn't it bad enough
to hear you bang your jaws? Must you bark too?"
"Now filthy traitor, say no more!" I cried,
"for to your shame, be sure I shall bear back
a true report of you." The wretch replied:
"Say anything you please but go away.
And if you *do* get back, don't overlook
that pretty one who had so much to say
just now. Here he laments the Frenchman's price.
'I saw Buoso da Duera,'[8] you can report,
'where the bad salad is kept crisp on ice.'
And if you're asked who else was wintering here,
Beccheria,[9] whose throat was slit by Florence,
is there beside you. Gianni de' Soldanier[1]
is further down, I think, with Ganelon,[2]
and Tebaldello,[3] who opened the gates of Faenza
and let Bologna steal in with the dawn."
Leaving him then, I saw two souls together
in a single hole, and so pinched in by the ice
that one head made a helmet for the other.
As a famished man chews crusts—so the one sinner

7. In the circumstances, a monstrous pun. The original is "*qual diavolo ti tocca?*" (what devil touches, or molests, you?) a standard colloquialism for "what's the matter with you?" A similar pun occurs in line 117 "kept crisp (cool) on ice. Colloquially "*stare fresco*" (to be or to remain cool) equals "to be left out in the cold," i.e., to be out of luck. 8. Of Cremona. In 1265 Charles of Anjou marched against Manfred and Naples (see Canto XIX), and Buoso da Duera was sent out in charge of a Ghibelline army to oppose the passage of one of Charles' armies, but accepted a bribe and let the French pass unopposed. The event took place near Parma. 9. Tesauro dei Beccheria of Pavia, Abbot of Vallombrosa and Papal Legate (of Alexander IV) in Tuscany. The Florentine Guelphs cut off his head in 1258 for plotting with the expelled Ghibellines.
1. A Florentine Ghibelline of ancient and noble family. In 1265, however, during the riots that occurred under the Two Jovial Friars, he deserted his party and became a leader of the commoners (Guelphs). In placing him in Antenora, Dante makes no distinction between turning on one's country and turning on one's political party, not at least if the end is simply for power. 2. It was Ganelon who betrayed Roland to the Saracens. (See Canto XXXI.) 3. Tebaldello de' Zambrasi of Faenza. At dawn on November 13, 1280, he opened the city gates and delivered Faenza to the Bolognese Guelphs in order to revenge himself on the Ghibelline family of the Lambertazzi who, in 1274, had fled from Bologna to take refuge in Faenza.

sank his teeth into the other's nape
at the base of the skull, gnawing his loathsome dinner.
Tydeus in his final raging hour
gnawed Menalippus' head[4] with no more fury
than this one gnawed at skull and dripping gore.
"You there," I said, "who show so odiously
your hatred for that other, tell me why
on this condition: that if in what you tell me
you seem to have a reasonable complaint
against him you devour with such foul relish,
I, knowing who you are, and his soul's taint,
may speak your cause to living memory,
God willing the power of speech be left to me."

CANTO XXXIII

Circle Nine: Cocytus Compound Fraud
Round Two: Antenora The Treacherous to Country
Round Three: Ptolomea The Treacherous to Guests and Hosts

In reply to Dante's exhortation, the sinner who is gnawing his companion's head looks up, wipes his bloody mouth on his victim's hair, and tells his harrowing story. He is Count Ugolino and the wretch he gnaws is Archbishop Ruggieri. Both are in Antenora for treason. In life they had once plotted together. Then Ruggieri betrayed his fellow-plotter and caused his death, by starvation, along with his four "sons." In the most pathetic and dramatic passage of the Inferno, Ugolino details how their prison was sealed and how his "sons" dropped dead before him one by one, weeping for food. His terrible tale serves only to renew his grief and hatred, and he has hardly finished it before he begins to gnaw Ruggieri again with renewed fury. In the immutable Law of Hell, the killer-by-starvation becomes the food of his victim.

The Poets leave Ugolino and enter Ptolomea, so named for the Ptolomaeus of *Maccabees*, who murdered his father-in-law at a banquet. Here are punished those who were Treacherous Against the Ties of Hospitality. They lie with only half their faces above the ice and their tears freeze in their eye sockets, sealing them with little crystal visors. Thus even the comfort of tears is denied them. Here Dante finds Friar Alberigo and Branca D'Oria, and discovers the terrible power of Ptolomea: so great is its sin that the souls of the guilty fall to its torments even before they die, leaving their bodies still on earth, inhabited by Demons.

4. Statius recounts in the *Thebaid* that Tydeus killed Menalippus in battle but fell himself mortally wounded. As he lay dying he had Menalippus' head brought to him and fell to gnawing it in his dying rage.

The sinner raised his mouth from his grim repast
and wiped it on the hair of the bloody head
whose nape he had all but eaten away. At last
he began to speak: "You ask me to renew
a grief so desperate that the very thought
of speaking of it tears my heart in two.
But if my words may be a seed that bears
the fruit of infamy for him I gnaw,
I shall weep, but tell my story through my tears.
Who you may be, and by what powers you reach
into this underworld, I cannot guess,
but you seem to me a Florentine by your speech.
I was Count Ugolino,[5] I must explain;
this reverend grace is the Archbishop Ruggieri:
now I will tell you why I gnaw his brain.
That I, who trusted him, had to undergo
imprisonment and death through his treachery,
you will know already.[6] What you cannot know—
that is, the lingering inhumanity
of the death I suffered—you shall hear in full:
then judge for yourself if he has injured me.
A narrow window in that coop[7] of stone
now called the Tower of Hunger for my sake
(within which others yet must pace alone)
had shown me several waning moons already[8]
between its bars, when I slept the evil sleep
in which the veil of the future parted for me.
This beast[9] appeared as master of a hunt
chasing the wolf and his whelps across the mountain
that hides Lucca from Pisa.[1] Out in front
of the starved and shrewd and avid pack he had placed
Gualandi and Sismondi and Lanfranchi[2]
to point his prey. The father and sons had raced
a brief course only when they failed of breath
and seemed to weaken; then I thought I saw

5. Count of Donoratico and a member of the Guelph family della Gherardesca. He and his nephew, Nino de' Visconti, led the two Guelph factions of Pisa. In 1288 Ugolino intrigued with Archbishop Ruggieri degli Ubaldini, leader of the Ghibellines, to get rid of Visconti and to take over the command of all the Pisan Guelphs. The plan worked, but in the consequent weakening of the Guelphs, Ruggieri saw his chance and betrayed Ugolino, throwing him into prison with his sons and his grandsons. In the following year the prison was sealed up and they were left to starve to death. 6. News of Ugolino's imprisonment and death would certainly have reached Florence. *What you cannot know*: No living man could know what happened after Ugolino and his sons were sealed in the prison and abandoned. 7. Dante uses the word *muda*, in Italian signifying a stone tower in which falcons were kept in the dark to moult. From the time of Ugolino's death it became known as The Tower of Hunger. 8. Ugolino was jailed late in 1288. He was sealed in to starve early in 1289. 9. Ruggieri. 1. These two cities would be in view of one another were it not for Monte San Giuliano. 2. Three Pisan nobles, Ghibellines and friends of the Archbishop.

their flanks ripped open by the hounds' fierce teeth.
Before the dawn, the dream still in my head,
I woke and heard my sons,[3] who were there with me,
cry from their troubled sleep, asking for bread.
You are cruelty itself if you can keep
your tears back at the thought of what foreboding
stirred in my heart; and if you do not weep,
at what are you used to weeping?—The hour when food
used to be brought, drew near. They were now awake,
and each was anxious from his dream's dark mood.
And from the base of that horrible tower I heard
the sound of hammers nailing up the gates:
I stared at my sons' faces without a word.
I did not weep: I had turned stone inside.
They wept. 'What ails you, Father, you look so strange,'
my little Anselm, youngest of them, cried.
But I did not speak a word nor shed a tear:
not all that day nor all that endless night,
until I saw another sun appear.
When a tiny ray leaked into that dark prison
and I saw staring back from their four faces
the terror and the wasting of my own,
I bit my hands in helpless grief. And they,
thinking I chewed myself for hunger, rose
suddenly together. I heard them say:
'Father, it would give us much less pain
if you ate us: it was you who put upon us
this sorry flesh; now strip it off again.'
I calmed myself to spare them. Ah! hard earth,
why did you not yawn open? All that day
and the next we sat in silence. On the fourth,
Gaddo, the eldest, fell before me and cried,
stretched at my feet upon that prison floor:
'Father, why don't you help me?' There he died.
And just as you see me, I saw them fall
one by one on the fifth day and the sixth.
Then, already blind, I began to crawl
from body to body shaking them frantically.
Two days I called their names, and they were dead.
Then fasting overcame my grief and me."[4]

3. Actually two of the boys were grandsons and all were considerably older than one would gather from Dante's account. Anselm, the younger grandson, was fifteen. The others were really young men and were certainly old enough for guilt despite Dante's charge in line 90. 4. I.e., he died. Some interpret the line to mean that Ugolino's hunger drove him to cannibalism. Ugolino's present occupation in Hell would certainly support that interpretation but the fact is that cannibalism is the one major sin Dante does not assign a place to in Hell. So monstrous would it have

His eyes narrowed to slits when he was done,
and he seized the skull again between his teeth
grinding it as a mastiff grinds a bone.
Ah, Pisa! foulest blemish on the land
where "si" sounds sweet and clear,[5] since those nearby you
are slow to blast the ground on which you stand,
may Caprara and Gorgona[6] drift from place
and dam the flooding Arno at its mouth
until it drowns the last of your foul race!
For if to Ugolino falls the censure
for having betrayed your castles,[7] you for your part
should not have put his sons to such a torture:
you modern Thebes![8] those tender lives you spilt—
Brigata, Uguccione, and the others
I mentioned earlier—were too young for guilt!
We passed on further,[9] where the frozen mine
entombs another crew in greater pain;
these wraiths are not bent over, but lie supine.
Their very weeping closes up their eyes;
and the grief that finds no outlet for its tears
turns inward to increase their agonies:
for the first tears that they shed knot instantly
in their eye-sockets, and as they freeze they form
a crystal visor above the cavity.
And despite the fact that standing in that place
I had become as numb as any callus,
and all sensation had faded from my face,
somehow I felt a wind begin to blow,
whereat I said: "Master, what stirs this wind?
Is not all heat extinguished here below?"[1]
And the Master said to me: "Soon you will be
where your own eyes will see the source and cause
and give you their own answer to the mystery."
And one of those locked in that icy mall
cried out to us as we passed: "O souls so cruel

seemed to him that he must certainly have established a special punishment for it. Certainly he could hardly have relegated it to an ambiguity. Moreover, it would be a sin of bestiality rather than of fraud, and as such it would be punished in the Seventh Circle. 5. Italy. 6. These two islands near the mouth of the Arno were Pisan possessions in 1300. 7. In 1284, Ugolino gave up certain castles to Lucca and Florence. He was at war with Genoa at the time and it is quite likely that he ceded the castles to buy the neutrality of these two cities, for they were technically allied with Genoa. Dante, however, must certainly consider the action as treasonable, for otherwise Ugolino would be in Caïna for his treachery to Visconti. 8. Thebes, as a number of the foregoing notes will already have made clear, was the site of some of the most hideous crimes of antiquity. 9. Marks the passage into Ptolomea. 1. Dante believed (rather accurately, by chance) that all winds resulted from "exhalations of heat." Cocytus, however, is conceived as wholly devoid of heat, a metaphysical absolute zero. The source of the wind, as we discover in the next Canto, is Satan himself.

that you are sent to the last post of all,
relieve me for a little from the pain
of this hard veil; let my heart weep a while
before the weeping freeze my eyes again."
And I to him: "If you would have my service,
tell me your name; then if I do not help you
may I descend to the last rim of the ice."[2]
"I am Friar Alberigo,"[3] he answered therefore,
"the same who called for the fruits from the bad garden.
Here I am given dates for figs full store."
"What! Are you dead already?" I said to him.
And he then: "How my body stands in the world
I do not know. So privileged is this rim
of Ptolomea, that often souls fall to it
before dark Atropos[4] has cut their thread.
And that you may more willingly free my spirit
of this glaze of frozen tears that shrouds my face,
I will tell you this: when a soul betrays as I did,
it falls from flesh, and a demon takes its place,
ruling the body till its time is spent.
The ruined soul rains down into this cistern.
So, I believe, there is still evident
in the world above, all that is fair and mortal
of this black shade who winters here behind me.
If you have only recently crossed the portal
from that sweet world, you surely must have known
his body: Branca D'Oria[5] is its name,
and many years have passed since he rained down."
"I think you are trying to take me in," I said,
"Ser Branca D'Oria is a living man;
he eats, he drinks, he fills his clothes and his bed."
"Michel Zanche had not yet reached the ditch
of the Black Talons," the frozen wraith replied,
"there where the sinners thicken in hot pitch,
when this one left his body to a devil,
as did his nephew and second in treachery,
and plumbed like lead through space to this dead level.

2. Dante is not taking any chances; he has to go on to the last rim in any case. The sinner, however, believes him to be another damned soul and would interpret the oath quite otherwise than as Dante meant it. 3. Of the Manfredi of Faenza. He was another Jovial Friar. In 1284 his brother Manfred struck him in the course of an argument. Alberigo pretended to let it pass, but in 1285 he invited Manfred and his son to a banquet and had them murdered. The signal to the assassins was the words: "Bring in the fruit." "Friar Alberigo's bad fruit," became a proverbial saying. 4. The Fate who cuts the thread of life. 5. A Genoese Ghibelline. His sin is identical in kind to that of Friar Alberigo. In 1275 he invited his father-in-law, Michel Zanche (see Canto XXII), to a banquet and had him and his companions cut to pieces. He was assisted in the butchery by his nephew.

But now reach out your hand, and let me cry."
And I did not keep the promise I had made,
for to be rude to him was courtesy.
Ah, men of Genoa! souls of little worth,
corrupted from all custom of righteousness,
why have you not been driven from the earth?
For there beside the blackest soul of all
Romagna's evil plain, lies one of yours
bathing his filthy soul in the eternal
glacier of Cocytus for his foul crime,
while he seems yet alive in world and time!

CANTO XXXIV

Ninth Circle: Cocytus Compound Fraud
Round Four: Judecca The Treacherous to Their Masters
The Center: Satan

"On march the banners of the King," Virgil begins as the Poets face the last depth. He is quoting a medieval hymn, and to it he adds the distortion and preversion of all that lies about him. "On march the banners of the King—of Hell." And there before them, in an infernal parody of Godhead, they see Satan in the distance, his great wings beating like a windmill. It is their beating that is the source of the icy wind of Cocytus, the exhalation of all evil.

All about him in the ice are strewn the sinners of the last round, Judecca, named for Judas Iscariot. These are the Treacherous to Their Masters. They lie completely sealed in the ice, twisted and distorted into every conceivable posture. It is impossible to speak to them, and the Poets move on to observe Satan.

He is fixed into the ice at the center to which flow all the rivers of guilt; and as he beats his great wings as if to escape, their icy wind only freezes him more surely into the polluted ice. In a grotesque parody of the Trinity, he has three faces, each a different color, and in each mouth he clamps a sinner whom he rips eternally with his teeth. Judas Iscariot is in the central mouth: Brutus and Cassius in the mouths on either side.

Having seen all, the Poets now climb through the center, grappling hand over hand down the hairy flank of Satan himself—a last supremely symbolic action—and at last, when they have passed the center of all gravity, they emerge from Hell. A long climb from the earth's center to the Mount of Purgatory awaits them, and they push on without rest, ascending along the sides of the river Lethe, till they emerge once more to see the stars of Heaven, just before dawn on Easter Sunday.

"On march the banners of the King of Hell,"[6]
my Master said. "Toward us. Look straight ahead:
can you make him out at the core of the frozen shell?"
Like a whirling windmill seen afar at twilight,
or when a mist has risen from the ground—
just such an engine rose upon my sight
stirring up such a wild and bitter wind
I cowered for shelter at my Master's back,
there being no other windbreak I could find.
I stood now where the souls of the last class
(with fear my verses tell it) were covered wholly;
they shone below the ice like straws in glass.
Some lie stretched out; others are fixed in place
upright, some on their heads, some on their soles;
another, like a bow, bends foot to face.
When we had gone so far across the ice
that it pleased my Guide to show me the foul creature[7]
which once had worn the grace of Paradise,
he made me stop, and, stepping aside, he said:
"Now see the face of Dis! This is the place
where you must arm your soul against all dread."
Do not ask, Reader, how my blood ran cold
and my voice choked up with fear. I cannot write it:
this is a terror that cannot be told.
I did not die, and yet I lost life's breath:
imagine for yourself what I became,
deprived at once of both my life and death.
The Emperor of the Universe of Pain
jutted his upper chest above the ice;
and I am closer in size to the great mountain
the Titans make around the central pit,
than they to his arms. Now, starting from this part,
imagine the whole that corresponds to it!
If he was once as beautiful as now
he is hideous, and still turned on his Maker,
well may he be the source of every woe!
With what a sense of awe I saw his head
towering above me! for it had three faces:
one was in front, and it was fiery red;
the other two, as weirdly wonderful,

6. *On march the banners of the King:* The hymn *(Vexilla regis prodeunt)* was written in the sixth century by Venantius Fortunatus, Bishop of Poitiers. The original celebrates the Holy Cross, and is part of the service for Good Friday to be sung at the moment of uncovering the cross.
7. Satan.

merged with it from the middle of each shoulder
to the point where all converged at the top of the skull;
the right was something between white and bile;
the left was about the color that one finds
on those who live along the banks of the Nile.
Under each head two wings rose terribly,
their span proportioned to so gross a bird:
I never saw such sails upon the sea.
They were not feathers—their texture and their form
were like a bat's wings—and he beat them so
that three winds blew from him in one great storm:
it is these winds that freeze all Cocytus.
He wept from his six eyes, and down three chins
the tears ran mixed with bloody froth and pus.[8]
In every mouth he worked a broken sinner
between his rake-like teeth. Thus he kept three
in eternal pain at his eternal dinner.
For the one in front the biting seemed to play
no part at all compared to the ripping: at times
the whole skin of his back was flayed away.
"That soul that suffers most," explained my Guide,
"is Judas Iscariot, he who kicks his legs
on the fiery chin and has his head inside.
Of the other two, who have their heads thrust forward,
the one who dangles down from the black face
is Brutus: note how he writhes without a word.
And there, with the huge and sinewy arms,[9] is the soul
of Cassius.—But the night is coming on[1]
and we must go, for we have seen the whole."
Then, as he bade, I clasped his neck, and he,
watching for a moment when the wings
were opened wide, reached over dexterously
and seized the shaggy coat of the king demon;
then grappling matted hair and frozen crusts
from one tuft to another, clambered down.
When we had reached the joint where the great thigh
merges into the swelling of the haunch,
my Guide and Master, straining terribly,
turned his head to where his feet had been
and began to grip the hair as if he were climbing;

8. The gore of the sinners he chews which is mixed with his slaver. 9. The Cassius who betrayed Caesar was more generally described in terms of Shakespeare's "lean and hungry look." Another Cassius is described by Cicero (*Catiline* III) as huge and sinewy. Dante probably confused the two. 1. It is now Saturday evening.

so that I thought we moved toward Hell again.
"Hold fast!" my Guide said, and his breath came shrill[2]
with labor and exhaustion. "There is no way
but by such stairs to rise above such evil."
At last he climbed out through an opening
in the central rock, and he seated me on the rim;
then joined me with a nimble backward spring.
I looked up, thinking to see Lucifer
as I had left him, and I saw instead
his legs projecting high into the air.
Now let all those whose dull minds are still vexed
by failure to understand what point it was
I had passed through, judge if I was perplexed.
"Get up. Up on your feet," my Master said.
"The sun already mounts to middle tierce,[3]
and a long road and hard climbing lie ahead."
It was no hall of state we had found there,
but a natural animal pit hollowed from rock
with a broken floor and a close and sunless air.
"Before I tear myself from the Abyss,"
I said when I had risen, "O my Master,
explain to me my error in all this:
where is the ice? and Lucifer—how has he
been turned from top to bottom: and how can the sun
have gone from night to day so suddenly?"
And he to me: "You imagine you are still
on the other side of the center where I grasped
the shaggy flank of the Great Worm of Evil
which bores through the world—you *were* while I climbed down,
but when I turned myself about, you passed
the point to which all gravities are drawn.
You are under the other hemisphere where you stand;
the sky above us is the half opposed
to that which canopies the great dry land.
Under the mid-point of that other sky
the Man who was born sinless and who lived
beyond all blemish, came to suffer and die.
You have your feet upon a little sphere
which forms the other face of the Judecca.
There it is evening when it is morning here.
And this gross Fiend and Image of all Evil

2. Cf. Canto XXIII, 85, where the fact that Dante breathes indicates to the Hypocrites that he is alive. Virgil's breathing is certainly a contradiction. 3. In the canonical day tierce is the period from about six to nine A.M. Middle tierce, therefore, is seven-thirty. In going through the center point, they have gone from night to day. They have moved ahead twelve hours.

who made a stairway for us with his hide
is pinched and prisoned in the ice-pack still.
On this side he plunged down from heaven's height,
and the land that spread here once hid in the sea
and fled North to our hemisphere for fright;
and it may be that moved by that same fear,
the one peak[4] that still rises on this side
fled upward leaving this great cavern here."
Down there, beginning at the further bound
of Beelzebub's dim tomb, there is a space
not known by sight, but only by the sound
of a little stream[5] descending through the hollow
it has eroded from the massive stone
in its endlessly entwining lazy flow."
My Guide and I crossed over and began
to mount that little known and lightless road
to ascend into the shining world again.
He first, I second, without thought of rest
we climbed the dark until we reached the point
where a round opening brought in sight the blest
and beauteous shining of the Heavenly Cars.
And we walked out once more beneath the Stars.[6]

Purgatorio

CANTO I

Ante-Purgatory:
The Shore of the Island Cato of Utica

The Poets emerge from Hell just before dawn of Easter Sunday (April 10, 1300), and Dante revels in the sight of the rediscovered heavens. As he looks eagerly about at the stars, he sees nearby an old man of impressive bearing. The ancient is Cato of Utica, guardian of the shores of Purgatory. Cato challenges the Poets as fugitives from Hell, but Virgil, after first instructing Dante to kneel in reverence, explains Dante's mission and Beatrice's command. Cato then gives them instructions for proceeding.

The Poets have emerged at a point a short way up the slope of Purgatory. It is essential, therefore, that they descend to the lowest

4. The Mount of Purgatory. 5. Lethe. In classical mythology, the river of forgetfulness, from which souls drank before being born. In Dante's symbolism it flows down from Purgatory, where it has washed away the memory of sin from the souls who are undergoing purification. That memory it delivers to Hell, which draws all sin to itself. 6. Dante ends each of the three divisions of the *Commedia* with this word. Every conclusion of the upward soul is toward the stars, God's shining symbols of hope and virtue. It is just before dawn of Easter Sunday that the Poets emerge.

point and begin from there, an allegory of Humility. Cato, accordingly, orders Virgil to lead Dante to the shore, to wet his hands in the dew of the new morning, and to wash the stains of Hell from Dante's face and the film of Hell's vapors from Dante's eyes. Virgil is then to bind about Dante's waist one of the pliant reeds (symbolizing Humility) that grow in the soft mud of the shore.

Having so commanded, Cato disappears. Dante arises in silence and stands waiting, eager to begin. His look is all the communication that is necessary. Virgil leads him to the shore and performs all that Cato has commanded, Dante's first purification is marked by a miracle: when Virgil breaks off a reed, the stalk immediately regenerates a new reed, restoring itself exactly as it had been.

For better waters now the little bark
  of my indwelling powers raises her sails,
  and leaves behind that sea so cruel and dark.
Now shall I sing that second kingdom[7] given
  the soul of man wherein to purge its guilt
  and so grow worthy to ascend to Heaven.
Yours am I, sacred Muses! To you I pray.
  Here let dead poetry[8] rise once more to life,
  and here let sweet Calliope[9] rise and play
some far accompaniment in that high strain
  whose power the wretched Pierides once felt
  so terribly they dared not hope again.
Sweet azure of the sapphire of the east
  was gathering on the serene horizon
  its pure and perfect radiance—a feast
to my glad eyes, reborn to their delight,
  as soon as I had passed from the dead air[1]
  which had oppressed my soul and dimmed my sight.
The planet whose sweet influence strengthens love[2]
  was making all the east laugh with her rays,
  veiling the Fishes, which she swam above.
I turned then to my right and set my mind
  on the other pole, and there I saw four stars[3]

7. Purgatory. 8. The verses that sang of Hell. Dante may equally have meant that poetry as an art has long been surpassed by history as the medium for great subjects. Here poetry will return to its classic state. 9. Muse of Epic Poetry. Dante exhorts Calliope to fill him with the strains of the music she played in the defeat of the Pierides, the nine daughters of Pierius, King of Thessaly. They presumed to challenge the Muses to a contest of song. After their defeat they were changed into magpies for their presumption. Ovid (*Metamorphoses*, V, 294–340 and 662–678) retells the myth in detail. 1. Of Hell. 2. Venus. Here, as morning star, Venus is described as rising in Pisces, the Fishes, the zodiacal sign immediately preceding Aries. In Canto I of the *Inferno* Dante has made it clear that the Sun is in Aries. Hence it is about to rise. 3. Modern readers are always tempted to identify these four stars as the Southern Cross, but it is almost certain that Dante did not know about that formation. In VIII, 89, Dante mentions three other stars as

unseen by mortals since the first mankind.[4]
The heavens seemed to revel in their light.
O widowed Northern Hemisphere, bereft
forever of the glory of that sight!
As I broke off my gazing, my eyes veered
a little to the left, to the other pole[5]
from which, by then, the Wain had disappeared.
I saw, nearby, an ancient man, alone.[6]
His bearing filled me with such reverence,
no father could ask more from his best son.
His beard was long and touched with strands of white,
as was his hair, of which two tresses fell
over his breast. Rays of the holy light
that fell from the four stars made his face glow
with such a radiance that he looked to me
as if he faced the sun. And standing so,
he moved his venerable plumes and said:
"Who are you two who climb by the dark stream
to escape the eternal prison of the dead?
Who led you? or what served you as a light
in your dark flight from the eternal valley,
which lies forever blind in darkest night?
Are the laws of the pit so broken? Or is new counsel
published in Heaven that the damned may wander
onto my rocks from the abyss of Hell?"
At that my Master laid his hands upon me,
instructing me by word and touch and gesture
to show my reverence in brow and knee,
then answered him: "I do not come this way

emphatically as he does these four and no one has been tempted to identify them on the star-chart. Both constellations are best taken as allegorical. The four stars represent the Four Cardinal Virtues: Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, and Temperance. Dante will encounter them again in the form of nymphs when he achieves the Earthly Paradise. 4. *The first mankind*: Adam and Eve. In Dante's geography, the Garden of Eden (the Earthly paradise) was at the top of the Mount of Purgatory, which was the only land in the Southern Hemisphere. All of what were called "the southern continents" were believed to lie north of the equator. When Adam and Eve were driven from the Garden, therefore, they were driven into the Northern Hemisphere, and no living soul since had been far enough south to see those stars. Ulysses and his men (*Inferno*, XXVII) had come within sight of the Mount of Purgatory, but Ulysses mentioned nothing of having seen these stars. 5. The North Pole. The Wain (Ursa Major, i.e., the Big Dipper) is below the horizon. 6. Marcus Porcious Cato, the younger, 95–46 B.C. In the name of freedom, Cato opposed the policies of both Caesar and Pompey, but because he saw Caesar as the greater evil joined forces with Pompey. After the defeat of his cause at the Battle of Thapsus, Cato killed himself with his own sword rather than lose his freedom. Virgil lauds him in the *Aeneid* as a symbol of perfect devotion to liberty, and all writers of Roman antiquity have given Cato a similar high place. Dante spends the highest praises on him both in *De Monarchia* and *Il Convivio*. Why Cato should be so signally chosen by God as the special guardian of Purgatory has been much disputed. Cato may be taken as representative of supreme virtue short of godliness. He has accomplished everything but the purifying total surrender of his will to God. As such he serves as an apt transitional symbol, being the highest rung on the ladder of natural virtue, but the lowest on the ladder of those godly virtues to which Purgatory is the ascent.

of my own will or powers. A Heavenly Lady
sent me to this man's aid in his dark day.
But since your will is to know more, my will
cannot deny you; I will tell you truly
why we have come and how. This man has still
to see his final hour, though in the burning
of his own madness he had drawn so near it
his time was perilously short for turning.
As I have told you, I was sent to show
the way his soul must take for its salvation;
and there is none but this by which I go.
I have shown him the guilty people. Now I mean
to lead him through the spirits in your keeping,
to show him those whose suffering makes them clean.
By what means I have led him to this strand
to see and hear you, takes too long to tell:
from Heaven is the power and the command.
Now may his coming please you, for he goes
to win his freedom; and how dear that is
the man who gives his life for it best knows.
You know it, who in that cause found death sweet
in Utica where you put off that flesh
which shall rise radiant at the Judgment Seat.
We do not break the Laws: this man lives yet,
and I am of that Round not ruled by Minos,[7]
with your own Marcia,[8] whose chaste eyes seem set
in endless prayers to you. O blessed breast
to hold her yet your own! for love of her
grant us permission to pursue our quest
across your seven kingdoms. When I go
back to her side I shall bear thanks of you,
if you will let me speak your name below."
"Marcia was so pleasing in my eyes
there on the other side," he answered then
"that all she asked, I did. Now that she lies
beyond the evil river, no word or prayer
of hers may move me. Such was the Decree
pronounced upon us when I rose from there.

7. The Judge of the Damned. The round in Hell not ruled by Minos is Limbo, the final resting place of the Virtuous Pagans. Minos (see *Inferno*, V) is stationed at the entrance to the second circle of Hell. The souls in Limbo (the first circle) have never had to pass before him to be judged. 8. The daughter of the consul Philippus and Cato's second wife, bearing his three children. In 56 B.C., in an unusual transaction approved by her father, Cato released her in order that she might marry his friend Hortensius. (Hence line 87: "that all she asked I did.") After the death of Hortensius, Cato took her back.

But if, as you have said, a Heavenly Dame
orders your way, there is no need to flatter:
you need but ask it of me in her name.
Go then, and lead this man, but first see to it
you bind a smooth green reed about his waist
and clean his face of all trace of the pit
For it would not be right that one with eyes
still filmed by mist should go before the angel
who guards the gate: he is from Paradise.
All round the wave-wracked shore-line, there below,
reeds grow in the soft mud. Along that edge
no foliate nor woody plant could grow,
for what lives in that buffeting must bend.
Do not come back this way: the rising sun
will light an easier way you may ascend."
With that he disappeared; and silently
I rose and moved back till I faced my Guide,
my eyes upon him, waiting. He said to me:
"Follow my steps and let us turn again:
along this side there is a gentle slope
that leads to the low boundaries of the plain."
The dawn, in triumph, made the day-breeze flee
before its coming, so that from afar
I recognized the trembling of the sea.
We strode across that lonely plain like men
who seek the road they strayed from and who count
the time lost till they find it once again.
When we had reached a place along the way
where the cool morning breeze shielded the dew
against the first heat of the gathering day,
with gentle graces my Sweet Master bent
and laid both outspread palms upon the grass.
Then I, being well aware of his intent,
lifted my tear-stained cheeks to him, and there
he made me clean, revealing my true color
under the residues of Hell's black air.
We moved on then to the deserted strand
which never yet has seen upon its waters
a man who found his way back to dry land.
There, as it pleased another, he girded me.
Wonder of wonders! when he plucked a reed
another took its place there instantly,
arising from the humble stalk he tore
so that it grew exactly as before.

CANTO II

Ante-Purgatory:
The Shore of the Island *The Angel Boatman, Casella, Cato of Utica*

It is dawn. Dante, washed, and girded by the reed, is standing by the shore when he sees a light approaching at enormous speed across the sea. The light grows and becomes visible as The Angel Boatman who ferries the souls of the elect from their gathering place at The Mouth of the Tiber to the shore of Purgatory.

The newly arrived souls debark and, taking the Poets as familiars of the place, ask directions. Virgil explains that he and Dante are new arrivals but that they have come by the dark road through Hell. The newly arrived souls see by his breathing that Dante is alive and crowd about him. One of the new souls is Casella, a musician who seems to have been a dear friend of Dante's. Dante tries three times to clasp him to his bosom, but each time his arms pass through empty air. Casella explains the function of the Angel Boatman and then, at Dante's request, strikes up a song, one of Dante's own canzoni that Casella had set to music. Instantly, Cato descends upon the group, berating them, and they break like startled pigeons up the slope toward the mountain.

The sun already burned at the horizon,
  while the high point of its meridian circle
  covered Jerusalem, and in opposition
equal Night revolved about the Ganges
  bearing the Scales that fall out of hand
  as she grows longer with the season's changes:
thus, where I was, Aurora in her passage
  was losing the pale blushes from her cheeks
  which turned to orange with increasing age.[9]
We were still standing by the sea's new day
  like travelers pondering the road ahead
  who send their souls on while their bones delay;
when low above the ocean's western rim,
  as Mars, at times, observed through the thick vapors
  that form before the dawn, burns red and slim;
just so—so may I hope to see it again!—
  a light appeared, moving above the sea
  faster than any flight. A moment then
I turned my eyes to question my sweet Guide,
  and when I looked back to that unknown body

9. The bit of erudite affectation in which Dante indulges in lines 1–9 means simply, "It was dawn."

I found its mass and brightness magnified.
Then from each side of it came into view
an unknown something-white; and from beneath it,
bit by bit, another whiteness grew.
We watched till the white objects at each side
took shape as wings, and Virgil spoke no word.
But when he saw what wings they were, he cried:
"Down on your knees! It is God's angel comes!
Down! Fold your hands! From now on you shall see
many such ministers in the high kingdoms.
See how he scorns man's tools: he needs no oars
nor any other sail than his own wings
to carry him between such distant shores.
See how his pinions tower upon the air,
pointing to Heaven: they are eternal plumes
and do not moult like feathers or human hair."
Then as that bird of heaven closed the distance
between us, he grew brighter and yet brighter
until I could no longer bear the radiance,
and bowed my head. He steered straight for the shore,
his ship so light and swift it drew no water;
it did not seem to sail so much as soar.
Astern stood the great pilot of the Lord,
so fair his blessedness seemed written on him;
and more than a hundred souls were seated forward,
singing as if they raised a single voice
in exitu Israel de Aegypto.[1]
Verse after verse they made the air rejoice.
The angel made the sign of the cross, and they
cast themselves, at his signal, to the shore.[2]
Then, swiftly as he had come, he went away.
The throng he left seemed not to understand
what place it was, but stood and stared about
like men who see the first of a new land.
The sun, who with an arrow in each ray
had chased the Goat[3] out of the height of Heaven,
on every hand was shooting forth the day,
when those new souls looked up to where my Guide
and I stood, saying to us, "If you know it,
show us the road that climbs the mountainside."
Virgil replied: "You think perhaps we two
have had some long experience of this place,
but we are also pilgrims, come before you

1. When Israel out of Egypt came. Psalm CXIII. 2. Note that this is exactly what Dante says of the sinners leaving Charon's ferry in *Inferno* III, 113. 3. Capricorn.

only by very little, though by a way
so steep, so broken, and so tortuous
the climb ahead of us will seem like play."
The throng of souls, observing by my breath
I was still in the body I was born to,
stared in amazement and grew pale as death.
As a crowd, eager for news, will all but smother
a messenger who bears the olive branch,[4]
and not care how they trample one another—
so these, each one of them a soul elect,
pushed close to stare at me, well-nigh forgetting
the way to go to make their beauty perfect.
One came forward to embrace me, and his face
shone with such joyous love that, seeing it,
I moved to greet him with a like embrace.
O solid seeming shadows! Three times there
I clasped my hands behind him, and three times
I drew them to my breast through empty air.
Amazed, I must have lost all color then,
for he smiled tenderly and drew away,
and I lunged forward as if to try again.
In a voice as gentle as a melody
he bade me pause; and by his voice I knew him,
and begged him stay a while and speak to me.
He answered: "As I loved you in the clay
of my mortal body, so do I love you freed:
therefore I pause. But what brings you this way?"
"Casella[5] mine, I go the way I do
in the hope I may return here," I replied.
"But why has so much time been taken from you?"
And he: "I am not wronged if he whose usage
accepts the soul at his own time and pleasure
has many times refused to give me passage:
his will moves in the image and perfection
of a Just Will; indeed, for three months now
he has taken all who asked,[6] without exception.

4. In Dante's time couriers bore the olive branch to indicate not only peace but good news in general. 5. *Casella*: Practically all that is known about Casella has been drawn from the text itself. He seems to have died several months before Dante began his journey, hence early in 1300 or late in 1299. There is no explanation of his delay in reaching Purgatory (the time that has been taken from him). Dante later meets several classes of sinners who must spend a certain period of waiting before they can begin their purification. Clearly it is Dante's conception that the souls bound for Purgatory do not always proceed instantly to their destination, but may be required to expiate by a delay at their gathering point by the mouth of the Tiber (line 101). Casella was a musician and is known to have set some of Dante's *canzone* to music. The song he strikes up (line 112) is such a *canzone*. 6. Boniface VIII decreed a Jubilee Year from Christmas 1299 to Christmas 1300. (See *Inferno* XVIII, 28–33 and note.) His decree extended special indulgences even to the dead. Hence the Angel's permissiveness.

And so it was that in my turn I stood
upon that shore where Tiber's stream grows salt,
and there was gathered to my present good.
It is back to the Tiber's mouth he has just flown,
for there forever is the gathering place
of all who do not sink to Acheron."
"If no new law has stripped you of your skill
or of the memory of those songs of love
that once could calm all passion from my will,"
I said to him, "Oh sound a verse once more
to soothe my soul which, with its weight of flesh
and the long journey, sinks distressed and sore."
"Love that speaks its reasons in my heart,"
he sang then, and such grace flowed on the air
that even now I hear that music start.
My Guide and I and all those souls of bliss
stood tranced in song; when suddenly we heard
the Noble Elder cry: "What's this! What's this!
Negligence! Loitering! O laggard crew
run to the mountain and strip off the scurf
that lets not God be manifest in you!"
Exactly as a flock of pigeons gleaning
a field of stubble, pecking busily,
forgetting all their primping and their preening,
will rise as one and scatter through the air,
leaving their feast without another thought
when they are taken by a sudden scare—
so that new band, all thought of pleasure gone,
broke from the feast of music with a start
and scattered for the mountainside like one
who leaps and does not look where he will land.
Nor were my Guide and I inclined to stand.

CANTO XIX

The Fourth Cornice The Slothful
Dante's Dream of Sirena
The Ascent The Angel of Zeal
The Fifth Cornice The Hoarders and Wasters (The Avaricious)

Just before morning (when the truth is dreamed) Dante dreams of The Siren that lures the souls of men to incontinent worldliness. Hideous in her true form, the Siren grows irresistible in men's eyes as they look upon her. A Heavenly Lady races in upon the dream and calls to Virgil who, thus summoned, strips the Siren, exposing her filthy body. Such a stench rises from her, so exposed, that Dante

wakens shuddering, to find Virgil calling him to resume the journey.

The Angel of Zeal shows them the passage, and when his wings have fanned the Poets, Dante casts off his depression and lethargy, and rushes up the remaining length of the passage.

Arrived at The Fifth Cornice, Virgil inquires the way of one of the souls of The Hoarders and Wasters, who lie motionless and outstretched, bound hand and foot, with their faces in the dust.

The soul of Pope Adrian V replies that, if they have incurred no guilt by Hoarding or Wasting, they may pass on to the right. Dante kneels in reverence to Adrian and is scolded for doing so. Adrian then dismisses Dante in order to resume his purification. Adrian's last request is that his niece, Alagia, be asked to pray for his soul.

At the hour when the heat of the day is overcome
by Earth, or at times by Saturn, and can no longer
temper the cold of the moon;[7] when on the dome
of the eastern sky the geomancers sight
Fortuna Major[8] rising on a course
on which, and soon, it will be drowned in light;
there came to me in a dream a stuttering crone,
squint-eyed, clubfooted, both her hands deformed,
and her complexion like a whitewashed stone.
I stared at her; and just as the new sun
breathes life to night-chilled limbs, just so my look
began to free her tongue, and one by one
drew straight all her deformities, and warmed
her dead face, till it bloomed as love would wish it
for its delight. When she was thus transformed,
her tongue thus loosened, she began to sing
in such a voice that only with great pain
could I have turned from her soliciting.
"I am," she sang, "Sirena.[9] I am she
whose voice is honeyed with such sweet enticements
it trances sailing men far out to sea.
I turned Ulysses from his wanderer's way[1]

7. An intricate passage based on the medieval belief that sunlight reflected from earth to the moon produced warmth on the moon, whereas sunlight reflected from the moon to the earth produced cold on the earth. *At the hour:* Before dawn. The accumulated heat of the day would have been dissipated through the long night and could no longer temper the cold of the moon. *Overcome by Earth:* The last heat of the day is overcome by the night-chilled earth. *Or at times by Saturn:* The times would be those in which Saturn draws close to the horizon. Saturn was believed to be a cold planet, as opposed to Mars, a hot planet. 8. A conjunction of the last stars of Aquarius and the first of Pisces, supposed to signify great good fortune. In this season these stars would be rising just before dawn, hence the sun is coming up behind them and their course will soon be drowned in light. 9. The Sirens were mythological creatures, usually of great beauty, and with the power of singing so entrancingly that they charmed the souls of men. They were usually presented as luring sailors at sea to their destruction. Dante's Sirena is a Christian adaptation. 1. In the Homeric version Ulysses escapes the Siren's blandishments by stuffing his ears with wax and having himself lashed to the mast of his ship. Dante may, perhaps, be following another version of the myth, but more probably he means to portray the Siren as a liar.

with my charmed song, and few indeed who taste
how well I satisfy would think to stray."
Her mouth had not yet shut when at my side
appeared a saintly lady,[2] poised and eager
to heap confusion on the Siren's pride.
"O Virgil, Virgil! Who," she cried, "is this?"
Roused by her indignation, Virgil came:
his eyes did not once leave that soul of bliss.
He seized the witch, and with one rip laid bare
all of her front, her loins and her foul belly:
I woke sick with the stench that rose from there.
I turned then, and my Virgil said to me:
"I have called at least three times now. Rise and come
and let us find your entrance." Willingly
I rose to my feet. Already the high day
lit all the circles of the holy mountain.
The sun was at our backs as we took our way.
I followed in his steps, my brow as drawn
as is a man's so bowed with thought he bends
like half an arch of a bridge. And moving on,
I heard the words: "Come. This is where you climb"[3]
pronounced in such a soft and loving voice
as is not heard here in our mortal time.
With swanlike wings outspread, he who had spoken
summoned us up between the walls of rock.
He fanned us with his shining pinions then,
affirming over us as we went by
"*blessed are they that mourn*"[4]—for they shall have
their consolation given them on high.
"What ails you?" said my Guide. "What heavy mood
makes you stare at the ground?" (We were by then
above the point at which the Angel stood.)
And I: "An apparition clouds my spirit,
a vision from a dream so strange and dreadful
I cannot seem to leave off thinking of it."
"Did you see that ageless witch," he said, "for whom
—and for no other—those above us weep?
And did you see how men escape her doom?
Let it teach your heels to scorn the earth, your eyes
to turn to the high lure the Eternal King
spins with his mighty spheres across the skies."
As falcons stare at their feet until they hear
the wished-for call, then leap with wings outspread

2. She may be Beatrice, or she may be Provenient Grace, but any identification is speculative.
3. Spoken by the Angel of Zeal. 4. The Fourth Beatitude. "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." (Matthew, iv, 5).

in eagerness for the meat that waits them there;
so did I move: filled with desire, I ran
up the remaining length of the rock passage
to the point at which the next great Round began.
When I stood on the fifth ledge and looked around,
I saw a weeping people everywhere
lying outstretched and face-down on the ground.
"My soul cleaves to the dust,"[5] I heard them cry
over and over as we stood among them;
and every word was swallowed by a sigh.
"O Chosen of God, spirits whose mournful rites
both Hope and Justice make less hard to bear,
show us the passage to the further heights."
"If you have not been sentenced to lie prone
in the bitter dust, and seek the nearest way,
keep the rim to your right as you go on."
So spoke the Poet, and so a voice replied
from the ground in front of us. I took good note
of what its way of speaking did not hide.[6]
I turned my eyes to Virgil then, and he
gave me a happy sign of his permission
to do what my eyes asked. Being thus free
to act according to my own intention,
I moved ahead and stood above that soul
whose speaking had attracted my attention,
saying: "O Soul in whom these tears prepare
that without which no soul can turn to God,
put off a while, I beg, your greater care,
to tell me who you were, why you lie prone,
and if there is some way that I may serve you
in the world I left while still in flesh and bone."
"Why Heaven makes us turn our backs shall be
made known to you," the spirit said, "but first
scias quod ego fui successor Petri.[7]
Between Sestri and Chiaveri, flowing on
through a fair land, there is a pleasant river[8]
from which the title of my line is drawn.
A single month, a month and some few days
I came to know on my own weary body
how heavily the Papal Mantle weighs

5. Psalm CXIX. 6. The soul has said, "If you have not been sentenced to lie prone in the bitter dust." The implication is—and it is the first time the point has emerged clearly—that souls may pass through some of the Cornices without delay, if they are free of the taint of sin there punished. 7. "Know that I was Peter's successor." The speaker is Pope Adrian V. He died in 1276 after having been Pope for thirty-eight days. 8. The Lavagna. It flows between Sestri and Chiaveri, small coastal towns near Genoa. Adrian, born Ottobuono de' Fieschi, was the line of the Counts of Lavagna.

upon the wearer who would take good care
to keep it from the mire; compared to that
all other burdens are as light as air.
My conversion, alas, came late; for only when
I had been chosen Pastor of Holy Rome
did I see the falseness in the lives of men.
I saw no heart's rest there, nor ease from strife,
nor any height the flesh-bound soul might climb,
and so I came to love this other life.
My soul was lost to God until that moment,
and wholly given over to avarice;
such was my sin, such is my punishment.
The nature of avarice is here made plain
in the nature of its penalty; there is not
a harsher forfeit paid on the whole mountain.
We would not raise our eyes to the shining spheres
but kept them turned to mundane things: so Justice
bends them to earth here in this place of tears.
As Avarice, there, quenched all our souls' delight
in the good without which all our works are lost,
so, here, the hand of Justice clamps us tight.
Taken and bound here hand and foot, we lie
outstretched and motionless; and here we stay
at the just pleasure of the Father on High."
I had knelt to him. Now I spoke once more.
That spirit sensed at once my voice was nearer
and guessed my reverence. "Why do you lower
your knees into the dust?" he said to me.
And I: "My conscience troubled me for standing
in the presence of your rank and dignity."
"Straighten your legs, my brother! Rise from error!"
he said. "I am, like you and all the others,
a fellow servant of one Emperor.
It is written in holy scripture *Neque nubent*;[9]
if ever you understood that sacred text,
my reason for speaking will be evident.
Now go your way. I wish to be alone.
Your presence here distracts me from the tears
that make me ready. And to your last question:
I have a niece, Alagia,[1] still on earth.

9. . . . They neither marry [nor are given in marriage but are as the angels of God in heaven]" (Matthew, xxii, 30). These were Christ's words when asked to which husband a remarried widow would belong in Heaven. Adrian obviously extends the meaning to include the cancellation of all earthly contracts, fealties, and honors. 1. Daughter of Niccolò di Tedisio di Ugone de' Fieschi and wife of Moroello Malaspina, Marquis of Giovagallo. Dante had been well received by Malaspina and knew and admired his wife for her good works.

If she can but avoid the bad example
those of our line have set, her native worth
will lead her yet the way the blessed go.
And she alone remains to me below."

* * *

CANTO XXVII

The Seventh Cornice *The Angel of Chastity*
The Wall of Fire
The Earthly Paradise *The Angel Guardian*

A little before sunset of the third day on the Mountain the Poets come to the further limit of the Seventh Cornice and are greeted by The Angel of Chastity, who tells them they must pass through the wall of fire. Dante recoils in terror, but Virgil persuades him to enter in Beatrice's name.

They are guided through the fire by a chant they hear coming from the other side. Emerging, they find it is sung by The Angel Guardian of the Earthly Paradise, who stands in a light so brilliant that Dante cannot see him.

The Angel hurries them toward the ascent, but night overtakes them, and the Poets lie down to sleep, each on the step on which he finds himself. (For Statius it will be the last sleep, since there is no night in Heaven.) There, just before dawn, Dante has a prophetic Dream of Leah and Rachel, which foreshadows the appearance, above, of Matilda and Beatrice.

Day arrives; the Poets rise and race up the rest of the ascent until they come in sight of The Earthly Paradise. Here Virgil Speaks His Last Words, for the Poets have now come to the limit of Reason, and Dante is now free to follow his every impulse, since all motion of sin in him has been purged away.

As the day stands when the Sun begins to glow
over the land where his Maker's blood was shed,
and the scales of Libra ride above the Ebro,
while Ganges' waters steam in the noonday glare—[2]
so it stood, the light being nearly faded,
when we met God's glad Angel[3] standing there
on the rocky ledge beyond the reach of the fire,
and caroling "*Beati mundo corde*"[4]

2. It is shortly before sunset of the third day on the Mountain. Dante's details here are the reverse of those given at the opening of II, which see. *The land where his Maker's blood was shed:* Jerusalem. *The Ebro:* For Spain. 3. The Angel of Chastity. He is standing on the narrow rocky path outside the wall of fire. 4. "Blessed are the pure in heart [for they shall see God]." (Matthew, v, 8.)

in a voice to which no mortal could aspire.
Then: "Blessèd ones, till by flame purified
no soul may pass this point. Enter the fire
and heed the singing from the other side."
These were his words to us when we had come
near as we could, and hearing them, I froze
as motionless as one laid in his tomb.
I lean forward over my clasped hands and stare
into the fire, thinking of human bodies
I once saw burned,[5] and once more see them there.
My kindly escorts heard me catch my breath
and turned, and Virgil said: "Within that flame
there may be torment, but there is no death.
Think well, my son, what dark ways we have trod . . .
I guided you unharmed on Geryon:[6]
shall I do less now we are nearer God?
Believe this past all doubt: were you to stay
within that womb of flame a thousand years,
it would not burn a single hair away.
And if you still doubt my sincerity,
but reach the hem of your robe into the flame:
your hands and eyes will be your guarantee.
My son, my son, turn here with whole assurance.
Put by your fears and enter to your peace."
And I stood fixed, at war with my own conscience.
And seeing me still stubborn, rooted fast,
he said, a little troubled: "Think, my son,
you shall see Beatrice when this wall is past."
As Pyramus, but one breath from the dead,
opened his eyes when he heard Thisbe's name,[7]
and looked at her, when the mulberry turned red—
just so my hard paralysis melted from me,
and I turned to my Leader at that name
which wells forever in my memory;
at which he wagged his head, as at a child
won over by an apple. Then he said:

5. Dante must mean as a witness at an execution. Burnings at the stake generally took place in public squares. They were a rather common spectacle. Dante's sentence of exile, it is relevant to note, decreed that he was to be burned if taken on Florentine territory. 6. *Geryon:* The Monster of Fraud. See *Inferno*, XVII. 7. Famous tragic lovers of Babylon. Ovid (*Metamorphoses*, IV, 55–166) tells their story. At a tryst by a mulberry (which in those days bore white fruit) Thisbe was frightened by a lion and ran off, dropping her veil. The lion, his jaws bloody from a recent kill, tore at the veil, staining it with blood. Pyramus, arriving later, saw the stained veil, concluded that Thisbe was dead, and stabbed himself. Thisbe, returning, found him and cried to him to open his eyes for his Thisbe. At that name Pyramus opened his eyes, looked at her, and died. Thisbe, invoking the tree to darken in their memory, thereupon stabbed herself. (Cf. Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.) The mulberry roots drank their blood and the fruit turned red ever after.

"Well, then, what are we waiting for?" and smiled.
He turned then and went first into the fire,
requesting Statius, who for some time now
had walked between us, to bring up the rear.
Once in the flame, I gladly would have cast
my body into boiling glass to cool it
against the measureless fury of the blast.
My gentle father, ever kind and wise,
strengthened me in my dread with talk of Beatrice,
saying: "I seem already to see her eyes."
From the other side, to guide us, rose a paean,
and moving toward it, mindless of all else,
we emerged at last where the ascent began.
There I beheld a light[8] that burned so brightly
I had to look away; and from it rang:
"*Venite benedicti patris mei.*"[9]
"Night falls," it added, "the sun sinks to rest;
do not delay but hurry toward the height
while the last brightness lingers in the west."
Straight up through the great rock-wall lay the way
on such a line that, as I followed it,
my body blocked the sun's last level ray.
We had only climbed the first few stairs as yet
when I and my two sages saw my shadow[1]
fade from me; and we knew the sun had set.
Before the vast sweep of the limned horizon
could fade into one hue and night win all
the immeasurable air to its dominion,
each made the step on which he stood his bed,
for the nature of the Mount not only stopped us
but killed our wish to climb, once day had fled.
As goats on a rocky hill will dance and leap,
nimble and gay, till they find grass, and then,
while they are grazing, grow as tame as sheep
at ease in the green shade when the sun is high
and the shepherd stands by, leaning on his staff,
and at his ease covers them with his eye—
and as the herdsman beds down on the ground,
keeping his quiet night watch by his flock
lest it be scattered by a wolf or hound;
just so we lay there, each on his stone block,
I as the goat, they as my guardians,
shut in on either side by walls of rock.

8. This is the Angel Guardian of the Earthly Paradise. 9. "Come ye blessèd of my Father." (*Matthew*, xxv, 34.) 1. Virgil and Statius, of course, cast none.

I could see little ahead—rock blocked the way—
but through that little I saw the stars grow larger,
brighter than mankind sees them. And as I lay,
staring and lost in thought, a sleep came on me—
the sleep that oftentimes presents the fact
before the event, a sleep of prophecy.
At the hour, I think, when Venus, first returning
out of the east, shone down upon the mountain—[2]
she who with fires of love comes ever-burning—
I dreamed I saw a maiden innocent
and beautiful, who walked a sunny field
gathering flowers, and caroling as she went:
"Say I am Leah if any ask my name,
and my white hands weave garlands wreath on wreath
to please me when I stand before the frame
of my bright glass. For this my fingers play
among these blooms. But my sweet sister Rachel[3]
sits at her mirror motionless all day.
To stare into her own eyes endlessly
is all her joy, as mine is in my weaving.
She looks, I do. Thus live we joyously."
Now eastward the new day rayed Heaven's dome
(the sweeter to the returning wanderer
who wakes from each night's lodging nearer home),
and the shadows fled on every side as I
stirred from my sleep and leaped upon my feet,
seeing my Lords already standing by.
"This is the day your hungry soul shall be
fed on the golden apples men have sought
on many different boughs so ardently."
These were the very words which, at the start,
my Virgil spoke to me, and there have never
been gifts as dear as these were to my heart.
Such waves of yearning to achieve the height
swept through my soul, that at each step I took
I felt my feathers growing for the flight.
When we had climbed the stairway to the rise
of the topmost step, there with a father's love
Virgil turned and fixed me with his eyes.
"My son," he said, "you now have seen the torment
of the temporal and the eternal fires;

2. It is the hour before dawn, in which the truth is dreamed. 3. Leah and Rachel were, respectively, the first- and second-born daughters of Laban and the first and second wives of Jacob. Many authors before Dante had interpreted them as representing the Active and the Contemplative Life of the Soul. Leah's white hands *(le belle mani)* symbolize the Active Life, as Rachel's eyes (lines 104–108) symbolize the Contemplative Life.

here, now, is the limit of my discernment.
I have led you here by grace of mind and art;
now let your own good pleasure be your guide;
you are past the steep ways, past the narrow part.
See there the sun that shines upon your brow,
the sweet new grass, the flowers, the fruited vines
which spring up without need of seed or plow.
Until those eyes come gladdened which in pain
moved me to come to you and lead your way,
sit there at ease or wander through the plain.
Expect no more of me in word or deed:
here your will is upright, free, and whole,
and you would be in error not to heed
whatever your own impulse prompts you to:
lord of yourself I crown and mitre you."[4]

* * *

CANTO XXX

The Earthly Paradise Beatrice
Virgil Vanishes

The procession [of the Heavenly Pageant] halts and the Prophets turn to the chariot and sing "Come, my bride, from Lebanon." They are summoning Beatrice, who appears on the left side of the chariot, half-hidden from view by showers of blossoms poured from above by A Hundred Angels. Dante, stirred by the sight, turns to Virgil to express his overflowing emotions, and discovers that Virgil Has Vanished.

Because he bursts into tears at losing Virgil Dante Is Reprimanded by Beatrice. The Angel Choir overhead immediately breaks into a Psalm of Compassion, but Beatrice, still severe, answers by detailing Dante's offenses in not making proper use of his great gifts. It would violate the ordering of the Divine Decree, she argues, to let Dante drink the waters of Lethe, thereby washing all memory of sin from his soul, before he had shed the tears of a real repentance.

When the Septentrion of the First Heaven,[5]
which does not rise nor set, and which has never
been veiled from sight by any mist but sin,
and which made every soul in that high court

4. Crown as king of your physical self and mitre (as a bishop) as lord of your soul. 5. The Septentrion is the seven stars of the Big Dipper. Here Dante means the seven candelabra [of the Heavenly Pageant]. They are the Septentrion of the First Heaven (the empyrean) as distinct from the seven stars of the dipper which occur lower down in the Sphere of the Fixed Stars.

know its true course (just as the lower Seven
direct the helmsman to his earthly port),
had stopped; the holy prophets,[6] who till then
had walked between the Griffon and those lights,
turned to the car like souls who cry "Amen."
And one among them[7] who seemed sent from Heaven
clarioned: "*Veni, sponsa, de Libano,*"[8]
three times, with all the others joining in.
As, at the last trump every saint shall rise
out of the grave, ready with voice new-fleshed
to carol *Alleluliah* to the skies;
just so, above the chariot, at the voice
of such an elder, rose a hundred Powers
and Principals[9] of the Eternal Joys,
all saying together: "*Benedictus qui venis*";[1]
then, scattering flowers about on every side:
"*Manibus o date lilia plenis.*"[2]
Time and again at daybreak I have seen
the eastern sky glow with a wash of rose
while all the rest hung limpid and serene,
and the Sun's face rise tempered from its rest
so veiled by vapors that the naked eye
could look at it for minutes undistressed.
Exactly so, within a cloud of flowers
that rose like fountains from the angels' hands
and fell about the chariot in showers,
a lady[3] came in view: an olive crown
wreathed her immaculate veil, her cloak was green,
the colors of live flame played on her gown.
My soul—such years had passed since last it saw[4]
that lady and stood trembling in her presence,
stupefied by the power of holy awe—
now, by some power that shone from her above
the reach and witness of my mortal eyes,
felt the full mastery of enduring love.
The instant I was smitten by the force,
which had already once transfixed my soul

6. The twenty-four elders who represent the books of the Old Testament. *Griffon*: A mythical figure with the fore parts of an eagle and the hind parts of a lion, here meant to represent the dual role of Christ as God and Man. 7. *The Song of Solomon*. 8. "Come [with me] from Lebanon, my spouse." *Song of Solomon*, iv. 8. This cry, re-echoed by choirs of angels, summons Beatrice. 9. Angels. 1. "Blessed is he who cometh." (*Matthew*, xxi, 9.) 2. "Oh, give lilies with full hands." These are the words of Anchises in honor of Marcellus. (*Aeneid*, VI, 883). Thus they are not only apt to the occasion but their choice is a sweetly conceived last literary compliment to Virgil before he vanishes. 3. Beatrice. She is dressed in the colors of Faith (white), Hope (green), and Caritas (red). 4. Beatrice died in 1290. Thus Dante has passed ten years without sight of her.

before my boyhood years had run their course,
I turned left with the same assured belief
that makes a child run to its mother's arms
when it is frightened or has come to grief,
to say to Virgil: "There is not within me
one drop of blood unstirred. I recognize
the tokens of the ancient flame." But he,
he had taken his light from us. He had gone.
Virgil had gone. Virgil, the gentle Father
to whom I gave my soul for its salvation!
Not all that sight of Eden lost to view
by our First Mother could hold back the tears
that stained my cheeks so lately washed with dew.[5]
"Dante,[6] do not weep yet, though Virgil goes.
Do not weep yet, for soon another wound
shall make you weep far hotter tears than those!"
As an admiral takes his place at stern or bow
to observe the handling of his other ships
and spur all hands to do their best—so now,
on the chariot's left side, I saw appear
when I turned at the sound of my own name
(which, necessarily, is recorded here),
that lady who had been half-veiled from view
by the flowers of the angel-revels. Now her eyes
fixed me across the stream, piercing me through.
And though the veil she still wore, held in place
by the wreathed flowers of wise Minerva's leaves,[7]
let me see only glimpses of her face,
her stern and regal bearing made me dread
her next words, for she spoke as one who saves
the heaviest charge till all the rest are read.
"Look at me well. I am she. I am Beatrice.
How dared you make your way to this high mountain?
Did you not know that here man lives in bliss?"
I lowered my head and looked down at the stream.
But when I saw myself reflected there,
I fixed my eyes upon the grass for shame.
I shrank as a wayward child in his distress
shrinks from his mother's sternness, for the taste
of love grown wrathful is a bitterness.
She paused. At once the angel chorus sang
the blessed psalm: *"In te, Domine, speravi."*

5. By Virgil. I, 124. 6. This is the only point in the *Commedia* at which Dante mentions his own name. 7. The olive crown.

As far as "*pedes meos*" their voices rang.[8]
As on the spine of Italy the snow
lies frozen hard among the living rafters[9]
in winter when the northeast tempests blow;
then, melting if so much as a breath stir
from the land of shadowless noon,[1] flows through itself
like hot wax trickling down a lighted taper—
just so I froze, too cold for sighs or tears
until I heard that choir whose notes are tuned
to the eternal music of the spheres.
But when I heard the voice of their compassion
plead for me more than if they had cried out:
"Lady, why do you treat him in this fashion?";
the ice, which hard about my heart had pressed,
turned into breath and water, and flowed out
through eyes and throat in anguish from my breast.
Still standing at the chariot's left side,
she turned to those compassionate essences
whose song had sought to move her, and replied:
"You keep your vigil in the Eternal Day
where neither night nor sleep obscures from you
a single step the world takes on its way;
but I must speak with greater care that he
who weeps on that far bank may understand
and feel a grief to match his guilt. Not only
by the workings of the spheres that bring each seed
to its fit end according to the stars
that ride above it, but by gifts decreed
in the largesse of overflowing Grace,
whose rain has such high vapors for its source
our eyes cannot mount to their dwelling place;
this man, potentially was so endowed
from early youth that marvelous increase
should have come forth from every good he sowed.
But richest soil the soonest will grow wild
with bad seed and neglect. For a while I stayed him
with glimpses of my face. Turning my mild
and youthful eyes into his very soul,
I let him see their shining, and I led him
by the straight way, his face to the right goal.

8. In mercy the angel chorus sings Psalm XXXI, 1–8, beginning "In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust" and continuing as far as "thou hast set my feet in a large room." 9. The trees. *The spine of Italy*: The Apennines. 1. *The land of shadowless noon*: Africa. In equatorial regions the noonday sun is at the zenith over each point twice a year. Its rays then fall straight down and objects cast no shadows.

The instant I had come upon the sill
of my second age,[2] and crossed and changed my life,
he left me and let others shape his will.
When I rose from the flesh into the spirit,
to greater beauty and to greater virtue,
he found less pleasure in me and less merit.
He turned his steps aside from the True Way,
pursuing the false images of good
that promise what they never wholly pay.
Not all the inspiration I won by prayer
and brought to him in dreams and meditations
could call him back, so little did he care.
He fell so far from every hope of bliss
that every means of saving him had failed
except to let him see the damned. For this
I visited the portals of the dead
and poured my tears and prayers before that spirit
by whom his steps have, up to now, been led.
The seal Almighty God's decree has placed
on the rounds of His creation would be broken
were he to come past Lethe and to taste
the water that wipes out the guilty years
without some scot of penitential tears!"[3]

CANTO XXXI

The Earthly Paradise Lethe; Beatrice, Matilda

Beatrice continues her reprimand, forcing Dante to confess his faults until he swoons with grief and pain at the thought of his sin. He wakes to find himself in Lethe, held in the arms of Matilda, who leads him to the other side of the stream and there immerses him that he may drink the waters that wipe out all memory of sin.

Matilda then leads him to The Four Cardinal Virtues, who dance about him and lead him before The Griffon where he may look into The Eyes of Beatrice. In them Dante sees, in a First Beatific Vision, the radiant reflection of the Griffon, who appears now in his human and now in his godly nature.

The Three Theological Virtues now approach and beg that Dante may behold The Smile of Beatrice. Beatrice removes her veil, and in a Second Beatific Vision, Dante beholds the splendor of the unveiled shining of Divine Love.

2. Beatrice's womanhood. When she had reached the full bloom of youth Dante turned from her and wrote to his *donna gentile*. [The *donna gentile* (noble or gentle lady) is not identified by name.] Allegorically, he turned from divine "sciences" to an overreliance upon philosophy (the human "sciences"). For this sin he must suffer. 3. In passing Lethe and drinking its waters, the soul loses all memory of guilt. This, therefore, is Dante's last opportunity to do penance.

"You, there, who stand upon the other side—"[4]
(turning to me now, who had thought the edge
of her discourse was sharp, the point) she cried
without pause in her flow of eloquence,
"Speak up! Speak up! Is it true? To such a charge
your own confession must give evidence."
I stood as if my spirit had turned numb:
the organ of my speech moved, but my voice
died in my throat before a word could come.
Briefly she paused, then cried impatiently:
"What are you thinking? Speak up, for the waters[5]
have yet to purge sin from your memory."
Confusion joined to terror forced a broken
"yes" from my throat, so weak that only one
who read my lips would know that I had spoken.
As an arbalest will snap when string and bow
are drawn too tight by the bowman, and the bolt
will strike the target a diminished blow—[6]
so did I shatter, strengthless and unstrung,
under her charge, pouring out floods of tears,
while my voice died in me on the way to my tongue.
And she: "Filled as you were with the desire
I taught you for That Good beyond which nothing
exists on earth to which man may aspire,
what yawning moats or what stretched chain-lengths[7] lay
across your path to force you to abandon
all hope of pressing further on your way?
What increase or allurement seemed to show
in the brows of others that you walked before them
as a lover walks below his lady's window?"
My breath dragged from me in a bitter sigh;
I barely found a voice to answer with;
my lips had trouble forming a reply.
In tears I said: "The things of the world's day,
false pleasures and enticements, turned my steps
as soon as you had ceased to light my way."
And she: "Had you been silent, or denied
what you confess, your guilt would still be known
to Him from Whom no guilt may hope to hide.
But here, before our court, when souls upbraid

4. Of Lethe. But also the other side of the immortal life, i.e., still living. 5. Of Lethe. 6. The figure is a bit confusing. Dante seems to say that the bolt (corresponding to an arrow) of a crossbow strikes the target with less force when the bow snaps. He does not stop to consider that the bolt may miss the target entirely. Nevertheless, the intent of his figure is clear enough. 7. These were, of course, defensive military measures. The moats guarded castles. The chains were strung to block roads, bridges, and gates.

themselves for their own guilt in true remorse,
the grindstone is turned back against the blade.[8]
In any case that you may know your crime
truly and with true shame and so be stronger
against the Siren's song another time,
control your tears and listen with your soul
to learn how my departure from the flesh
ought to have spurred you to the higher goal.
Nothing in Art or Nature could call forth
such joy from you, as sight of that fair body
which clothed me once and now sifts back to earth.
And if my dying turned that highest pleasure
to very dust, what joy could still remain
in mortal things for you to seek and treasure?
At the first blow you took from such vain things
your every thought should have been raised to follow
my flight above decay. Nor should your wings
have been weighed down by any joy below—
love of a maid,[9] or any other fleeting
and useless thing—to wait a second blow.
The fledgling waits a second shaft, a third;
but nets[1] are spread and the arrow sped in vain
in sight or hearing of the full-grown bird."
As a scolded child, tongue tied for shame, will stand
and recognize his fault, and weep for it,
bowing his head to a just reprimand,
so did I stand. And she said: "If to hear me
grieves you, now raise your beard and let your eyes
show you a greater cause for misery."[2]
The blast that blows from Libya's hot sand,
or the Alpine gale, overcomes less resistance
uprooting oaks than I, at her command,
overcame then in lifting up my face;
for when she had referred to it as my "beard"
I sensed too well the venom of her phrase.
When I had raised my eyes with so much pain,
I saw those Primal Beings, now at rest,
who had strewn blossoms round her thick as rain;
and with my tear-blurred and uncertain vision
I saw Her turned to face that beast which is

8. Turning the grindstone away from the blade sharpens it. Turning it back against the blade dulls it. Thus Beatrice is saying that when a soul openly confesses in true repentance what could not in any case be hidden from God, the sword of Justice is blunted, i.e., no longer cuts as deeply. 9. Dante mentions another maiden in some of his songs but in an indefinite way. No specific reference can be attached to these words. 1. Sometimes used for trapping birds. 2. The sight of her accompanied by the guilty knowledge that he had turned away from so much beauty and perfection.

one person in two natures without division.[3]
Even veiled and across the river from me
her face outshone its first-self[4] by as much
as she outshone all mortals formerly.
And the thorns of my repentance pricked me so
that all the use and substance of the world
I most had loved, now most appeared my foe.
Such guilty recognition gnawed my heart
I swooned for pain; and what I then became
she best knows who most gave me cause to smart.
When I returned to consciousness at last
I found the lady who had walked alone[5]
bent over me. "Hold fast!" she said, "Hold fast!"
She had drawn me into the stream up to my throat,
and pulling me behind her, she sped on
over the water, light as any boat.
Nearing the sacred bank, I heard her say
in tones so sweet I cannot call them back,
much less describe them here: "*Asperges me.*"[6]
Then the sweet lady took my head between
her open arms, and embracing me, she dipped me
and made me drink the waters that make clean.
Then raising me in my new purity
she led me to the dance of the Four Maidens;[7]
each raised an arm and so joined hands above me.
"Here we are nymphs; stars are we in the skies.
Ere Beatrice went to earth we were ordained
her handmaids. We will lead you to her eyes;
but that your own may see what joyous light
shines in them, yonder Three,[8] who see more deeply,
will sharpen and instruct your mortal sight."
Thus they sang, then led me to the Griffon.
Behind him, Beatrice waited. And when I stood
at the Griffon's breast, they said in unison:
"Look deep, look well, however your eyes may smart.
We have led you now before those emeralds[9]

3. The Griffon. He is the masque of Christ and represents His two aspects as man and God. 4. Her mortal self. 5. Matilda, who appears in Canto XXVIII, having been foreshadowed by Leah in Dante's dream (XXVII)). She may be taken to symbolize the Active Life of the Soul. 6. *Asperges me hyssopo, et mundabor; lavabis me, et super nivem dealbabor.* ("Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.") *Psalms* li, 7. These are the words the priest utters when he sprinkles holy water over the confessed sinner to absolve him. 7. The Four Cardinal Virtues: Justice, Prudence, Fortitude, and Temperance. In their present manifestation they are nymphs. In another manifestation they are the four stars Dante saw above him when he arrived at the base of the mountain. (I, 23, note.) 8. The Theological Virtues: Faith, Hope, and Charity (*i.e., Caritas*). 9. The eyes of Beatrice. Dante may have intended to describe them as green (hazel) but more likely his choice of words here is meant only to signify "jewel bright." Green is, of course, the color of Hope, and an allegorical significance may be implied in that.

from which Love shot his arrows through your heart."
A thousand burning passions, every one
hotter than any flame, held my eyes fixed
to the lucent eyes she held fixed on the Griffon.
Like sunlight in a glass the twofold creature
shone from the deep reflection of her eyes,
now in the one, now in the other nature.
Judge, reader, if I found it passing strange
to see the thing unaltered in itself
yet in its image working change on change.
And while my soul in wonder and delight
was savoring that food which in itself
both satisfies and quickens appetite,[1]
the other Three, whose bearing made it clear
they were of higher rank, came toward me dancing
to the measure of their own angelic air.
"Turn, Beatrice, oh turn the eyes of grace,"
was their refrain, "upon your faithful one
who comes so far to look upon your face.
Grant us this favor of your grace: reveal
your mouth to him, and let his eyes behold
the Second Beauty,[2] which your veils conceal."
O splendor of the eternal living light!
who that has drunk deep of Parnassus' waters,[3]
or grown pale in the shadow of its height,
would not, still, feel his burdened genius fail
attempting to describe in any tongue
how you appeared when you put by your veil
in that free air open to heaven and earth
whose harmony is your shining shadowed forth!

* * *

Paradiso

CANTO I

The Earthly Paradise The Invocation
Ascent to Heaven The Sphere of Fire, The Music of the Spheres

Dante States his supreme theme as Paradise itself and invokes the aid not only of the Muses but of Apollo.

1. "They that eat me shall yet be hungry, and they that drink me shall yet be thirsty." (*Ecclesiasticus*, xxiv, 21.) 2. The smile of Beatrice (Divine Love). Dante was led to the First Beauty by the Four Cardinal Virtues. Now the Three Theological Virtues, as higher beings, lead him to the second, and higher beauty, which is the joy of Divine Love in receiving the purified soul.
3. The fountain of Castalia. To drink from it is to receive poetic gifts. To grow pale in the shadow of Parnassus signifies to labor at mastering the art of poetry.

Dante and Beatrice are in The Earthly Paradise, the Sun is at the Vernal Equinox, it is noon at Purgatory and midnight at Jerusalem when Dante sees Beatrice turn her eyes to stare straight into the sun and reflexively imitates her gesture. At once it is as if a second sun had been created, its light dazzling his senses, and Dante feels the ineffable change of his mortal soul into Godliness.

These phenomena are more than his senses can grasp, and Beatrice must explain to him what he himself has not realized: that he and Beatrice are soaring toward the height of Heaven at an incalculable speed.

Thus Dante climaxes the master metaphor in which purification is equated to weightlessness. Having purged all dross from his soul he mounts effortlessly, without even being aware of it at first, to his natural goal in the Godhead. So they pass through The Sphere of Fire, and so Dante first hears The Music of the Spheres.

The glory of Him who moves all things rays forth
through all the universe, and is reflected
from each thing in proportion to its worth.
I have been in that Heaven of His most light,
and what I saw, those who descend from there
lack both the knowledge and the power to write.
For as our intellect draws near its goal
it opens to such depths of understanding
as memory cannot plumb within the soul.
Nevertheless, whatever portion time
still leaves me of the treasure of that kingdom
shall now become the subject of my rhyme.
O good Apollo,[4] for this last task, I pray
you make me such a vessel of your powers
as you deem worthy to be crowned with bay.[5]
One peak of cleft Parnassus heretofore
has served my need, now must I summon both[6]
on entering the arena one time more.
Enter my breast, I pray you, and there breathe
as high a strain as conquered Marsyas
that time you drew his body from its sheath.[7]
O power divine, but lend to my high strain
so much as will make clear even the shadow

4. The God of Poetry, and the father of the Muses. Note, too, that Apollo is identified with the Sun and that Dante has consistently used the Sun as a symbol for God. 5. The laurel wreath awarded to poets and conquerors. 6. Parnassus has two peaks: Nisa, which was sacred to the Muses; and Cyrrha, which was sacred to Apollo. Heretofore Nisa has been enough for Dante's need, but for this last canticle he must summon aid from both peaks (i.e., from all the Muses and from Apollo as well). 7. The satyr Marsyas challenged Apollo to a singing contest and was defeated. Ovid (*Metamorphoses*, VI, 382–400) recounts in gory detail how Apollo thereupon punished him by pulling him out of his skin leaving all the uncovered organs still functioning.

of that High Kingdom stamped upon my brain,
and you shall see me come to your dear grove[8]
to crown myself with those green leaves which you
and my high theme shall make me worthy of.
So seldom are they gathered, Holy Sire,
to crown an emperor's or a poet's triumph
(oh fault and shame of mortal man's desire!)
that the glad Delphic god must surely find
increase of joy in the Peneian frond[9]
when any man thirsts for it in his mind.
Great flames are kindled where the small sparks fly.
So after me, perhaps, a better voice
shall raise such prayers that Cyrrha[1] will reply.
The lamp of the world rises to mortal view
from various stations, but that point which joins
four circles with three crosses, it soars through
to a happier course in happier conjunction
wherein it warms and seals the wax of the world
closer to its own nature and high function.[2]
That glad conjunction had made it evening here
and morning there; the south was all alight,
while darkness rode the northern hemisphere;
when I saw Beatrice had turned left to raise
her eyes up to the sun; no eagle ever
stared at its shining with so fixed a gaze.[3]
And as a ray descending from the sky
gives rise to another, which climbs back again,
as a pilgrim yearns for home; so through my eye
her action, like a ray into my mind,
gave rise to mine: I stared into the sun

8. In which grows the sacred laurel, or bay. 9. The laurel or bay, so called for Daphne, daughter of the river god Peneus. Cupid, to avenge a taunt, fired an arrow of love into Apollo and an arrow of aversion into Daphne. Fleeing from the inflamed Apollo, Daphne prayed to her father and was changed into a laurel tree. *The glad Delphic god:* Apollo. 1. Apollo's sacred peak, here taken for Apollo himself. If Apollo does not heed his prayer, Dante will at least show the way, and perhaps a better poet will come after him and have his prayer answered by Apollo, whereby Paradise will at last be well portrayed. 2. Short of pages of diagrams, there is no way of explaining Dante's astronomical figure in detail. A quick gloss must do: *The lamp:* The Sun. *Various stations:* various points on the celestial horizon from which the sun rises at various times of the year. *Four circles with three crosses:* The four circles here intended are: (1) the celestial horizon, (2) the celestial equator, (3) the ecliptic, and (4) equinoxial colure, the great circle drawn through both poles and the two equinoxial points. When the sun is in this position the time is sunrise of the vernal equinox and all four circles meet, each of the other three forming a cross with the celestial horizon. Astrologers took this to be a particularly auspicious conjunction. Its *happier course* (line 40) brings the brighter and longer days of summer. Its *happier conjunction* (line 40) with the stars of Aries bring it back to the sign of the first creation (see *Inferno* I, 38–39, note). And certainly the fact that the diagram forms three crosses would weigh it with the good omens of both the cross and trinity. All would once more be in God's shaping hand. So the *wax of the world* (line 41) is warmed and sealed, in a first sense by the warmth of approaching summer, and in a clearly implicit spiritual sense by the favor of God's will upon His creation. 3. In the Middle Ages men believed that the eagle was able to stare directly into the sun.

so hard that here it would have left me blind;
but much is granted to our senses there,
in that garden made to be man's proper place,
that is not granted us when we are here.
I had to look away soon, and yet not
so soon but what I saw him spark and blaze
like new-tapped iron when it pours white-hot.
And suddenly, as it appeared to me,
day was added to day, as if He who can
had added a new sun to Heaven's glory.
Beatrice stared at the eternal spheres
entranced, unmoving; and I looked away
from the sun's height to fix my eyes on hers.
And as I looked, I felt begin within me
what Glaucus felt eating the herb that made him
a god among the others in the sea.[4]
How speak trans-human change to human sense?
Let the example speak until God's grace
grants the pure spirit the experience.
Whether I rose in only the last created
part of my being,[5] O Love that rulest Heaven
Thou knowest, by whose lamp I was translated.
When the Great Wheel that spins eternally
in longing for Thee,[6] captured my attention
by that harmony attuned and heard by Thee,
I saw ablaze with sun from side to side
a reach of Heaven:[7] not all the rains and rivers
of all of time could make a sea so wide.
That radiance and that new-heard melody
fired me with such a yearning for their Cause
as I had never felt before. And she
who saw my every thought as well as I,
saw my perplexity: before I asked
my question she had started her reply.
Thus she began: "You dull your own perceptions
with false imaginings and do not grasp
what would be clear but for your preconceptions.
You think you are still on earth: the lightning's spear

4. The fisherman Glaucus, noting how his catch revived and leaped into the sea after being laid upon a certain herb, ate some of it and was transformed into a god (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* XIII, 898–968). 5. The soul, which is created after the body. (See *Purgatorio* XXV, 37–75.) *O Love that rulest Heaven:* God. *Whose lamp:* Beatrice as the reflector of God's love. 6. Dante says, literally: "The wheel that Thou, in being desired [i.e., loved] by it, makest eternal." The Great Wheel is the Primum Mobile, its motion deriving from the love of God. *That harmony:* The Music of the Spheres. 7. Dante believed that the earth's atmosphere extended as high as the Sphere of the Moon. Beyond the Moon is another atmosphere of fire. This sphere of fire was believed to cause lightning. (See also line 115, "the fire about the moon.")

never fled downward from its natural place
as rapidly as you are rising there."
I grasped her brief and smiling words and shed
my first perplexity, but found myself
entangled in another, and I said:
"My mind, already recovered from the surprise
of the great marvel you have just explained,
is now amazed anew: how can I rise
in my gross body through such aery substance?"
She sighed in pity and turned as might a mother
to a delirious child. "The elements
of all things," she began, "whatever their mode,
observe an inner order. It is this form
that makes the universe resemble God.
In this the higher creatures see the hand
of the Eternal Worth, which is the goal
to which these norms conduce, being so planned.
All Being within this order, by the laws
of its own nature is impelled to find
its proper station round its Primal Cause.
Thus every nature moves across the tide
of the great sea of being to its own port,
each with its given instinct as its guide.
This instinct draws the fire about the moon.
It is the mover in the mortal heart.
It draws the earth together and makes it one.
Not only the brute creatures, but all those
possessed of intellect and love, this instinct
drives to their mark as a bow shoots forth its arrows.
The Providence that makes all things hunger here
satisfies forever with its light
the heaven within which whirls the fastest sphere.[8]
And to it now, as to a place foretold,
are we two soaring, driven by that bow
whose every arrow finds a mark of gold.
It is true that oftentimes the form of a thing
does not respond to the intent of the art,
the matter being deaf to summoning—
just so, the creature sometimes travels wide
of this true course, for even when so driven
it still retains the power to turn aside
(exactly as we may see the heavens' fire
plunge from a cloud) and its first impulse may

8. The Primum Mobile.

be twisted earthward by a false desire.
You should not, as I see it, marvel more
at your ascent than at a river's fall
from a high mountain to the valley floor.
If you, free as you are of every dross,
had settled and had come to rest below,
that would indeed have been as marvelous[9]
as a still flame there in the mortal plain."
So saying, she turned her eyes to Heaven again.

* * *

CANTO III

The First Sphere: The Moon The Inconstant Piccarda, Constance

As Dante is about to speak to Beatrice he sees the dim traceries of human faces and taking them to be reflections, he turns to see what souls are being so reflected. Beatrice, as ever, explains that these pallid images are the souls themselves. They are The Inconstant, the souls of those who registered holy vows in Heaven, but who broke or scanted them.

Among them Piccarda Donati identifies herself, and then identifies The Empress Constance. Both, according to Dante's beliefs, had taken vows as nuns but were forced to break them in order to contract a political marriage. Not all the souls about them need have failed in the same vows, however. Any failure to fulfill a holy vow (of holy orders, to go on a pilgrimage, to offer special services to God) might place the soul in this lowest class of the blessed.

Piccarda explains that every soul in Heaven rejoices in the entire will of God and cannot wish for a higher place, for to do so would be to come into conflict with the will of God. In the perfect harmony of bliss, everywhere in Heaven is Paradise.

That sun that breathed love's fire into my youth[1]
had thus resolved for me, feature by feature—
proving, disproving—the sweet face of truth.
I, raising my eyes to her eyes to announce
myself resolved of error, and well assured,
was about to speak; but before I could pronounce
my first word, there appeared to me a vision.
It seized and held me so that I forgot
to offer her my thanks and my confession.
As in clear glass when it is polished bright,

9. Because then it would be going against the order of the universe. What is purified must ascend to God as inevitably as earthly waters must flow downhill. 1. Beatrice.

or in a still and limpid pool whose waters
are not so deep that the bottom is lost from sight,
a footnote of our lineaments[2] will show,
so pallid that our pupils could as soon
make out a pearl upon a milk-white brow—[3]
so I saw many faces eager to speak,[3a]
and fell to the error opposite the one
that kindled love for a pool in the smitten Greek.[4]
And thinking the pale traces I saw there
were reflected images, I turned around
to face the source—but my eyes met empty air.
I turned around again like one beguiled,
and took my line of sight from my sweet guide
whose sacred eyes grew radiant as she smiled.
"Are you surprised that I smile at this childish act
of reasoning?" she said, "since even now
you dare not trust your sense of the true fact,
but turn, as usual, back to vacancy?
These are true substances you see before you.
They are assigned here for inconstancy
to holy vows. Greet them. Heed what they say,
and so believe; for the True Light[5] that fills them
permits no soul to wander from its ray."
So urged, I spoke to those pale spirits, turning
to one who seemed most eager, and began
like one whose mind goes almost blank with yearning.
"O well created soul, who in the sun
of the eternal life drinks in the sweetness
which, until tasted, is beyond conception;
great would be my joy would you confide
to my eager mind your earthly name and fate."
That soul with smiling eyes, at once replied:
"The love that fills us will no more permit
hindrance to a just wish than does that Love[6]
that wills all of Its court to be like It.
I was a virgin sister[7] there below,
and if you search your memory with care,
despite my greater beauty, you will know
I am Piccarda,[8] and I am placed here

2. The figure seems oddly out of context but its intent is clear: Dante is suggesting that the image is related to the face as a footnote is related to the text. 3. The brow would have to be death-pale as marble, but perhaps Dante intends these spirits to be chalky-white. 3a. Dante and Beatrice are now on the moon. 4. Narcissus. His error was in taking a reflection (his own) to be a real face. Dante's opposite error is in taking real faces to be reflections. 5. God. 6. God, as the essence of *Caritas*. 7. A nun. 8. Piccarda Donati was the daughter of Simone Donati (*Inferno* XXV, 32) and sister of Forese (*Purgatorio* XXIII, 48) and of the war-leader, Corso (*Purgatorio* XXIV, 82ff.). Forese was Dante's friend. Dante was married to Gemma Donati, who

among these other souls of blessedness
to find my blessedness in the slowest sphere.
Our wishes, which can have no wish to be
but in the pleasure of the Holy Ghost,
rejoice in being formed to His decree.
And this low-seeming post which we are given
is ours because we broke, or, in some part,
slighted the vows we offered up to Heaven."
And I then: "Something inexpressibly
divine shines in your face, subliming you
beyond your image in my memory:
therefore I found you difficult to place;
but now, with the assistance of your words,
I find the memory easier to retrace.[9]
But tell me, please: do you who are happy here
have any wish to rise to higher station,
to see more, or to make yourselves more dear?"[1]
She smiled, as did the spirits at her side;
then, turning to me with such joy she seemed
to burn with the first fire of love, replied:
"Brother, the power of love, which is our bliss,
calms all our will. What we desire, we have.
There is in us no other thirst than this.
Were we to wish for any higher sphere,
then our desires would not be in accord
with the high will of Him who wills us here;
and if love is our whole being, and if you weigh
love's nature well, then you will see that discord
can have no place among these circles. Nay,
the essence of this blessèd state of being
is to hold all our will within His will,
whereby our wills are one and all-agreeing.
And so the posts we stand from sill to sill
throughout this realm, please all the realm as much
as they please Him who wills us to His will.
In His will is our peace. It is that sea
to which all moves, all that Itself creates
and Nature bears through all Eternity."
Then was it clear to me that everywhere

also had a brother named Forese, but Piccarda's family was grander than Dante's in-laws. Piccarda was already a nun and living in her convent when her brother Corso, needing to establish a political alliance, forced her to marry Rossellino della Tossa of Florence. Various commentators report that Piccarda sickened and soon died as a consequence of having been so forced against her will and vows. 9. A desperate simplification of Dante's untranslatable "*m'è più latino*" (literally: "it is more Latin to me"). Learned men of Dante's time used Latin naturally and gracefully. Thus to make a thing "more Latin" was to facilitate it. An opposite form of a similar idiom is our still current "It's Greek to me." 1. More dear to God.

in Heaven is Paradise, though the Perfect Grace
does not rain down alike on all souls there.
But as at times when we have had our fill
of one food and still hunger for another,
we put this by with gratitude, while still
asking for that—just so I begged to know,
by word and sign, through what warp she had not
entirely passed the shuttle[2] of her vow.
"The perfection of her life and her great worth
enshrine a lady[3] hereabove," she said,
"in whose rule some go cloaked and veiled on earth,
that till their death they may live day and night
with that sweet Bridegroom[4] who accepts of love
all vows it makes that add to His delight.[5]
As a girl, I fled the world to walk the way
she walked, and closed myself into her habit,
pledged to her sisterhood till my last day.
Then men came, men more used to hate than love.
They tore me away by force from the sweet cloister.
What my life then became is known above.
This other splendor who lets herself appear[6]
here to my right to please you, shining full
of every blessedness that lights this sphere,
understands in herself all that I say.
She, too, was a nun. From her head as from mine
the shadow of the veil was ripped away.
Against her will and all propriety
she was forced back to the world. Yet even there
her heart was ever veiled in sanctity.
She is the radiance of the Empress Constance,[7]
who by the second blast of Swabia
conceived and bore its third and final puissance."[8]
She finished, and at once began to sing
Ave Maria, and singing, sank from view

2. The vertical strings of a loom are the warp. Across them the shuttle draws the woof. Not to draw the shuttle entirely through is to leave the weaving unfinished, hence her vow unfulfilled. 3. Saint Clara of Assisi (1194–1253). Born Chiara Sciffi, she became a disciple of St. Francis and, under his influence, founded in 1212 an order of nuns. *Hereabove:* Higher in Heaven. Probably in the Empyrean, but Dante does not mention her again. 4. Christ. He is so called several times in the New Testament. 5. Only those vows that conform to His love are acceptable. A vow to perform a trivial or an evil action would have no standing. 6. Dante says, "who shows herself to you." Clearly, the souls in Paradise can make themselves visible ór invisible at will (i.e., Heaven reveals itself of its own love). At the end of the conversation the whole company withdraws from sight. 7. (1154–1198). As the last of the line of Norman kings who took southern Italy in the eleventh century, she was Empress of the Two Sicilies (Sicily and Naples). She married the Emperor Henry VI in 1185 and became the mother of Frederick II. Dante follows a legend, for which there was no basis in fact, that she had become a nun and was forced to leave her convent to marry Henry. 8. The three blasts of Swabia are the three great princes whose origins were in Swabia (in Germany). Frederick Barbarossa was the first. His son, Henry VI, was the second. To Henry, Constance bore the third, Frederick II.

like a weight into deep water, plummeting
out of my sight, which followed while it could,
and then, having lost her, turned about once more
to the target of its greater wish and good,
and wholly gave itself to the delight
of the sweet vision of Beatrice. But she
flashed so radiantly upon my sight
that I, at first, was blinded, and thus was slow
to ask of her what I most wished to know.

CANTO XXXI

The Empyrean The Mystic Rose, The Angel Host, Beatrice Leaves Dante, St. Bernard

The Second Soldiery of the Church Triumphant is the Angel Host and Dante now receives a vision of them as a Swarm of Bees in eternal transit between God and the Rose.

Dante turns from that rapturous vision to speak to Beatrice and finds in her place a reverend elder. It is St. Bernard, who will serve as Dante's guide to the ultimate vision of God. Bernard shows Dante his Last Vision of Beatrice, who has resumed her throne among the blessed. Across the vastness of Paradise, Dante sends his soul's prayer of thanks to her. Beatrice Smiles down at Dante a last time, then turns her eyes forever to the Eternal Fountain of God.

Bernard, the most faithful of the worshippers of the Virgin, promises Dante the final vision of God through the Virgin's intercession. Accordingly, he instructs Dante to raise his eyes to her throne. Dante obeys and burns with bliss at the vision of her splendor.

Then, in the form of a white rose, the host
of the sacred soldiery[9] appeared to me,
all those whom Christ in his own blood espoused.
But the other host (who soar, singing and seeing
His glory, who to will them to his love
made them so many in such blissful being,

9. In XXX, 43, Beatrice promised that Dante would see both hosts of Paradise. The first host is of the sacred soldiery, those who were once mortal and who were redeemed by Christ. They are seated upon the thrones of the Mystic Rose in which are gathered eternally the essences of all those heavenly souls that manifested themselves to Dante in the various spheres below, moved by *caritas* to reveal themselves to Dante at the various levels of his developing understanding. How these souls could be eternally within the Rose while yet manifesting themselves to Dante in the various spheres is, of course, one of the mysteries to be grasped only by revelation. The essential point is that Dante becomes better able to see; the vision of Heaven unfolds to him ever more clearly and ever more profoundly. The second soldiery is of the angels who never left heaven. They soar above the Rose like Heavenly bees, in constant motion between the Rose and the radiance of God. Unlike earthly bees, however, it is from God, the mystical hive of grace, that they bring the sweetness to the flower, bearing back to God, of course, the bliss of the souls of Heaven. (See lines 16–18). The first host is more emphatically centered on the aspect of God as the Son; the second, on the aspect of God as the Father.

like a swarm of bees who in one motion dive
into the flowers, and in the next return
the sweetness of their labors to the hive)
flew ceaselessly to the many-petaled rose
and ceaselessly returned into that light
in which their ceaseless love has its repose.
Like living flame their faces seemed to glow.[1]
Their wings were gold. And all their bodies shone[2]
more dazzling white than any earthly snow.
On entering the great flower they spread about them,
from tier to tier, the ardor and the peace
they had acquired in flying close to Him.
Nor did so great a multitude in flight
between the white rose and what lies above it
block in the least the glory of that light;
for throughout all the universe God's ray
enters all things according to their merit,
and nothing has the power to block its way.
This realm of ancient bliss shone, soul on soul,
with new and ancient beings, and every eye
and every love was fixed upon one goal.
O Threefold Light which, blazoned in one star,
can so content their vision with your shining,
look down upon us in the storm we are!
If the barbarians (coming from that zone
above which Helice[3] travels every day
wheeling in heaven with her belovèd son)
looking at Rome, were stupefied to see
her works in those days when the Lateran[4]
outshone all else built by humanity;
What did I feel on reaching such a goal
from human to blest, from time to eternity,
from Florence to a people just and whole—[5]
by what amazement was I overcome?
Between my stupor and my new-found joy
my bliss was to hear nothing and be dumb.
And as a pilgrim at the shrine of his vow

1. See the vision of God and Heaven in Ezekiel, I, 14 ff. 2. See the similar vision in Daniel, X, 4 ff. 3. The nymph Helice (I am afraid the reader will have to Anglicize her name as HEL-ees) attracted Zeus and was turned into a bear by jealous Hera. Zeus translated his nymph to heaven as Ursa Major, the constellation of the Great Bear which contains the Big Dipper. Arcas, her son by Zeus, was translated to Ursa Minor, within which he forms the Little Dipper. The two dippers, being near the pole, are always above the horizon in the northland, the zone from which the barbarians came. 4. Today a section of old Rome. Here Dante uses it to signify Rome in general. 5. This is Dante's last mention of Florence. Note that Florence has not improved but that on the universal scale it has become too insignificant for the sort of denunciation he once heaped upon it.

stares, feels himself reborn, and thinks already
how he may later describe it[6]—just so now
I stood and let my eyes go wandering out
into that radiance from rank to rank,
now up, now down, now sweeping round about.
I saw faces that compelled love's charity
lit by Another's lamp and their own smiles,
and gestures graced by every dignity.
Without having fixed on any part, my eyes
already had taken in and understood
the form and general plan of Paradise:
and—my desire rekindled—I wheeled about
to question my sweet lady on certain matters
concerning which my mind was still in doubt.
One thing I expected; another greeted me:
I thought to find Beatrice there; I found instead
an elder[7] in the robes of those in glory.
His eyes and cheeks were bathed in the holy glow
of loving bliss; his gestures, pious grace.
He seemed a tender father standing so.
"She—where is she?" I cried in sudden dread.
"To lead you to the goal of all your wish
Beatrice called me from my place," he said;
"And if you raise your eyes you still may find her
in the third circle down[8] from the highest rank
upon the throne her merit has assigned her."
Without reply I looked up to that height
and saw her draw an aureole round herself
as she reflected the Eternal Light.
No mortal eye, though plunged to the last bounds
of the deepest sea, has ever been so far
from the topmost heaven to which the thunder sounds
as I was then from Beatrice; but there
the distance did not matter, for her image
reached me unblurred by any atmosphere.

6. It was a custom of the pious, as thanks for an answered prayer, to win forgiveness of sins, or as a testimony of faith, to vow a journey to a stated shrine or temple. Such pilgrimages were often dangerous. Travel was rare in the Middle Ages, and the pilgrim returned from far shrines was much sought after for the hopefully miraculous, and in any case rare, news he brought back. How could Dante, having traveled to the Infinite Summit, fail to think ahead to the way he would speak his vision to mankind? 7. St. Bernard (1090–1153), the famous Abbot of Clairvaux, a contemplative mystic and author. Under him the Cistercian Order (a branch of the Benedictines with a stricter rule than the original order) flourished and spread. All Cistercian monasteries are especially dedicated to the Virgin, and St. Bernard is particularly identified with her worship. 8. In the Mystic Rose, Mary sits in the topmost tier, Eve directly below her, Rachel (the Contemplative Life) below Eve. Beatrice sits to the right of Rachel. In Dante, of course, every mention of three must suggest trinity, but the reader is left to decide for himself the significance of the Mary-Eve-Rachel trinity.

"O lady in whom my hope shall ever soar
and who for my salvation suffered even
to set your feet upon Hell's broken floor;[9]
through your power and your excellence alone
have I recognized the goodness and the grace
inherent in the things I have been shown.
You have led me from my bondage and set me free
by all those roads, by all those loving means
that lay within your power and charity.
Grant me your magnificence that my soul,
which you have healed, may please you when it slips
the bonds of flesh and rises to its goal."
Such was my prayer, and she—far up a mountain,
as it appeared to me—looked down and smiled.
Then she turned back to the Eternal Fountain.
And the holy Elder said: "I have been sent
by prayer and sacred love to help you reach
the perfect consummation of your ascent.
Look round this garden, therefore, that you may
by gazing at its radiance, be prepared
to lift your eyes up to the Trinal Ray.
The Queen of Heaven, for whom in whole devotion
I burn with love, will grant us every grace
because I am Bernard, her faithful one."
As a stranger afar—a Croat,[1] if you will—
comes to see our Veronica,[2] and awed
by its ancient fame, can never look his fill,
but says to himself as long as it is displayed:
"My Lord, Jesus Christ, true God, and is this then
the likeness of thy living flesh portrayed?"—
just so did I gaze on the living love
of him who in this world, through contemplation,
tasted the peace which ever dwells above.[3]
"Dear son of Grace," he said, "you cannot know
this state of bliss while you yet keep your eyes
fixed only on those things that lie below;
rather, let your eyes mount to the last round

9. As she did when she descended to Limbo (as, of course, a manifestation) to summon Virgil.
1. Probably used here in a generic sense to signify the native of any far-off Christian land, but Croatia, aside from lying at one of the outer limits of Christianity, was also known for the ardor of its religious belief. 2. From *vera icon*, the true image. Certainly the most famous relic in St. Peter's, the Veronica was the handkerchief of the faithful follower ever after known as St. Veronica. She gave it to Jesus to wipe the blood from his face on the road to Calvary, and what was believed to be the true likeness of Jesus was believed to have appeared on what was believed to be the cloth in what was believed to be His own blood. 3. According to legend, Bernard was rewarded for his holiness by being permitted a vision of Heaven's blessedness while he was yet on earth.

where you shall see the Queen to whom this realm
is subject and devoted, throned and crowned."
I looked up: by as much as the horizon
to eastward in the glory of full dawn
outshines the point at which the sun went down;[4]
by so much did one region on the height
to which I raised my eyes out of the valley
outshine the rays of every other light.
And as the sky is brightest in that region
where we on earth expect to see the shaft
of the chariot so badly steered by Phaeton,
while to one side and the other it grows dim—
just so that peaceful oriflamme lit the center
and faded equally along either rim.[5]
And in the center, great wings spread apart,
more than a thousand festive angels shone,
each one distinct in radiance and in art.[6]
I saw there, smiling at this song and sport,
her whose beauty entered like a bliss
into the eyes of all that sainted court.
And even could my speech match my conception,
yet I would not dare make the least attempt
to draw her delectation and perfection.
Bernard, seeing my eyes so fixed and burning
with passion on his passion, turned his own
up to that height with so much love and yearning
that the example of his ardor sent
new fire through me, making my gaze more ardent.

CANTO XXXII

The Empyrean St. Bernard, The Virgin Mary, The Thrones of the Blessed

His eyes fixed blissfully on the vision of the Virgin Mary, Bernard recites the orders of the Mystic Rose, identifying the thrones of the most blessed.

Mary's Throne is on the topmost tier of the Heavenly Stadium. Directly across from it rises the Throne of John the Baptist. From

4. The comparison is not, as careless readers sometimes take it to be, between a dawn and a sunset (whose brightnesses would be approximately equal) but between the eastern and western horizons at dawn. Bright as Heaven is, Mary outshines it as the east outshines the west at daybreak. 5. The shaft of the chariot of the Sun would project ahead of the horses. It would, therefore, be the first point of light of the new dawn, that moment when light glows on the eastern rim while the horizon to north and south is still dark. Thus Mary not only outshines all heaven as the east at daybreak outshines the west, but even at the uppermost tier of the blessed, those radiances at either side of her are dim by comparison. 6. Motion. No two angel beings are exactly equal in their brightness, nor in the speed of their flight. These festive angels are, of course, another manifestation of the Angel Hierarchy.

her throne to the central arena (The Yellow of the Rose) descends a Line of Christian Saints. These two radii form a diameter that divides the stadium. On one side are throned Those Who Believe in Christ to Come; on the other, Those who Believed in Christ Descended. The lower half of the Rose contains, on one side, the Pre-Christian Children Saved by Love, and on the other, the Christian Children saved by Baptism.

Through all these explanations, Bernard has kept his eyes fixed in adoration upon the Virgin. Having finished his preliminary instruction of Dante, Bernard now calls on him to join in a Prayer to the Virgin.

Still rapt in contemplation,[7] the sainted seer
assumed the vacant office of instruction,
beginning with these words I still can hear:
"The wound that Mary healed with balm so sweet
was first dealt and then deepened by that being
who sits in such great beauty at her feet.[8]
Below her, in the circle sanctified
by the third rank of loves, Rachel is throned
with Beatrice, as you see, there at her side.
Sarah[9] and Rebecca and Judith and she[1]
who was the great-grandmother of the singer
who for his sins cried, 'Lord, have mercy on me!'—
as I go down the great ranks tier by tier,
naming them for you in descending order,
petal by petal, you shall see them clear.
And down from the seventh, continuing from those
in the first six tiers, a line of Hebrew women
forms a part in the tresses of the rose.[2]
Arranged to form a wall thus, they divide
all ranks according to the view of Christ
that marked the faith of those on either side.
On this side, where the flower is in full bloom[3]

7. Of the Virgin. His eyes have not left her. Nor do they turn again to Dante. *The vacant office of instruction:* Formerly held by Beatrice. *I still can hear:* A rhyme-forced addition, not in Dante's text. 8. Mary, Mother of God, sits in the uppermost tier. At her feet in the second tier sits Eve, Mother of Man. *The wound:* Original sin. *Balm so sweet:* Jesus. *Dealt:* The first fault, Eve's disobedience. *Deepened:* Her seduction of Adam, thus spreading sin to all mankind. *In such great beauty:* Eve, having been created directly by God, was perfect in her beauty. 9. Wife of Abraham. *Hebrews,* XI, 11–14, cites her as the mother (by miraculous fertility in her old age) of the Jews who foresaw Christ's coming and believed in him. *Rebecca:* Wife of Isaac. *Judith:* She killed Holofernes and freed the Jews. 1. Ruth, great-grandmother of David ("that singer.") *Who for his sins:* His lust for Bathsheba, wife of Uriah. In order to marry Bathsheba, David sent Uriah to his death in the first line of battle. David's lament is in *Psalm L.* 2. As if the rose were a head of hair and that vertical row of Hebrew women formed a part in it. In the next line the part becomes a wall. 3. That half of the rose-stadium that holds the pre-Christian believers would naturally be completely filled. On the other side there are thrones waiting for those who have yet to win salvation through Christ Descended. Dante, in fact, is laboring to earn one of them for himself. The Day of Judgment will be upon mankind when the last throne is filled, for Heaven will then be complete.

to its last petal, are arranged all those
whose faith was founded upon Christ to Come;
on that, where the half circles show the unblended
gaps of empty seats, are seated those
whose living faith was fixed on Christ Descended.
And as, on this side, the resplendent throne
of Heaven's Lady, with the thrones below it,
establishes the line of that division;
so, facing hers, does the throned blessedness
of the Great John[4] who, ever holy, bore
the desert, martyrdom, and Hell's distress;
and under him, forming that line are found
Francis, Benedict, Augustine, and others
descending to this center round by round.
Now marvel at all-foreseeing profundity:
this garden shall be complete when the two aspects
of the one faith have filled it equally.
And know that below that tier that cuts the two
dividing walls at their centerpoint, no being
has won his seat of glory by his own virtue,
but by another's, under strict condition;
for all of these were spirits loosed from flesh
before they had matured to true volition.[5]
You can yourself make out their infant graces:
you need no more than listen to their treble
and look attentively into their faces.
You do not speak now: many doubts confound you.[6]
Therefore, to set you free I shall untie
the cords in which your subtle thoughts have bound you.
Infinite order rules in this domain.
Mere accidence can no more enter in
than hunger can, or thirst, or grief, or pain.
All you see here is fixed by the decree
of the eternal law, and is so made
that the ring goes on the finger perfectly.
These, it follows, who had so short a pause
in the lower life are not ranked higher or lower
among themselves without sufficient cause.
The king in whom this realm abides unchanging

4. *The Great John:* The Baptist. He denounced Herod Antipos and was beheaded two years before the Crucifixion. He had to wait in Limbo for two years, therefore, till Christ came for him at the Resurrection. 5. The lower half of the rose-stadium contains the blessed infants, the souls of those who died before they had achieved the true volition of reason and faith. Salvation is granted them not directly through belief in Christ but through the faith and prayers of their parents, relatives, and others of the faithful who interceded for them. 6. The infants are ranked in tiers that indicate degrees of heavenly merit. But if they were saved through no merit of their own, how can one be more worthy than the other? Such is Dante's doubt, which Bernard goes on to set at rest by telling him, in essence, that God knows what He is doing.

in so much love and bliss that none dares will
increase of joy, creating and arranging
the minds of all in the glad Paradise
of His own sight, grants them degrees of grace
as He sees fit. Here let the effect suffice.[7]
Holy Scripture clearly and expressly
notes this effect upon those twins who fought
while still within their mother.[8] So we see
how the Supreme light fittingly makes fair
its aureole by granting them their graces
according to the color of their hair.[9]
Thus through no merit of their works and days
they are assigned their varying degrees
by variance only in original grace.
In the first centuries of man's creation
their innocence and the true faith of their parents
was all they needed to achieve salvation.
When the first age of man had run its course,
then circumcision was required of males,
to give their innocent wings sufficient force.
But when the age of grace came to mankind
then, unless perfectly baptized in Christ,
such innocents went down among the blind.[1]
Look now on her who most resembles Christ,[2]
for only the great glory of her shining
can purify your eyes to look on Christ."
I saw such joy rain down upon that face—[3]
borne to it by those blest Intelligences
created thus to span those heights of space—
that through all else on the long road I trod
nothing had held my soul so fixed in awe,
nor shown me such resemblances to God.
The self-same Love that to her first descended[4]
singing "*Ave Maria, gratia plena*"
stood before her with its wings extended.
Thus rang the holy chant to Heaven's Queen
and all the blessed court joined in the song,

7. The cause is buried in God's mind. The effect must speak for itself. 8. Jacob and Esau. According to Genesis, XXV, 21 ff., they were at odds while still in their mother's womb. (Cf. the legend of Polyneices and Eteocles, twin sons of Oedipus and Jocasta.) Dante follows St. Paul (Romans, IX, 11–13) in interpreting the division between Jacob and Esau as a working of God's unfathomable will. "Even as it is written, Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." Man can note the will of God in such matters ("the effect") but cannot plumb its causes. 9. For what may seem to be superficial reasons. Esau (Genesis, XXV, 25) was red-headed. 1. Among the souls of Hell. Such infants were assigned to Limbo. 2. The Virgin Mary. 3. Mary's. 4. The archangel Gabriel, the Angel of the Annunciation. Dante seems to conceive of Gabriel suspended in air before her, repeating the blissful chant of the Annunciation as he had first hymned it in Nazareth.

and singing, every face grew more serene.
"O holy Father, who endures for me
the loss of being far from the sweet place
where fate has raised your throne eternally,
who is that angel who with such desire
gazes into the eyes of our sweet Queen,
so rapt in love he seems to be afire?"
Thus did I seek instruction from that Great One
who drew the beauty of his light from Mary
as the morning star draws beauty from the sun.
And he: "As much as angel or soul can know
of exultation, gallantry, and poise
there is in him; and we would have it so,
for it was he who brought the victory[5]
to Mary when the Son of God had willed
to bear the weight of human misery.
But let your eyes go where my words point out
among this court, and note the mighty peers
of the empire of the just and the devout.
Those two whose bliss it is to sit so close
to the radiance of the Empress of All Joy
are the two eternal roots of this our rose:[6]
The one just to the left of her blessedness
is the father whose unruly appetite
left man the taste for so much bitterness;
and on her right, that ancient one you see
is the father of Holy Church to whom Christ gave
the twin keys to this flower of timeless beauty.
And that one who in his prophetic sight
foretold the evil days of the Sweet Bride
won by the spear and nails,[7] sits on his right.
While by the other father and first man
sits the great leader to whom manna fell
to feed an ingrate and rebellious clan.[8]
Across the circle from Peter, behold Anna.[9]
She feels such bliss in looking at her daughter
she does not move her eyes to sing 'Hosanna!'
And opposite the father of us all

5. (Dante says "the palm.") Of God's election, that she bear the promised Messiah. 6. Adam and St. Peter. Adam as Father of Mankind, Peter as Father of the Church. Note that Peter has the place of honor on the right. 7. St. John the Evangelist. His *Apocalypse* was received as the prophetic book in which the entire history of the Church is foretold. He sits on Peter's right. 8. Moses. 9. Ste. Anna, Ste. Anne, mother of the Virgin. Her position directly across the circle from Peter's puts her to the right of John the Baptist. *Does not move her eyes to sing 'Hosanna!'*: Like all the other heavenly beings, she constantly sings the praise of God. All others, naturally enough, look up as they sing. She, however, is so filled with bliss by the sight of Mary that she does not turn her eyes from her blessed daughter.

sits Lucy,[1] who first urged your lady to you
when you were blindly bent toward your own fall.
But the time allowed for this dream vision flies.
As a tailor must cut the gown from what cloth is given,
just so must we move on, turning our eyes
to the Primal Love, that as your powers advance
with looking toward him, you may penetrate
as deep as may be through His radiance.
But lest you should fall backward when you flare
your mortal wings, intending to mount higher,
remember grace must be acquired through prayer.
Therefore I will pray that blessed one[2]
who has the power to aid you in your need.
See that you follow me with such devotion
your heart adheres to every word I say."
And with those words the saint began to pray.

CANTO XXXIII

The Empyrean St. Bernard, Prayer to the Virgin, The Vision of God

St. Bernard offers a lofty Prayer to the Virgin, asking her to intercede in Dante's behalf, and in answer Dante feels his soul swell with new power and grow calm in rapture as his eyes are permitted the Direct Vision of God.

There can be no measure of how long the vision endures. It passes, and Dante is once more mortal and fallible. Raised by God's presence, he had looked into the Mystery and had begun to understand its power and majesty. Returned to himself, there is no power in him capable of speaking the truth of what he saw. Yet the impress of the truth is stamped upon his soul, which he now knows will return to be one with God's Love.

"Virgin Mother, daughter of thy son;
humble beyond all creatures and more exalted;
predestined turning point of God's intention;
thy merit so ennobled human nature
that its divine Creator did not scorn
to make Himself the creature of His creature.
The Love that was rekindled in Thy womb
sends forth the warmth of the eternal peace
within whose ray this flower has come to bloom.

1. See *Inferno*, II, 97–100. It was she who first sent Beatrice to rescue Dante from the Dark Wood of Error. She sits opposite Adam. She would, accordingly, be to the left of John the Baptist. 2. Mary.

Here, to us, thou art the noon and scope
of Love revealed; and among mortal men,
the living fountain of eternal hope.
Lady, thou art so near God's reckonings
that who seeks grace and does not first seek thee
would have his wish fly upward without wings.
Not only does thy sweet benignity
flow out to all who beg, but oftentimes
thy charity arrives before the plea.
In thee is pity, in thee munificence,
in thee the tenderest heart, in thee unites
all that creation knows of excellence!
Now comes this man who from the final pit
of the universe up to this height has seen,
one by one, the three lives of the spirit.
He prays to thee in fervent supplication
for grace and strength, that he may raise his eyes
to the all-healing final revelation.
And I, who never more desired to see
the vision myself than I do that he may see It,
add my own prayer, and pray that it may be
enough to move you to dispel the trace
of every mortal shadow by thy prayers
and let him see revealed the Sum of Grace.
I pray thee further, all-persuading Queen,
keep whole the natural bent of his affections[3]
and of his powers after his eyes have seen.
Protect him from the stirrings of man's clay;[4]
see how Beatrice and the blessed host
clasp reverent hands to join me as I pray."
The eyes[5] that God reveres and loves the best
glowed on the speaker, making clear the joy
with which true prayer is heard by the most blest.
Those eyes turned then to the Eternal Ray,
through which, we must indeed believe, the eyes
of others do not find such ready way.
And I, who neared the goal of all my nature,
felt my soul, at the climax of its yearning,
suddenly, as it ought, grow calm with rapture.
Bernard then, smiling sweetly, gestured to me
to look up, but I had already become

3. Bernard is asking Mary to protect Dante lest the intensity of the vision overpower his faculties. 4. Protect him from the stirrings of base human impulse, especially from pride, for Dante is about to receive a grace never before granted to any man and the thought of such glory might well move a mere mortal to an hybris that would turn glory to sinfulness. 5. Of Mary.

within myself all he would have me be.[6]
Little by little as my vision grew
it penetrated further through the aura
of the high lamp which in Itself is true.[7]
What then I saw is more than tongue can say.
Our human speech is dark before the vision.
The ravished memory swoons and falls away.
As one who sees in dreams and wakes to find
the emotional impression of his vision
still powerful while its parts fade from his mind—
just such am I, having lost nearly all
the vision itself, while in my heart I feel
the sweetness of it yet distill and fall.
So, in the sun, the footprints fade from snow.
On the wild wind that bore the tumbling leaves
the Sybil's oracles were scattered so.[8]
O Light Supreme who doth Thyself withdraw
so far above man's mortal understanding,
lend me again some glimpse of what I saw;
make Thou my tongue so eloquent it may
of all Thy glory speak a single clue
to those who follow me in the world's day;
for by returning to my memory
somewhat, and somewhat sounding in these verses,
Thou shalt show man more of Thy victory.
So dazzling was the splendor of that Ray,
that I must certainly have lost my senses
had I, but for an instant, turned away.[9]
And so it was, as I recall, I could
the better bear to look, until at last
my vision made one with the Eternal Good.
Oh grace abounding that had made me fit
to fix my eyes on the eternal light
until my vision was consumed in it!
I saw within Its depth how It conceives

6. I.e., "But I had already fixed my entire attention upon the vision of God." But if so, how could Dante have seen Bernard's smile and gesture? Eager students like to believe they catch Dante in a contradiction here. Let them bear in mind that Dante is looking directly at God, as do the souls of Heaven, who thereby acquire—insofar as they are able to contain it—God's own knowledge. As a first stirring of that heavenly power, therefore, Dante is sharing God's knowledge of St. Bernard. 7. The light of God is the one light whose source is Itself. All others are a reflection of this. 8. The Cumean Sybil (Virgil describes her in *Aeneid*, III, 441 ff.) wrote her oracles on leaves, one letter to a leaf, then sent her message scattering on the wind. Presumably, the truth was all contained in that strew, could one only gather all the leaves and put the letters in the right order. 9. How can a light be so dazzling that the beholder would swoon if he looked away for an instant? Would it not be, rather, in looking at, not away from, the overpowering vision that the viewer's senses would be overcome? So it would be on earth. But now Dante, with the help of all heaven's prayers, is in the presence of God and strengthened by all he sees. It is by being so strengthened that he can see yet more.

all things in a single volume bound by Love,
of which the universe is the scattered leaves;
substance,[1] accident, and their relation
so fused that all I say could do no more
than yield a glimpse of that bright revelation.
I think I saw the universal form
that binds these things,[2] for as I speak these words
I feel my joy swell and my spirits warm.
Twenty-five centuries since Neptune saw
the Argo's keel have not moved all mankind,
recalling that adventure, to such awe
as I felt in an instant. My tranced being
stared fixed and motionless upon that vision,
ever more fervent to see in the act of seeing.
Experiencing that Radiance, the spirit
is so indrawn it is impossible
even to think of ever turning from It.
For the good which is the will's ultimate object
is all subsumed in It; and, being removed,
all is defective which in It is perfect.
Now in my recollection of the rest
I have less power to speak than any infant
wetting its tongue yet at its mother's breast;
and not because that Living Radiance bore
more than one semblance, for It is unchanging
and is forever as it was before;
rather, as I grew worthier to see,
the more I looked, the more unchanging semblance
appeared to change with every change in me.
Within the depthless deep and clear existence
of that abyss of light three circles shown—
three in color, one in circumference:
the second from the first, rainbow from rainbow;
the third, an exhalation of pure fire
equally breathed forth by the other two.
But oh how much my words miss my conception,
which is itself so far from what I saw
that to call it feeble would be rank deception!
O Light Eternal fixed in Itself alone,
by Itself alone understood, which from Itself
loves and glows, self-knowing and self-known;
that second aureole which shone forth in Thee,
conceived as a reflection of the first—

1. Matter, all that exists in itself. *Accident:* All that exists as a phase of matter. 2. Substance and accident.

or which appeared so to my scrutiny—
seemed in Itself of Its own coloration
to be painted with man's image. I fixed my eyes
on that alone in rapturous contemplation.
Like a geometer wholly dedicated
to squaring the circle, but who cannot find,
think as he may, the principle indicated—
so did I study the supernal face.
I yearned to know just how our image merges
into that circle, and how it there finds place;
but mine were not the wings for such a flight.
Yet, as I wished, the truth I wished for came
cleaving my mind in a great flash of light.
Here my powers rest from their high fantasy,
but already I could feel my being turned—
instinct and intellect balanced equally
as in a wheel whose motion nothing jars—
by the Love that moves the Sun and the other stars.

GIOVANNI BOCCACCIO

1313–1375

The tales of Boccaccio's *Decameron* (completed about 1353) constitute the greatest achievement of prose fiction in a vernacular language of southern Europe during the medieval centuries. In his hundred stories the Italian author presents a great variety of people and situations, aptly and often acutely characterized, and abundant dialogue of varying liveliness and realism.

Born in 1313 in Paris, Giovanni Boccaccio was the son of a Florentine businessman and a Frenchwoman. He was apparently taken to Italy in infancy, and in 1328 was sent to Naples to learn commerce in the office of his father's partner; but after six years, bored with business, he turned to the study of canon law. In 1336 Boccaccio saw Maria d'Aquino in a church at Naples; she is represented as Fiammetta in several of his works, including the *Decameron*. A romantic affair ended in Maria's desertion of her lover, and finally in her death in the plague of 1348. In 1341 Boccaccio returned to Florence. After 1351 he was greatly influenced by Petrarch, and turned in his writing from Italian poetry and prose fiction to Latin works of a scholarly nature. He sheltered Leon Pilatus, inducing him to make the first translation of Homer from Greek. Unlike Petrarch, Boccaccio was devoted to the study of Dante, of whom he wrote a biography; in 1373 he was appointed to a Dante chair or lectureship in Florence. He died in 1375.

Like Chaucer, who wrote his *Canterbury Tales* several decades later, Boccaccio provides a dramatic framework for his narrations. But his storytellers are not miscellaneous pilgrims traveling to a famous shrine; they are seven

young ladies and three young gentlemen who have withdrawn from Florence to the countryside, to escape the Black Death, or plague, of 1348. They engage in gay banter and good-natured raillery; but, as they are all refined and cultivated young people with no occupational bias or ingrained prejudices, their relationships are polite rather than boisterous and lack the force and depth and vitality of those portrayed in *The Canterbury Tales*. They agree on a plan of storytelling—and adhere to it (with slight changes). Here there is no drunken miller, such as interrupts Chaucer's pilgrims, to upset the seemly orderliness acceptable to gentlefolk, for there are no other folk present. Each member of the company is to tell a tale each day; on some days a general topic is assigned, on others each narrator follows his own taste and judgment.

The story about Brother Alberto and his impersonation of the angel Gabriel, a bawdy tale of amorous intrigue and deception, exemplifies what most modern readers regard as typical of the *Decameron*. Like Chaucer's *Miller's Tale*, it presents a (moderately) clever person successfully deceiving a very foolish one, but eventually punished for his trickery. In the present story, the man is the trickster and the woman is the foolish dupe, but these roles are often reversed in other stories of the *Decameron*; indeed, Boccaccio digresses during the introduction to the fourth day to assert his devotion to women—the Muses, after all, were women—and, indeed, the women storytellers outnumber the men. He nonetheless knew that some women are foolish, just as he knew, though he was a devout Christian, that some priests and friars fall short of their vocation. Like other authors of his time, he saw nothing wrong in acknowledging these facts and turning them to artistic use.

If reduced to the bare essentials of its plot, this tale could be told far more briefly, as a mere anecdote, a joke. Indeed, it may well have been in circulation as an anecdote both before and after Boccaccio. But he gives it literary value by the way he handles it. He makes the reader see the successive scenes in vivid detail, he creates memorable and amusing characters, and he relates the incidents of the narrative closely to the personalities of those characters. Lisetta is not only credulous but also inordinately vain—her credulity derives from her vanity—and it is because of these qualities that she can be taken in by Brother Alberto's preposterous account of the angel's interest in her. The reader also notices the tacit perception of Lisetta's woman friend, who at once sees through the friar's scheme but, instead of disabusing her foolish friend, leads her on and then gleefully reveals the whole story to the outside world. And Alberto, though clever, is not as cautious as he should be. Otherwise, once warned, he would not have exposed himself to discovery and disgrace.

The story of Federigo and his falcon is told on a day devoted to accounts of love that turns out happily after difficulties on the way. It presents the courtly-love relationship—or one of the possible relationships—in a remarkable combination of realism and nobility. Federigo's conduct perfectly fulfills the code; he devotes himself completely to Monna Giovanna, and his failure to receive any return in no way disturbs the pattern of that devotion. He never repines or complains; his lady's married or widowed condition is all one to him; and, having spent his fortune in the futile effort to attract her, he lives with resignation on his tiny estate. But Federigo is genuinely

high-minded and noble; he has absorbed the ideals and not merely the etiquette of courtly love. His declaration, when Giovanna comes to call, that he has gained and not lost by his service to her, might be politeness learned out of a book—a romance, for example. But his sacrifice of the falcon to provide her with a good meal is a splendid and magnificent folly that could come only from an almost unbelievably generous heart. His grief at the outcome is probably sharper than Giovanna's, despite the painful disappointment which it produces for her.

Giovanna's dignity and charm and sensitivity are as clear to us as they evidently are to Federigo. Unwilling, whether as wife or widow, to have a romance with Federigo, she does not encourage him. Yet she knows that he loves her and that he has squandered his wealth on her account. We see her distress at having to ask him for anything, let alone the falcon, his most cherished possession. But when love for her young son, mortally ill, forces her to it, she acts with grace and decorum. And with something more; for she has discerned the nobleness of temper in Federigo through his consistently courteous behavior. It is that to which she appeals, not to any obligation of a courtly lover to please his lady. Later, when her brothers convince her that she should remarry, she also shows both generosity and independence of character. She gives Federigo his reward by marrying him—and seeing that his new fortune is not wasted! The happy ending is agreeable; but the notable achievement of the story is the brief but complete and poignant depiction of the dilemmas faced by the two against a background of preliminary characterization which gives their decision full significance.

Two good biographies are T. C. Chubb, *The Life of Giovanni Boccaccio* (1930), and Edward Hutton, *Giovanni Boccaccio* (1910). Interesting and sensitive criticism is to be found in Charles G. Osgood, *Boccaccio on Poetry* (1930). John Addington Symonds, *Giovanni Boccaccio* (1895), has been reissued (1968). A. D. Scaglione, *Nature and Love in the Middle Ages* (1963), is a useful discussion of the *Decameron*. Twenty-one of the tales from the *Decameron* will be found in Mark Musa and Peter E. Bondanella, *Giovanni Boccaccio, The Decameron, A New Translation* (1977).

The Decameron[1]

The Author's Introduction

Thirteen hundred and forty-eight years had already passed after the fruitful Incarnation of the Son of God when into the distinguished city of Florence, more noble than any other Italian city, there came the deadly pestilence. It started in the East, either because of the influence of heavenly bodies or because of God's just wrath as a punishment to mortals for our wicked deeds, and it killed an infinite number of people. Without pause it spread from one place and it stretched its miserable length over the West. And against this pes-

1. These selections translated by Mark Musa and Peter E. Bondanella.

tilence no human wisdom or foresight was of any avail; quantities of filth were removed from the city by officials charged with this task; the entry of any sick person into the city was prohibited; and many directives were issued concerning the maintenance of good health. Nor were the humble supplications, rendered not once but many times to God by pious people, through public processions or by other means, efficacious; for almost at the beginning of springtime of the year in question the plague began to show its sorrowful effects in an extraordinary manner. It did not act as it had done in the East, where bleeding from the nose was a manifest sign of inevitable death, but it began in both men and women with certain swellings either in the groin or under the armpits, some of which grew to the size of a normal apple and others to the size of an egg (more or less), and the people called them buboes. And from the two parts of the body already mentioned, within a brief space of time, the said deadly buboes began to spread indiscriminately over every part of the body; and after this, the symptoms of the illness changed to black or livid spots appearing on the arms and thighs, and on every part of the body, some large ones and sometimes many little ones scattered all around. And just as the buboes were originally, and still are, a very certain indication of impending death, in like manner these spots came to mean the same thing for whoever had them. Neither a doctor's advice nor the strength of medicine could do anything to cure this illness; on the contrary, either the nature of the illness was such that it afforded no cure, or else the doctors were so ignorant that they did not recognize its cause and, as a result, could not prescribe the proper remedy (in fact, the number of doctors, other than the well-trained, was increased by a large number of men and women who had never had any medical training); at any rate, few of the sick were ever cured, and almost all died after the third day of the appearance of the previously described symptoms (some sooner, others later), and most of them died without fever or any other side effects.

This pestilence was so powerful that it was communicated to the healthy by contact with the sick, the way a fire close to dry or oily things will set them aflame. And the evil of the plague went even further: not only did talking to or being around the sick bring infection and a common death, but also touching the clothes of the sick or anything touched or used by them seemed to communicate this very disease to the person involved. What I am about to say is incredible to hear, and if I and others had not witnessed it with our own eyes, I should not dare believe it (let alone write about it), no matter how trustworthy a person I might have heard it from. Let me say, then, that the power of the plague described here was of such virulence in spreading from one person to another that not only did it pass from one man to the next, but, what's more, it was often trans-

mitted from the garments of a sick or dead man to animals that not only became contaminated by the disease, but also died within a brief period of time. My own eyes, as I said earlier, witnessed such a thing one day: when the rags of a poor man who died of this disease were thrown into the public street, two pigs came upon them, as they are wont to do, and first with their snouts and then with their teeth they took the rags and shook them around; and within a short time, after a number of convulsions, both pigs fell dead upon the ill-fated rags, as if they had been poisoned. From these and many similar or worse occurrences there came about such fear and such fantastic notions among those who remained alive that almost all of them took a very cruel attitude in the matter; that is, they completely avoided the sick and their possessions; and in so doing, each one believed that he was protecting his good health.

There were some people who thought that living moderately and avoiding all superfluity might help a great deal in resisting this disease, and so, they gathered in small groups and lived entirely apart from everyone else. They shut themselves up in those houses where there were no sick people and where one could live well by eating the most delicate of foods and drinking the finest of wines (doing so always in moderation), allowing no one to speak about or listen to anything said about the sick and the dead outside; these people lived, spending their time with music and other pleasures that they could arrange. Others thought the opposite: they believed that drinking too much, enjoying life, going about singing and celebrating, satisfying in every way the appetites as best one could, laughing, and making light of everything that happened was the best medicine for such a disease; so they practiced to the fullest what they believed by going from one tavern to another all day and night, drinking to excess; and often they would make merry in private homes, doing everything that pleased or amused them the most. This they were able to do easily, for everyone felt he was doomed to die and, as a result, abandoned his property, so that most of the houses had become common property, and any stranger who came upon them used them as if he were their rightful owner. In addition to this bestial behavior, they always managed to avoid the sick as best they could. And in this great affliction and misery of our city the revered authority of the laws, both divine and human, had fallen and almost completely disappeared, for, like other men, the ministers and executors of the laws were either dead or sick or so short of help that it was impossible for them to fulfill their duties; as a result, everybody was free to do as he pleased.

Many others adopted a middle course between the two attitudes just described: neither did they restrict their food or drink so much as the first group nor did they fall into such dissoluteness and drunk-

enness as the second; rather, they satisfied their appetites to a moderate degree. They did not shut themselves up, but went around carrying in their hands flowers, or sweet-smelling herbs, or various kinds of spices; and often they would put these things to their noses, believing that such smells were a wonderful means of purifying the brain, for all the air seemed infected with the stench of dead bodies, sickness, and medicines.

Others were of a crueler opinion (though it was, perhaps, a safer one): they maintained that there was no better medicine against the plague than to flee from it; and convinced of this reasoning, not caring about anything but themselves, men and women in great numbers abandoned their city, their houses, their farms, their relatives, and their possessions and sought other places, and they went at least as far away as the Florentine countryside—as if the wrath of God could not pursue them with this pestilence wherever they went but would only strike those it found within the walls of the city! Or perhaps they thought that Florence's last hour had come and that no one in the city would remain alive.

And not all those who adopted these diverse opinions died, nor did they all escape with their lives; on the contrary, many of those who thought this way were falling sick everywhere, and since they had given, when they were healthy, the bad example of avoiding the sick, they, in turn, were abandoned and left to languish away without care. The fact was that one citizen avoided another, that almost no one cared for his neighbor, and that relatives rarely or hardly ever visited each other—they stayed far apart. This disaster had struck such fear into the hearts of men and women that brother abandoned brother, uncle abandoned nephew, sister left brother, and very often wife abandoned husband, and—even worse, almost unbelievable—fathers and mothers neglected to tend and care for their children, as if they were not their own.

Thus, for the countless multitude of men and women who fell sick, there remained no support except the charity of their friends (and these were few) or the avarice of servants, who worked for inflated salaries and indecent periods of time and who, in spite of this, were few and far between; and those few were men or women of little wit (most of them not trained for such service) who did little else but hand different things to the sick when requested to do so or watch over them while they died, and in this service, they very often lost their own lives and their profits. And since the sick were abandoned by their neighbors, their parents, and their friends and there was a scarcity of servants, a practice that was almost unheard of before spread through the city: when a woman fell sick, no matter how attractive or beautiful or noble she might be, she did not mind having a manservant (whoever he might be, no matter how young or

old he was), and she had no shame whatsoever in revealing any part of her body to him—the way she would have done to a woman—when the necessity of her sickness required her to do so. This practice was, perhaps, in the days that followed the pestilence, the cause of looser morals in the women who survived the plague. And so, many people died who, by chance, might have survived if they had been attended to. Between the lack of competent attendants, which the sick were unable to obtain, and the violence of the pestilence, there were so many, many people who died in the city both day and night that it was incredible just to hear this described, not to mention seeing it! Therefore, out of sheer necessity, there arose among those who remained alive customs which were contrary to the established practices of the time.

It was the custom, as it is again today, for the women, relatives, and neighbors to gather together in the house of a dead person and there to mourn with the women who had been dearest to him; on the other hand, in front of the deceased's home, his male relatives would gather together with his male neighbors and other citizens, and the clergy also came (many of them, or sometimes just a few) depending upon the social class of the dead man. Then, upon the shoulders of his equals, he was carried to the church chosen by him before death with the funeral pomp of candles and chants. With the fury of the pestilence increasing, this custom, for the most part, died out and other practices took its place. And so, not only did people die without having a number of women around them, but there were many who passed away without even having a single witness present, and very few were granted the piteous laments and bitter tears of their relatives; on the contrary, most relatives were somewhere else, laughing, joking, and amusing themselves; even the women learned this practice too well, having put aside, for the most part, their womanly compassion for their own safety. Very few were the dead whose bodies were accompanied to the church by more than ten or twelve of their neighbors, and these dead bodies were not even carried on the shoulders of honored and reputable citizens but rather by gravediggers from the lower classes that were called *becchini*. Working for pay, they would pick up the bier and hurry it off, not to the church the dead man had chosen before his death but, in most cases, to the church closest by, accompanied by four or six churchmen with just a few candles, and often none at all. With the help of these *becchini*, the churchmen would place the body as fast as they could in whatever unoccupied grave they could find, without going to the trouble of saying long or solemn burial services.

The plight of the lower class and, perhaps, a large part of the middle class, was even more pathetic: most of them stayed in their homes or neighborhoods either because of their poverty or their hopes

for remaining safe, and every day they fell sick by the thousands; and not having servants or attendants of any kind, they almost always died. Many ended their lives in the public streets, during the day or at night, while many others who died in their homes were discovered dead by their neighbors only by the smell of their decomposing bodies. The city was full of corpses. The dead were usually given the same treatment by their neighbors, who were moved more by the fear that the decomposing corpses would contaminate them than by any charity they might have felt towards the deceased: either by themselves or with the assistance of porters (when they were available), they would drag the corpse out of the home and place it in front of the doorstep where, usually in the morning, quantities of dead bodies could be seen by any passerby; then, they were laid out on biers, or for lack of biers, on a plank. Nor did a bier carry only one corpse; sometimes it was used for two or three at a time. More than once, a single bier would serve for a wife and husband, two or three brothers, a father or son, or other relatives, all at the same time. And countless times it happened that two priests, each with a cross, would be on their way to bury someone, when porters carrying three or four biers would just follow along behind them; and where these priests thought they had just one dead man to bury, they had, in fact, six or eight and sometimes more. Moreover, the dead were honored with no tears or candles or funeral mourners but worse: things had reached such a point that the people who died were cared for as we care for goats today. Thus, it became quite obvious that what the wise had not been able to endure with patience through the few calamities of everyday life now became a matter of indifference to even the most simple-minded people as a result of this colossal misfortune.

So many corpses would arrive in front of a church every day and at every hour that the amount of holy ground for burials was certainly insufficient for the ancient custom of giving each body its individual place; when all the graves were full, huge trenches were dug in all of the cemeteries of the churches and into them the new arrivals were dumped by the hundreds; and they were packed in there with dirt, one on top of another, like a ship's cargo, until the trench was filled.

But instead of going over every detail of the past miseries which befell our city, let me say that the same unfriendly weather there did not, because of this, spare the surrounding countryside any evil; there, not to speak of the towns which, on a smaller scale, were like the city, in the scattered villages and in the fields the poor, miserable peasants and their families, without any medical assistance or aid of servants, died on the roads and in their fields and in their homes, as many by day as by night, and they died not like men but more like

wild animals. Because of this they, like the city dwellers, became careless in their ways and did not look after their possessions or their businesses; furthermore, when they saw that death was upon them, completely neglecting the future fruits of their past labors, their livestock, their property, they did their best to consume what they already had at hand. So, it came about that oxen, donkeys, sheep, pigs, chickens and even dogs, man's most faithful companion, were driven from their homes into the fields, where the wheat was left not only unharvested but also unreaped, and they were allowed to roam where they wished; and many of these animals, almost as if they were rational beings, returned at night to their homes without any guidance from a shepherd, satiated after a good day's meal.

Leaving the countryside and returning to the city, what more can one say, except that so great was the cruelty of Heaven, and, perhaps, also that of man, that from March to July of the same year, between the fury of the pestiferous sickness and the fact that many of the sick were badly treated or abandoned in need because of the fear that the healthy had, more than one hundred thousand human beings are believed to have lost their lives for certain inside the walls of the city of Florence whereas, before the deadly plague, one would not have estimated that there were actually that many people dwelling in that city.

Oh, how many great palaces, beautiful homes, and noble dwellings, once filled with families, gentlemen, and ladies, were now emptied, down to the last servant! How many notable families, vast domains, and famous fortunes remained without legitimate heir! How many valiant men, beautiful women, and charming young men, who might have been pronounced very healthy by Galen, Hippocrates, and Aesculapius[2] (not to mention lesser physicians), dined in the morning with their relatives, companions, and friends and then in the evening took supper with their ancestors in the other world!

Reflecting upon so many miseries makes me very sad; therefore, since I wish to pass over as many as I can, let me say that as our city was in this condition, almost emptied of inhabitants, it happened (as I heard it later from a person worthy of trust) that one Tuesday morning in the venerable church of Santa Maria Novella there was hardly any congregation there to hear the holy services except for seven young women, all dressed in garments of mourning as the times demanded, each of whom was a friend, neighbor, or relative of the other, and none of whom had passed her twenty-eighth year, nor was any of them younger than eighteen; all were educated and of noble birth and beautiful to look at, well-mannered and gracefully

2. Roman god of medicine and healing, often identified with Asclepius, Apollo's son, who was the Greek god of medicine. *Galen:* Greek anatomist and physician (A.D. 130?–201?). *Hippocrates:* Greek Physician (160?–377? B.C.), to whom the Hippocratic oath, administered to new physicians, is attributed.

modest. I would tell you their real names, if I did not have a good reason for not doing so, which is this: I do not wish any of them to be embarrassed in the future because of the things that they said to each other and what they listened to—all of which I shall later recount. Today the laws regarding pleasure are again strict, more so than at that time (for the reasons mentioned above when they were very lax), not only for women of their age but even for those who were older; nor would I wish to give an opportunity to the envious, who are always ready to attack every praiseworthy life, to diminish in any way with their indecent talk the dignity of these worthy ladies. But, so that you may understand clearly what each of them had to say, I intend to call them by names which are either completely or in part appropriate to their personalities. We shall call the first and the oldest Pampinea and the second Fiammetta, the third Filomena, and the fourth Emilia, and we shall name the fifth Lauretta and the sixth Neifile, and the last, not without reason, we shall call Elissa.[3] Not by prior agreement, but purely by chance, they gathered together in one part of the church and were seated almost in a circle, saying their rosaries; after many sighs, they began to discuss among themselves various matters concerning the nature of the times, and after a while, as the others fell silent, Pampinea began to speak in this manner:

"My dear ladies, you have often heard, as I have, how a proper use of one's reason does harm to no one. It is only natural for everyone born on this earth to aid, preserve, and defend his own life to the best of his ability; this is a right so taken for granted that it has, at times, permitted men to kill each other without blame in order to defend their own lives. And if the laws dealing with the welfare of every human being permit such a thing, how much more lawful, and with no harm to anyone, is it for us, or anyone else, to take all possible precautions to preserve our own lives! When I consider what we have been doing this morning and in the past days and what we have spoken about, I understand, and you must understand too, that each one of us is afraid for her life; nor does this surprise me in the least—rather I am greatly amazed that since each of us has the natural feelings of a woman, we do not find some remedy for ourselves to cure what each one of us dreads. We live in the city, in my opinion, for no other reason than to bear witness to the number of dead bodies that are carried to burial, or to listen whether the friars (whose number has been reduced to almost nothing) chant their offices at the prescribed hours, or to demonstrate to anyone who comes here the quality and the quantity of our miseries by our garments of mourning. And if we leave the church, either we see dead or sick

3. Perhaps the reason is that like her namesake, the Carthaginian queen, who is better known as Dido, Boccaccio's Elisa is dominated by a violent passion.

bodies being carried all about, or we see those who were once condemned to exile for their crimes by the authority of the public laws making sport of these laws, running about wildly through the city, because they know that the executors of these laws are either dead or dying; or we see the scum of our city, avid for our blood, who call themselves *becchini*[1] and who ride about on horseback torturing us by deriding everything, making our losses more bitter with their disgusting songs. Nor do we hear anything but 'So-and-so is dead,' and 'So-and-so is dying'; and if there were anyone left to mourn, we should hear nothing but piteous laments everywhere. I do not know if what happens to me also happens to you in your homes, but when I go home I find no one there except my maid, and I become so afraid that my hair stands on end, and wherever I go or sit in my house, I seem to see the shadows of those who have passed away, not with the faces that I remember, but with horrible expressions that terrify me. For these reasons, I am uncomfortable here, outside, and in my home, and the more so since it appears that no one like ourselves, who is well off and who has some other place to go, has remained here except us. And if there are any who remain, according to what I hear and see, they do whatever their hearts desire, making no distinction between what is proper and what is not, whether they are alone or with others, by day or by night; and not only laymen but also those who are cloistered in convents have broken their vows of obedience and have given themselves over to carnal pleasures, for they have made themselves believe that these things are permissible for them and are improper for others, and thinking that they will escape with their lives in this fashion, they have become wanton and dissolute.

"If this is the case, and plainly it is, what are we doing here? What are we waiting for? What are we dreaming about? Why are we slower to protect our health than all the rest of the citizens? Do we hold ourselves less dear than all the others? Or do we believe that our own lives are tied by stronger chains to our bodies than those of others and, therefore, that we need not worry about anything which might have the power to harm them? We are mistaken and deceived, and we are mad if we believe it. We shall have clear proof of this if we just call to mind how many young men and ladies have been struck down by this cruel pestilence. I do not know if you agree with me, but I think that, in order not to fall prey, out of laziness or presumption, to what we might well avoid, it might be a good idea for all of us to leave this city, just as many others before us have done and are still doing. Let us avoid like death itself the ugly examples of others, and go to live in a more dignified fashion in our country houses (of which we all have several) and there let us take what enjoyment,

1. *becchini*: Grave-diggers.

what happiness, and what pleasure we can, without going beyond the rules of reason in any way. There we can hear the birds sing, and we can see the hills and the pastures turning green, the wheat fields moving like the sea, and a thousand kinds of trees; and we shall be able to see the heavens more clearly which, though they still may be cruel, nonetheless will not deny to us their eternal beauties, which are much more pleasing to look at than the empty walls of our city. Besides all this, there in the country the air is much fresher, and the necessities for living in such times as these are plentiful there, and there are just fewer troubles in general; though the peasants are dying there even as the townspeople here, the displeasure is the less in that there are fewer houses and inhabitants than in the city. Here on the other hand, if I judge correctly, we would not be abandoning anyone; on the contrary, we can honestly say it is we ourselves that have been abandoned, for our loved ones are either dead or have fled and have left us alone in such affliction as though we did not belong to them. No reproach, therefore, can come to us if we follow this course of action, whereas sorrow, worry, and perhaps even death can come if we do not follow this course. So, whenever you like, I think it would be well to take our servants, have all our necessary things sent after us, and go from one place one day to another the next, enjoying what happiness and merriment these times permit; let us live in this manner (unless we are overtaken first by death) until we see what ending Heaven has reserved for these horrible times. And remember that it is no more forbidden for us to go away virtuously than it is for most other women to remain here dishonorably."

When they had listened to what Pampinea had said, the other women not only praised her advice but were so anxious to follow it that they had already begun discussing among themselves the details, as if they were going to leave that very instant. But Filomena, who was most discerning, said:

"Ladies, regardless of how convincing Pampinea's arguments are, that is no reason to rush into things, as you seem to wish to do. Remember that we are all women, and any young girl can tell you that women do not know how to reason in a group when they are without the guidance of some man who knows how to control them. We are changeable, quarrelsome, suspicious, timid, and fearful, because of which I suspect that this company will soon break up without honor to any of us if we do not take a guide other than ourselves. We would do well to resolve this matter before we depart."

Then Elissa said:

"Men are truly the leaders of women, and without their guidance, our actions rarely end successfully. But how are we to find any men? We all know that the majority of our relatives are dead and those who remain alive are scattered here and there in various groups, not

knowing where we are (they, too, are fleeing precisely what we seek to avoid), and since taking up with strangers would be unbecoming to us, we must, if we wish to leave for the sake of our health, find a means of arranging it so that while going for our own pleasure and repose, no trouble or scandal follow us."

While the ladies were discussing this, three young men came into the church, none of whom was less than twenty-five years of age. Neither the perversity of the times nor the loss of friends or parents, nor fear for their own lives had been able to cool, much less extinguish, the love those lovers bore in their hearts. One of them was called Panfilo, another Filostrato, and the last Dioneo, each one very charming and well-bred; and in those turbulent times they sought their greatest consolation in the sight of the ladies they loved, all three of whom happened to be among the seven ladies previously mentioned, while the others were close relatives of one or the other of the three men. No sooner had they sighted the ladies than they were seen by them, whereupon Pampinea smiled and said:

"See how Fortune favors our plans and has provided us with these discreet and virtuous young men, who would gladly be our guides and servants if we do not hesitate to accept them for such service."

Then Neifile's face blushed out of embarrassment, for she was one of those who was loved by one of the young men, and she said:

"Pampinea, for the love of God, be careful what you say! I realize very well that nothing but good can be said of any of them, and I believe that they are capable of doing much more than that task and, likewise, that their good and worthy company would be fitting not only for us but for ladies much more beautiful and attractive than we are, but it is quite obvious that some of them are in love with some of us who are here present, and I fear that if we take them with us, slander and disapproval will follow, through no fault of ours or of theirs."

Then Filomena said:

"That does not matter at all; as long as I live with dignity and have no remorse of conscience about anything, let anyone who wishes say what he likes to the contrary: God and Truth will take up arms in my defense. Now, if they were just prepared to come with us, as Pampinea says, we could truly say that Fortune was favorable to our departure."

When the others heard her speak in such a manner, the argument was ended, and they all agreed that the young men should be called over, told about their intentions, and asked if they would be so kind as to accompany the ladies on such a journey. Without further discussion, then, Pampinea, who was related to one of the men, rose to her feet and made her way to where they stood gazing at the ladies, and she greeted them with a cheerful expression, outlined their plan

to them, and begged them, in everyone's name, to keep them company in the spirit of pure and brotherly affection.

At first the young men thought they were being mocked, but when they saw that the lady was speaking seriously, they gladly consented; and in order to start without delay and put the plan into action, before leaving the church they agreed upon what preparations must be made for their departure. And when everything had been arranged and word had been sent on to the place they intended to go, the following morning (that is, Wednesday) at the break of dawn the ladies with some of their servants and the three young men with three of their servants left the city and set out on their way; they had traveled no further than two short miles when they arrived at the first stop they had agreed upon.

The place was somewhere on a little mountain, at some distance away from our roads, full of various shrubs and plants with rich, green foliage—most pleasant to look at; at the top there was a country mansion with a beautiful large inner courtyard with open colonnades, halls, and bedrooms, all of them beautiful in themselves and decorated with cheerful and interesting paintings; it was surrounded by meadows and marvelous gardens, with wells of fresh water and cellars full of the most precious wines, the likes of which were more suitable for expert drinkers than for sober and dignified ladies. And the group discovered, to their delight, that the entire palace had been cleaned and the beds made in the bedchambers, and that fresh flowers and rushes had been strewn everywhere. Soon after they arrived and were resting, Dioneo, who was more attractive and wittier than either of the other young men, said:

"Ladies, more than our preparations, it was your intelligence that guided us here. I do not know what you intend to do with your thoughts, but I left mine inside the city walls when I passed through them in your company a little while ago; and so, you must either make up your minds to enjoy yourselves and laugh and sing with me (as much, let me say, as your dignity permits), or you must give me leave to return to my worries and to remain in our troubled city."

To this Pampinea, who had driven away her sad thoughts in the same way, replied happily:

"Dioneo, you speak very well: let us live happily, for after all it was unhappiness that made us flee the city. But when things are not organized they cannot long endure, and since I began the discussions which brought this fine company together, and since I desire the continuation of our happiness, I think it is necessary that we choose a leader from among us, whom we shall honor and obey as our superior and whose every thought shall be to keep us living happily. And in order that each one of us may feel the weight of this responsibility together with the pleasure of its authority, so that no

one of us who has not experienced it can envy the others, let me say that both the weight and the honor should be granted to each one of us in turn for a day; the first will be chosen by election; the others that follow will be whomever he or she that will have the rule for that day chooses as the hour of vespers[4] approaches; this ruler, as long as his reign endures, will organize and arrange the place and the manner in which we will spend our time."

These words greatly pleased everyone, and they unanimously elected Pampinea queen for the first day; Filomena quickly ran to a laurel bush, whose leaves she had always heard were worthy of praise and bestowed great honor upon those crowned with them; she plucked several branches from it and wove them into a handsome garland of honor. And when it would be placed upon the head of any one of them, it was to be to all in the group a clear symbol of royal rule and authority over the rest of them for as long as their company stayed together.

After she had been chosen queen, Pampinea ordered everyone to refrain from talking; then, she sent for the four servants of the ladies and for those of the three young men, and as they stood before her in silence, she said:

"Since I must set the first example for you all in order that it may be bettered and thus allow our company to live in order and in pleasure, and without any shame, and so that it may last as long as we wish, I first appoint Parmeno, Dioneo's servant, as my steward, and I commit to his care and management all our household and everything which pertains to the services of the dining hall. I wish Sirisco, the servant of Panfilo, to act as our buyer and treasurer and follow the orders of Parmeno. Tindaro, who is in the service of Filostrato, shall wait on Filostrato and Dioneo and Panfilo in their bedchambers when the other two are occupied with their other duties and cannot do so. Misia, my servant, and Licisca, Filomena's, will be occupied in the kitchen and will prepare those dishes which are ordered by Parmeno. Chimera, Lauretta's servant, and Stratilia, Fiammetta's servant, will take care of the bedchambers of the ladies and the cleaning of those places we use. And in general, we desire and command each of you, if you value our favor and good graces, to be sure—no matter where you go or come from, no matter what you hear or see—to bring us back nothing but pleasant news."

And when these orders, praised by all present, were delivered, Pampinea rose happily to her feet and said:

"Here there are gardens and meadows and many other pleasant places, which all of us can wander about in and enjoy as we like; but

4. Late afternoon; the sixth of the seven times of day set aside for prayer by canon law.

at the hour of tierce[5] let everyone be here so that we can eat in the cool of the morning."

After the merry group had been given the new queen's permission, the young men, together with the beautiful ladies, set off slowly through a garden, discussing pleasant matters, making themselves beautiful garlands of various leaves and singing love songs. After the time granted them by the queen had elapsed, they returned home and found Parmeno busy carrying out the duties of his task; for as they entered a hall on the ground floor, they saw the tables set with the whitest of linens and with glasses that shone like silver and everything decorated with broom blossoms; then, they washed their hands and, at the queen's command, they all sat down in the places assigned them by Parmeno. The delicately cooked foods were brought in and very fine wines were served; the three servants in silence served the tables. Everyone was delighted to see everything so beautiful and well arranged, and they ate merrily and with pleasant conversation. Since all the ladies and young men knew how to dance (and some of them even knew how to play and sing very well), when the tables had been cleared, the queen ordered that instruments be brought, and on her command, Dioneo took a lute and Fiammetta a viola, and they began softly playing a dance tune. After the queen had sent the servants off to eat, she began to dance together with the other ladies and two of the young men; and when that was over, they all began to sing carefree and gay songs. In this manner they continued until the queen felt that it was time to retire; therefore, at the queen's request, the three young men went off to their chambers (which were separate from those of the ladies), where they found their beds prepared and the rooms as full of flowers as the halls; the ladies, too, discovered their chambers decorated in like fashion. Then they all undressed and fell asleep.

Not long after the hour of nones,[6] the queen arose and had the other ladies and young men awakened, stating that too much sleep in the daytime was harmful; then they went out onto a lawn of thick, green grass, where no ray of the sun could penetrate; and there, with a gentle breeze caressing them, they all sat in a circle upon the green grass, as was the wish of their queen. Then she spoke to them in this manner:

"As you see, the sun is high, the heat is great, and nothing can be heard except the cicadas in the olive groves; therefore, to wander about at this hour would be, indeed, foolish. Here it is cool and fresh and, as you see, there are games and chessboards with which all of you can amuse yourselves to your liking. But if you take my

5. The third canonical hour, 9 A.M. 6. That is, they rested during the early afternoon taking a *siesta*. *Nones*: The fifth canonical hour, 3 P.M.

advice in this matter, I suggest we spend this hot part of the day not in playing games (a pastime which of necessity disturbs the player who loses without providing much pleasure either for his opponents or for those who watch) but rather in telling stories, for this way one person, by telling a story, can provide amusement for the entire company. In the time it takes for the sun to set and the heat to become less oppressive, you will each have told a little story, and then we can go wherever we like to amuse ourselves; so, if what I say pleases you (and in this I am willing to follow your pleasure), then, let us do it; if not, then let everyone do as he pleases until the hour of vespers."

The entire group of men and women liked the idea of telling stories.

"Then," said the queen, "if this is your wish, for this first day I order each of you to tell a story about any subject he likes."

And turning to Panfilo, who sat on her right, she ordered him in a gracious manner to begin with one of his tales; whereupon, hearing her command, Panfilo, while everyone listened, began at once as follows:

The Second Tale of the Fourth Day[7]

Gracious ladies, there was once in Imola a man of wicked and corrupt ways named Berto della Massa, whose evil deeds were so well known by the people of Imola that nobody there would believe him when he told the truth, not to mention when he lied. Realizing that his tricks would no longer work there, in desperation he moved to Venice, that receptacle of all forms of wickedness, thinking that he would adopt a different style of trickery there from what he had used anywhere else before. And almost as if his conscience were struck with remorse for his evil deeds committed in the past, he gave every sign of a man who had become truly humble and most religious; in fact, he went and turned himself into a minor friar, taking the name of Brother Alberto da Imola; and in this disguise he pretended to lead an ascetic life, praising repentance and abstinence, and never eating meat nor drinking wine unless they were of a quality good enough for him.

Never before had such a thief, pimp, forger, and murderer become so great a preacher without having abandoned these vices, even while he may have been practicing them in secret. And besides this, after he became a priest, whenever he celebrated the mass at the altar, in view of all the congregation, he would weep when it came to the Passion of Our Savior, for he was a man to whom tears cost very

7. Told by Pampinea. On the fourth day, in Filostrato's reign, the friends were to tell love stories with unhappy endings.

little when they were called for. And in short, between his sermons and his tears, he managed to beguile the Venetians to such an extent that he was almost always made the trustee and guardian of every will that was made, the keeper of many people's money, and confessor and advisor to the majority of men and women; and acting in this way, he changed from a wolf into a shepherd, and his reputation for sanctity in those parts was far greater than St. Francis's was in Assisi.

Now it happened that there was a foolish and silly young woman named Madonna Lisetta da Ca' Quirino (the wife of a great merchant who had gone with his galleys to Flanders) who, along with other ladies, went to be confessed by this holy friar. She was kneeling at his feet and, being a Venetian (and, as such, a gossip like all of them), she was asked by Brother Alberto halfway through her confession if she had a lover. To this question she crossly replied:

"What, my dear brother, don't you have eyes in your head? Do my charms appear to you to be like all those of other women? I could have even more lovers than I want, but my beauty is not to be enjoyed by just anyone. How many ladies do you know who possess such charms as mine, charms which would make me beautiful even in paradise?"

And then she kept on saying so many things about her beauty that it became boring to listen to her. Brother Alberto realized immediately that she was a simpleton, and since he thought she was just the right terrain for plowing, he fell passionately in love with her right then and there; but putting aside his flatteries for a more appropriate time, and reassuming his saintly manner, he began to reproach her and to tell her that her attitude was vainglorious and other such things; and so the lady told him that he was a beast and that he did not know one beauty from another; and because he did not want to upset her too much, Brother Alberto, after having confessed her, let her go off with the other women.

After a few days, he went with a trusted companion to Madonna Lisetta's home and taking her into a room where they could be seen by no one, he threw himself on his knees before her and said:

"My lady, I beg you in God's name to forgive me for speaking to you as I did last Sunday about your beauty, for I was so soundly punished the following night that I have not been able to get up until today."

"And who punished you in this way?" asked Lady Halfwit.

"I shall tell you," replied Brother Alberto. "As I was praying that night in my cell, as I always do, I suddenly saw a glowing light, and before I was able to turn around to see what it was, I saw a very beautiful young man with a large stick in his hand who took me by the collar, dragged me to my feet, and gave me so many blows that

he broke practically everything in my body. I asked him why he had done this and he replied:

'Because yesterday you presumed to reproach the celestial beauty of Madonna Lisetta whom I love more than anything else except God.'

"And then I asked: 'Who are you?'

"He replied that he was the angel Gabriel.

" 'Oh My Lord,' I said, 'I beg you to forgive me.'

" 'I shall forgive you on one condition,' he said, 'that you go to her as soon as you are able and beg her forgiveness; and if she does not pardon you, I shall return here and beat you so soundly that you will be sorry for the rest of your life.' "

Lady Lighthead, who was as smart as salt is sweet, enjoyed hearing all these words and believed them all, and after a moment she said:

"I told you, Brother Alberto, that my charms were heavenly; but, God help me, I feel sorry for you, and from now on, in order to spare you more harm, I forgive you on condition that you tell me what the angel said next."

Brother Alberto said: "My lady, since you have forgiven me, I shall gladly tell you, but I remind you of one thing: you must not tell what I tell you to anyone in the world, otherwise you will spoil everything, you who are the most fortunate woman in the world today. The angel Gabriel told me that I was to tell you that you are so pleasing to him that often he would have come to pass the night with you if he had not thought it might frighten you. Now he sends me here with a message that he would like to come to you one night and spend some time with you; but since he is an angel and you would not be able to touch him in the form of an angel, he says that for your pleasure he would like to come as a human being, and he asks when you would have him come and in whose shape should he come, and he will come; therefore you, more than any other woman alive, should consider yourself blessed."

Lady Silly then said that it pleased her very much that the angel Gabriel was in lóve with her, for she loved him as well and never failed to light a cheap candle in his honor whenever she found a painting of him in church; and whenever he wished to come to her, he would be very welcome, and he would find her all alone in her room, and he could come on the condition that he would not leave her for the Virgin Mary, whom, it was said, he loved very much, and it was obviously true, because everywhere she saw him, he was always on his knees before her;[8] and besides this, she said that he could appear in whatever shape or form he wished—she would not be afraid.

8. Gabriel told the Virgin Mary that she was to bear the Son of God, and so the two are invariably shown together in paintings of the Annunciation, which Lisetta would often have seen in church.

"My Lady," Brother Alberto then said, "you speak wisely, and I shall arrange everything with him as you have said. And you could do me a great favor which will cost you nothing; and the favor is this: that you allow him to come to you in my body. Let me tell you how you would be doing me a favor: he will take my soul from my body and place it in paradise, and he will enter my body, and as long as he is with you my soul will be in paradise."

Then Lady Dimwit replied: "That pleases me; I wish you to have this consolation for the beating he gave you on my account."

Brother Alberto then said: "Now arrange for him to find the door of your house open tonight so that he can come inside; since he will be arriving in the form of a man, he cannot enter unless he uses the door."

The lady replied that it would be done. Brother Alberto departed, and she was so delighted by the whole affair that, jumping for joy, she could hardly keep her skirts over her ass, and it seemed like a thousand years to her waiting for the angel Gabriel to come. Brother Alberto, who was thinking more about getting in the saddle than of being an angel that evening, began to fortify himself with sweetmeats and other delicacies so that he would not be easily thrown from his horse; and then he got permission to stay out that night and, as soon as it was dark, he went with a trusted companion to the house of a lady friend of his, which on other occasions he had used as his point of departure whenever he went to ride the mares; and from there, when the time seemed ripe to him, he went in disguise to the lady's house, and went inside; and, having changed himself into an angel with the different odds and ends he brought with him, he climbed the stairs, and entered the lady's bedroom.

When she saw this white object approaching, she threw herself on her knees in front of him, and the angel blessed her and raised her to her feet, and made a sign for her to get into bed; and she, most anxious to obey, did so immediately, and the angel lay down alongside his devout worshipper. Brother Alberto was a handsome young man with a robust, well-built body; Lady Lisetta was all fresh and soft, and she discovered that his ride was altogether different from that of her husband. He flew many times that night without his wings, which caused the lady to cry aloud with delight and, in addition, he told her many things about the glory of heaven. Then as day broke, having made another appointment to meet her, he gathered his equipment and returned to his companion, who had struck up a friendly relationship with the good woman of the house so that she would not be afraid of sleeping alone.

When the lady had finished breakfast, she went with one of her attendants to Brother Alberto's and told him the story of the angel Gabriel and of what she had heard from him about the glory of the

eternal life and of how he looked, adding all sorts of incredible tales to her story. To this Brother Alberto said:

"My lady, I do not know how you were with him; I only know that last night, when he came to me and I delivered your message to him, in an instant he transported my soul to a place where there were more flowers and roses than I have ever seen before, and he left my soul in this most delightful spot until this morning at the hour of early prayer. What happened to my body I know not."

"But did I not tell you?" replied the lady. "Your body passed the entire night in my arms with the angel Gabriel inside it; and if you do not believe me, look under your left nipple, where I gave the angel such a passionate kiss that he will carry its mark for some days!"

Then Brother Alberto said: "Today I shall perform an act that I have not done for some time—I shall undress myself to see if what you say is true."

And after much more chatter, the lady returned home; and Brother Alberto, without the slightest problem, often went to visit her, disguised as an angel. One day, however, Madonna Lisetta was discussing the nature of beauty with one of her neighbors, and she, showing off and being the silly goose she was, said: "You would not talk about any other women if you know who it is that loves my beauty."

Her neighbor, anxious to hear more about this and knowing very well the kind of woman Lisetta was, replied: "Madame, you may be right; but as I do not know to whom you are referring, I cannot change my opinion so easily."

"Neighbor," replied Madonna Lisetta, who was easily excited, "he does not want it to be known, but my lover is the angel Gabriel, and he loves me more than himself, and he tells me that this is because I am the most beautiful woman that there is in the world or even in the Maremma."[9]

Her neighbor had the urge to break into laughter right then, but she held herself back in order to make her friend continue talking, and she said: "God's faith, Madame, if the angel Gabriel is your lover and he tells you this, it must really be so; but I did not realize that angels did such things."

"Neighbor," replied the lady, "that is where you are wrong; by God's wounds, he does it better than my husband, and he tells me that they do it up there as well; but since he thinks I am more beautiful than anyone in heaven, he fell in love with me and comes to be with me very often. Now do you see?"

When the neighbor had left Madonna Lisetta, it seemed to her as if a thousand years had passed before she was able to repeat what she

9. A small, marshy region of Tuscany.

had learned; and at a large gathering of women, she told them the whole story. These women told it to their husbands and to other women, who passed it on to others, and thus in less than two days it was the talk of all Venice. But among those whom this story reached were also the woman's in-laws, and they decided, without telling her a word, to find this angel and to see if he knew how to fly; and they kept watch for him for several nights. It just happened that some hint of this got back to Brother Alberto, so he went there one night to reprove the lady, and no sooner was he undressed than her in-laws, who had seen him arrive, were at the door of the bedroom ready to open it. When Brother Alberto heard this and realized what was going on, he jumped up, and seeing no other means of escape, he flung open a window which looked out on the Grand Canal and threw himself into the water.

The water was deep there, but he knew how to swim well, and so he did not hurt himself; after he swam to the other side of the canal, he immediately entered a home that was opened to him and begged the good man inside, for the love of God, to save his life, as he made up a story to explain why he was there at that hour and in the nude. The good man, moved to pity, gave him his own bed, since he had some affairs of his own to attend to, and he told him to remain there until he returned; and having locked him in, he went about his business.

When the lady's in-laws opened the door to her bedroom and entered, they found that the angel Gabriel had flown away, leaving his wings behind him; they abused the lady no end and finally, leaving her alone, all distressed, they returned to their home with the angel's equipment. In the meanwhile, at daybreak, while the good man was on the Rialto, he heard talk about how the angel Gabriel had gone to bed that night with Madonna Lisetta and had been discovered there by her in-laws, and how he had thrown himself into the canal out of fear, and how no one knew what had happened to him; immediately he realized that the man in his house was the man in question. Returning home and identifying him, after much discussion, he came to an agreement with the friar: he would not give him over to the in-laws if he would pay him fifty ducats; and this was done.

When Brother Alberto wished to leave the place, the good man told him:

"There is only one way out, if you agree to it. Today we are celebrating a festival in which men are led around dressed as bears, others dressed as wild men, and others in one costume or another, and a hunt is put on in St. Mark's Square, and with that the festival is ended; then everyone goes away, with whomever he led there, to wherever they please; and if you wish, so that no one will discover

you, I am willing to lead you to wherever you like; otherwise, I don't see any way for you to escape from here without being recognized; and the in-laws of the lady, knowing that you have hidden yourself somewhere around here, have posted guards everywhere to trap you."

Though it seemed rough to Brother Alberto to have to go in such a disguise, his fear of the lady's relatives induced him to agree, and he told the man where he would like to go and that in whatever way he might choose to lead him there, he would be happy. The man smeared him completely with honey, covered him up with feathers, put a chain around his neck and a mask on his head; in one of his hands he put a large club and in the other two great dogs which he had brought from the butcher; at the same time he sent someone to the Rialto to announce that whoever wished to see the angel Gabriel should go to St. Mark's Square. And this is what they call good old Venetian honesty!

And when this was done, he took the friar outside and had him take the lead, holding him by a chain from behind; and many bystanders kept asking: "Who is it? What is it?" Thus he led him up to the piazza where, between those who had followed him and those who had heard the announcement and had come from the Rialto, a huge crowd gathered. When he arrived there, he tied his wild man up to a column in a conspicuous and elevated spot, pretending to wait for the hunt; meanwhile, the flies and horseflies were giving Brother Alberto a great deal of trouble, for he was covered with honey. But when the good man saw that the piazza was full, pretending to unchain his wild man, he tore the mask from his face and announced:

"Ladies and gentlemen, since the pig has not come to the hunt, and since there is no hunt, I would not want you to have come in vain; therefore I should like you to see the angel Gabriel, who descends from heaven to earth to console the Venetian women by night."

When his mask was removed, Brother Alberto was instantly recognized by everybody, and everyone cried out against him and shouted the most insulting words that were ever directed at a scoundrel; besides this, one by one they all started throwing garbage in his face, keeping him occupied this way for a long time until, by chance, the news reached his brother friars; six of them came, and throwing a cloak over him, they unchained him, and in the midst of a great commotion, they led him back to their monastery, where he was locked up, and after a miserable life he is believed to have died there.

Thus a man who was thought to be good and who acted evilly, not recognized for what he really was, dared to turn himself into the angel Gabriel, and instead was converted into a wild man, and, finally, was cursed at as he deserved and made to lament in vain for the sins he had committed. May it please God that the same thing happen to all others like him!

* * *

The Ninth Tale of the Fifth Day[1]

There was once in Florence a young man named Federigo, the son of Messer Filippo Alberighi, renowned above all other men in Tuscany for his prowess in arms and for his courtliness. As often happens to most gentlemen, he fell in love with a lady named Monna Giovanna, in her day considered to be one of the most beautiful and one of the most charming women that ever there was in Florence; and in order to win her love, he participated in jousts and tournaments, organized and gave feasts, and spent his money without restraint; but she, no less virtuous than beautiful, cared little for these things done on her behalf, nor did she care for him who did them. Now, as Federigo was spending far beyond his means and was taking nothing in, as easily happens he lost his wealth and became poor, with nothing but his little farm to his name (from whose revenues he lived very meagerly) and one falcon which was among the best in the world.

More in love than ever, but knowing that he would never be able to live the way he wished to in the city, he went to live at Campi, where his farm was. There he passed his time hawking whenever he could, asked nothing of anyone, and endured his poverty patiently. Now, during the time that Federigo was reduced to dire need, it happened that the husband of Monna Giovanna fell ill, and realizing death was near, he made his last will: he was very rich, and he made his son, who was growing up, his heir, and, since he had loved Monna Giovanna very much, he made her his heir should his son die without a legitimate heir; and then he died.

Monna Giovanna was now a widow, and as is the custom among our women, she went to the country with her son to spend a year on one of her possessions very close by to Federigo's farm, and it happened that this young boy became friends with Federigo and began to enjoy birds and hunting dogs; and after he had seen Federigo's falcon fly many times, it pleased him so much that he very much wished it were his own, but he did not dare to ask for it, for he could see how dear it was to Federigo. And during this time, it happened that the young boy took ill, and his mother was much grieved, for he was her only child and she loved him enormously; she would spend the entire day by his side, never ceasing to comfort him, and often asking him if there was anything he desired, begging him to tell her what it might be, for if it were possible to obtain it, she would certainly do everything possible to get it. After the young boy had heard her make this offer many times, he said:

"Mother, if you can arrange for me to have Federigo's falcon, I think I would be well very soon."

1. Told by Dioneo. On the fifth day, in Fiammetta's reign, the friends were to tell love stories which end happily after a period of misfortune.

When the lady heard this, she was taken aback for a moment, and she began to think what she should do. She knew that Federigo had loved her for a long while, in spite of the fact that he never received a single glance from her, and so, she said to herself:

"How can I send or go and ask for this falcon of his which is, as I have heard tell, the best that ever flew, and besides this, his only means of support? And how can I be so insensitive as to wish to take away from this gentleman the only pleasure which is left to him?"

And involved in these thoughts, knowing that she was certain to have the bird if she asked for it, but not knowing what to say to her son, she stood there without answering him. Finally the love she bore her son persuaded her that she should make him happy, and no matter what the consequences might be, she would not send for the bird, but rather go herself for it and bring it back to him; so she answered her son:

"My son, take comfort and think only of getting well, for I promise you that the first thing I shall do tomorrow morning is to go for it and bring it back to you."

The child was so happy that he showed some improvement that very day. The following morning, the lady, accompanied by another woman, as if going for a stroll, went to Federigo's modest house and asked for him. Since it was not the season for it, Federigo had not been hawking for some days and was in his orchard, attending to certain tasks; when he heard that Monna Giovanna was asking for him at the door, he was very surprised and happy to run there; as she saw him coming, she greeted him with feminine charm, and once Federigo had welcomed her courteously, she said:

"Greetings, Federigo!" Then she continued: "I have come to compensate you for the harm you have suffered on my account by loving me more than you needed to; and the compensation is this: I, along with this companion of mine, intend to dine with you—a simple meal—this very day."

To this Federigo humbly replied: "Madonna, I never remember having suffered any harm because of you; on the contrary: so much good have I received from you that if ever I have been worth anything, it has been because of your merit and the love I bore fore you; and your generous visit is certainly so dear to me that I would spend all over again that which I spent in the past; but you have come to a poor host."

And having said this, he received her into his home humbly, and from there he led her into his garden, and since he had no one there to keep her company, he said:

"My lady, since there is no one else, this good woman here, the wife of this workman, will keep you company while I go to set the table."

Though he was very poor, Federigo, until now, had never before realized to what extent he had wasted his wealth; but this morning, the fact that he found nothing with which he could honor the lady for the love of whom he had once entertained countless men in the past gave him cause to reflect: in great anguish, he cursed himself and his fortune and, like a man beside himself, he started running here and there, but could find neither money nor a pawnable object. The hour was late and his desire to honor the gracious lady was great, but not wishing to turn for help to others (not even to his own workman), he set his eyes upon his good falcon, perched in a small room; and since he had nowhere else to turn, he took the bird, and finding it plump, he decided that it would be a worthy food for such a lady. So, without further thought, he wrung its neck and quickly gave it to his servant girl to pluck, prepare, and place on a spit to be roasted with care; and when he had set the table with the whitest of tablecloths (a few of which he still had left), he returned, with a cheerful face, to the lady in his garden, saying that the meal he was able to prepare for her was ready.

The lady and her companion rose, went to the table together with Federigo, who waited upon them with the greatest devotion, and they ate the good falcon without knowing what it was they were eating. And having left the table and spent some time in pleasant conversation, the lady thought it time now to say what she had come to say, and so she spoke these kind words to Federigo:

"Federigo, if you recall your past life and my virtue, which you perhaps mistook for harshness and cruelty, I do not doubt at all that you will be amazed by my presumption when you hear what my main reason for coming here is; but if you had children, through whom you might have experienced the power of parental love, it seems certain to me that you would, at least in part, forgive me. But, just as you have no child, I do have one, and I cannot escape the common laws of other mothers; the force of such laws compels me to follow them, against my own will and against good manners and duty, and to ask of you a gift which I know is most precious to you; and it is naturally so, since your extreme condition has left you no other delight, no other pleasure, no other consolation; and this gift is your falcon, which my son is so taken by that if I do not bring it to him, I fear his sickness will grow so much worse that I may lose him. And therefore I beg you, not because of the love that you bear for me, which does not oblige you in the least, but because of your own nobleness, which you have shown to be greater than that of all others in practicing courtliness, that you be pleased to give it to me, so that I may say that I have saved the life of my son by means of this gift, and because of it I have placed him in your debt forever."

When he heard what the lady requested and knew that he could

not oblige her since he had given her the falcon to eat, Federigo began to weep in her presence, for he could not utter a word in reply. The lady, at first, thought his tears were caused more by the sorrow of having to part with the good falcon than by anything else, and she was on the verge of telling him she no longer wished it, but she held back and waited for Federigo's reply after he stopped weeping. And he said:

"My lady, ever since it pleased God for me to place my love in you, I have felt that Fortune has been hostile to me in many things, and I have complained of her, but all this is nothing compared to what she has just done to me, and I must never be at peace with her again, thinking about how you have come here to my poor home where, while it was rich, you never deigned to come, and you requested a small gift, and Fortune worked to make it impossible for me to give it to you; and why this is so I shall tell you briefly. When I heard that you, out of your kindness, wished to dine with me, I considered it fitting and right, taking into account your excellence and your worthiness, that I should honor you, according to my possibilities, with a more precious food than that which I usually serve to other people; therefore, remembering the falcon that you requested and its value, I judged it a food worthy of you, and this very day you had it roasted and served to you as best I could; but seeing now that you desired it in another way, my sorrow in not being able to serve you is so great that I shall never be able to console myself again."

And after he had said this, he laid the feathers, the feet, and the beak of the bird before her as proof. When the lady heard and saw this, she first reproached him for having killed such a falcon to serve as a meal to a woman; but then to herself she commended the greatness of his spirit, which no poverty was able or would be able to diminish; then, having lost all hope of getting the falcon and, perhaps because of this, of improving the health of her son as well, she thanked Federigo both for the honor paid to her and for his good will, and she left in grief, and returned to her son. To his mother's extreme sorrow, either because of his disappointment that he could not have the falcon, or because his illness must have necessarily led to it, the boy passed from this life only a few days later.

After the period of her mourning and bitterness had passed, the lady was repeatedly urged by her brothers to remarry, since she was very rich and was still young; and although she did not wish to do so, they became so insistent that she remembered the merits of Federigo and his last act of generosity—that is, to have killed such a falcon to do her honor—and she said to her brothers:

"I would prefer to remain a widow, if that would please you; but if you wish me to take a husband, you may rest assured that I shall take no man but Federigo degli Alberighi."

In answer to this, making fun of her, her brothers replied:

"You foolish woman, what are you saying? How can you want him; he hasn't a penny to his name?"

To this she replied: "My brothers, I am well aware of what you say, but I would rather have a man who needs money than money that needs a man."

Her brothers, seeing that she was determined and knowing Federigo to be of noble birth, no matter how poor he was, accepted her wishes and gave her in marriage to him with all her riches; when he found himself the husband of such a great lady, whom he had loved so much and who was so wealthy besides, he managed his financial affairs with more prudence than in the past and lived with her happily the rest of his days.

* * *

FRANÇOIS VILLON

1431–?

François Villon is the poet of the fifteenth century who evokes the deepest response from a modern reader. Born in Paris, in 1431, well educated at the Sorbonne, he led an irregular life and was often an associate of criminals. In 1455 he was charged with killing a priest but acquitted on the ground of self-defense. Involved with others in a theft from the College of Navarre, he left Paris for several years of wandering. During this period he visited the court of Charles d'Orléans, who was a poet and a patron of poets. In 1461 he was imprisoned at Meung-sur-Loire, apparently on a serious charge the nature of which is not known. Liberated later that year by the new king Louis XI (in a coronation amnesty), Villon returned to Paris and soon was once more in difficulty with the law. A sentence of death was in January, 1463, commuted to banishment from Paris, and from this time on nothing is known of him.

Villon wrote poems in a variety of short forms, especially the *lai* and the *ballade*, and some of these are incorporated in his major work, the *Testament*. Our selection contains one independent *ballade* and a considerable part of the *Testament*.

The "Ballade of the Hanged" shows us "five, six" skeletons of criminals who have been executed long before, and are now twisting slowly in the wind. The gruesome imagery, the changes wrought by rain and sun—these are starkly realistic. The poem asserts both the distance of the hanged men from the rest of mankind and their affinity with it—"brother humans."

The *Testament* employs a well-established literary form, that of a last will, in which the author makes various bequests, some actual, some fictitious or facetious or satirical, and also expresses his views about a variety of more or less extraneous matters. In Villon's poem autobiographical elements bulk large. We see his resentment against Bishop Thibault, who was responsible

for his harsh life in prison, and his gratitude to King Louis, who released him. In a way that reminds us a bit of the "Confessions" of the Archpoet, Villon often acknowledges his misdeeds and at the same time offers a defense, as in the story of Alexander and Diomedes. A recurrent theme is the inevitability and universality of death, and this leads easily into the best-known stanzas of the *Testament*, in which the poet asks where now are the great men and beautiful women of the past—and where are the snows of last winter? This, too, was a favorite topic of poets; we noted it in Boethius. So is the lament of the once beautiful Helmet-seller, now old and decrepit, for her lost youth. The details are unsparing and the language uninhibited; these are qualities more attractive to our generation of readers than to those of many of the intervening centuries. In another vein, Villon moves us by his gratitude toward his fatherly protector and by his affection for his mother, now old and poor, for whom he composes a prayer. At the end of the *Testament* the author is again the central figure: his general misery, his ill-spent life, his need of God's mercy.

For the French original and for further information about Villon, see Galway Kinnell, *The Poems of François Villon* (1977). A more detailed account can be found in Henry de Vere Stacpoole, *François Villon: His Life and Times* (1916). A recent critical study is John Fox, *The Poetry of Villon* (1962).

Ballade[1]

Brother humans who live on after us
Don't let your hearts harden against us
For if you have pity on wretches like us
More likely God will show mercy to you
You see us five, six, hanging here

As for the flesh we loved too well
A while ago it was eaten and has rotted away
And we the bones turn to ashes and dust
Let no one make us the butt of jokes
But pray God that he absolve us all.

Don't be insulted that we call you
Brothers, even if it was by Justice
We were put to death, for you understand
Not every person has the same good sense
Speak up for us, since we can't ourselves
Before the son of the virgin Mary
That his mercy toward us shall keep flowing
Which is what keeps us from hellfire
We are dead, may no one taunt us
But pray God that he absolve us all.

1. Translated by Galway Kinnell.

The rain has rinsed and washed us
The sun dried us and turned us black
Magpies and ravens have pecked out our eyes
And plucked our beards and eyebrows
Never ever can we stand still
Now here, now there, as the wind shifts
At its whim it keeps swinging us
Pocked by birds worse than a sewing thimble
Therefore don't join in our brotherhood
But pray God that he absolve us all.

Prince Jesus, master over all
Don't let us fall into hell's dominion
We've nothing to do or settle down there
Men, there's nothing here to laugh at
But pray God that he absolve us all.

The Testament[2]

In my thirtieth year of life
When I had drunk down all my disgrace
Neither altogether a fool nor altogether wise
Despite the many blows I had
Every one of which I took
At Thibault d'Aussigny's[3] hand
Bishop he may be as he signs the cross
Through the streets, but I deny he is mine.

And he's no more my lord than my bishop
I hold from him nothing but waste
I owe him neither fealty nor homage
I am not his serf or his doe
He fed me on a small loaf
And cold water a whole summer long
Open-handed or mean he was stingy with me
God be to him as he's been to me.

If someone wants to object
And say I'm cursing the man
I'm not if you see my meaning
I don't speak ill of him at all
Here's the sum of my abuse

2. Translated by Galway Kinnell, whose notes are adapted for use here.

3. Bishop of Orléans from 1452 to 1473.

If he's shown me any mercy
Let Jesus king of paradise
Show him as much to soul and body.

And if he has misused me
Even worse than I can tell here
All I ask is that the eternal God
Be unto him accordingly
"But the Church asks and expects us
To pray for our enemies"
I'll reply "I'm wrong and ashamed
Whatever he did being in God's hands."

So I'll pray for him gladly
And for the soul of the late Cotart[4]
But how? It will be by heart
I'm too lazy to read it out
And it will be the way the Picards pray[5]
In case he doesn't know it he should go learn
Before too late if he values my advice
At Douai or at Lille in Flanders.

But if he wants a prayer he can hear
By the faith I owe from baptism
Though I won't bandy it about
I'll be sure he gets his wish
From my psalter when I have the time
Bound neither in calf nor red leather
I'll recite him the verse set down as seventh
Of the psalm *Deus laudem*.[6]

And now I turn to God's blessed son
On whom I call in times of need
And ask that this poor prayer be heard
By him from whom I hold body and soul
Who has shielded me from many trials
And delivered me from iron rule
Praise be to him and our Lady
And Louis the good king of France[7]

4. Jean Cotart, the prayer for whose soul occurs later in the *Testament*. 5. The Picards were a heretical sect that did not believe in prayer. Their headquarters were in Douai and Lille in northwestern France. 6. Psalm 108 (*Deus laudem meam*, "God of my praise") verse 8 (in some editions verse 7) has the prayer *Fiant dies eius pauci et episcopateum eius accipiat alter* ("Let his days be few and let another take his office"). 7. Louis XI (1423–1483), crowned king of France in August 1461, passed through Meung-sur-Loire in October 1461. While there, he freed Villon and the other prisoners being kept by Bishop Thibault.

To whom God grant Jacob's luck[8]
And Solomon's honor and glory
As for prowess he has plenty
And authority too, by my soul
And so that his memory may last
In this fleeting world
Such as it has of length and breadth
Let him live as long as Methuselah[9]

And see twelve fine children all sons
Born of his precious royal blood
Conceived in the marriage bed
Doughty as the great Charles[1]
And good as Saint Martial
May it turn out so for the ex-dauphin[2]
I wish him no further trouble
And then paradise at the last.

Because I'm feeling poor
In goods far more than in health
And still have my wits about me
At least the few God lent me
For I haven't borrowed from anyone else
I've drawn up this true and authentic
Testament of my last will
Once and for all, irrevocable.

Written in the year sixty-one
When the good king set me free
From the hard prison at Meung
And gave me back my life
For which while my heart beats I'm bound
To humble myself before him
And so it shall be until he dies
A good act must not be forgotten.

* * *

I am a sinner I know it well
And yet God doesn't want me to die

8. Jacob obtained his older brother Esau's inheritance in exchange for a meal (Genesis 25–27). *Solomon*: King of Israel in the tenth century B.C. famous for his wealth and wisdom; also the reputed author of the Biblical books of Proverbs, The Song of Solomon, and Ecclesiastes. 9. The longest-lived of the sons of Adam (Genesis 5), he lived for 969 years. 1. Possibly Charlemagne (742–814), founder of the Holy Roman Empire in western Europe. *Saint Martial*: Kinsman of Saint Peter, amiable and effective missionary to the heathen Gauls, also bishop of Limoges. 2. Louis XI. *Dauphin* is the title of the heir apparent to the French throne.

But to repent and live right
And so with all others bitten by sin
Though in my sin I may be dead
Yet God and his mercy live
If my conscience gnaws
He in his grace forgives me.

* * *

In the time when Alexander[3] reigned
A man by the name of Diomedes
Was brought into his presence
With screws on his thumbs and fingers
Like a thief, for he was one
Of those freebooters who cruise the seas
That's how he was dragged before this chief
To hear his death sentence.

The emperor harangued him thus
"Why are you a robber on the high seas?"
To which the other answered
"Why do you call me a robber?
Because I'm seen marauding about
In a tiny little skiff?
If I could arm myself like you
Like you I'd be an emperor.

"But what can one expect? Fortune
Whom I'm helpless against
Who deals me such bad luck
Sets the course of life I've taken
Take this as some excuse
And know that in great poverty
It's said often enough
There lies no great honesty."

When the emperor had mulled over
What Diomedes had said he told him
"I'll have your fortune changed
From bad to good" and so he did
After that he never so much as spoke ill
Of anyone again and was a respected man

3. Alexander the Great (356–323 B.C.), ruler of Greece, Persia, and Egypt through military conquest and occupation.

This is vouched for by Valerian[4]
Who was called "The Great" in Rome.

If only God had let me meet
Another merciful Alexander
Who'd put me in line for good luck
After that if I'd been caught
Stooping to crime I'd have sentenced myself
With my own voice to the burning stake
Necessity makes people err
And hunger drives wolf from woods.

* * *

Ah God if only I had studied
In the days of my heedless youth
And set myself in good ways
I'd have a house now and soft bed
But I ran from that school
Like some good-for-nothing child
As I write these words
My heart is nearly breaking.

I credited Solomon's words
Far too much (only I am to blame)
When he says "Rejoice my son
In the time of your youth"[5] and yet
He dishes it out differently elsewhere
For he also says "Childhood and youth"
These his very words no less no more
"Are ignorance and error."

My days have fled away
Just as Job says the threads do[6]
On a cloth when the weaver
Takes burning straw in his hand
Then if a stray end sticks out
He razes it in a flash
So I no longer fear what ills may come
For everything finishes in death.

4. Valerius Maximus (1st century A.D.), Roman writer and politician; but Villon probably took the story from the *Policraticus*, a work on diplomacy and courtly behavior by the twelfth century church leader and classical scholar John of Salisbury. 5. Quoted from Ecclesiastes 11:9–10. 6. Job 7–6, "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle."

Where are the happy young men
I ran with in the old days
Who sang so well, who spoke so well
So excellent in word and deed?
Some are stiffened in death
And of those there's nothing left
May they find rest in paradise
And my God save those who remain.

And others, God be praised
Are now great lords and masters
And others go begging naked
And see white bread only in shop windows
And still others have entered the cloisters
Of the Celestines and Carthusians[7]
Booted and gaitered like oystermen
See how differently they've come out

* * *

I am not, I'm perfectly aware
An angel's son wearing a crown
Of stars or other heavenly bodies
My father is dead, God keep his soul
And his body lies under a stone
And my mother will die I realize
And she knows it well poor woman
And the son will not lag behind.

I know that the poor and the rich
The wise and the foolish, the priests and the laymen
The nobles, the serfs, the generous, the mean
Small and great, handsome and ugly
Ladies in upturned collars
No matter what their rank
Whether in kerchiefs or *bourrelets*[8]
Death seizes them without exception.

Be it Paris or Helen[9] who dies
Whoever dies dies in such pain
The wind is knocked out of him
His gall breaks on his heart
And he sweats God knows what sweat

7. Orders of monks. 8. Homely padded caps. 9. Helen's elopement with the Trojan prince Paris was a cause of the Trojan War. Paris was killed during the Greek capture of Troy; Helen's death is not recorded.

And no one can lighten his pain
He hasn't child, brother, or sister
Willing to stand in for him then.

Death makes him shudder and blanch
Makes the nose curve, the veins tighten
The neck puff, the flesh go limp
The joints and sinews swell and stretch
Body of woman so tender
So polished, so smooth, so dearly loved
Must you too come to these agonies?

Yes or rise in the flesh up to heaven.
Tell me where, in what country
Is Flora[1] the beautiful Roman
Archipiada or Thaïs[2]
Who was first cousin[3] to her once
Echo who speaks when there's a sound
Over pond or river
Whose beauty was more than human?
But where are the snows of last winter?

Where is the learned Heloïse
For whom they castrated Pierre Abélard
And monked him at Saint Denis?
For his love he suffered this outrage
Also where is the queen[4]
Who had Buridan tied in a sack
And dumped into the Seine?
But where are the snows of last winter?

That queen white as a lily[5]
Who sang with a siren's voice
And big-footed Berte,[6] Beatrice, Alice
Haremburgis[7] who held Maine
And Jeanne the good maid of Lorraine[8]
Whom the English burned at Rouen, where
Where are they sovereign Virgin?
But where are the snows of last winter?

1. A courtesan of ancient Rome. 2. Mistress of Alexander the Great. *Archipiada*: Alcibiades (ca. 450–404 B.C.), Athenian general and politician. Because of his reputed beauty he was sometimes regarded as a woman in the Middle Ages. 3. Or "counterpart." 4. Of uncertain identification. There was a story that she took lovers from among students at Paris and then had them thrown out a window into the Seine. Buridan was a professor at the University of Paris. 5. Probably Blanche of Castille, mother of the French king Louis XIX. 6. Bertha (Berte *au grand pied*) was the mother of Charlemagne. Beatrice and Alice are figures in the medieval narrative poem *Hervi de Metz*. 7. Erembourg, daughter and heiress of Count Hélie de la Flèche, ruler of the French province of Maine. 8. Joan of Arc.

Prince you may not ask this week
Where they are nor this year
That I won't tell you back the refrain
But where are the snows of last winter?

* * *

For be it his holiness the Pope
Wearing his alb and amice
Who puts on his holy stole
With which to strangle the devil
All flaming with evil power
He dies exactly as his servant
Swept off from this life
So much blows away on the wind.

Yet or be it the emperor
Of Constantinople[9] of the golden fist
Or that most noble king of France[1]
Singled out above all kings
To build churches and monasteries
To the greater glory of God
If he was honored in his day
So much blows away on the wind.

Or be it the dauphin brave and wise
Of Vienne and Grenoble[2]
Or the great men and their eldest sons
Of Dijon, Salins, and Dole[3]
Or the same number of their servants
Heralds, trumpeters, men-at-arms
Didn't they happily stuff their faces?
So much blows away on the wind.

Princes are destined to die
And so are all others who live
Whether they rage at this or tremble
So much blows away on the wind.

Since popes, kings, and kings' sons
Conceived in wombs of queens

9. Probably refers to a Count of Eu. Villon may have seen his tombstone at Saint-Denis, according to which he was son of a Sir Jehan de Bayne, who was known as emperor of Constantinople.
1. Louis IX, later canonized as Saint Louis. 2. In modern French, *le dauphin* (that is, prince) *du Viennois*. 3. Areas in the domain of the Duke of Burgundy.

Lie dead and cold under the ground
And their reigns pass into other hands
I a poor packman out of Rennes[4]
Won't I also die? Yes, God willing
But as long as I've sown my wild oats
I won't mind an honest death.

The world won't last forever
Whatever the robber baron may think
The mortal knife hangs over us all
A thought which comforts the old-timer
Who was well known in his day
For the gaiety of his wit
Who'd be thought a slob, a dirty old man
If in old age he tried to poke fun.

Not he's got to go begging
Necessity obliges it
Day after day he longs to die
Sadness so works on his heart
Often but for the fear of God
He'd commit a horrible act
And it may yet happen he breaks God's law
And does away with himself.

For if he was amusing once
Now nothing he says gets a laugh
An old monkey is always unpleasant
And every face it makes is ugly
If trying to please he keeps quiet
Everybody thinks he's senile
If he speaks they tell him "Pipe down
That plum didn't grow on your tree."

The same with the poor shrunken women
Who've grown old and haven't a penny
When they see the young girls
Squeezing them out on the sly
They demand of God why is it
By what right were they born so early?
Our Lord keeps quiet and says nothing
For against such bickering he would lose.

4. A city in the French province of Brittany.

Now I think I hear the laments
Of the once-beautiful Helmet-seller
Wishing she were a girl again
And saying something like this
"Ah, cruel, arrogant old age
Why have you beaten me down so soon?
What holds me back from striking myself
From killing myself with a blow?

"You have taken from me the high hand
That I had by right of beauty
Over clerics, merchants, men of the Church
For then there wasn't a man born
Who wouldn't have given me all he owned
Repent though he might later on
If I'd just have let him have
What now tramps won't take for free.

"To many a man I refused it
Which wasn't exactly good sense
For the love of a smooth operator
Whom I gave free play with it
And what if I did fool around
I swear I loved him truly
But he just gave me a hard time
And loved me for my money.

"He could wipe the floor with me
Or kick me I loved him still
And even if he's broken my back
He could just ask for a kiss
And I'd forget my misery
The rascal rotten right through
Would take me in his arms (a lot I got for it)
What's left? The shame and sin.

"Dead he's been these thirty years
And here I am old and grizzled
When I think alas of the happy times
What I was, what I've become
When I look at myself naked
And see how I've changed so much
Poor, dried-up, lean and bony
I nearly go off my head.

"What's become of the smooth forehead
The yellow hair, the arching eyebrows
The wide-set eyes, the fair gaze
That took in all the cleverest men
The straight nose neither large nor small
The little flattened ears
The dimpled chin, the bright rounded cheeks
And the lips beautiful and red?

"The delicate little shoulders
The long arms and slender hands
The small breasts, the full buttocks
High, broad, perfectly built
For holding the jousts of love
The wide loins and the sweet quim
Set over thick firm thighs
In its own little garden?

"The forehead lined, the hair gray
The eyebrows all fallen out, the eyes clouded
Which threw those bright glances
That felled many a poor devil
The nose hooked far from beauty
The ears hairy and lopping down
The cheeks washed out, dead and pasty
The chin furrowed, the lips just skin.

"This is what human beauty comes to
The arms short, the hands shriveled
The shoulders all hunched up
The breasts? Shrunk in again
The buttocks gone the way of the tits
The quim? aagh! As for the thighs
They aren't thighs now but sticks
Speckled all over like sausages.

"This is how we lament the good old days
Among ourselves, poor silly crones
Dumped down on our hunkers
In little heaps like so many skeins
Around a tiny hempstalk fire
That's soon lit and soon gone out
And once we were so adorable
So it goes for men and women.

"Now look here pretty Glover
Who used to study under me
And you too Blanche the Shoe-fitter
It's time you got it straight
Take what you can right and left
Don't spare a man I beg you
For there's no run on old crones
No more than cried-down money.

"And you sweet Sausage-filler
Such a born dancer
And Guillemette the Tapester[5]
Don't fall out with your man
Soon you'll have to close up shop
When you've gotten old and flabby
And good for no one but an old priest
No more than cried-down money.

"Jeanneton the Bonnet-maker
Don't let that one lover tie you down
And Catherine the Purse-seller
Stop putting men out to pasture
She who's lost her looks can ask them
To come back, she can flash her smile
But ugly old age can't buy love
No more than cried-down money.

"Girls, stop a moment
And let it sink in why I weep and cry
I can't get back in circulation
No more than cried-down money."

* * *

So fall in love all you want
Go to the dances and festivals
Come home empty-handed
With nothing cracked but your skulls
Love makes beasts of us all
It made an idolater of Solomon[6]
And that's why Samson lost his eyes[7]
Lucky the man who has no part in it.

5. Properly a maker or seller of rugs; her shop may have been headquarters for a prostitute. 6. King Solomon built temples for heathen deities worshipped by some of his wives (1 Kings 11.3–8.) 7. The Israelite hero was captured and blinded by the Philistines when he told the beautiful seductress Delilah the secret of his strength. (Judges 13–14.)

Love made the sweet minstrel Orpheus[8]
Playing his flutes and bagpipes
Risk death from the murderous
Dog four-headed Cerberus
It made the fair-haired boy Narcissus[9]
Drown himself down in a well
For love of his lovelies
Lucky the man who has no part in it.

It made the brave knight Sardana[1]
Who subdued the whole kingdom of Crete
Try to turn into a woman
So he could join the virgins at spinning
And made King David the wise prophet
Forget all his fear of God
When he saw shapely thighs being washed[2]
Lucky the man who has no part in it.

It made Ammon[3] want to dishonor
While pretending to be eating tarts
His sister Tamar and deflower her
Which was wicked incest
Herod and this isn't a joke
Cut off John the Baptist's head
For dances, leaps, and love songs[4]
Lucky the man who has no part in it.

Of my poor self let me say
I was pummeled like laundry in a stream
Stark naked no need to hide it
Who forced me to eat this sour mash
But Katherine de Vausselles?[5]
Noël[6] was the third one there
At his wedding may he be beaten the same
Lucky the man who has no part in it.

8. The musician of Greek myth, who descended to the underworld to bring his wife Eurydice back to life. Cerberus was the guardian of the way to the underworld. 9. In Greek myth, a handsome youth who mistook his own reflection in the water for another person, plunged in and was drowned. 1. Perhaps Sardanapalus, a notorious king of ancient Assyria, apparently identified with a reputed conqueror of Crete. 2. He saw Bathsheba bathing and fell in love with her, though shewas a married woman (2 Samuel 11.) 3. A son of King David; infatuated with his (half-) sister Tamar, he induced her to serve him a meal in his apartment, whereupon he forced her. He was later slain at the instigation of Absalom. (2 Samuel 13.) 4. After his stepdaughter Salome danced for him, Herod acceded to her demand that the prophet John the Baptist be beheaded. (Matthew 14.3–12). 5. Nothing is known of her. By tradition she is classed as one of Villon's "serious" loves. 6. Perhaps Noël Jolis, who later in the *Testament* receives a whipping as his bequest.

But will this young bachelor
Give up the single girls?
No not even if he has to burn for it
Like a rider of broomsticks
Girls are sweeter to him than civet
But this fool gets taken every time
Be they blondes or brunettes
Lucky the man who has no part in it.

* * *

First I confer my poor soul
On the glorious Trinity
And commend it to our Lady
Dwelling place of divinity
And petition all the charity
Of the nine Orders of Heaven[7]
That they may carry this gift
Before the precious throne.

Item I bequeath and give my body
To our great mother the Earth
The worms won't find much fat on it
Too long did hunger wage its hard war
Let her receive it straight away
From earth it came, to earth it returns
All things unless they stray too far
Long to go back to their own place.

Item to my more than father
Master Guillaume de Villon[8]
Who has been gentler to me than mother
To child just out of swaddling clothes
He has saved me from many a tight spot
And isn't exactly enjoying this one
Down on my knees I beg him

To leave all the joy of it to me,
I give him my library
Including "The Tale of the Devil's Fart"[9]
Which that truthful fellow
Master Guy Tabarie[1] clear-copied
It's in notebooks under a table

7. The hierarchy of angels. 8. Villon's benefactor. 9. A lost early work by Villon or, more probably, a title Villon made up as a joke. Its subject would be the story of how a group of students as a prank removed the stone landmark known as "The Devil's Fart" from in front of the hotel of that name. 1. Being questioned by police after the robbery of the chapel of the College of Navarre, Tabarie told the whole truth, incriminating Villon.

Although the style may be crude
The matter itself is so potent
It makes up for the defects.

Item I give my poor mother
Who suffered bitterly over me
God knows, and had many sorrows
These words to give to our Lady
I've no other castle or fortress
Where I can find refuge body and soul
When evil times come upon me
And my mother hasn't either, poor woman.

Lady of heaven, regent of earth
Empress over the swamps of hell
Receive me your humble Christian
Let me be counted among your elect
Even though I'm without any worth
My lady and mistress your merits
Are greater by far than my sinfulness
And without them no soul could deserve
Or enter heaven, I'm not acting
In this faith I want to live and die.

Tell your son I belong to him
May he wash away my sins
And forgive me as he did the Egyptian woman[2]
Or Theophilus the priest[3]
Who with your help was acquitted and absolved
Though he'd made a pact with the devil
Keep me from ever doing that
Virgin who bore with unbroken hymen
The sacrament we celebrate at Mass
In this faith I want to live and die.

I'm just a poor old woman
Who knows nothing and can't read
On the walls of my parish church I see
A paradise painted with harps and lutes
And a hell where they boil the damned
One gives me a fright, one great bliss and joy
Let me have the good place, mother of God
To whom sinners all must turn

2. Saint Mary the Egyptian. 3. Feudal lord, representative in temporal affairs of the Church of Adana in Cilicie. The legend of how he dealt with the devil so as to keep his job is treated often in medieval writings.

Filled with faith, sincere and eager
In this faith I want to live and die.

Virgin so worthy, princess, you bore
Iesus who reigns without end or limit
Lord Almighty who took on our weakness
Left heaven and came down to save us
Offering his precious youth to death
Now such is our Lord, such I acknowledge him
In this faith I want to live and die.

* * *

Item I leave my barber
Name of Colin Galerne[4]
Close neighbor to the herb-dealer Angelot[5]
A large block of ice (From where? The Marne[6])
In order to winter comfortably
He's to press it firmly to his gut
If he does this faithfully all winter
Next summer he won't feel too hot.

* * *

Item I order my sepulcher
At Sainte-Avoye[7] and nowhere else
And so everyone may see me
Not in the flesh but in painting
Have my full-length portrait done
In ink if there's money for that
A tombstone? No, forget it
It would break through the floor.

Item around my pit I want
The following words and no others
Inscribed in rather large letters
Lacking something to write with
Use charcoal or a lump of coal
Though watch you don't scratch the plaster
So that at least there'll be some memory left
Such as may be of a wayward one.

Here lies and sleeps in this garret
One love's arrow struck down

4. Barber and churchwarden of Saint-Germain-le-Vieux. 5. Parishioner at Saint-German le-Vieux. 6. River in eastern France. 7. An Augustinian convent on the rue du Temple in Sainte-Avoie.

A poor obscure scholar
Who was known as François Villon
He never owned a furrow on earth
He parceled it all out, everyone knows
Tables, chairs, bread, basket
Say *Amen* with this *rondeau*.[8]

Rest eternal grant him
Lord and everlasting light[9]
He didn't have the money for a plate or bowl
Or for a sprig of parsley
They shaved him, head, beard, and eyebrows
Like some turnip you scrape or peel
Rest eternal *etc.*

Harsh law exiled him
And whacked him on the ass with a shovel
Even though he cried out "I appeal!"
Which isn't too subtle a phrase
Rest eternal *etc.*

* * *

Here ends and finishes
The testament of poor Villon
Come to his burial
When you hear the bell ringing
Dressed in red vermilion
For he died a martyr to love
This he swore on his testicle
As he made his way out of this world.

And I think it wasn't a lie
For he was chased like a scullion
By his loves so spitefully
From here to Roussilon[1]
There isn't a bush or a shrub
That didn't get, he speaks truly
A shred from his back
As he made his way out of this world.

8. Verse form of 12 lines, divided into stanzas of 7 and 5 lines, each ending with the refrain, as in the following passage. 9. *Cf.* the Mass for the Dead: "Rest eternal give them, O Lord, and let everlasting light shine upon them." 1. A town in south central France.

It was like this, so that
By the time he died he had only a rag
What's worse, as he died, sorely
The spur of love pricked into him
Sharper than the buckle-tongue
Of a baldric he could feel it
And this is what we marvel at
As he made his way out of this world.

Prince graceful as a merlin
Hear what he did as he left
He took a long swig of dead-black wine
As he made his way out of this world.

Masterpieces of the Renaissance

As with other terms that have currency in cultural history (for instance, *Romanticism*), the usefulness of the term *Renaissance* depends on its keeping a certain degree of elasticity. The literal meaning of the word—"rebirth"—suggests that one impulse toward the great intellectual and artistic achievements of the period came from the example of ancient culture, or even better, from a certain vision that the artists and intellectuals of the Renaissance possessed of the world of antiquity which was "reborn" through their work. Especially in the more mature phase of the Renaissance, men were aware of having brought about a vigorous renewal, which they openly associated with the cult of antiquity. The restoration of ancient canons was regarded as a glorious achievement to be set beside the thrilling discoveries of their own age. "Today," Rabelais writes through his Gargantua,

> the old sciences are revived, knowledge is systematized, discipline reestablished. The learned languages are restored: Greek, without which a man would be ashamed to consider himself educated; Hebrew, Chaldean, and Latin. Printing is now in use, an art so accurate and elegant that it betrays the divine inspiration of its discovery, which I have lived to witness. Alas! Conversely, I was not spared the horror of such diabolic works as gunpowder and artillery.

Machiavelli, whose infatuation with antiquity is as typical a trait as his better-advertised political realism, in the opening of his *Discourses on the First Ten Books of Livy* (1513–21) suggests that rulers should be as keen on the imitation of ancient "virtues" as are artists, lawyers, and the scientists: "The civil laws are nothing but decisions given by the ancient jurisconsults. . . . And what is the science of medicine, but the experience of ancient physicians, which their successors have taken for their guide?"

Elasticity should likewise be maintained in regard to the chronological span of the Renaissance as a "movement" extending through varying periods of years, and as including phases and traits of the epoch that is otherwise known as the Middle Ages (and vice versa). The peak of the Renaissance can be shown to have occurred at different times in different countries, the "movement" having had its inception in Italy, where its impact was at first most remarkable in the visual arts, while in England, for instance, it developed later and its main achievements were in literature, particularly the drama. The meaning of the term has also, in the course of time, widened

considerably: nowadays it conveys, to say the least, a general notion of artistic creativity, of extraordinary zest for life and knowledge, of sensory delight in opulence and magnificence, of spectacular individual achievement, thus extending far beyond the literal meaning of rebirth and the strict idea of a revival and imitation of antiquity.

Even, however, in its stricter sense, the term continues to have its function. The degree to which European intellectuals of the period possessed and were possessed by the writings of the ancient world is difficult for the average modern reader to realize. For these writers references to classical mythology, philosophy, and literature are not ornaments or affectations; along with references to the Scriptures they are part, and a major part, of their mental equipment and way of thinking. When Erasmus through his "Folly" speaks in a cluster of classical allusions, or when Machiavelli writes to a friend: "I will get up before daylight, prepare my birdlime, and go out with a bundle of cages on my back, so that I look like Geta when he came back from the harbor with the books of Amphitryo," the words have by no means the sound of erudite self-gratification which they might have nowadays; they are wholly natural, familiar, unassuming.

When we are overcome by sudden emotion, our first exclamations are likely to be in the language most familiar to us—our dialect, if we happen to have one. Montaigne relates of himself that when once his father unexpectedly fell back in his arms in a swoon, the first words he uttered under the emotion of that experience were in Latin. Similarly Benvenuto Cellini, the Italian sculptor, goldsmith, and autobiographer, talking to his patron and expressing admiration of a Greek statue, establishes with the ancient artist an immediate contact, a proud familiarity:

> I cried to the Duke: "My lord, this is a statue in Greek marble, and it is a miracle of beauty. . . . If your Excellency permits, I should like to restore it—head and arms and feet. . . . It is certainly not my business to patch up statues, that being the trade of botchers, who do it in all conscience villainously ill; yet the art displayed by this great master of antiquity cries out to me to help him."

The men who, starting at about the middle of the fourteenth century, gave new impulse to this emulation of the classics are often referred to as humanists. The word in that sense is related to what we call the humanities, and the humanities at that time were Latin and Greek. Every cultivated person wrote and spoke Latin, with the result that a Western community of intellectuals could exist, a spiritual "republic of letters" above individual nations. There was also a considerable amount of individual contact among humanists. In glancing at the biographies of the authors included in this section, the extensiveness of their travels may strike us as a remarkable or even surprising fact, considering the hardships and slowness of traveling during those centuries.

The archetype of the modern "man of letters" is often said to be Petrarch—the first author in this section—who anticipated certain ideals of the high Renaissance: a lofty conception of the literary art, a taste for the good life, a basic pacifism, and a strong sense of the memories and glories of antiquity.

In this last respect, what should be emphasized is the imaginative quality, the visionary impulse with which the men of letters of the period looked at those memories—the same vision and imagination with which they regarded such contemporary heroes as the great navigators and astronomers. The Renaissance view of the cultural monuments of antiquity was far from being that of the philologist and the antiquarian; indeed, familiarity was facilitated by the very lack of a scientific sense of history. We find the visionary and imaginative element not only in the creations of poets and dramatists (Shakespeare's Romans, to give an obvious example) but also in the works of political writers: as when Machiavelli describes himself entering, through his reading, the

> ancient courts of ancient men, where, being lovingly received, I feed on that food which alone is mine, and which I was born for; I am not ashamed to speak with them and to ask the reasons for their actions, and they courteously answer me. For . . . hours I feel no boredom and forget every worry; I do not fear poverty, and death does not terrify me. I give myself completely over to the ancients.

Imitation of antiquity acquires, in Machiavelli and many others, a special quality; between mere "academic" imitation and the Renaissance approach there is as much difference as between the impulse to learn and the impulse to *be*.

The vision of an ancient age of glorious intellectual achievement which is "now" brought to life again, implies of course, however roughly, the idea of an intervening "middle" time, by comparison ignorant and dark. The hackneyed notion that the "light" of the Renaissance broke through a long "night" of the Middle Ages may be vastly inaccurate, yet it is inevitable to remember that this view was not devised by subsequent "enlightened" centuries but held by the men of the Renaissance themselves. In his genealogy of giants from Grangousier to Gargantua to Pantagruel, Rabelais conveniently represents the generations of modern learning with their varying degrees of enlightenment; this is what Gargantua writes to his son:

> My late father Grangousier, of blessed memory, made every effort that I might achieve mental, moral and technical excellence. . . . But you can realize that conditions were not as favorable to learning as they are to-day. Nor had I such gifted teachers as you. We were still in the dark ages; we still walked in the shadow of the dark clouds of ignorance; we suffered the calamitous consequences of the destruction of good literature by the Goths. Now, by God's grace, light and dignity have been restored to letters, and I have lived to see it.

Definitions of the Renaissance must also in one way or another include the idea that the period was characterized by preoccupation with this life rather than with the life beyond. The contrast of an ideal Medieval Man, whose mode of action is basically oriented toward the thought of the afterlife—and who therefore conceives of his days on earth as transient and preparatory—with an ideal Renaissance Man, possessing and cherishing earthly interests so concrete and self-sufficient that the very realization of the ephemeral

quality of life is to him nothing but an added spur to its immediate enjoyment—this is a useful contrast even though it represents an enormous oversimplification of the facts.

The same emphasis on the immediate and tangible is reflected in the earthly, amoral, and esthetic character of what we may call the Renaissance code of behavior. According to this "code," human action is judged not in terms of right and wrong, of good and evil (as it is judged when life is viewed as a moral "test," with reward or punishment in the afterlife), but in terms of its present concrete validity and effectiveness, of the delight it affords, of its memorability and its beauty. In that sense a good deal that is typical of the Renaissance, from architecture to poetry, from sculpture to rhetoric, may be related to a taste for the harmonious and the memorable, for the spectacular effect, for the successful striking of a pose. Individual human action, seeking as it were in itself its own reward, finds justification in its formal appropriateness; in its being a well-rounded achievement, perfect of its kind; in the zest and gusto with which it is, here and now, performed; and, finally, in its proving worthy of remaining as a testimony to the performer's power on earth.

A convenient way to illustrate this emphasis is to consider certain words especially expressive of the interests of the period—"virtue," "fame," "glory." "Virtue," particularly in its Italian form, *virtù*, is to be understood in a wide sense. As we may see even now in some relics of its older meanings, the word (from the Latin *vir*, "man") connotes active power—the intrinsic force and ability of a person or thing (the "virtue" of a law or of a medicine)—and hence, also, technical skill (the capacity of the "virtuoso"). The Machiavellian prince's "virtues," therefore, are not necessarily goodness, temperance, clemency, and the like; they are whatever forces and skills may help him in the efficient management and preservation of his princely powers. The idealistic, intangible part of the prince's success is consigned to such concepts as "fame" and "glory," but even in this case the dimension within which human action is considered is still an earthly one. These concepts connote the hero's success and reputation with his contemporaries, or look forward to splendid recognition from posterity, on earth.

In this sense (though completely pure examples of such an attitude are rare) the purpose of life is the unrestrained and self-sufficient practice of one's "virtue," the competent and delighted exercise of one's skill. At the same time, there is no reason to forget that such virtues and skills are God's gift to man. The world view of even some of the most clearly earthbound Renaissance men was hardly godless; Machiavelli, Cellini, Rabelais take for granted the presence of God in their own and in their heroes' lives:

> . . . we have before our eyes extraordinary and unexampled means prepared by God. The sea has been divided. A cloud has guided you on your way. The rock has given forth water. Manna has fallen. Everything has united to make you great. The rest is for you to do. God does not intend to do everything, lest he deprive us of our free will and the share of glory that belongs to us. (Machiavelli.)

> According to the Pythagorean system, Gargantua would, with his tutor, recapitulate briefly all that he had read, seen, learned, done, and

> assimilated in the course of the day. Then they prayed to God the Creator, doing Him worship and confirming their faith in Him, glorifying Him for His immense goodness, vouchsafing thanks for all the mighty past, and imploring His divine clemency for all the future. And so they retired to rest. (Rabelais.)

> I found that all the bronze my furnace contained had been exhausted in the head of this figure [of the statue of Perseus]. It was a miracle to observe that not one fragment remained in the orifice of the channel, and that nothing was wanting to the statue. In my great astonishment I seemed to see in this the hand of God arranging and controlling all. (Cellini.)

Yet there is no doubt that if we compare the attitudes of these authors with the view of the world and of the value of human action which emerges from the major literary work of the Middle Ages, the *Divine Comedy*, and with the manner in which human action is there seen within a grand extra-temporal design, the presence of God in the Renaissance writers cited above cannot help appearing marginal and perfunctory.

In any attempt to discuss the religious temper of the Renaissance, we should not lose sight of certain basic historical facts: the Papacy was not only a spiritual power, but a political and military one as well; furthermore, the European Renaissance was a period of violent religious strife. The consequences of the Protestant Reformation (Lutheranism, Zwinglianism, Calvinism) were not only theological and ideological debates, but also armed conflict and bloodshed, as is apparent from the biographies of several of the writers presented here (Erasmus, Rabelais, Montaigne). It is also apparent that the position of the intellectual generally was not one of militant partisanship or, conversely, of retreat to an "ivory tower," but rather was characterized by wisdom and attempts at conciliation.

Much about the religious temper of the age is expressed in its art, particularly in Italian painting, where Renaissance Madonnas often make it difficult, as the saying goes, to recite a properly devout Hail Mary—serving as celebrations of earthly beauty rather than exhortations to contrite thoughts and mystical hope of salvation. Castiglione in the first pages of the *Courtier* pays homage to the memory of the late lord of Montefeltro, in whose palace at Urbino the book's personages hold their lofty debate on the idea of a perfect gentleman (an earlier Montefeltro appears in Dante's Hell, another in Dante's Purgatory); but Castiglione praises him only for his achievements as a man of arms and a promoter of the arts. There is no thought of either the salvation or the damnation of his soul (though the general tone of the work would seem to imply his salvation); he is exalted instead for military victories, and even more warmly, for having built a splendid palace—the tangible symbol of his earthly glory, for it is both the mark of political and social power and a work of art.

Thus the popular view which associates the idea of the Renaissance especially with the flourishing of the arts is correct. The leaders of the period saw in a work of art the clearest instance of beautiful, harmonious, and self-justified performance. To create such a work became the valuable occupation par excellence, the most satisfactory display of *virtù*. The Renaissance

view of antiquity exemplifies this attitude: the artists and intellectuals of the period not only drew on antiquity for certain practices and forms but also found there a recognition of the place of the arts among outstanding modes of human action. In this way, the concepts of "fame" and "glory" became particularly associated with the art of poetry because the Renaissance drew from antiquity the idea of the poet as celebrator of high deeds, the "dispenser of glory."

There is, then, an important part of the Renaissance mind which sees terrestrial life as positive fulfillment. This is especially clear where there is a close association between the practical and the intellectual, as in the exercise of political power, the act of scientific discovery, the creation of works of art. The Renaissance assumption is that there are things highly worth doing, within a strictly temporal pattern. By doing them, man proves his privileged position in Creation and therefore incidentally follows God's intent. The often cited phrase "the dignity of man" describes this positive, strongly affirmed awareness of the intellectual and physical "virtues" of the human being, and of his place in Creation.

It is important, however, to see this fact about the Renaissance in the light of another phenomenon: where there is a singularly high capacity for feeling the delight of earthly achievement, there is a possibility that its ultimate worth will also be questioned profoundly. What (the Renaissance mind usually seems to ask at some point) is the purpose of all this activity? What meaningful relation does it bear to any all-inclusive, cosmic pattern? The Renaissance coincided with, and perhaps to some extent occasioned, a loss of firm belief in the final unity and the final intelligibility of the universe, such belief as underlies, for example, the *Divine Comedy*, enabling Dante to say in Paradise:

> I saw within Its depth how It conceives
> all things in a single volume bound by Love,
> of which the universe is the scattered leaves;
> Substance, accident, and their relation
> so fused that all I say could do no more
> than yield a glimpse of that bright revelation.

Once the notion of this grand unity of design has lost its authority, certainty about the final value of human actions is no longer to be found. For some minds, indeed, the sense of void becomes so strong as to paralyze all aspiration to power or thirst for knowledge or delight in beauty; the resulting attitude we may call Renaissance melancholy, whether it be openly shown (as by some characters in Elizabethan drama) or provide an undercurrent of sadness, or incite to ironical forms of compromise, to some sort of wise adjustment (as in Erasmus or Montaigne.) The legend of Faust— "Doctor" Faustus—a great amasser of knowledge doomed to frustration by his perception of the vanity of science, for which he finds at one point desperate substitutes in pseudoscience and the devil's arts, is one illustration of this sense of vanity. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is another, a play in which the very word "thought" seems to acquire a troubled connotation: "the pale cast of thought," "thought and affliction, passion, hell itself." In these instances, the intellec-

tual excitement of understanding, the zest and pride of achievement through what chiefly constitutes man's "dignity," his intellect, seem not so much lost as directly inverted.

Thus while on one, and perhaps the better-known, side of the picture man's intellect in Renaissance literature enthusiastically expatiates over the realms of knowledge and unveils the mysteries of the universe, on the other it is beset by puzzling doubts and a profound mistrust of its own powers. Man's moral nature is seen as only a little lower than the angels', but also scarcely above the beasts'. Earthly power—a favorite theme because Renaissance literature was so largely produced in the courts or with a vivid sense of courtly ideas—is the crown of human aspirations ("How sweet a thing it is to wear a crown, / Within whose circuit is Elysium") but it is also the death's head ("Imperious Caesar, dead and turn'd to clay, / Might stop a hole to keep the wind away").

Much of Renaissance literature takes its character and strength from the tensions generated by this simultaneous exaltation and pessimism about the human condition.

FURTHER READING

Richard L. DeMolen, ed., *The Meaning of Renaissance and Reformation* (1974), is a collection of essays by experts on the Renaissance and Reformation, with maps and illustrations. Paul Oskar Kristeller's lecture series on the Renaissance is now a paperback, *Renaissance Thought: The Classic, Scholastic, and Humanist Strains* (1961). A solid, well-written general historical and cultural presentation is Eugene F. Rice, Jr.'s *The Foundations of Early Modern Europe, 1460–1559* (1970), with illustrations, facsimiles, maps, bibliographic references. Lewis W. Spitz gives a reliable historical presentation of the period, taking into account literary and artistic trends in *The Renaissance and Reformation Movements* (1971).

FRANCIS PETRARCH

1304–1374

Francesco Petrarca (forty years younger than Dante) was born at Arezzo on July 13, 1304. His father, like Dante, was exiled from Florence for political reasons and in 1312 moved with his family to Avignon with hopes of employment at the Papal court, which had been transferred there in 1309 by a Pope of French nationality—Clement V (Bertrand de Got). Following his father's wish, Petrarch studied law at Montpellier and Bologna for a brief period. A highly cultivated man of the world, on his return to Avignon he was well received by the brilliant and refined society that moved around the Papal court. It was in Avignon, in the church of St. Clare, on April 6, 1327, that he saw for the first time Laura, who would become the object and image of his love poetry. Soon after this momentous event, he began to travel widely (France, Flanders, Germany), not only on diplomatic missions but also, and perhaps more relevantly, as a man of letters and humanist in search of manuscripts from classical antiquity.

In 1338 he made his first trip to Rome, a twofold spiritual capital for him as a classical scholar and as a Christian. Later that same year, at his home in Vaucluse near Avignon, Petrarch attempted to revive the ancient ideal of spiritually active relaxation, or *otium*. He was so imbued with the idea of a renovation of classical antiquity that he expected his major glory as a poet from the work he began at this time—*Africa*, an epic poem in Latin hexameters which has for its central figure Scipio Africanus, conceived by the poet as the model of the valiant and pious Roman hero. No less characteristic of his devotion to classical ideals is the fact that when in 1340 he received invitations from both Paris and Rome to be crowned poet laureate, he chose Rome, and received the crown in the Capitol.

There was in his life, as in Dante's, a pattern of moral dissipation followed by spiritual conflict and repentance. This conflict, which is reflected in Petrarch's autobiographical treatise in Latin, *Secretum*, may have been enhanced by his brother Gherardo's decision to enter a monastery and by the news of Laura's death by plague, which he received in 1348 while traveling in Italy. She died on April 6, the very day of the month on which he had first seen her, and the day of Christ's passion as well. Thus Laura remained an image of exclusively spiritual love, in contrast to Petrarch's more earthly attachments, evidenced by the birth of two illegitimate children, Giovanni, in 1337, and Francesca, in 1343.

As a pilgrim on his way to Rome for the Papal Jubilee of 1350, Petrarch stopped at Florence as a guest of Boccaccio, the great Florentine storyteller and fellow humanist. Most of the years between 1353 and 1361 he spent in Milan, where he was entrusted by the ruling Visconti family with various diplomatic missions (to Venice, to Prague, to the king of France). He alternated such duties with intense literary work, including a complete edition of his lyric poetry in Italian, letters and treatises in Latin, and progress on his great unfinished *terza rima* allegory, *The Triumphs*. To avoid the plague,

in 1361 he moved to Padua, spending much of his time in a nearby country house in the Euganean hills at Arquà, now called Arquà Petrarca. He died there in 1374, on the eve of his seventieth birthday, working until the very end on the refinement and ordering of his work and on the careful creation of what we would call today his "public image," polishing for posterity with exquisite care his poems and letters (the letter was then an established literary form). Even accidental events in his life seem to have been inspired by his taste for the harmonious and well-rounded gesture. He even came within a few hours of reaching the "perfect" life span, three score and ten, and frequently used April 6, as in sonnet 3, to symbolize his own drama of passion.

If we compare Petrarch to the standard image of Medieval Man, what first strikes us as new is the self-centered quality of his work. A comparison between him and Dante points to this quality, and the contrast is made sharper by certain analogies in their situations. Both illustrate the same basic motif, the quest for salvation. But while Dante as hero of the quest focused dramatically on himself only on a few enormously effective and severe occasions (his first exchange with Beatrice in *Purgatory* XXX, for example), Petrarch was continuously at work on his personal drama, its lights and shades, its subtle modulations of feeling.

A different way of getting at the distinction between Renaissance Man and Medieval Man may be found in Petrarch's conception of the literary profession and the status of the poet. His attitude toward classical antiquity makes him "the first writer of the Renaissance," rather than a writer of the Middle Ages. As a self-aware man of letters he modeled his work on classical examples—the texts which, as a humanistic scholar, he had sometimes helped rediscover and bring back to life. In 1333 at Liège, for example, he found a manuscript of Cicero's oration *Pro Archia*, a Roman "defense of poetry," celebrating the role of artist and thinker as creators of value, legislators of virtuous behavior, and dispensers of fame: the program to which Petrarch was to devote his life. It would be difficult to overestimate his importance for European culture in establishing that model of the poet, scholar, and member of the "republic of letters" which remains today an ideal of Western civilization.

But however important this aspect of his work may have been, the prevailing Petrarchan image in literary history is the drama of his love for Laura, both in life and in death. Of course there would be no drama in that love without an element of the tragic—his sense of its sinfulness and vanity. Thus he sounds a "medieval" note, but in a new context: that of the ever-changing, ambiguous attractions of mortal beauty and earthly values. One even surmises that these values might have been less attractive to him had they not kept the taint of vanity, for without it they would have afforded a less rich and complex life. Thus he sings in sonnet 61, "Blest Be the Day," of his first encounter with Laura, the source of his torment. Even though calling him a romantic may stretch the meaning of the term to the point of uselessness, we can say that his definition of love as sorrow has had a yet wider influence than those striking verbal inventions which inspired European poetry for a century and more before degenerating into "Petrarchism," the arsenal of tired conceits, witticisms, and hyperboles on which much popular twentieth-century songwriting still draws.

Another essential part of Petrarch's drama is the death of his lady and her role as mediator between the penitent poet and Divine Grace. Here again, the inevitable comparison with Dante makes the differences between the two poets stand clear. The shift in tone between Petrarch's poems for Laura "in life" and the ones for her "in death" is less relevant than the similarity of the two sections of the *Canzoniere* (*Song Book*). A sensuous quality pervades both groups of poems, suggesting an earthly relationship even when the beloved lady is dead. Thus the poet, in sonnet 300, envies the earth "folding her in invisible embrace," and in sonnet 292, also written after Laura's death, the larger part of the octave is devoted to the living lady's physical appearance. In other sonnets Laura herself, in heaven, refers to her mortal body as her "beautiful veil." In sonnet 333 the poet implores her to come to him at the moment of his death and guide him to "the blessed place." His poetry has made the world know and love her, and the implication is that he has thus become worthy of her succor. Hence Petrarch is not only a repentant sinner, but also a literary master turning autobiography and confession into art. However strong his sense of the vanity and fallaciousness of human attachments, he seems to have no doubt about the validity of one particular manifestation of *virtù:* the sensuous, expert handling of words, the poetic art itself.

A thorough account of Petrarch's life with many quotations from his writing may be found in Morris Bishop, *Petrarch and His World* (1963). Two other worthwhile biographical studies are J. H. Whitfield, *Petrarch and the Renaissance* (1943; 1966), and Ernest Hatch Wilkins, *Life of Petrarch* (1961).

It Was the Morning[1]

It was the morning of that blessèd day[2]
Whereon the Sun in pity veiled his glare
For the Lord's agony, that, unaware,
I fell a captive, Lady, to the sway

Of your swift eyes: that seemed no time to stay
The strokes of Love: I stepped into the snare
Secure, with no suspicion: then, and there
I found my cue in man's most tragic play.

Love caught me naked to his shaft, his sheaf,
The entrance for his ambush and surprise
Against the heart wide open through the eyes,[3]
The constant gate and fountain of my grief:

1. *Era 'l giorno ch'al sol si scoloraro,* sonnet 3. Translated by Joseph Auslander. 2. Elsewhere (sonnet 211) Petrarch gives the date as April 6, 1327, a Monday. Here too the day is apparently intended to be the day of Christ's death (April 6) rather than Good Friday, 1327. 3. The image of the eyes as the gateway to the heart had been a poetic commonplace since pre-Dante days.

How craven so to strike me stricken so,[4]
Yet from you fully armed conceal his bow!

Blest Be the Day[5]

Blest be the day, and blest the month and year,
Season[6] and hour and very moment blest,
The lovely land and place[7] where first possessed
By two pure eyes I found me prisoner;

And blest the first sweet pain, the first most dear,
Which burnt my heart when Love came in as guest;
And blest the bow, the shafts which shook my breast,
And even the wounds which Love delivered there.

Blest be the words and voices which filled grove
And glen with echoes of my lady's name;
The sighs, the tears, the fierce despair of love;

And blest the sonnet-sources of my fame;
And blest that thought of thoughts which is her own,
Of her, her only, of herself alone!

Father in Heaven[8]

Father in heaven, after each lost day,
Each night spent raving with that fierce desire
Which in my heart has kindled into fire
Seeing your acts adorned for my dismay;

Grant henceforth that I turn, within your light[9]
To another life and deeds more truly fair,
So having spread to no avail the snare
My bitter foe[1] might hold it in despite.

The eleventh year,[2] my Lord, has now come round
Since I was yoked beneath the heavy trace
That on the meekest weighs most cruelly.

4. With grief on commemorating Christ's Passion. 5. *Benedetto sia 'l giorno e 'l mese e l'anno*, sonnet 61. Translated by Joseph Auslander. 6. Spring. *Hour:* "Upon the first hour" (sonnet 211), sunrise. 7. The Church of Saint Clare at Avignon. 8. *Padre del ciel, dopo i perduti giorni*, sonnet 62. Translated by Vernard Bergonzi. 9. The light of grace. 1. The Devil, not Love as some commentators have thought. 2. 1327.

Pity the abject plight where I am found;
Return my straying thoughts to a nobler place;
Show them this day you were on Calvary.

She Used To Let Her Golden Hair Fly Free[3]

She used to let her golden hair fly free
For the wind to toy and tangle and molest;
Her eyes were brighter than the radiant west.
(Seldom they shine so now.) I used to see

Pity look out of those deep eyes on me.
("It was false pity," you would now protest.)
I had love's tinder heaped within my breast;
What wonder that the flame burned furiously?

She did not walk in any mortal way,
But with angelic progress; when she spoke,
Unearthly voices sang in unison.

She seemed divine among the dreary folk
Of earth. You say she is not so today?
Well, though the bow's unbent, the wound bleeds on.

The Eyes That Drew from Me[4]

The eyes that drew from me such fervent praise,
The arms and hands and feet and countenance
Which made me a stranger in my own romance
And set me apart from the well-trodden ways;

The gleaming golden curly hair, the rays
Flashing from a smiling angel's glance
Which moved the world in paradisal dance,
Are grains of dust, insensibilities.

And I live on, but in grief and self-contempt,
Left here without the light I loved so much,
In a great tempest and with shrouds unkempt.

3. *Erano i capei d'oro a l'aura sparsi*, sonnet 90. Translated by Morris Bishop. 4. *Gli occhi di ch'io parlai sì caldamente*, sonnet 292. Translated by Edwin Morgan. All the poems in the canon from number 267 on were written to commemorate Laura. She died at Avignon on April 6, 1348.

No more love songs, then, I have done with such;
My old skill now runs thin at each attempt,
And tears are heard within the harp I touch.[5]

Great Is My Envy of You[6]

Great is my envy of you, earth, in your greed
Folding her in invisible embrace,
Denying me the look of the sweet face
Where I found peace from all my strife at need!
Great is my envy of heaven which can lead
And lock within itself in avarice
That spirit from its lovely biding-place
And leave so many others here to bleed!

Great is my envy of those souls whose reward
Is the gentle heaven of her company,
Which I so fiercely sought beneath these skies!

Great is my envy of death whose curt hard sword
Carried her whom I called my life away;
Me he disdains, and mocks me from her eyes!

Go, Grieving Rimes of Mine[7]

Go, grieving rimes of mine, to that hard stone
Whereunder lies my darling, lies my dear,
And cry to her to speak from heaven's sphere.
Her mortal part with grass is overgrown.

Tell her, I'm sick of living; that I'm blown
By winds of grief from the course I ought to steer,
That praise of her is all my purpose here
And all my business; that of her alone

Do I go telling, that how she lived and died
And lives again in immortality,
All men may know, and love my Laura's grace.

Oh, may she deign to stand at my bedside
When I come to die; and may she call to me
And draw me to her in the blessèd place!

5. *Cf. Job* 30:31. 6. *Quanta invidia io ti porto, avara terra*, sonnet 300. Translated by Edwin Morgan. 7. *Ite, rime dolenti, al duro sasso*, sonnet 333. Translated by Morris Bishop.

DESIDERIUS ERASMUS
1466–1536

Erasmus was born around 1466, apparently in Rotterdam, to a physician's daughter and a father who later became a priest; in any event, he later referred to himself as Desiderius Erasmus Roterodamus. He received his early schooling under humanistic masters who fostered his love of good literature. After both his parents died, Erasmus's guardians sent him to the Augustinian canons at Steyn, although his desire had been to enter a university. He was ordained a priest on April 25, 1492. Erasmus's humanistic aspirations found an outlet in 1494 when he became Latin secretary to Henry of Bergen, bishop of Cambrai, through whose help he entered the college of Montaigu at the University of Paris in 1495. College discipline was very strict, but in the following year, with lodgings in town, he received pupils. One of his pupils, William Blount, Baron Mountjoy, accompanied him on his first trip to England in 1499–1500, where he met Thomas More and the English theologian John Colet; the latter encouraged him toward serious religious study and a direct scholarly approach to the early Church Fathers.

In the following years Erasmus traveled on the continent; his first collection of *Adages* (short sayings from classical authors) appeared in Paris in 1500, and his *Handbook of the Christian Knight*, a plea for a return to primitive Christian simplicity, was published at Antwerp in 1504. After a second visit to England in 1505–06, during which he met Warham, the archbishop of Canterbury, a chance to act as tutor to the son of Henry VII's physician, Boeri, enabled him to fulfill the humanist's aspiration to visit Italy. He spent time at the universities of Turin (where he received a doctorate of theology) and Bologna, visited Padua and Florence, and conversed with high church dignitaries in Rome. In Venice, the great humanistic printer Aldus Manutius became a friend and published an enlarged collection of *Adages*. In 1509 Erasmus returned to England, where in the same year he wrote *The Praise of Folly*. During this third and longest stay in England (until 1514) he lectured in Greek and divinity at Cambridge. Erasmus offers the highest illustration of the learned cosmopolitan humanist endeavoring to conciliate humanistic learning and religious piety. After leaving England in 1514, he continued to travel on the continent, finally making his most permanent home in Basel, a center whose cultural importance cannot be overestimated, especially as the seat of the printing house of Frobenius, whose general editor Erasmus became. In 1529 religious disturbances and the victories of the Swiss Protestants caused him to move to Freiburg in the Breisgau, the German university town in the Black Forest. His attitude toward the Protestant reformers (Luther in Germany, Zwingli in Switzerland) was typical: having tried to promote an impartial arbitration of the question between Luther and the Roman church, he was alienated by excesses on both sides. The shattering news of Thomas More's execution in England in 1535 reached him in Freiburg. He returned to Basel that same year and died there in July 1536.

Though his literary works and pamphlets, his editions of the Church Fathers, and his Latin edition of the New Testament (based on the Greek), and especially his letters (about three thousand of them) gave an important perspective on the cultural life of the period, Erasmus's most famous work remains *The Praise of Folly*. Its popularity is partly due to its dramatic and elegant literary form, partly to the fact that it deals in a wise, temperate way with perennial concerns, as pressing now as they were then: the power (and arrogance) of the human intellect, the worth (and futility) of knowledge, and above all the folly (and wisdom) of man's behavior.

To present these issues concretely, Erasmus uses an oratorical and theatrical approach. He takes for his speaker a feminine figure, Folly, placing her in front of an audience of whom she herself makes us aware: "as soon as I began to speak to this great audience, all faces suddenly brightened." We see her gesture, point to her public, call for their attention: "I am almost out of breath." "But why not speak to you more openly . . . ?" "You applaud! I was sure that you were not so wise, or rather so foolish—no, so wise." The general tone of speech balances between the jocose and the serious, the erudite and the foolish. In this way, she also throws light upon the audience—a congenial one, we feel, made up of people to whom the cultured allusions with which her speech is studded are so familiar that they appreciate the comic twists performed upon them, as they appreciate, more generally, the satire on conventional oratory which her monologue contains. "I see that you are expecting a peroration," she admits in the end, "but you are certainly foolish if you think that I can remember any part of such a hodgepodge of words as I have poured out." Her attitude toward her audience is thus not adversary but convivial. The butts of her polemic—the passionless Stoics—constitute a third party, and rather than address such people, she enlists her audience's support in rejecting them: "I ask you, if it were put to a vote, what city would choose such a person as mayor?"

This is the "play" as it is presented to us. But of course it is actually a "play within a play," performed for Erasmus and *his* audience, i.e., ourselves. From his vantage point backstage, he uses Folly as an ambiguous mouthpiece. In fact, by showing her to be foolish, light-headed, and rambling, he throws into sharper focus the truths she expresses; he secures the advantage of her directness and "innocence" while granting her the full support of his own erudition and wit. The apparent surface frivolity calls on us to expect an undercover depth and complexity, to read between the lines, and we may best measure that complexity by asking, What does Folly stand for? Does she stand for carefree living? For a way of life not hostile to the passions? For foolishness? For self-abandonment? For naïveté? For imagination? Is she simply the lighthearted creation of a great scholar in a frivolous moment, deploring the vanity of intellectual knowledge and the scholar's austere and solitary life in favor of instinct, intuition, good fellowship, "innocence"? Or does she embody a paradoxical "wisdom" to be found at the end of a long and perhaps finally frustrating accumulation of learning? Our answer to such questions must be at least as equivocal as the attitude of the work itself.

Clearly, the issue of knowledge versus ignorance underlies *The Praise of Folly*. What "Folly" says may often seem to be a debunking of the former

in favor of the latter, but—and this is the function of the "play"—the attitude ultimately suggested is one neither of "barbaric" rebellion nor of unrelieved satiety and desperation. Erasmus's position, whether overtly or between the lines, is that of noble and wise compromise: a serene acceptance of the limitations of knowledge rather than a "melancholic" rejection of its value followed by a desperate gesture of rebellion. The attitude proposed, in other words, is a far cry from that of a dissatisfied intellectual who finds the mind has not given him satisfactory answers and who therefore embraces folly as Faust embraces the diabolical. On the other hand, the author's "praise" of folly is certainly not feigned or *mainly* ironical. His point of view is not that of the sophisticate who takes a frivolous delight in masquerading, let us say, as a shepherd. When a man like Erasmus implies that possibly fools are really wiser than we are (an implication that underlies many a passage in the book), his attitude toward the "fool" includes understanding, affection, and a real question about value. The balance of irony is maintained in both directions; the wisdom of compromise and the wise man's sense of limits guide the performance from backstage.

What has been said about the value of knowledge can be extended to the value of life: the world is a stage, and the forces ruling its actors may be irrational or not understandable, but it is in accordance with nature that we should go on playing our roles. Folly is imagination, inventiveness, and therefore make-believe; "everything is pretense." But at the same time, "this play is performed in no other way"; "true prudence . . . consists in not desiring more wisdom than is proper to mortals." This is "to act the play of life."

Acceptance of life as a play, as a pageant, opens a vision of true human reality, Erasmus feels, whereas the wisdom of the Stoics (who stand for pure intellectualism) produces "a marble imitation of a man" from which one shudders away "as from a ghost." Folly's far preferable prescription is "a timely mixture of ignorance, thoughtlessness, forgetfulness of evil, hope of good, and a dash of delight."

A good introduction to Erasmus is Richard L. DeMolen, ed., *Erasmus of Rotterdam. A Quincentennial Symposium* (1971), with brief essays by leading scholars, notes, selected bibliography, and a brief chronology of Erasmus's life. A more specialized collection of essays is provided by T. A. Dorey, ed., *Erasmus* (1970). George Faludy's modern biography, *Erasmus of Rotterdam* (1970), is intended for the general reader. Kathleen Williams, ed., *Twentieth Century Interpretations of "The Praise of Folly": A Collection of Critical Essays* (1969) is recommended.

The Praise of Folly[1]

I. Folly Herself

Folly Speaks:

No matter what is ordinarily said about me (and I am not ignorant of how bad the name of Folly sounds, even to the biggest fools), I

1. Abridged. Translated by Leonard F. Dean.

am still the one, the only one I may say, whose influence makes Gods and men cheerful. A convincing proof of this is that as soon as I began to speak to this great audience, all faces suddenly brightened with a new and unusual gaiety, all frowns disappeared, and you applauded hilariously. Now you seem intoxicated with nectar, and also with nepenthe,[2] like the gods of Homer; whereas a moment ago you were sad and careworn, as if you had just come out of the cave of Trophonius.[3] Just as a new and youthful color reappears everywhere when the sun first shows its beautiful, golden face to the earth, or when spring breathes softly after a hard winter, so your faces changed at the sight of me. And thus what great orators can hardly accomplish with long and elaborate speeches, namely the banishment of care, I have done with my appearance alone.

. . . Since my ancestry is not known to many, I will undertake to describe it, with the Muses' kind assistance. My father was neither Chaos, Orcus, Saturn, Japetus, nor any other of that obsolete and senile set of gods; on the contrary he was Plutus,[4] the real father of men and gods, despite the opinion of Hesiod,[5] Homer, and Jove himself. Now, as always, one nod from Plutus turns everything sacred or profane upside down. By his decision wars, peace, empires, plans, judgments, assemblies, marriages, treaties, pacts, laws, arts, sports, solemnities (I am almost out of breath)—in short, all public and private affairs are governed. Without his help, all the poets' multitude of gods, even, I may boldly say, the chief ones, either would not exist or would have to live leanly at home. Not even Pallas can help the person who arouses Plutus' anger, but with his favor one can laugh at Jove's thunderbolts. What a magnificent father! He did not beget me out of his head, as Jupiter did that grim and gloomy Pallas, but from Youth, the best-looking as well as the gayest of all the nymphs. Nor was this done dully in wedlock, in the way that lame blacksmith[6] was conceived, but more pleasantly in passion, as old Homer puts it. It should also be clearly understood that I was not born of Aristophanes' worn-out and weak-eyed Plutus, but of the unimpaired Plutus, hot with youth and still hotter with nectar which by chance he had drunk straight and freely at a party of the gods.

Next, if you want to know the place of my birth (since the place where one first squalled is nowadays considered a mark of nobility), I was born neither in wandering Delos,[7] nor on the foaming sea,[8] nor "in deep caves," but in the Fortunate Isles themselves, where all

2. Legendary drug causing oblivion. 3. Seat of a particularly awesome oracle. 4. God of wealth and abundance. In Aristophanes' play by that name, to which Erasmus refers later in the paragraph, he is shown in decrepit age; ordinarily he is represented as a boy with a cornucopia. 5. Greek didactic poet of the eighth century B.C., cited here because he was author of the *Theogony* (about the generation and genealogy of the gods). 6. Hephaestus (Vulcan). 7. Birthplace of Apollo. 8. From which Venus emerged. "*In deep caves*": A Homeric expression. *Fortunate Isles:* The mythical and remote islands where, according to Greek tradition, some favorites of the gods dwelt in immortality and bliss.

things grow "without plowing or planting." There where there is no labor, no old age, and no sickness; where not a daffodil, mallow, onion, bean, or any other ordinary thing is to be seen; but where nose and eyes are equally delighted by moly, panacea, nepenthes, sweet marjoram, ambrosia, lotus, rose, violet, hyacinth, and the gardens of Adonis. Being born amidst these pleasant things, I did not begin life crying, but from the first laughed good-naturedly at my mother. I certainly need not envy Jove for being suckled by a she-goat, for I was nursed at the breasts of two charming nymphs—Drunkenness, offspring of Bacchus, and Ignorance, daughter of Pan. Both of them you see here with my other attendants and followers. If you ask the names of the others, I must answer in Greek. The haughty one over there is Philantia (Self-love). The one with laughing eyes who is clapping her hands is Kolakia (Flattery). This drowsy one is Lethe (Forgetfulness). She leaning on her elbows with folded hands is Misoponia (Laziness). She with the perfume and wreath of roses is Hedone (Pleasure). This wild-eyed one is Anoia (Madness). The smooth-skinned and shapely one is Tryphe (Sensuality). And you see those two gods playing with the girls; well, one is Comus (Intemperance) and the other is Negretos Hypnos (Sound Sleep). With the help of these faithful servants I gain control of all things, even dictating to dictators.

II. The Powers and Pleasures of Folly

. . . Now, that it may not seem that I call myself a goddess without good cause, let me tell you of the range of my influence and of my benefits to men and gods. If to be a god is simply to aid men, as someone has wisely said, and if they have been deservedly deified who have shown mankind the uses of wine or grain, why am I not justly called the Alpha[9] of gods, I who have all alone given all things to all men.

First, what is more dear and precious than life itself? And by whose aid but mine is life conceived? It is not the spear of "potently-sired" Pallas nor the shield of "cloud-controlling" Jove that propagates and multiplies mankind. Even the father of gods and the king of men, he who shakes Olympus with a nod, must lay aside the three-pronged thunderer and that Titanic manner with which when he pleases he terrifies the gods, and like a poor actor assume another character, if he wishes to do what he is forever doing, namely, begetting children. The Stoics[1] assert that they are almost god-like. But give me one

9. First letter of the Greek alphabet; hence, "beginning," "origin." 1. Stoicism originated in the Stoa Poikile ("painted porch"), a building in the market place in Athens where the philosopher Zeno lectured in the fourth century B.C., and later was perhaps the main type of philosophy of the Roman elite. It became known during the Renaissance especially through Seneca. Erasmus here makes the Stoics the butts of Folly's irony on account of their supposedly godlike disregard of the passions.

who is three, four, or six hundred times a Stoic, and if on this occasion he does not remove his beard, the sign of wisdom (in common with goats), at least he will shed his gravity, stop frowning, abandon his rock-bound principles and for a while be a silly fool. In short, the wise man must send for me if he wants to be a father. But why not speak to you more openly, as I usually do? I ask whether the head, the face, the breast, the hand, or the ear—each an honorable part—creates gods and men? I think not, but instead the job is done by that foolish, even ridiculous part which cannot be named without laughter. This is the sacred fountain from which all things rise, more certainly than from the Pythagorean tetrad.[2]

What man, I ask you, would stick his head into the halter of marriage if, following the practice of the wise, he first weighed the inconveniences of that life? Or what woman would ever embrace her husband if she foresaw or considered the dangers of childbirth and the drudgery of motherhood? Now since you owe your life to the marriage-bed, and marriage itself to my follower Madness, you can see how completely indebted you are to me. Moreover, would a woman who had experienced that travail once ever repeat it without the influence of my Forgetfulness? And Venus herself, no matter what Lucretius says,[3] cannot deny that her work would be weak and inconclusive without my help. Hence from my ridiculous and crazy game are produced supercilious philosophers, their present-day successors, vulgarly called monks, kings in purple robes, pious priests, thrice-holy popes, and finally all the gods invented by the poets, so numerous that spacious Olympus is crowded.

That the conception of life is due to me is a small matter when I can show you that I am responsible for everything agreeable. Would life without pleasure be life at all? You applaud! I was sure that you were not so wise, or rather so foolish—no, so wise, as to think otherwise. As a matter of fact, even the Stoics do not really dislike pleasure; they carefully pretend to and they loudly denounce it in public, but only in order to deter others and thus have it all to themselves. Just let them explain to me what part of life is not sad, troublesome, graceless, flat, and distressing without a dash of pleasure, or in other words, folly. This is very adequately proved by Sophocles,[4] a person insufficiently appreciated, who has left this pretty eulogy of me: "Ignorance is bliss." . . .

If someone should unmask the actors in the middle of a scene on the stage and show their real faces to the audience, would he not spoil the whole play? And would not everyone think he deserved to

2. According to the numerical conception of the universe of Pythagoras (sixth century B.C.) and his followers, the first four numbers (the "tetrad"—one, two, three, and four, adding up to the ideal number, ten) signified the root of all being. 3. In the opening lines of his poem *On the Nature of Things*, Lucretius (99?–55 B.C.) invokes Venus because "all living things" are conceived through her. 4. See his *Ajax*, ll. 554–555: ". . . life is sweetest before the feelings are awake—until one learns to know joy and pain."

be driven out of the theater with brickbats as a crazy man? For at once a new order of things would suddenly arise. He who played the woman is now seen to be a man; the juvenile is revealed to be old; he who a little before was a king is suddenly a slave; and he who was a god now appears as a little man. Truly, to destroy the illusion is to upset the whole play. The masks and costumes are precisely what hold the eyes of the spectators. Now what else is our whole life but a kind of stage play through which men pass in various disguises, each one going on to play his part until he is led off by the director? And often the same actor is ordered back in a different costume, so that he who played the king in purple, now acts the slave in rags. Thus everything is pretense; yet this play is performed in no other way.

What if some wise man, dropped from heaven, should suddenly confront me at this point and exclaim that the person whom everyone has looked up to as a god and ruler is not even a man, because he is led sheeplike by his passions; that he is the meanest slave because he voluntarily serves so many and such foul masters? Or what if this wise man should instruct someone mourning his parent's death to laugh, on the grounds that the parent had at last really begun to live—our life here being in one way nothing but a kind of death? And what if he should entitle another who was glorying in ancestry, ignoble and illegitimate, because he was so far from virtue, the only source of nobility? And what if he should speak of all others in the same way? What, I ask, would he gain by it except to be regarded as dangerously insane by everyone? Just as nothing is more foolish than unseasonable wisdom, so nothing is more imprudent than bull-headed prudence. And he is indeed perverse who does not accommodate himself to the way of the world, who will not follow the crowd, who does not at least remember the rule of good fellowship, drink or begone, and who demands that the play shall no longer be a play. True prudence, on the contrary, consists in not desiring more wisdom than is proper to mortals, and in being willing to wink at the doings of the crowd or to go along with it sociably. But that, they say, is folly itself. I shall certainly not deny it; yet they must in turn admit that it is also to act the play of life.

I hesitate to speak about the next point. But why should I be silent about what is truer than truth? For so great an undertaking, however, it would probably be wise to call the Muses from Helicon;[5] the poets usually invoke them on the slightest pretext. Therefore, stand by for a moment, daughters of Jove, while I show that one cannot acquire that widely advertised wisdom, which the wise call the secret of happiness, unless one follows the leadership of Folly. First, everyone

5. Mythical mountain, home of the Muses.

admits that all the emotions belong to folly. Indeed a fool and a wise man are distinguished by the fact that emotions control the former, and reason the latter. Now the Stoics would purge the wise man of all strong emotions, as if they were diseases; yet these emotions serve not only as a guide and teacher to those who are hastening toward the portal of wisdom, but also as a stimulus in all virtuous actions, as exhorters to good deeds. Of course that superstoic, Seneca, strongly denies this and strips the wise of absolutely every emotion; yet in so doing he leaves something that is not a man at all, but rather a new kind of god or sub-god who never existed and never will. To put it bluntly, he makes a marble imitation of a man, stupid, and altogether alien to every human feeling.

If this is the way they want it, let them keep their wise man. They can love him without any rivals and live with him in Plato's republic or, if they prefer, in the realm of Ideas, or in the gardens of Tantalus.[6] Who would not shudder at such a man and flee from him as from a ghost? He would be insensible to every natural feeling, no more moved by love or pity than if he were solid flint or Marpesian stone.[7] Nothing escapes him; he never makes a mistake; like another Lynceus[8] he sees all; he evaluates everything rigidly; he excuses nothing; he alone is satisfied with himself as the only one who is really rich, sane, royal, free—in short, unique in everything, but only so in his own opinion. Desiring no friend, he is himself the friend of none. He does not hesitate to bid the gods go hang themselves. All that life holds he condemns and scorns as folly. And this animal is the perfect wise man. I ask you, if it were put to a vote, what city would choose such a person as mayor? What army would want such a general? What woman such a husband? What host such a guest? What servant such a master? Who would not rather have any man at all from the rank and file of fools? Now such a choice, being a fool, would be able to command or obey fools. He would be able to please those like himself—or nearly everyone; he would be kind to his wife, a jolly friend, a gay companion, a polished guest; finally, he would consider nothing human to be alien to him.[9] But this wise man has been boring me for some time; let us turn to other instructive topics.

Imagine, then, that a man should look down from a great height, as the poets say that Jove does. What calamities would he see in man's life. How miserable, how vile, man's birth. How laborious his education. His childhood is subject to injuries; his youth is painful;

6. Plato's republic, his celestial realm of pure ideas, and the mythical garden of Tantalus in Hades (where rich fruit always evades Tantalus' grasp) are all mentioned because they are characterized by the presence of abstractions and figments. 7. From Marpessos, a mountain on the island of Paros famous for its marble. 8. A mythical figure whose eyesight was proverbially supposed to penetrate even solid objects. 9. From a proverbial phrase in Terence's *Self-Tormentor*, 1. 77: "I am a man: nothing human do I consider alien to me."

his age a burden; his death a hard necessity. He is attacked by a host of diseases, threatened by accidents, and assaulted by misfortunes; there is nothing without some gall. There are also the multitude of evils that man does to man. Here are poverty, imprisonment, infamy, shame, tortures, plots, treachery, slander, lawsuits, fraud. But this is plainly to count the grains of sand. It is not proper for me at the moment to suggest for what offenses men have deserved these misfortunes, nor what angry god caused them to be born to such miseries. Yet will not anyone who considers these things approve the example of the Milesian virgins,[1] pitiable as it is? Recall, however, what kind of people have committed suicide because they were tired of life. Have they not been the wise or near-wise? Among them, besides Diogenes, Xenocrates, Cato, Cassius, and Brutus, there was Chiron,[2] who chose death rather than immortality. Now you begin to see, I believe, what would happen if all men became wise: there would be need for new clay and another potter like Prometheus.[3]

But by a timely mixture of ignorance, thoughtlessness, forgetfulness of evil, hope of good, and a dash of delight, I bring relief from troubles; so that men are unwilling to relinquish their lives even when their lives are ready to relinquish them. They are so far from being weary of existence, that the less reason they have for living, the more they enjoy life. Clearly it is because of my good work that you everywhere see old fellows of Nestor's[4] age, scarcely recognizable as members of the human race, babbling, silly, toothless, white-haired, bald—or better let me describe them in the words of Aristophanes: "dirty, stooped, wrinkled, bald, toothless, and toolless."[5] And yet they are so in love with life and so eager to be young that one of them dyes his white hair, another hides his baldness with a wig, another obtains false teeth from heaven knows where, another is infatuated with some young girl and is a sillier lover than any adolescent. Nowadays for one of these old sticks, these drybones, to marry a juicy young wife, and one without a dowry and sure to be enjoyed by others, is becoming the usual and proper thing. But it is even more entertaining to observe the old women, long since half-dead with age, so cadaverous that they seem to have returned from the grave; yet always saying, "It's good to be alive." They, too, are always in heat, and hire young men at a handsome fee. They carefully paint their faces, and constantly inspect themselves in the mirror; they pluck out hairs from the strangest places; they display their withered and flabby breasts; with a quavering love-song they stir a worn-out desire; they drink and go around with girls; they write love-

1. Of the city of Miletus, in Asia Minor. There is an ancient tale that most of them, seemingly gone insane, hanged themselves. 2. The centaur (half man, half horse); incurably wounded and suffering great pain, he asked Zeus for relief from his own immortality. 3. He supposedly molded man out of clay. 4. The old, eloquent sage in the Homeric epic. 5. See Aristophanes, *Plutus*, 11. 266–267.

letters. Everyone laughs at all this, and very properly, since it is the greatest folly in the world; yet the old ladies are well pleased with themselves. They are perfectly happy solely because of me. Moreover, those who scorn this kind of behavior might consider whether it is not better to lead a life of pleasant folly than to look for a rafter and a rope. Anyway, it is nothing to my fools that their actions are scorned; they either feel no shame, or shrug it off easily. If a rock falls on your head, that is clearly painful; but shame, disgrace, and curses hurt only so far as they are felt. What isn't noticed isn't troublesome. So long as you applaud yourself, what harm are the hisses of the world? And folly is the only key to this happiness.

I seem to hear the philosophers disagreeing. This is really unhappiness, they say, this life of folly, error, and ignorance. No, indeed; this is to be human. I cannot see why they should call this unhappiness when it is the common lot of all to be thus born, brought up, and constituted. Nothing can be unhappy if it expresses its true nature. Or do you argue that man is to be pitied because he cannot fly with the birds, and cannot run on four legs with the animals, and is not armed with horns like a bull? It can be argued equally well that the finest horse is unhappy because it is not a grammarian and a gourmet, or that a bull is miserable because it is found wanting at the minuet. A foolish man is no more unhappy than an illiterate horse: both are true to themselves.

The casuists argue next that men are naturally imperfect, and support and strengthen themselves by the peculiarly human device of study. As if it were possible that nature should be so careful in making a midge, a flower, or an herb, and then should have dozed in making man! And with the result that the sciences are needed! They were really invented by Theuth,[6] the evil genius of the human race, for the hurt of mankind. Instead of promoting man's happiness, they hinder it. They were probably even discovered for that purpose, just as letters were, according to the admirable argument of Plato's wise king.[7] In this way, studies crept in with the other trials of life, and from the same devilish source. This is shown by their name: "daemons," which means "those who know."

The people of the golden age lived without the advantages of learning, being guided by instinct and nature alone. What was the need of grammar when all spoke the same language, and spoke only to be understood? What use for dialectic when there was no conflict of opinion? What place for rhetoric when no one wished to get the better of another? What need for legal skill before the time of those evil acts which called forth our good laws? Furthermore, they were

6. In Plato's *Phaedrus*, the name of an Egyptian god who brought the art of writing to King Thamus. 7. King Thamus argued that the invention of writing would produce only false wisdom and destroy the power of man's memory.

then too religious to pry impiously into nature's secrets, to measure the size, motion, and influence of the stars, or to seek the hidden causes of things. They considered it a sacrilege for man to know more than he should. They were free from the insane desire to discover what may lie beyond the stars. But as men fell slowly from the innocence of the golden age, the arts were invented, and by evil spirits, as I have said. At first they were few in number and were accepted by a few people. Later, hundreds more were added by the superstition of the Chaldeans and by the idle speculation of the Greeks. This was a needless vexation of the spirit, when one considers that a single grammatical system is perfectly adequate for a lifetime of torture.

Of course the arts which are nearest to common sense, that is, to folly, are most highly esteemed. Theologians are starved, scientists are given the cold shoulder, astrologers are laughed at, and logicians are ignored. The doctor alone, as they say, is worth all the rest put together. And a doctor is honored, especially among nobles, to the degree that he is ignorant and impudent. Medicine, as now generally practiced, is a branch of the art of flattery just as much as rhetoric is. Lawyers rank next to doctors. Perhaps they should be placed first, but I hesitate to join the philosophers, who unanimously laugh at lawyers as being so many asses. Nevertheless, all affairs, both great and small, are arbitrated by these asses. Their lands increase; while the theologian, who has mastered a trunkful of manuscripts, lives on beans, and wages a gallant war against lice and fleas. As those arts are more successful which have the greatest proportion of folly, so those people are happiest who have nothing to do with learning and follow nature as their only guide. She is in no way wanting, except as a man wishes to go beyond what is proper for him. Nature hates counterfeits; the less the art, the greater the happiness.

Isn't it true that the happiest creatures are those which are least artificial and most natural? What could be happier than the bees, or more wonderful? They lack some of the senses, but what architect has equalled their constructive skill, or what philosopher has framed a republic to match theirs? Now the horse, who does have some of the human senses and who travels around with men, suffers also from human ills. He feels ashamed if he loses a race. While seeking military glory, he is run through and bites the dust along with his rider. Think, too, of the hard bit, the sharp spurs, the prison-like stable, the whips, sticks, and straps, the rider himself—in short, all the tragedy of servitude to which he exposes himself when he imitates men of honor and zealously seeks vengeance against the enemy. How much more desirable except for the interference of men, is the lot of flies and birds, who live for the moment and by the light of nature. Everyone has noticed how a bird loses its natural beauty

when it is shut up in a cage and taught to speak. In every sphere, what is natural is happier than what is falsified by art.

For these reasons I can never sufficiently praise that cock (really Pythagoras)[8] who had been all things—philosopher, man, woman, king, subject, fish, horse, frog, perhaps even a sponge—and who concluded that none is as miserable as man. All the others are content with their natural limitations; man alone is vainly ambitious. Among men, furthermore, the fools are in many respects superior to the learned and the great. Gryllus,[9] for example, proved to be considerably wiser than wise Ulysses when he chose to grunt in a sty rather than to expose himself to the dangers of a further odyssey. Homer, the father of fiction, seems to agree with this: he often observes that men are wretched, and he still oftener describes Ulysses, the pattern of wisdom, as miserable, but he never speaks in this way of Paris, Ajax, or Achilles. Obviously Ulysses was unhappy because that tricky and artful fellow never did anything without consulting the goddess of wisdom. Wouldn't you say that he was over-educated, and that he had got too far away from nature? The seekers after wisdom are the farthest from happiness. They are fools twice over: forgetting the human station to which they were born, they grasp at divinity, and imitating the Giants,[1] they use their arts as engines with which to attack nature. It follows that the least unhappy are those who approximate the naivete of the beasts and who never attempt what is beyond men.

There is no need to argue this like a Stoic logician, however, when we can prove it with a plain example. Is anyone happier than those we commonly call morons, fools, nitwits, and naturals—the most beautiful of names? This may sound absurd at first, but it is profoundly true. In the first place, these fools are free from the fear of death—and that fear is not an insignificant evil. They are free from the pangs of conscience. They are not terrified by ghosts and hobgoblins. They are not filled with vain worries and hopes. In short, they are not troubled by the thousand cares to which this life is subject. Shame, fear, ambition, envy, and love are not for them. If they were just a little dumber and more animal-like they would not even sin—or so the theologians say. Count your cares, you stupid intellectuals, and then you will begin to appreciate what I do for my followers. Remember also that they are always merry; wherever they go they bring pleasure, as if they were mercifully created by the gods to lighten the sadness of human life.

In a world where men are mostly at odds, all are as one in their

8. In the dialogue *The Dream, or the Cock*, written in the second century A.D. by the Greek satirist Lucian, the cock upholds the Pythagorean notion of the transmigration of souls from one body to another by claiming that he is Pythagoras. 9. Character in a dialogue by Plutarch, changed into a pig by Circe. 1. Following the example of the Giants, or Titans, of Greek mythology who, inspired by their wronged mother Gaea (Earth), fought the Olympian gods and were defeated.

attitude toward these innocents. They are sought out and sheltered; everyone permits them to do and say what they wish with impunity. Even the wild beasts perceive their harmlessness and do not attack them. They are sacred to the gods, and especially to me; therefore do all men properly honor them. Kings cannot eat or travel or spend an hour without their fools, in whom they take the greatest delight. In fact they rather prefer them to their crabbed counsellors, whom they nevertheless support for the sake of appearances. This royal preference is easily explained, I think. Counsellors, confident in their wisdom and forced to speak the unpleasant truth, bring only problems to princes; but fools bring what rulers are always looking for—jokes and laughter.

Fools have another not insignificant virtue: they alone are candid and truthful. What is more admirable than truth? I know that Alcibiades thought that only drunkards and children speak the truth;[2] nevertheless, the merit is really mine, as is proved by a line from Euripides: A fool speaks folly.[3] Whatever a fool has in his heart is all over his face and in his speech. Now wise men have two tongues, as Euripides also remarks,[4] one for speaking the truth, and the other for saying whatever is expedient at the moment. They turn black into white, and blow hot and cold with the same breath; their words are far from what is in their hearts. Kings are unhappiest at this point it seems to me, since in the midst of their prosperity they can find no one to tell them the truth, and are obliged to have flatterers for friends. You may say that kings hate to hear the truth and avoid wise counsellors for fear that one more daring than the others will speak what is true rather than what is pleasant. By and large this is so. It is remarkable, therefore, that kings will take the truth, and a sharp truth too, from my fools. A statement which would cost a wise man his head is received from a fool with the greatest delight. Truth that is free from offensiveness does give genuine pleasure, and only fools have the power to speak it. It is for these reasons, too, that fools are taken up by women, who are naturally inclined to pleasure and frivolity. Moreover, they can explain away whatever games they indulge in with fools, even when the sport becomes serious, as good clean fun—for the sex is ingenious, especially at covering up its own lapses.

Now let's return to the subject of the happiness of fools. After a life of jollity, and with no fear of death, or sense of it, they go straight to the Elysian fields, where they entertain the pious and leisurely shades. Compare the life of a wise man with that of a fool. Put up against a fool some model of wisdom, one who lost his boyhood and youth in the classroom, who dissipated the best part of his life in continual worry and study, and who never tasted a particle of plea-

2. See Plato's *Symposium*. 3. *The Bacchanals (Bacchae)*, l. 369. 4. The source of this reference is uncertain.

sure thereafter. He is always abstemious, poor, unhappy, and crabbed; he is harsh and unjust to himself, grim and mean to others; he is pale, emaciated, sickly, sore-eyed, prematurely old and white-haired, dying before his time. Of course it really makes little difference when such a man dies. He has never lived. Well, there is your wise man for you.

Here the Stoics croak at me again. Nothing, they say, is more lamentable than madness, and pure folly is either very near madness, or more likely is the same thing. What is madness but a wandering of the wits? (But the Stoics wander the whole way.) With the Muses' help we will explode this line of reasoning. The argument is plausible, but our opponents should remember the practice of Socrates in splitting Cupids and Venuses,[5] and distinguish one kind of madness from another—at least they should if they wish to be considered sane themselves. To begin with, not every kind of madness is a calamity. Otherwise Horace would not have said, "A pleasant madness inspires me."[6] Nor would Plato have ranked the frenzy of poets, prophets, and lovers among the chief blessings of life. And the oracle would not have called the labors of Aeneas, insane.[7] Madness is really of two kinds. The first is sent up from hell by the vengeful Furies. Unloosing their snaky locks, they assault the hearts of men with hot desire for war, with insatiable greed and shameful lust, with parricide, incest, sacrilege, or any other evil of that sort. At other times the Furies pursue the guilty and conscience-stricken soul with terror and the fire of wrath. The second kind of madness is far different from this. It comes from me and is to be desired above all things. It arises whenever a cheerful confusion of the mind frees the spirit from care and at the same time anoints it with many-sided delight. It is the state of mind that Cicero desired as a defense against the evils of his age. The Greek in Horace[8] also had the right idea. He was just sufficiently mad to sit alone in the theater all day, laughing and applauding at a bare stage, because he thought that tragedies were being enacted there. Otherwise he was sane enough—pleasant with his friends, kind to his wife, and indulgent to his servants, who could uncork a bottle without his getting angry. When the care of family and physician had freed him of his disease, he protested that he had been killed rather than cured, that they had taken away his pleasures and destroyed his delightful delusions. And he was perfectly right. They were the mad ones themselves, and needed the medicine more than he did. What sense is there in regarding a fortunate delusion like his as a disease to be purged with drugs?

It is not certain that every delusion and vagary ought to be called

5. Distinguishing different types of love. 6. Horace, *Odes*, Book III, Ode iv, 11. 5–6. 7. *Aeneid*, Book VI, l. 135. 8. What follows is a paraphrase of a passage in Horace's *Epistles*, Book II, Epistle ii, 11. 128–140.

madness. A short-sighted man who thinks a mule is an ass is not commonly considered insane, nor is one who judges popular music to be great poetry. However, we must grant that a man is pretty nearly mad if he is continually and extraordinarily deluded by both his senses and his judgment. Take, for example, a person who thinks he is listening to a symphony orchestra whenever an ass brays, or a beggar who believes himself to be Croesus. Nevertheless, when this extreme madness gives pleasure, as it usually does, it is remarkably delightful both to those who are possessed by it, and to those who look on and are not mad in exactly the same way. Indeed this kind of madness is much more common than the ordinary person realizes. One madman laughs at another; they take turns entertaining each other. And the maddest one gets the biggest laugh.

If Folly is any judge, the happiest man is the one who is the most thoroughly deluded. May he maintain that ecstasy. It comes only from me, and is so widespread that I doubt if there is one man anywhere who is consistently wise and untouched by some madness. It may be only a tendency to think a gourd is a woman; but since very few see eye to eye with him on this, he will be called mad. When a man foolishly maintains that his wife (whom he shares with many others) is a pluperfect Penelope, however, nobody calls him mad, because they see that this is a plight common to other husbands.

To this latter class belong those who sacrifice everything for hunting. They swear that the sound of the horn and the baying of the hounds fill them with indescribable joy. I understand that even the dung of the dogs smells like cinnamon to them. And what is so delightful as an animal being butchered? Bulls and oxen are of course slaughtered by commoners, but it is a crime for anyone except a gentleman to touch wild game. Bareheaded and kneeling, he performs the ceremony with a special knife (no other can be used), cutting certain parts in approved order. The silent company stands as if spellbound by some novelty, although it has seen the spectacle a thousand times. If one of them is given a piece to taste, he feels that he has risen somewhat in the ranks of nobility. They think they are living royally, whereas they are really gaining nothing from this butchering and eating of animals, except to degenerate into animals themselves.

A similar class is those who are afire with a tremendous enthusiasm for building. They change round structures into square ones, and then back into round ones again. There is no end to this, until, having built themselves into poverty, they have no house to live in, and nothing to eat. What of it? In the meantime, they have been happy.

Next to these, I believe, are those who with new and secret arts labor to transmute the forms of things and who ransack earth and sea

for a fifth essence.[9] Lured on by hope, and begrudging neither pain nor cost, they contrive, with marvelous ingenuity, their own delightful deception. Finally, they have spent all their money and can't afford another furnace. Even then, however, they dream on pleasantly, urging others to experience the same happiness. When absolutely all hope is gone, they find much comfort in this last thought, "In great things, it is enough to have tried." They complain that life is too short for the magnitude of their undertaking.

I am not sure that gamblers should be admitted to our fellowship, and yet some of these addicts are a foolish and ridiculous sight. At the sound of the dice their hearts beat faster. The hope of winning always lures them on, until their means are gone, until their ship is split on the gaming table, which is a more deadly promontory than Malea.[1] Now, when they have lost their shirt, they will cheat anyone except the winner, in order to preserve their word and honor. Think, also, of the old and half-blind fellows, who have to wear glasses to play. When well-earned gout has tied their joints in knots, they hire a proxy to put the dice in the box for them. A delightful affair, were it not that the game usually degenerates into a brawl, and so belongs to the Furies rather than to me.

A group that does belong with us beyond any doubt is made up of those who enjoy telling and hearing monstrous lies and tall tales. They never get enough of ghosts and goblins and the like. They are most pleased by stories that are farthest from the truth. Such wonders are a diversion from boredom, and they may also be very profitable, especially for priests and pardoners.

Closely related are those who have reached the foolish but comforting belief that if they gaze on a picture of Polyphemus-Christopher,[2] they will not die that day; or that whoever speaks the right words to an image of Barbara[3] will return unharmed from battle; or that a novena[4] to Erasmus, with proper prayers and candles, will shortly make one rich. In St. George they have turned up another Hercules or Hippolytus.[5] They all but adore his horse, which is piously studded and ornamented, and they ingratiate themselves by small gifts. To swear by St. George's brass helmets is an oath for a king. Then, what shall I say of those who happily delude themselves with forged pardons for their sins? They calculate the time to be spent in Purgatory down to the year, month, day, and hour, as if from a foolproof mathematical table. There are also those who propose to get everything they desire by relying on magical charms and prayers devised

9. A substance (in addition to the four traditional elements—earth, water, air, and fire) of which the heavenly bodies were believed to be composed. 1. A proverbially dangerous promontory in Greece. 2. Polyphemus is the Cyclops (one-eyed giant) in Homer's *Odyssey*; St. Christopher is also represented with only one eye. 3. St. Barbara, supposed to protect her worshipers against fire and artillery. 4. A nine days' devotion. 5. In Greco-Roman mythology, both fought against monsters.

by some pious impostor for the sake of his soul, or for profit. They will have wealth, honor, pleasure, plenty, good health, long life, a vigorous old age, and at last, a place next to Christ in heaven. However they don't want that seat of honor until the very last minute; celestial pleasures may come only when worldly pleasures, hung on to with tooth and nail, finally depart.

I picture a business man, a soldier, or a judge taking from all his loot one small coin as a proper expiation for the infinite evil of his life. He thinks it possible to buy up, like notes, so many perjuries, rapes, debauches, fights, murders, frauds, lies and treacheries. Having done this, he feels free to start with a clean slate on a new round of sin. How foolish also—and how happy—are those who expect something more than the highest happiness if they repeat daily the seven verses of the Psalms. These are the verses believed to have been pointed out to St. Bernard by the devil. He was a merry fellow but not very shrewd, since his tongue was loosened by the saint's trick.[6] Things like that are so foolish that I am almost ashamed of them myself; yet they are accepted not only by the laity but by the professors of theology themselves. The same thing on a larger scale occurs when sections of the country set up regional saints, and assign peculiar rites and powers to each one. One gives relief from toothache, another aids women in labor, a third recovers stolen goods, a fourth succors the shipwrecked, and still another watches over the sheep—the list is too long to finish. Some are helpful in a number of difficulties, especially the Virgin Mother, whom the common people honor more than they do the Son.

Do men ask anything but folly from these saints? Among all the gifts hanging from the walls and even from the ceilings of churches, have you ever seen one in payment for an escape from folly, or for making the giver wiser? One person has escaped from drowning. Another has lived after being run through. This fellow had the good luck or the nerve to leave the battlefield, allowing the others to fight. Another was delivered from the shadow of the gallows by the patron saint of thieves so that he could continue to relieve those who are burdened with too much wealth. This one escaped from jail. That one crossed up his doctor by surviving a fever. This man was saved by a poisoned drink, which loosened his bowels instead of killing him. His wife was not exactly pleased, since she lost both her labor and expense. Another's wagon was overturned, but he drove his horses home unharmed. That fellow's house fell on him and he lived. This one sneaked out safely when he was surprised by a husband. No one, however, gives thanks for warding off folly. It is so pleasant not to be wise that men will seek to avoid anything rather than folly.

6. A devil had told St. Bernard that repeating seven particular verses of the Psalms would bring him the certainty of salvation; "the saint's trick" was that of proposing to recite all of the Psalms.

Why should I go farther on this sea of superstition? "If I had a hundred tongues, a hundred mouths, a voice of brass, I could not describe all the forms of folly, or list all its names."[7] The life of Christians everywhere runs over with such nonsense. Superstitions are allowed and even promoted by the priests; they do not regret anything so profitable. Imagine, in the midst of this, some insolent wise men speaking the real truth: "You will not die badly if you live well. Your sins are redeemed if to the payment of money you add tears, vigils, prayers, fastings, and hatred of evil, and if you change your whole way of living. The saints will favor you if you imitate them." A wise man who snarled out things like that would throw the world into turmoil and deprive it of happiness!

Also of our fellowship are those who while still living make elaborate funeral arrangements, even prescribing the number of candles, mourners, singers, and hired pall-bearers. They must think that their sight will be returned to them after they are dead, or that their corpses will feel ashamed at not being buried grandly. They labor as if they were planning a civic entertainment.

I must not pass over those nobodies who take enormous pride in empty titles of nobility. One will trace his family back to Aeneas, another to Brutus,[8] and a third to King Arthur. They are surrounded by busts and portraits of their ancestors. They name over their grandfathers and great-grandfathers, and have the old titles by heart. At the same time, they are not far from being senseless statues themselves, and are probably worth less than the ones they show off. My follower, Self-love, enables them to live happily, however; and there are always other fools who regard monsters like these as gods.

Of course Self-love brings joy to others too. This ape-like fellow here seems handsome enough to himself. That one drawing circles over there thinks he is another Euclid. The man with the rooster's voice considers himself a great musician. The happiest fool, however, is the dolt who glories in some talent which is really made possible by his followers. Seneca tells[9] of that double-happy rich man, for example, who had servants on hand to refresh his memory whenever he told stories. He was so weak he could hardly stand, but he was a great fighter—with the support of hired thugs.

Artists are notoriously conceited. They would rather lose the family homestead than any part of their talent. This is especially true of actors, singers, orators, and poets. The worse they are, the more insolent, pushing, and conceited they become. And the more applause they receive. The worst always please the most, because the majority of people, as I have remarked, are fools. If the poorer artist is most

7. A variation on a passage in the *Aeneid*, Book VI, ll. 625–627, in which, however, Virgil is talking of "forms of crime" rather than of "folly." 8. The legendary founder of Britain. 9. The reference has not been traced.

pleased with himself and is admired by the largest number, why should he wish to have true skill? It will cost him more; it will make him self-conscious and critical; and it will please far fewer of his audience.

I observe that races and cities are also attended by self-love. The English pride themselves on their good looks, their music, and their fine food, among other things. Noble or royal lineage is the claim of all Scots, together with argumentative skill. The French are the masters of courtesy; and the Parisians, in addition, are the only ones who understand theology.[1] The Italians have a monopoly on literature and eloquence, and they are pleased to admit that they alone are not barbarians. Happiest in this delusion are the Romans, who dream pleasantly of their ancient glories. The Venetians are content with their own nobility. The Greeks, of course, discovered the arts and possess the heroes of antiquity. Christian superstitions entertain the Turks and the other actual barbarians, who boast of their own religions. Better yet, the Jews steadfastly await the Messiah, and still hold grimly to Moses. The Spaniards scorn all other soldiers; and the Germans pride themselves on their great size and their knowledge of magic. I believe this is sufficient to convince you that the happiness of men, individually and collectively, springs from self-love.

Another source of pleasure is flattery, an extension of self-love. Instead of admiring yourself, you simply admire someone else. Nowadays flattery is condemned, but only among those who confuse the names of things with the things themselves. They think that flattery is necessarily insincere. The example of dumb animals should show them how wrong they are. What is more fawning than a dog? And yet, what is more faithful and a better friend to man? Or perhaps you prefer fierce lions, tigers, and leopards? Of course there is a harmful kind of flattery, the kind with which traitors and mockers destroy their victims; but my kind springs from kindliness and candor. It is much closer to virtue than is its opposite, surliness—or what Horace calls a heavy and awkward rudeness.[2] It raises the spirits and dispels grief; it stimulates the faint, enlivens the dull, and eases the suffering; it brings lovers together and keeps them together. It entices boys to study literature; it inspires the old. Disguised as praise, it warns and instructs princes without offense. In short, it makes everyone more pleased with himself—which is the chief part of happiness. What is more courteous than the way two mules scratch each other? There is no need to point out that flattery is important in the admired art of oratory, that it is a great part of medicine, and that it is a still

1. The Sorbonne, the theological faculty in Paris, was the center of theological studies in Europe. 2. Horace, *Epistles*, Book I, Epistle xviii, ll. 508.

greater part of poetry. It is nothing less than the sugar and spice of all human intercourse.

Still, it is a sad thing, they say, to be deceived. No; the saddest thing is not to be deceived. The notion that happiness comes from a knowledge of things as they really are is wrong. Happiness resides in opinion. Human affairs are so obscure and various that nothing can be clearly known. This was the sound conclusion of the Academics,[3] who were the least surly of the philosophers. At least if something can be truly known, it is rarely anything that adds to the pleasure of life. Anyway, man's mind is much more taken with appearances than with reality. This can be easily and surely tested by going to church. When anything serious is being said, the congregation dozes or squirms. But if the ranter—I mean the reverend—begins some old wives' tale, as often happens, everyone wakes up and strains to hear. You will also see more devotion being paid to such fabulous and poetic saints as George, Christopher, or Barbara than to Peter or Paul or even to Christ Himself. But these examples belong elsewhere.

The price of this kind of happiness is very low. Much more must be paid for substantial things, even for the least of them—grammar, for instance. It is easy enough to acquire mere opinions; nevertheless they bring greater happiness than knowledge does. The satisfaction of a man who thinks rotten kippers taste and smell like ambrosia is not affected by the fact that his neighbor cannot abide their odor. On the other hand, if the finest fish turn your stomach, their quality has no bearing on your happiness. A man who thinks his extremely ugly wife is another Venus is as well off as if she really were beautiful. Here's a person who gazes admiringly at a picture made of red lead and mud which he believes is by Apelles or Zeuxis. Isn't he happier than someone who has paid a high price for an authentic masterpiece, but who gets little pleasure from it? I know a man by my name,[4] a practical joker, who gave his new wife some imitation jewels and persuaded her that they were genuine and very valuable. Now what difference did it make to the girl? She was delighted with the glass trinkets and kept them locked in a secret place. In the meantime, the husband had saved money, had enjoyed fooling his wife, and had won her devotion as well as he would have by a more expensive present.

What difference do you see between the self-satisfied inhabitants of Plato's cave[5] who contentedly admire the shadows of things, and

3. Philosophers of Plato's school, the Academy, which later became a school of skeptics. 4. Sir Thomas More, who was a close friend of Erasmus's and on whose name Erasmus puns with *moria* (Latin for "folly"). 5. The reference is to Plato's allegory in the *Republic*, Book VII, where he compares the soul in the body to a prisoner chained in a cave, his back against the light, able to see only the shadows of things outside.

the wise man who emerges from the cave and sees reality? If Lucian's Micyllus[6] could have dreamed forever his rich and golden dream, there would have been no reason for him to desire any other kind of happiness. Evidently, then, there is either no difference between a fool and a wise man, or if there is a difference, a fool has the better of it. A fool's happiness costs least—no more than a bit of illusion. In addition, it is enjoyed in the company of a great many others. The good things of life must be shared to be delightful; and who has not heard of the scarcity of wise men, if indeed any exist at all. The Greeks listed seven all told;[7] a more accurate census would do well to turn up one-half or one-third of a wise man.

Of course drink will drown your sorrows, but only for a time. The next morning they come galloping back, riding four white horses, as the saying is. Folly, on the other hand, is a spree that never ends. Its effect is complete and immediate. Without requiring any bothersome preparations, it fills the heart with joy. It is available to all, rather than to a chosen few, as with other gifts of the gods. Vintage wine is not made everywhere; beauty comes to few, and eloquence to fewer still. Not many are rich, and not many can be kings. Mars often favors neither side; Neptune drowns more than he saves. The majority are turned away from wisdom. Jove himself thunders, and the anti-Joves—Pluto, Ate, Poena, Febris,[8] and the others—are executioners rather than gods. Only I, great-hearted Folly, embrace all men equally. Nor do I come only when prayed for. If some devotion is neglected, I don't grow testy and demand expiation. I don't upset heaven and earth if I have been left at home and not invited along with the other gods to smell the sacrifices. In fact, the other gods are so hard to please that it is safer and wiser not to try to worship them, but rather to avoid them altogether. Men are sometimes like that; so thin-skinned and irritable that hands off is the best policy.

Even though all this is so, I understand that no one sacrifices to Folly or builds a temple for her. Such ingratitude, I repeat, is amazing. At the same time, I good-naturedly persuade myself that respect is not really lacking. What need have I for incense, meal, a he-goat, or a she-hog, so long as men everywhere whole-heartedly worship me in the way that preachers tell us is best? Let Diana have her human sacrifices! I am not envious when I consider that all men honor me in the truest way, that is, by taking me to their hearts and manifesting me in their lives and actions. This kind of worship of the saints is not exactly customary among Christians. Plenty of them burn little candles to the Virgin, and in the middle of the day, when

6. A character in Lucian's *The Dream, or the Cock* who dreams that he has taken the place of a rich man. 7. The Seven Sages listed were philosophers of the sixth century B.C., among them Thales and Solon. 8. Pluto was god of the underworld; *Ate*, goddess of revenge and discord; *Poena*, goddess of punishment; *Febris*, goddess of fever.

it does no good; but how few of them burn with zeal to imitate her in chastity, temperance, and love of heavenly things! That, after all, is the true worship, and it is by far the most pleasing to those above. Besides, why should I desire a temple, when the whole world, if I am not mistaken, is a handsome shrine to me? Nor are priests lacking—except where men are lacking. As for stone and painted images, I am not so foolish as to demand what stands in the way of worship. The stupid adore such substitutes in place of the saints themselves, who are finally crowded out altogether. The same thing would happen to me. One might say, of course, that there are as many statues to me as there are people who look foolish, even unintentionally so. What do I care if other gods are worshipped in certain places on stated days—Phoebus at Rhodes, Venus at Cyprus, Juno at Argos, Minerva at Athens, Jupiter at Olympus, Neptune at Tarentum, Priapus[9] at Lampsacus? Why should I envy them when all men eagerly offer greater sacrifices to me?

[The third section deals with "The Followers of Folly," and includes among them, in lively and paradoxical descriptions, all categories of people, from merchants to poets, from scholars to popes and cardinals; in fact, Folly concludes: "My real point has been that no man can live happily unless he has been admitted into my mysteries and enjoys my favor."]

IV. The Christian Fool

. . . There is really no need for me to marshal proof[1] with so much care, when in the mystical psalms Christ himself, speaking to the Father, says perfectly plainly, "Thou knowest my foolishness."[2] It is not hard to see why fools are greatly pleasing to God. We know that great princes look with suspicion on men who are too clever, and hate them. Julius Caesar, for instance, suspected and hated Brutus and Cassius, while he did not fear the drunken Antony at all. Nero, likewise, was suspicious of Seneca, and Dionysius[3] of Plato; but all princes take pleasure in duller and simpler souls. In the same way, Christ always hates and condemns those who rely on their own wisdom. Paul testifies to this clearly enough when he says, "God has chosen the foolish things of the world,"[4] and when he says, "It has pleased God to save the world by foolishness,"[5] since it could never be redeemed by wisdom. God himself indicates this plainly when he

9. A god of procreation, son of Dionysus and Aphrodite. 1. Of the relationship between "Folly" and Christianity. 2. The quotation is from Psalm 69:5, where the speaker is not Christ, but the Psalmist. 3. Dionysius the Younger, tyrant of Syracuse, in Sicily, in the fourth century B.C. 4. "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise." (I Corinthians 1:27. 5. "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

proclaims through the mouth of the prophet, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and I will reject the prudence of the prudent."[6] Christ also gave thanks that God had concealed the mystery of salvation from the wise, but had revealed it to babes, that is, to fools.[7] The Greek for "babes" is *νηπιοισ*, which is the opposite of *σοφοισ*, "the wise." Equally pertinent is the fact that in the Gospels Christ often attacks the scribes and Pharisees and doctors of laws, whereas he faithfully defends the ignorant multitude. What is "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees,"[8] except "Woe unto you that are wise"? Little children, women, and fishermen seem to delight Him most. Even among animals, those pleased Christ best which had the least slyness. He preferred to ride upon a donkey, though had He chosen He could safely have ridden upon a lion. The Holy Spirit descended in the likeness of a dove, not of an eagle or a hawk; and the Gospels frequently mention harts, fawns, and lambs. Those who are chosen for eternal life are called "sheep." No animal is more foolish, as is shown by the proverbial phrase in Aristotle, "sheepish character," which was suggested by the stupidity of the animal and is commonly used as a taunt against dull and foolish men. Nevertheless, Christ declares himself the shepherd of his flock, and even takes delight in the name of "the Lamb," as when John pointed Him out, "Behold the Lamb of God."[9] The expression also appears frequently in the book of *Revelations*.

What do these things declare except that all men, even the pious, are fools? And that Christ himself, although He possessed the wisdom of the Father,[1] became something like a fool in order to cure the folly of mankind, when He assumed the nature and being of a mortal? And that He was made "to be sin"[2] in order to redeem sinners? He did not wish to redeem them by any way except by the foolishness of the Cross, and by weak and simple apostles. These He taught to practice folly and to avoid wisdom. He incited them by the example of children, lilies, mustard-seed, and sparrows,[3] all of them foolish things, living without art or care, by the light of nature alone. Furthermore, He forbade the apostles to be concerned about how they should answer the charges of the magistrates, and He forbade them to pry into the times and seasons. They should not rely on their own wisdom, but should wholly depend upon Him. We know, likewise, that the Creator commanded men not to eat of the Tree of Knowledge, just as if knowledge were the destroyer of happiness.

6. ". . . for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid." 7. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." (Matthew 11:25.) 8. Luke 11:44. 9. John 1:29, 36. 1. "But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." (I Corinthians 1:24.) 2. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin." (II Corinthians 5:21.) 3. For the reference to *children*, see Luke 18:17; for *lilies*, see Matthew 6:28; for *mustard-seed*, see Luke, 17:6; for *sparrows*, see Matthew 10:29.

Paul roundly condemns knowledge as that which puffs up[4] and works harm. St. Bernard is following him, I believe, when he explains that the mountain wherein Lucifer established his headquarters was "the Mount of Knowledge."

Surely we should not overlook this argument, that folly is so pleasing to the heavenly powers that forgiveness of its errors is certain; whereas nothing is forgiven to wisdom. And so it comes about that when the prudent pray to be forgiven, although they were clever enough when they sinned, they use the excuse and defense of having acted foolishly. This was the argument that Aaron used in the book of *Numbers*, if I remember correctly, to excuse his sister from punishment: "I beseech, my master, that you lay not this sin, which we have committed foolishly, to our charge."[5] Saul asked forgiveness of David by saying, "It is apparent that I have done foolishly."[6] David, in turn, speaks placatingly to the Lord: "I beseech Thee, do away the iniquity of thy servant, for I have done very foolishly."[7] It is as if he could not obtain grace by praying unless he pleaded folly and ignorance. Much stronger proof is the fact that Christ when he prayed on the Cross for His enemies, "Father, forgive them," pleaded no other excuse than ignorance, saying, "for they know not what they do."[8] In the same manner, Paul wrote to Timothy: "But therefore I have obtained the mercy of the Lord, because I acted ignorantly in unbelief."[9] What is "I acted ignorantly" except "I acted foolishly, not maliciously"? What is "But therefore I have obtained the mercy of the Lord" except "I should not have obtained it if I had not been supported by the excuse of folly"? The mystical psalmist, whom I failed to recall at the proper place, aids us: "Remember not the sins of my youth and my ignorances."[1]

Let me stop pursuing the infinite and try to summarize. The Christian religion on the whole seems to have some kinship with folly, while it has none at all with wisdom. If you want proof of this, observe first that children, old people, women, and fools take more delight than anyone else in holy and religious things; and that they are therefore ever nearest the altars, led no doubt solely by instinct. Next, you will notice that the founders of religion have prized simplicity exceedingly, and have been the bitterest foes of learning. Finally, no people seem to act more foolishly than those who have been truly possessed with Christian piety. They give away whatever is theirs; they overlook injuries, allow themselves to be cheated, make no distinction between friends and enemies, shun pleasure, and feast on

4. "Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth." (I Corinthians 8:1.) 5. "And Aaron said unto Moses, Alas, my lord, I beseech thee, lay not the sin upon us, wherein we have done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned." (Numbers 12:11.) 6. ". . . behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly." (I Samuel 26:21.) 7. I Chronicles 21:8. 8. Luke 23:34. 9. ". . . but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." (I Timothy 1:13.) 1. "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions." (Psalms 25:7.)

hunger, vigils, tears, labors, and scorn. They disdain life, and utterly prefer death; in short, they seem to have become altogether indifferent to ordinary interests, quite as if their souls lived elsewhere and not in their bodies. What is this, if not to be mad? Considering this, we should not find it very strange that the apostles appeared to be drunk on new wine, and that Paul, in the eyes of Festus, his judge,[2] looked as if he had gone mad.

. . . Since the pious and the vulgar are so radically different, it comes about that each appears to the other to be mad. It is obvious to me, however, that the word is more correctly applied to the pious rather than to the others. This will become clearer if I briefly demonstrate, as I promised to do, that their *summum bonum* is nothing but a kind of insanity. First, let us assume that Plato was dreaming of approximately the same thing when he wrote that "the madness of lovers is the highest kind of happiness."[3] He who loves intensely no longer lives in himself but in whatever he loves, and the more he can leave himself and enter into the other, the happier he is. Now when a soul is eager to leave the body, and does not use its bodily organs normally, you call it madness and rightly so. Isn't this what is meant by the common sayings: "there's nobody home," and "to come to," and "he is himself again"? Furthermore, as the love becomes more nearly complete, the madness is greater and more delightful. What is that heavenly life, then, towards which the truly religious aspire with such devotion? Very certainly the stronger and victorious spirit will absorb the body, and it will do this the more easily because now it is in its own realm, and also because during life it has cleansed and contracted the body in preparation for this change. Then the soul will itself be marvellously absorbed by that supreme spirit, which is greater than its infinite parts. And so at last the whole man will be outside of himself; nor will he be happy for any other reason than that, being outside of himself, he shall have some ineffable portion of that supreme good which draws all things unto itself. Although this happiness becomes complete only when the soul has recovered its original body by being clothed with immortality; yet since the life of pious folk is a contemplation and a shadowing forth of that other life, they feel a glow and a foretaste of the reward to come. This is only a drop, of course, in comparison with the fountain of eternal happiness, but it far surpasses all physical pleasures, even all mortal delights rolled into one. By so much does the spiritual exceed the bodily, the invisible exceed the visible. This surely is what the prophet has promised: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."[4] And this is that portion of folly which will not be

2. A Roman official. ". . . Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad." (Acts 26:24.) 3. See Plato, *Phaedrus*. 4. I Corinthians 2:9.

taken away by the transformation of life, but will be perfected.

Those who are permitted to have a foretaste of this—and it comes to very few—experience something very like madness. They say things that are not quite coherent or conventional, sounds without meaning, and their expressions change suddenly. They are exuberant and melancholy, crying, laughing, and sighing by turns; in brief, they are truly beside themselves. When presently they return to themselves, they say that they do not know where they have been, whether in the body or out of it, waking or sleeping. They do not remember what they have heard, seen, said, or done; and yet mistily as in a dream, they know that they were happiest when they were out of their minds. So they are sorry to come to themselves again, and they desire nothing more than to be mad always with this kind of madness. And this is only the slightest taste of the happiness hereafter.

But indeed I have long since forgotten who I am and have run out of bounds. If anything I have said seems sharp or gossipy, remember that it is Folly and a woman who has spoken. At the same time remember the Greek proverb, "Even a foolish man will often speak a word in season." Or perhaps you think that does not hold for women? I see that you are expecting a peroration, but you are certainly foolish if you think that I can remember any part of such a hodgepodge of words as I have poured out. There is an old saying, "I hate a drinking companion with a memory." Here is a new one, "I hate an audience that remembers anything."

And so farewell. Applaud, live, drink, most distinguished worshippers of Folly.

BALDESAR CASTIGLIONE

1478–1529

Castiglione was born in 1478 at Casatico, near Mantua. His father, Cristoforo, was a courtier, and his mother was a Gonzaga, related to the lords of Mantua. In Milan Castiglione received a humanistic education and prepared himself for the career of a courtier. As such, from 1499 to 1503 he was in the service of Francesco Gonzaga, lord of Mantua, and from 1504 to 1513 he was at Urbino in the service of Guidobaldo da Montefeltro, duke of Urbino, and later of Guidobaldo's successor, Francesco Maria della Rovere, commander of the Pope's army, whom he followed on military compaigns. In 1506 he went to England on a mission to the court of Henry VII, from whom he received, on behalf of his lord, the Order of the Garter and to whom he presented a painting by Raphael. In 1511 he took part in the siege of Mirandola under Pope Julius II (Giuliano della Rovere). As a reward for his services, he was made a count. In 1515 he was again with the Gonzagas, who made him their ambassador to Pope Leo X (Giovanni de' Me-

dici). In Rome, his friends included Raphael and Michelangelo, and he saw Renaissance social and intellectual life at its most brilliant. He thus not only codified the ideal of the refined and "virtuous" courtier in his works, but also embodied it in his life. In 1525 Clement VII made him Papal nuncio to the court of Emperor Charles V in Spain. His premature death in Toledo in 1529 was probably caused in part by sorrow at his failure to foresee the emperor's designs as they most dramatically took shape in the storming and plundering of Rome in 1527 (the "Sack of Rome"). *The Book of the Courtier*, in which the court of Urbino is idealized, was written between 1508 and 1516 and published in 1528 in Venice.

Even from these brief data, it appears very likely that as Castiglione advanced in experience of the world, his treatise on the ideal courtly gentleman acquired a nostalgic character. Indeed, in reading selections from *The Book of the Courtier*, it is helpful to consider the description with which the book opens as a "setting," because this approach serves to suggest the theatrical atmosphere that pervades the work. We should not, however, forget that the characters whose highly mannered conversation the book records were all actual members (presented with their own names) of a courtly milieu of which Castiglione himself had been a part. These people, then, were known to him not as objects of adulation or satire (the two extremes with which we are perhaps accustomed to associate literary portrayals of the aristocracy), but rather as equals and companions whose standards were his own. Hence Castiglione's attitude contains neither flattery nor mockery; the theatrical way in which the scene is set and the characters talk (the traditional form of the Platonic dialogue acquires here the tone of what in the Renaissance was called "civil conversation") is simply the expression of a style, "artificial" in no derogatory sense, which both the characters and the author considered ideally appropriate to people of their kind and station. The speakers appear somewhat like ladies and gentlemen who have kindly consented, on some courtly occasion, to take roles in a play, except that it happens that the play is their own; they enact, so to speak, themselves. The strong element of stylization (the elaborate phrasings, the manner of repartee) is not forced by the writer on his material; we feel rather that in his formalizing process he has merely emphasized qualities inherent in the world he portrays. In this sense the book is an ideal vision of Renaissance court society at its most refined and self-conscious; of a society which had a penchant, as was observed in the general introduction (p. 1006), for the well-finished gesture, the formally perfect act of its kind—a penchant that was applied to all modes and norms of activity, conversation or dueling, art, courtship, etiquette.

Our selections are from the first of the four books (or evening conversations) into which the *Courtier* is divided. The purpose of this first book is to arrive, through the contributions of the obviously experienced speakers, at a description of the perfect courtly gentleman. Although Machiavelli too, in his description of the prince, presents something of an idealization of a type, his explicit intention is to come down to reality and practical motives, in contrast to the abstractions of preceding authors. Castiglione's attitude is different from the start. He has what we may call a Platonic turn of mind, in the sense that he intentionally and openly seeks the ideal and permanent form behind the transient and fragmentary examples. This point of view in

the *Courtier* suggests, among other things, the sense of rule, of adjustment to correct norms; Castiglione's optimistic assumption is that such norms exist and can be defined, and that man can educate himself to comply with them. There is even, as the famous passage on "nonchalance" (*sprezzatura*) at the end of our second selection suggests, a sort of formalization of informality.

Considered against the background of the period with which we are concerned here, *The Book of the Courtier* presents a healthy corrective to those views of the Renaissance court, especially popularized by drama, in which that institution is the typical scene of intrigue, corruption, and violence. Castiglione codifies a moment of perfection and gentle equilibrium.

Julia Cartwright Ady's illustrated biography, *Baldassare Castiglione, the Perfect Courtier. His Life and Letters*, 2 vols. (1908), is old-fashioned but thorough. Robert W. Hanning and David Rosand, eds., *Castiglione: The Ideal and the Real in Renaissance Culture* (1983), offers several views of Castiglione. An essay on *The Courtier* is found in Joseph Anthony Mazzeo's *Renaissance and Revolution: The Remaking of European Thought* (1965).

The Book of the Courtier[1]

[The Setting][2]

On the slopes of the Apennines towards the Adriatic sea, almost in the centre of Italy, there lies (as everyone knows) the little city of Urbino. Although amid mountains, and less pleasing ones than perhaps some others that we see in many places, it has yet enjoyed such favour of heaven that the country round about is very fertile and rich in crops; so that besides the wholesomeness of the air, there is great abundance of everything needful for human life. But among the greatest blessings that can be attributed to it, this I believe to be the chief, that for a long time it has ever been ruled by the best of lords; although in the calamities of the universal wars of Italy, it was for a season deprived of them.[3] But without seeking further, we can give good proof of this by the glorious memory of Duke Federico,[4] who in his day was the light of Italy; nor is there lack of credible and abundant witnesses, who are still living, to his prudence, humanity, justice, liberality, unconquered courage,—and to his military discipline, which is conspicuously attested by his numerous victories, his capture of impregnable places, the sudden swiftness of his expeditions, the frequency with which he put to flight large and formidable armies by means of a very small force, and by his loss of no single battle whatever; so that we may not unreasonably compare him to many famous men of old.

1. Translated by Leonard E. Opdycke. 2. Book I, Chapters 2–4. 3. For a certain period of time, when Duke Guidobaldo, described below, had to relinquish the duchy of Urbino to Cesare Borgia, who occupied it by force. 4. Federico II (1422–1482), of the house of Montefeltro, duke of Urbino.

Among his other praiseworthy deeds, he built on the rugged site of Urbino a palace regarded by many as the most beautiful to be found in all Italy; and he so well furnished it with everything suitable that it seemed not a palace but a city in the form of a palace; and not merely with what is ordinarily used,—such as silver vases, hangings of richest cloth-of-gold and silk, and other similar things,—but for ornament he added countless antique statues in marble and bronze, pictures most choice, and musical instruments of every sort, nor would he admit anything there that was not very rare and excellent. Then at very great cost he collected a goodly number of most excellent and rare books in Greek, Latin and Hebrew, all of which he adorned with gold and with silver, esteeming this to be the chiefest excellence of his great palace.

Following then the course of nature, and already sixty-five years old,[5] he died gloriously, as he had lived; and he left as his successor a motherless little boy of ten years, his only son Guidobaldo. Heir to the State, he seemed to be heir also to all his father's virtues, and soon his noble nature gave such promise as seemed not permissible to hope for from mortal man; so that men esteemed none among the notable deeds of Duke Federico to be greater than to have begotten such a son. But envious of so much virtue, fortune thwarted this glorious beginning with all her power; so that before Duke Guido reached the age of twenty years, he fell ill of the gout, which grew upon him with grievous pain, and in a short space of time so crippled all his members that he could neither stand upon his feet nor move; and thus one of the fairest and most promising forms in the world was distorted and spoiled in tender youth.

And not content even with this, fortune was so contrary to him in all his purposes, that he could seldom carry into effect anything that he desired; and although he was very wise of counsel and unconquered in spirit, it seemed that what he undertook, both in war and in everything else whether small or great, always ended ill for him. And proof of this is found in his many and diverse calamities, which he ever bore with such strength of mind, that his spirit was never vanquished by fortune; nay, scorning her assaults with unbroken courage, he lived in illness as if in health and in adversity as if fortunate, with perfect dignity and universal esteem; so that although he was thus infirm in body, he fought with most honourable rank[6] in the service of their Serene Highnesses the Kings of Naples, Alfonso and Ferdinand the Younger;[7] later with Pope Alexander VI,[8] and with the Venetian and Florentine signories.

5. Actually only sixty. 6. As a mercenary captain or *condottiere*. 7. Alfonso II and Ferdinand II (both of the house of Aragon), kings of Naples in the late fifteenth century. 8. Rodrigo Borgia, pope from 1492 to 1503.

Upon the accession of Julius II[9] to the pontificate, he was made Captain of the Church;[1] at which time, following his accustomed habit, above all else he took care to fill his household with very noble and valiant gentlemen, with whom he lived most familiarly, delighting in their intercourse: wherein the pleasure he gave to others was not less than that he received from others, he being well versed in both the [learned] languages, and uniting affability and pleasantness to a knowledge of things without number. And besides this, the greatness of his spirit so set him on, that although he could not practise in person the exercises of chivalry, as he once had done, yet he took the utmost pleasure in witnessing them in others; and by his words, now correcting now praising every man according to desert, he clearly showed his judgment in those matters; wherefore, in jousts and tournaments, in riding, in the handling of every sort of weapon, as well as in pastimes, games, music,—in short, in all the exercises proper to noble cavaliers,—everyone strove so to show himself, as to merit being deemed worthy of such noble fellowship.

Thus all the hours of the day were assigned to honourable and pleasant exercises as well for the body as for the mind; but since my lord Duke was always wont by reason of his infirmity to retire to sleep very early after supper, everyone usually betook himself at that hour to the presence of my lady Duchess, Elisabetta Gonzaga;[2] where also was ever to be found my lady Emilia Pia, who was endowed with such lively wit and judgment that, as you know, it seemed as if she were the Mistress of us all, and as if everyone gained wisdom and worth from her. Here then, gentle discussions and innocent pleasantries were heard, and on the face of everyone a jocund gaiety was seen depicted, so that the house could truly be called the very abode of mirth: nor ever elsewhere, I think, was so relished, as once was here, how great sweetness may flow from dear and cherished companionship; for not to speak of the honour it was to each of us to serve such a lord as he of whom I have just spoken, there was born in the hearts of all a supreme contentment every time we came into the presence of my lady Duchess; and it seemed as if this were a chain that held us all linked in love, so that never was concord of will or cordial love between brothers greater than that which here was between us all.

The same was it among the ladies, with whom there was intercourse most free and honourable; for everyone was permitted to talk, sit, jest and laugh with whom he pleased; but such was the reverence

9. In 1503. 1. Captain in the pontiff's army. 2. Of the ruling family of Mantua, she had married Duke Guidobaldo in 1488. She is the one who presides over this courtly scene. *Emilia Pia:* sister-in-law and companion of the duchess, widow of an illegitimate son of the old duke, Federico, she wittily directs much of the conversation.

paid to the wish of my lady Duchess, that this same liberty was a very great check; nor was there anyone who did not esteem it the utmost pleasure he could have in the world, to please her, and the utmost pain to displease her. And thus, most decorous manners were here joined with greatest liberty, and games and laughter in her presence were seasoned not only with witty jests, but with gracious and sober dignity; for that modesty and loftiness which governed all the acts, words and gestures of my lady Duchess, bantering and laughing, were such that she would have been known for a lady of noblest rank by anyone who saw her even but once. And impressing herself thus upon those about her, she seemed to attune us all to her own quality and tone; accordingly every man strove to follow this pattern, taking as it were a rule of beautiful behaviour from the presence of so great and virtuous a lady; whose highest qualities I do not now purpose to recount, they not being my theme and being well known to all the world, and far more because I could not express them with either tongue or pen; and those that perhaps might have been somewhat hid, fortune, as if wondering at such rare virtue, chose to reveal through many adversities and stings of calamity, so as to give proof that in the tender breast of woman, in company with singular beauty, there may abide prudence and strength of soul, and all those virtues that even among stern men are very rare.

["*Everything He May Do or Say Shall Be Stamped with Grace*"][3]

"I am of opinion[4] that the principal and true profession of the Courtier ought to be that of arms; which I would have him follow actively above all else, and be known among others as bold and strong, and loyal to whomsoever he serves. And he will win a reputation for these good qualities by exercising them at all times and in all places, since one may never fail in this without severest censure. And just as among women, their fair fame once sullied never recovers its first lustre, so that reputation of a gentleman who bears arms, if once it be in the least tarnished with cowardice or other disgrace, remains forever infamous before the world and full of ignominy. Therefore the more our Courtier excels in this art, the more he will be worthy of praise; and yet I do not deem essential in him that perfect knowledge of things and those other qualities that befit a commander; since this would be too wide a sea, let us be content, as we have said, with perfect loyalty and unconquered courage, and that he be always seen to possess them. For the courageous are often recognized even more

3. From Book I, Chapters 17–26. 4. The conversational "game" through which the courtiers at Urbino are attempting to achieve a description of the perfect courtly gentleman, is in progress. The speaker at this point is Count Ludovico da Canossa (1476–1532). A relative of the writer and a friend of the painter Raphael, he was later a bishop and held many important offices, such as that of papal ambassador to England.

in small things than in great; and frequently in perils of importance and where there are many spectators, some men are to be found, who, although their hearts be dead within them, yet, moved by shame or by the presence of others, press forward almost with their eyes shut, and do their duty God knows how. While on occasions of little moment, when they think they can avoid putting themselves in danger without being detected, they are glad to keep safe. But those who, even when they do not expect to be observed or seen or recognized by anyone, show their ardour and neglect nothing, however paltry, that may be laid to their charge,—they have that strength of mind which we seek in our Courtier.

"Not that we would have him look so fierce, or go about blustering, or say that he has taken his cuirass to wife, or threaten with those grim scowls that we have often seen in Berto; because to such men as this, one might justly say that which a brave lady jestingly said in gentle company to one whom I will not name at present; who, being invited by her out of compliment to dance, refused not only that, but to listen to the music, and many other entertainments proposed to him,—saying always that such silly trifles were not his business; so that at last the lady said, 'What is your business, then?' He replied with a sour look, 'To fight.' Then the lady at once said, 'Now that you are in no war and out of fighting trim, I should think it were a good thing to have yourself well oiled, and to stow yourself with all your battle harness in a closet until you be needed, lest you grow more rusty than you are'; and so, amid much laughter from the bystanders, she left the discomfited fellow to his silly presumption.

"Therefore let the man we are seeking, be very bold, stern, and always among the first, where the enemy are to be seen; and in every other place, gentle, modest, reserved, above all things avoiding ostentation and that impudent self-praise by which men ever excite hatred and disgust in all who hear them."

Then my lord Gaspar[5] replied:

"As for me, I have known few men excellent in anything whatever, who do not praise themselves; and it seems to me that this may well be permitted them; for when anyone who feels himself to be of worth, sees that he is not known to the ignorant by his works, he is offended that his worth should lie buried, and needs must in some way hold it up to view, in order that he may not be cheated of the fame that is the true reward of worthy effort. Thus among the ancient authors, whoever carries weight seldom fails to praise himself. They indeed are insufferable who do this without desert, but such we do not presume our Courtier to be."

The Count then said:

5. Count Gaspar Pallavicino (1486–1511), a very young member of the court, who died only a few years afterward.

"If you heard what I said, it was impudent and indiscriminate self-praise that I censured: and as you say, we surely ought not to form a bad opinion of a brave man who praises himself modestly, nay we ought rather to regard such praise as better evidence than if it came from the mouth of others. I say, however, that he, who in praising himself runs into no error and incurs no annoyance or envy at the hands of those that heard him, is a very discreet man indeed and merits praise from others in addition to that which he bestows upon himself; because it is a very difficult matter."

Then my lord Gaspar said:

"You must teach us that."

The Count replied:

"Among the ancient authors there is no lack of those who have taught it; but to my thinking, the whole art consists in saying things in such a way that they shall not seem to be said to that end, but let fall so naturally that it was impossible not to say them, and while seeming always to avoid self-praise, yet to achieve it; but not after the manner of those boasters, who open their mouths and let the words come forth haphazard. Like one of our friends a few days ago, who, being quite run through the thigh with a spear at Pisa, said he thought it was a fly that had stung him; and another man said he kept no mirror in his room because, when angry, he became so terrible to look at, that the sight of himself would have frightened him too much."

Everyone laughed at this, but Messer Cesare Gonzaga[6] added:

"Why do you laugh? Do you not know that Alexander the Great, on hearing the opinion of a philosopher to be that there was an infinite number of worlds, began to weep, and being asked why he wept, replied, 'Because I have not yet conquered one of them'; as if he would fain have vanquished all? Does not this seem to you a greater boast than that about the fly-sting?"

Then the Count said:

"Yes, and Alexander was a greater man than he who made the other speech. But extraordinary men are surely to be pardoned when they assume much; for he who has great things to do must needs have daring to do them, and confidence in himself, and must not be abject or mean in spirit, yet very modest in speech, showing less confidence in himself than he has, lest his self-confidence lead to rashness."

The Count now paused a little, and messer Bernardo Bibbiena[7] said, laughing:

6. Considered by some the "first gentleman" at the court of Urbino. A cousin of the writer, he was a warrior, a diplomat, and a pastoral poet; he died in 1512, at thirty-seven. 7. Bernardo Dovizi da Bibbiena (1470–1520), author of a play performed at the court of Urbino, patron and friend of the painter Raphael, and later a cardinal.

"I remember what you said earlier, that this Courtier of ours must be endowed by nature with beauty of countenance and person, and with a grace that shall make him so agreeable. Grace and beauty of countenance I think I certainly possess, and this is the reason why so many ladies are ardently in love with me, as you know; but I am rather doubtful as to the beauty of my person, especially as regards these legs of mine, which seem to me decidedly less well proportioned than I should wish: as to my bust and other members, however, I am quite content. Pray, now, describe a little more in particular the sort of body that the Courtier is to have, so that I may dismiss this doubt and set my mind at rest."

After some laughter at this, the Count continued:

"Of a certainty that grace of countenance can be truly said to be yours, nor need I cite further example than this to show what manner of thing it is, for we unquestionably perceive your aspect to be most agreeable and pleasing to everyone, albeit the lineaments of it are not very delicate. Still it is of a manly cast and at the same time full of grace; and this characteristic is to be found in many different types of countenance. And of such sort I would have our Courtier's aspect; not so soft and effeminate as is sought by many, who not only curl their hair and pluck their brows, but gloss their faces with all those arts employed by the most wanton and unchaste women in the world; and in their walk, posture and every act, they seem so limp and languid that their limbs are like to fall apart; and they pronounce their words so mournfully that they appear about to expire upon the spot: and the more they find themselves with men of rank, the more they affect such tricks. Since nature has not made them women, as they seem to wish to appear and be, they should be treated not as good women but as public harlots, and driven not merely from the courts of great lords but from the society of honest men.

"Then coming to the bodily frame, I say it is enough if this be neither extremely short nor tall, for both of these conditions excite a certain contemptuous surprise, and men of either sort are gazed upon in much the same way that we gaze on monsters. Yet if we must offend in one of the two extremes, it is preferable to fall a little short of the just measure of height than to exceed it, for besides often being dull of intellect, men thus huge of body are also unfit for every exercise of agility, which thing I should much wish in the Courtier. And so I would have him well built and shapely of limb, and would have him show strength and lightness and suppleness, and know all bodily exercises that befit a man of war: whereof I think the first should be to handle every sort of weapon well on foot and on horse, to understand the advantages of each, and especially to be familiar with those weapons that are ordinarily used among gentlemen; for besides the use of them in war, where such subtlety in contrivance is perhaps

not needful, there frequently arise differences between one gentleman and another, which afterwards result in duels often fought with such weapons as happen at the moment to be within reach: thus knowledge of this kind is a very safe thing. Nor am I one of those who say that skill is forgotten in the hour of need; for he whose skill forsakes him at such a time, indeed gives token that he has already lost heart and head through fear.

"Moreover I deem it very important to know how to wrestle, for it is a great help in the use of all kinds of weapons on foot. Then, both for his own sake and for that of his friends, he must understand the quarrels and differences that may arise, and must be quick to seize an advantage, always showing courage and prudence in all things. Nor should he be too ready to fight except when honour demands it; for besides the great danger that the uncertainty of fate entails, he who rushes into such affairs recklessly and without urgent cause, merits the severest censure even though he be successful. But when he finds himself so far engaged that he cannot withdraw without reproach, he ought to be most deliberate, both in the preliminaries to the duel and in the duel itself, and always show readiness and daring. Nor must he act like some, who fritter the affair away in disputes and controversies, and who, having the choice of weapons, select those that neither cut nor pierce, and arm themselves as if they were expecting a cannonade; and thinking it enough not to be defeated, stand ever on the defensive and retreat,—showing therein their utter cowardice. And thus they make themselves a laughing-stock for boys, like those two men of Ancona who fought at Perugia not long since, and made everyone laugh who saw them."

"And who were they?" asked my lord Gaspar Pallavicino.

"Two cousins," replied messer Cesare.

Then the Count said:

"In their fighting they were as like as two brothers"; and soon continued: "Even in time of peace weapons are often used in various exercises, and gentlemen appear in public shows before the people and ladies and great lords. For this reason I would have our Courtier a perfect horseman in every kind of seat; and besides understanding horses and what pertains to riding, I would have him use all possible care and diligence to lift himself a little beyond the rest in everything, so that he may be ever recognized as eminent above all others. And as we read of Alcibiades that he surpassed all the nations with whom he lived, each in their particular province, so I would have this Courtier of ours excel all others, and each in that which is most their profession. And as it is the especial pride of the Italians to ride well with the rein, to govern wild horses with consummate skill, and to play at tilting and jousting,—in these things let him be among the best of the Italians. In tourneys and in the arts of defence and attack,

let him shine among the best in France. In stick-throwing, bull-fighting, and in casting spears and darts, let him excel among the Spaniards. But above everything he should temper all his movements with a certain good judgment and grace, if he wishes to merit that universal favour which is so greatly prized.

"There are also many other exercises, which although not immediately dependent upon arms, yet are closely connected therewith, and greatly foster manly sturdiness; and one of the chief among these seems to me to be the chase, because it bears a certain likeness to war; and truly it is an amusement for great lords and befitting a man at court, and furthermore it is seen to have been much cultivated among the ancients. It is fitting also to know how to swim, to leap, to run, to throw stones, for besides the use that may be made of this in war, a man often has occasion to show what he can do in such matters; whence good esteem is to be won, especially with the multitude, who must be taken into account withal. Another admirable exercise, and one very befitting a man at court, is the game of tennis, in which are well shown the disposition of the body, the quickness and suppleness of every member, and all those qualities that are seen in nearly every other exercise. Nor less highly do I esteem vaulting on horse, which although it be fatiguing and difficult, makes a man very light and dexterous more than any other thing; and besides its utility, if this lightness is accompanied by grace, it is to my thinking a finer show than any of the others.

"Our Courtier having once become more than fairly expert in these exercises, I think he should leave the others on one side: such as turning summersaults, rope-walking, and the like, which savour of the mountebank and little befit a gentleman.

"But since one cannot devote himself to such fatiguing exercises continually, and since repetition becomes very tiresome and abates the admiration felt for what is rare, we must always diversify our life with various occupations. For this reason I would have our Courtier sometimes descend to quieter and more tranquil exercises, and in order to escape envy and to entertain himself agreeably with everyone, let him do whatever others do, yet never departing from praiseworthy deeds, and governing himself with that good judgment which will keep him from all folly; but let him laugh, jest, banter, frolic and dance, yet in such fashion that he shall always appear genial and discreet, and that everything he may do or say shall be stamped with grace."

Then messer Cesare Gonzaga said:

"We certainly ought on no account to hinder the course of this discussion; but if I were to keep silence, I should be neglected both of the right I have to speak and of my desire to know one thing: and let me be pardoned if I ask a question instead of contradicting; for

this I think may be permitted me, after the precedent of messer Bernardo here, who in his over desire to be held comely, broke the rules of our game by asking a question instead of contradicting."[8]

Then my lady Duchess said:

"You see how one error begets many. Therefore he who transgresses and sets a bad example, like messer Bernardo, deserves to be punished not only for his own transgression but also for the others'."

Then messer Cesare replied:

"In that case, my Lady, I shall be exempt from penalty, since messer Bernardo is to be punished for his own fault as well as mine."

"Nay," said my lady Duchess, "you both ought to have double punishment: he for his own transgression and for leading you to transgress; you for your own transgression and for imitating him."

"My Lady," replied messer Cesare, "as yet I have not transgressed; so, to leave all this punishment to messer Bernardo alone, I will keep silence."

And indeed he remained silent; when my lady Emilia laughed and said:

"Say whatever you like, for under leave of my lady Duchess I pardon him that has transgressed and him that shall transgress, in so small a degree."

"I consent," continued my lady Duchess. "But take care lest perchance you fall into the mistake of thinking to gain more by being merciful than by being just; for to pardon him too easily that has transgressed is to wrong him that transgresses not. Yet I would not have my severity reproach your indulgence, and thus be the cause of our not hearing this question of messer Cesare."

And so, being given the signal by my lady Duchess and by my lady Emilia, he at once said:

"If I remember rightly, Sir Count, I think you have repeated several times this evening that the Courtier must accompany his actions, gestures, habits, in short his every movement, with grace; and this you seem to regard as an universal seasoning, without which all other properties and good qualities are of little worth. And indeed I think that in this everyone would allow himself to be persuaded easily, since from the very force of the word, it may be said that he who has grace finds grace. But since you said that this is oftentimes the gift of nature and of heaven and, even when not thus perfect, can with care and pains be made much greater,—those men who are born so fortunate and so rich in this treasure as are some we see, seem to me in this to have little need of other master; because that benign favour of heaven almost in despite of themselves leads them higher than they will, and makes them not only pleasing but admirable to all the

8. According to the plan agreed upon at the start, one of the company began a description of the perfect courtier, and the others made their contributions by contradicting the preceding speaker.

world. Therefore I do not discuss this, it not being in our power to acquire it of ourselves. But they who have received from nature only so much, that they are capable of becoming graceful by pains, industry and care,—I long to know by what art, by what training, by what method, they can acquire this grace, as well in bodily exercises (in which you esteem it to be so necessary) as also in everything else that they may do or say. Therefore, since by much praise of this quality you have aroused in all of us, I think, an ardent thirst to pursue it, you are further bound, by the charge that my lady Emilia laid upon you, to satisfy that thirst by teaching us how to attain it."

"I am not bound," said the Count, "to teach you how to become graceful, or anything else; but only to show you what manner of man a perfect Courtier ought to be. Nor would I in any case undertake the task of teaching you this perfection; especially having said a little while ago that the Courtier must know how to wrestle, vault, and do many other things, which I am sure you all know quite as well as if I, who have never learned them, were to teach you. For just as a good soldier knows how to tell the smith what fashion, shape and quality his armour ought to have, but cannot show how it is to be made or forged or tempered; so I perhaps may be able to tell you what manner of man a perfect Courtier ought to be, but cannot teach you what you must do to become one.

"Yet to comply with your request as far as is within my power,—although it is almost a proverb that grace is not to be learned,—I say that whoever would acquire grace in bodily exercises (assuming first that he be by nature not incapable), ought to begin early and learn the rudiments from the best masters. And how important this seemed to King Philip of Macedon, may be seen from the fact that he chose Aristotle, the famous philosopher and perhaps the greatest that has ever been in the world, to teach his son Alexander the first elements of letters. And of the men whom we know at the present day, consider how well and how gracefully my lord Galeazzo Sanseverino,[9] Grand Equerry of France, performs all bodily exercises; and this because in addition to the natural aptitude of person that he possesses, he has taken the utmost pains to study with good masters, and always to have about him men who excel and to select from each the best of what they know: for just as in wrestling, vaulting and in the use of many sorts of weapons, he has taken for his guide our friend messer Pietro Monte,[1] who (as you know) is the true and only master of every form of trained strength and ability,—so in riding, jousting and all else, he has ever had before his eyes the most proficient men that were known in those matters.

"Therefore he who wishes to be a good pupil, besides performing

9. Of a famous Neapolitan family, he fought for Louis XII and Francis I of France, and died at the battle of Pavia (1525). 1. Fencing master at the court of Urbino.

his tasks well, must put forth every effort to resemble his master, and, if it were possible, to transform himself into his master. And when he feels that he has made some progress, it will be very profitable to observe different men of the same calling, and governing himself with that good judgment which must ever be his guide, to go about selecting now this thing from one and that thing from another. And as the bee in the green meadows is ever wont to rob the flowers among the grass, so our Courtier must steal this grace from all who seem to possess it, taking from each that part which shall most be worthy of praise; and not act like a friend of ours whom you all know, who thought he greatly resembled King Ferdinand the Younger of Aragon,[2] and made it his care to imitate the latter in nothing but a certain trick of continually raising the head and twisting one side of the mouth, which the king had contracted from some infirmity. And there are many such, who think they gain a point if only they be like a great man in some thing; and frequently they devote themselves to that which is his only fault.

"But having before now often considered whence this grace springs, laying aside those men who have it by nature, I find one universal rule concerning it, which seems to me worth more in this matter than any other in all things human that are done or said: and that is to avoid affectation to the uttermost and as it were a very sharp and dangerous rock; and, to use possibly a new word, to practise in everything a certain nonchalance[3] that shall conceal design and show that what is done and said is done without effort and almost without thought. From this I believe grace is in large measure derived, because everyone knows the difficulty of those things that are rare and well done, and therefore facility in them excites the highest admiration; while on the other hand, to strive and as the saying is to drag by the hair, is extremely ungraceful, and makes us esteem everything slightly, however great it be.

"Accordingly we may affirm that to be true art which does not appear to be art; nor to anything must we give greater care than to conceal art, for if it is discovered, it quite destroys our credit and brings us into small esteem. And I remember having once read that there were several very excellent orators of antiquity, who among their other devices strove to make everyone believe that they had no knowledge of letters; and hiding their knowledge they pretended that their orations were composed very simply and as if springing rather from nature and truth than from study and art; the which, if it had been detected, would have made men wary of being duped by it.

"Thus you see how the exhibition of art and study so intense destroys

2. Ferdinand II, king of Naples from 1495 to 1496. 3. *Sprezzatura*, here translated as "nonchalance," is indeed Castiglione's own word, epitomizing the important concept of gentlemanly behavior discussed in this passage.

the grace in everything. Which of you is there who does not laugh when our friend messer Pierpaolo[4] dances in his peculiar way, with those capers of his,—legs stiff to the toe and head motionless, as if he were a stick, and with such intentness that he actually seems to be counting the steps? What eye so blind as not to see in this the ungracefulness of affectation,—and in many men and women who are here present, the grace of that nonchalant ease (for in the case of bodily movements many call it thus), showing by word or laugh or gesture that they have no care and are thinking more of everything else than of that, to make the onlooker think they can hardly go amiss?"

4. An otherwise unidentified character.

NICCOLÒ MACHIAVELLI

1469–1527

The most famous and controversial political writer and theorist of his time—indeed, possibly of all times—Niccolò Machiavelli, was born in Florence on May 3, 1469. Little is known of his schooling, but it is obvious from his works that he knew the Latin and Italian writers well. He entered public life in 1494 as a clerk and from 1498 to 1512 was secretary to the second chancery of the commune of Florence, whose magistrates were in charge of internal and war affairs. During the conflict between Florence and Pisa, he dealt with military problems first-hand. Thus he had a direct experience of war and likewise of diplomacy; he was entrusted with many missions—among others, to King Louis XII of France in 1500 and in 1502 to Cesare Borgia, duke of Valentinois or "il duca Valentino," the favorite son of Pope Alexander VI. The latter's ruthless methods in crushing a conspiracy during his conquest of the Romagna region, Machiavelli described in a terse booklet *Of the Method Followed by Duke Valentino in Killing Vitellozzo Vitelli . . .* which already shows direct insight into the type of the amoral and technically efficient "prince." In 1506 Machiavelli went on a mission to Pope Julius II, whose expedition into Romagna (an old name for North-central Italy) he followed closely. From this and other missions—to Emperor Maximilian (1508) and again to the king of France (1509)—Machiavelli drew his two books of observations or *Portraits* of the affairs of those territories, written in 1508 and 1510.

Preeminently a student of politics and an acute observer of historical events, Machiavelli endeavored to apply his experience of other states to the strengthening of his own, the Florentine Republic, and busied himself in 1507 with the establishment of a Florentine militia, encountering great difficulties. When the republican regime came to an end, he lost his post and was exiled from the city proper, though forbidden to leave Florentine territory. The new regime of the Medici accused him unjustly of conspiracy,

and he was released only after a period of imprisonment and torture. To the period of his exile (spent near San Casciano, a few miles from Florence, where he retired with his wife, Marietta Corsini, and his five children), we owe his major works: the *Discourses on the First Ten Books of Livy* (1513–21) and *The Prince*, written in 1513 with the hope of obtaining public office from the Medici. In 1520 Machiavelli was commissioned to write a history of Florence, which he presented in 1525 to Pope Clement VII (Giulio de' Medici). The following year, conscious of imminent dangers, he took part in the work to improve the military fortifications of Florence. The fate of the city at this point depended on the outcome of the larger struggle between Francis I of France and the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V. Pope Clement's siding with the king of France led to the disastrous "Sack of Rome" by Charles V in 1527, and the result for Florence was the collapse of Medici domination. Machiavelli's hopes, briefly raised by the re-establishment of the republic, came to naught because he was now regarded as a Medici sympathizer. This last disappointment may have accelerated his end. He died on June 22, 1527, and was buried in the church of Santa Croce.

Though Machiavelli has a place in literary history for a short novel and two plays, one of which, *La mandragola*, first performed in the early 1520s, belongs in the upper rank of Italian comedies of intrigue, his world reputation is based on *The Prince*. This "handbook" on how to obtain and keep political power consists of twenty-six chapters. The first eleven deal with different types of dominions and the ways in which they are acquired and preserved—the early title of the whole book, in Latin, was *De principatibus* (*Of Princedoms*)—and the twelfth to fourteenth focus particularly on problems of military power. The book's astounding fame, however, is based on the final part (from chapter fifteen to the end), which deals primarily with the attributes and "virtues" of the prince himself. In other words, despite its reputation for cool, precise realism, the work presents a hypothetical type, the idealized portrait of a certain kind of man.

Manuals of this sort may be classified, in one sense, as pedagogical literature. While for their merits of form and of vivid, if stylized, characterization they can be considered works of art, their overt purpose is to codify a certain set of manners and rules of conduct; the author therefore presents himself as especially wise, an expert in the field, the "mind" offering advice to the executive "arm." Machiavelli is a clear example of this approach. His fervor, the dramatic, oratorical way he confronts his reader, the wealth and pertinence of his illustrations are all essential qualities of his pedagogical *persona:* "Either you are already a prince, or you are on the way to become one. In the first case liberality is dangerous; in the second it is very necessary to be thought liberal. Caesar was one of those. . . . Somebody may answer . . . I answer . . ." Relying on his direct knowledge of politics, he uses examples he can personally vouch for:

> Men are so simple and so subject to present needs that he who deceives in this way will always find those who will let themselves be deceived. I do not wish to keep still about one of the recent instances. Alexander VI did nothing else than deceive men, and had no other intention. . . .

The implied tone of *I know, I have seen such things myself* adds a special immediacy to Machiavelli's prose. His view of the practical world may have been an especially startling one; but the sensation caused by his work would have been far less without the rhetorical power, the drama of argumentation, which make *The Prince* a unique example of "the art of persuasion."

The view of man in Machiavelli is not at all cheerful. Indeed, the pessimistic notion that man is evil is not so much Machiavelli's conclusion about human nature as his premise; it is the point of departure of all subsequent reasoning upon the course for a ruler to follow. The very fact of its being given as a premise, however, tends to qualify it; it is not a firm philosophical judgment, but a stratagem, dictated by the facts as they are seen by a lucid observer of the here and now. The author is committed to his view of mankind not as a philosopher or as a religious man but as a practical politician. He indicates the rules of the game as his experience shows it must, under the circumstances, be played.

> A prudent . . . ruler cannot and should not observe faith when such observance is to his disadvantage and the causes that made him give his promise have vanished. If men were all good, this advice would not be good, but since men are wicked and do not keep their promises to you, you likewise do not have to keep yours to them.

A basic question in the study of Machiavelli, therefore, is: How much of a realist is he? His picture of the perfectly efficient ruler has something of the quality of an abstraction; it shows, though much less clearly than Castiglione's portrayal of the courtier, the well-known Renaissance tendency toward "perfected" form. Machiavelli's abandonment of complex actualities in favor of an ideal vision is shown most clearly at the conclusion of the book, particularly in the last chapter. This is where he offers what amounts to the greatest of his illustrations as the prince's preceptor and counselor: the ideal ruler, now technically equipped by his pedagogue, is to undertake a mission—the liberation of Machiavelli's Italy. If we regard the last chapter of *The Prince* as a culmination of Machiavelli's discussion rather than as a dissonant addition to it, we are likely to feel at that point not only that Machiavelli's realistic method is ultimately directed toward an ideal task, but also that his conception of that task, far from being based on immediate realities, is founded on cultural and poetic myths. Machiavelli's method here becomes imaginative rather than scientific. His exhortation to liberate Italy, and his final prophecy, belong to the tradition of poetic visions in which a present state of decay is lamented, and a hope of future redemption is expressed (as in Dante, *Purgatory*, Canto VI). And a very significant part of this hope is presented not in terms of technical political considerations (choice of the opportune moment, evaluation of military power), but in terms of a poetic justice for which precedents are sought in religious and ancient history and in mythology:

> . . . if it was necessary to make clear the ability of Moses that the people of Israel should be enslaved in Egypt, and to reveal Cyrus' greatness of mind that the Persians should be oppressed by the Medes, and to dem-

> onstrate the excellence of Theseus that the Athenians should be scattered, so at the present time. . . . Everything is now fully disposed for the work . . . if only your House adopts the methods of those I have set forth as examples. Moreover, we have before our eyes extraordinary and unexampled means prepared by God. The sea has been divided. . . . Manna has fallen.

Machiavelli's Italy, as he observed in the preceding chapter, is now a country "without dykes and without any wall of defence." It has suffered from "deluges," and its present rule, a "barbarian" one, "stinks in every nostril." Something is rotten in it, in short, as in Hamlet's Denmark. And we become more and more detached even from the particular example, Italy, as we recognize in the situation a pattern frequently exemplified in tragedy: the desire for communal regeneration, for the cleansing of the city-state, the *polis*. Of this cleansing, Italy on the one side and the imaginary prince on the other may be taken as symbols. The envisaged redemption is identified with antiquity and Roman virtue, while the realism of the political observer is here drowned out by the cry of the humanist dreaming of ancient glories.

Peter E. Bondanella focuses on the literary aspects of Machiavelli's works in *Machiavelli and the Art of Renaissance History* (1973). J. R. Hale's biography, *Machiavelli and Renaissance Italy* (1972), places Machiavelli in a historical perspective. A political analysis is provided by Anthony Parel in *The Political Calculus. Essays on Machiavelli's Political Philosophy* (1972). Roberto Ridolfi, *The Life of Niccolò Machiavelli*, translated by Cecil Grayson (1963) is still considered the best and most accurate biobraphy. Silvia Ruffo-Fiore's *Niccolò Machiavelli* (1982) is a useful comprehensive guide for the beginning student.

["That Food Which Alone Is Mine"][1]

I am living on my farm, and since my last troubles[2] I have not been in Florence twenty days, putting them all together. Up to now I have been setting snares for thrushes with my own hands; I get up before daylight, prepare my birdlime, and go out with a bundle of cages on my back, so that I look like Geta when he came back from the harbor with the books of Amphitryo,[3] and catch at the least two thrushes and at the most six. So I did all of September; then this trifling diversion, despicable and strange as it is, to my regret failed. What my life is now I shall tell you.

In the morning I get up with the sun and go out into a grove that I am having cut; there I remain a couple of hours to look over the

1. From a letter of December 10, 1513, to Francesco Vettori, Florentine Ambassador at Rome. Translated by Allan H. Gilbert. 2. Machiavelli had been suspected of participation in a conspiracy led by two young friends of his, and had been imprisoned and subjected to torture before his innocence was recognized. 3. Allusion to a popular tale in which Amphitryo, returning to Thebes after having studied at Athens, sends forward from the harbor his servant Geta to announce his arrival to his wife Alcmene, and loads him with his books.

work of the past day and kill some time with the woodmen, who always have on hand some dispute either among themselves or among their neighbors. . . .

When I leave the grove, I go to a spring, and from there into my aviary. I have a book in my pocket, either Dante or Petrarch or one of the minor poets, as Tibullus,[4] Ovid, and the like. I read about their tender passions and their loves, remember mine, and take pleasure for a while in thinking about them. Then I go along the road to the inn, talk with those who pass by, ask the news of their villages, learn various things, and note the varied tastes and different fancies of men. It gets to be dinner time, and with my troop I eat what food my poor farm and my little property permit. After dinner, I return to the inn; there I usually find the host, a butcher, a miller, and two furnace-tenders. With these fellows I sink into vulgarity for the rest of the day, playing at *cricca* and *tricche-trach*;[5] from these games come a thousand quarrels and numberless offensive and insulting words; we often dispute over a penny, and all the same are heard shouting as far as San Casciano.[6] So, involved in these trifles, I keep my brain from getting mouldy, and express the perversity of Fate, for I am willing to have her drive me along this path, to see if she will be ashamed of it.

In the evening, I return to my house, and go into my study. At the door I take off the clothes I have worn all day, mud spotted and dirty, and put on regal and courtly garments. Thus appropriately clothed, I enter into the ancient courts of ancient men,[7] where, being lovingly received, I feed on that food which alone is mine, and which I was born for; I am not ashamed to speak with them and to ask the reasons for their actions, and they courteously answer me. For four hours I feel no boredom and forget every worry; I do not fear poverty, and death does not terrify me. I give myself completely over to the ancients. And because Dante says that there is no knowledge unless one retains what one has read,[8] I have written down the profit I have gained from their conversation, and composed a little book *De principatibus*,[9] in which I go as deep as I can into reflections on this subject, debating what a principate is, what the species are, how they are gained, how they are kept, and why they are lost. If ever any of my trifles can please you, this one should not displease you; and to a prince, and especially a new prince, it ought to be welcome.

4. Albius Tibullus, Roman elegiac poet of the first century B.C. 5. Two popular games, the first played with cards, the second with dice thrown to regulate the movements of pawns on a chessboard. 6. Nearby village; in the region around Florence. 7. Machiavelli here refers figuratively to his study of ancient history. 8. ". . . for knowledge none can vaunt / Who retains not, although he have understood." (*Paradise*, Canto V, ll. 41–42.) 9. *Of Princedoms*; the Latin title of *The Prince*. All chapter headings are also in Latin in the original.

The Prince[1]

[*Princely Virtues*][2]

ON THE THINGS FOR WHICH MEN, AND ESPECIALLY PRINCES, ARE PRAISED OR CENSURED

. . . Because I know that many have written on this topic, I fear that when I too write I shall be thought presumptuous, because, in discussing it, I break away completely from the principles laid down by my predecessors. But since it is my purpose to write something useful to an attentive reader, I think it more effective to go back to the practical truth of the subject than to depend on my fancies about it. And many have imagined republics and principalities that never have been seen or known to exist in reality. For there is such a difference between the way men live and the way they ought to live, that anybody who abandons what is for what ought to be will learn something that will ruin rather than preserve him, because anyone who determines to act in all circumstances the part of a good man must come to ruin among so many who are not good. Hence, if a prince wishes to maintain himself, he must learn how to be not good, and to use that ability or not as is required.

Leaving out of account, then, things about an imaginary prince, and considering things that are true, I say that all men, when they are spoken of, and especially princes, because they are set higher, are marked with some of the qualities that bring them either blame or praise. To wit, one man is thought liberal, another stingy (using a Tuscan word, because *avaricious* in our language is still applied to one who desires to get things through violence, but *stingy* we apply to him who refrains too much from using his own property); one is thought open-handed, another grasping; one cruel, the other compassionate; one is a breaker of faith, the other reliable; one is effeminate and cowardly, the other vigorous and spirited; one is philanthropic, the other egotistic; one is lascivious, the other chaste; one is straight-forward, the other crafty; one hard, the other easy to deal with; one is firm, the other unsettled; one is religious, the other unbelieving; and so on.

And I know that everybody will admit that it would be very praiseworthy for a prince to possess all of the above-mentioned qualities that are considered good. But since he is not able to have them or to observe them completely, because human conditions do not allow him to, it is necessary that he be prudent enough to understand how to avoid getting a bad name because he is given to those vices that will deprive him of his position. He should also, if he can, guard

1. Translated by Allan H. Gilbert. 2. From Chapters 15–18.

himself from those vices that will not take his place away from him, but if he cannot do it, he can with less anxiety let them go. Moreover, he should not be troubled if he gets a bad name because of vices without which it will be difficult for him to preserve his position. I say this because, if everything is considered, it will be seen that some things seem to be virtuous, but if they are put into practice will be ruinous to him; other things seem to be vices, yet if put into practice will bring the prince security and well-being.

ON LIBERALITY AND PARSIMONY

Beginning, then, with the first of the above-mentioned qualities, I assert that it is good to be thought liberal.[3] Yet liberality, practiced in such a way that you get a reputation for it, is damaging to you, for the following reasons: If you use it wisely and as it ought to be used, it will not become known, and you will not escape being censured for the opposite vice. Hence, if you wish to have men call you liberal, it is necessary not to omit any sort of lavishness. A prince who does this will always be obliged to use up all his property in lavish actions; he will then, if he wishes to keep the name of liberal, be forced to lay heavy taxes on his people and exact money from them, and do everything he can to raise money. This will begin to make his subjects hate him, and as he grows poor he will be little esteemed by anybody. So it comes about that because of this liberality of his, with which he has damaged a large number and been of advantage to but a few, he is affected by every petty annoyance and is in peril from every slight danger. If he recognizes this and wishes to draw back, he quickly gets a bad name for stinginess.

Since, then, a prince cannot without harming himself practice this virtue of liberality to such an extent that it will be recognized, he will, if he is prudent, not care about being called stingy. As time goes on he will be thought more and more liberal, for the people will see that because of his economy his income is enough for him, that he can defend himself from those who make war against him, and that he can enter upon undertakings without burdening his people. Such a prince is in the end liberal to all those from whom he takes nothing, and they are numerous; he is stingy to those to whom he does not give, and they are few. In our times we have seen big things done only by those who have been looked on as stingy; the others have utterly failed. Pope Julius II,[4] though he made use of a reputation for liberality to attain the papacy, did not then try to maintain it, because he wished to be able to make war. The present

3. Generous, openhanded. 4. Giuliano della Rovere, elected to the papacy in 1503 at the death of Pius III, who had been successor to Alexander VI (Rodrigo Borgia). Alexander VI is discussed in the chapter "In What Way Faith Should Be Kept by Princes"; for Machiavelli's view of the character of Julius II, see the chapter "The Power of Fortune in Human Affairs . . ."

King of France[5] has carried on great wars without laying unusually heavy taxes on his people, merely because his long economy has made provision for heavy expenditures. The present King of Spain,[6] if he had continued liberal, would not have carried on or completed so many undertakings.

Therefore a prince ought to care little about getting called stingy, if as a result he does not have to rob his subjects, is able to defend himself, does not become poor and contemptible, and is not obliged to become grasping. For this vice of stinginess is one of those that enables him to rule. Somebody may say: Caesar, by means of his liberality became emperor, and many others have come to high positions because they have been liberal and have been thought so. I answer: Either you are already prince, or you are on the way to become one. In the first case liberality is dangerous; in the second it is very necessary to be thought liberal. Caesar was one of those who wished to attain dominion over Rome. But if, when he had attained it, he had lived for a long time and had not moderated his expenses, he would have destroyed his authority. Somebody may answer: Many who have been thought very liberal have been princes and done great things with their armies. I answer: The prince spends either his own property and that of his subjects or that of others. In the first case he ought to be frugal; in the second he ought to abstain from no sort of liberality. When he marches with his army and lives on plunder, loot, and ransom, a prince controls the property of others. To him liberality is essential, for without it his soldiers would not follow him. You can be a free giver of what does not belong to you or your subjects, as were Cyrus, Caesar, and Alexander, because to spend the money of others does not decrease your reputation but adds to it. It is only the spending of your own money that hurts you.

There is nothing that eats itself up as fast as does liberality, for when you practice it you lose the power to practice it, and become poor and contemptible, or else to escape poverty you become rapacious and therefore are hated. And of all the things against which a prince must guard himself, the first is being an object of contempt and hatred. Liberality leads you to both of these. Hence there is more wisdom in keeping a name for stinginess, which produces a bad reputation without hatred, than in striving for the name of liberal, only to be forced to get the name of rapacious, which brings forth both bad reputation and hatred.

ON CRUELTY AND PITY, AND WHETHER IT IS BETTER TO BE LOVED OR TO BE FEARED, AND VICE VERSA

Coming then to the other qualities already mentioned, I say that every prince should wish to be thought compassionate and not cruel;

5. Louis XII. 6. Ferdinand II, "the Catholic."

still, he should be careful not to make a bad use of the pity he feels. Cesare Borgia[7] was considered cruel, yet this cruelty of his pacified the Romagna, united it, and changed its condition to that of peace and loyalty. If the matter is well considered, it will be seen that Cesare was much more compassionate than the people of Florence, for in order to escape the name of cruel they allowed Pistoia to be destroyed.[8] Hence a prince ought not to be troubled by the stigma of cruelty, acquired in keeping his subjects united and faithful. By giving a very few examples of cruelty he can be more truly compassionate than those who through too much compassion allow disturbances to continue, from which arise murders or acts of plunder. Lawless acts are injurious to a large group, but the executions ordered by the prince injure a single person. The new prince, above all other princes, cannot possibly avoid the name of cruel, because new states are full of perils. Dido in Vergil puts it thus: "Hard circumstances and the newness of my realm force me to do such things, and to keep watch and ward over all my lands."[9]

All the same, he should be slow in believing and acting, and should make no one afraid of him, his procedure should be so tempered with prudence and humanity that too much confidence does not make him incautious, and too much suspicion does not make him unbearable.

All this gives rise to a question for debate: Is it better to be loved than to be feared, or the reverse? I answer that a prince should wish for both. But because it is difficult to reconcile them, I hold that it is much more secure to be feared than to be loved, if one of them must be given up. The reason for my answer is that one must say of men generally that they are ungrateful, mutable, pretenders and dissemblers, prone to avoid danger, thirsty for gain. So long as you benefit them they are all yours; as I said above, they offer you their blood, their property, their lives, their children, when the need for such things is remote. But when need comes upon you, they turn around. So if a prince has relied wholly on their words, and is lacking in other preparations, he falls. For friendships that are gained with money, and not with greatness and nobility of spirit, are deserved but not possessed, and in the nick of time one cannot avail himself of them. Men hesitate less to injure a man who makes himself loved than to injure one who makes himself feared, for their love is held by a chain of obligation, which, because of men's wickedness, is broken on every occasion for the sake of selfish profit; but their fear is secured by a dread of punishment which never fails you.

Nevertheless the prince should make himself feared in such a way

7. Son of Pope Alexander VI, and duke of Valentinois and Romagna. His skillful and merciless subjugation of the local lords of Romagna occurred during the years between 1499 and 1502.
8. By internal dissensions because the Florentines, Machiavelli contends, failed to treat the leaders of the dissenting parties with an iron hand. 9. *Aeneid*, Book I, ll. 563–564.

that, if he does not win love, he escapes hatred. This is possible, for to be feared and not to be hated can easily coexist. In fact it is always possible, if the ruler abstains from the property of his citizens and subjects, and from their women. And if, as sometimes happens, he finds that he must inflict the penalty of death, he should do it when he has proper justification and evident reason. But above all he must refrain from taking property, for men forget the death of a father more quickly than the loss of their patrimony. Further, causes for taking property are never lacking, and he who begins to live on plunder is always finding cause to seize what belongs to others. But on the contrary, reasons for taking life are rare and fail sooner.

But when a prince is with his army and has a great number of soldiers under his command, then above all he must pay no heed to being called cruel, because if he does not have that name he cannot keep his army united or ready for duty. It should be numbered among the wonderful feats of Hannibal that he led to war in foreign lands a large army, made up of countless types of men, yet never suffered from dissension, either among the soldiers or against the general, in either bad or good fortune. His success resulted from nothing else than his inhuman cruelty, which, when added to his numerous other strong qualities, made him respected and terrible in the sight of his soldiers. Yet without his cruelty his other qualities would not have been adequate. So it seems that those writers have not thought very deeply who on one side admire his accomplishment and on the other condemn the chief cause for it.

The truth that his other qualities alone would not have been adequate may be learned from Scipio,[1] a man of the most unusual powers not only in his own times but in all ages we know of. When he was in Spain his armies mutinied. This resulted from nothing other than his compassion, which had allowed his soldiers more license than befits military discipline. This fault was censured before the Senate by Fabius Maximus, and Scipio was called by him the corruptor of the Roman soldiery. The Locrians[2] were destroyed by a lieutenant of Scipio's, yet he did not avenge them or punish the disobedience of that lieutenant. This all came from his easy nature, which was so well understood that one who wished to excuse him in the Senate said there were many men who knew better how not to err than how to punish errors. This easy nature would in time have overthrown the fame and glory of Scipio if, in spite of this weakness, he had kept on in independent command. But since he was under the orders of the Senate, this bad quality was not merely concealed but was a glory to him.

Returning, then, to the debate on being loved and feared, I con-

1. Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus the Elder (235–183 B.C.). The episode of the mutiny occurred in 206 B.C. 2. Citizens of Locri, in Sicily.

clude that since men love as they please and fear as the prince pleases, a wise prince will evidently rely on what is in his own power and not on what is in the power of another. As I have said, he need only take pains to avoid hatred.

IN WHAT WAY FAITH SHOULD BE KEPT BY PRINCES

Everybody knows how laudable it is in a prince to keep his faith and to be an honest man and not a trickster. Nevertheless, the experience of our times shows that the princes who have done great things are the ones who have taken little account of their promises and who have known how to addle the brains of men with craft. In the end they have conquered those who have put their reliance on good faith.

You must realize, then, that there are two ways to fight. In one kind the laws are used, in the other, force. The first is suitable to man, the second to animals. But because the first often falls short, one has to turn to the second. Hence a prince must know perfectly how to act like a beast and like a man. This truth was covertly taught to princes by ancient authors, who write that Achilles and many other ancient princes were turned over for their up-bringing to Chiron the centaur,[3] that he might keep them under his tuition. To have as teacher one who is half beast and half man means nothing else than that a prince needs to know how to use the qualities of both creatures. The one without the other will not last long.

Since, then, it is necessary for a prince to understand how to make good use of the conduct of the animals, he should select among them the fox and the lion, because the lion cannot protect himself from traps, and the fox cannot protect himself from the wolves. So the prince needs to be a fox that he may know how to deal with traps, and a lion that he may frighten the wolves. Those who act like the lion alone do not understand their business. A prudent ruler, therefore, cannot and should not observe faith when such observance is to his disadvantage and the causes that made him give his promise have vanished. If men were all good, this advice would not be good, but since men are wicked and do not keep their promises to you, you likewise do not have to keep yours to them. Lawful reasons to excuse his failure to keep them will never be lacking to a prince. It would be possible to give innumerable modern examples of this and to show many treaties and promises that have been made null and void by the faithlessness of princes. And the prince who has best known how to act as a fox has come out best. But one who has this capacity must understand how to keep it covered, and be a skilful pretender and dissembler. Men are so simple and so subject to pres-

3. Reputed in myth to be the educator of many heroes, among them Achilles, Theseus, Jason, and Hercules.

ent needs that he who deceives in this way will always find those who will let themselves be deceived.

I do not wish to keep still about one of the recent instances. Alexander VI[4] did nothing else than deceive men, and had no other intention; yet he always found a subject to work on. There never was a man more effective in swearing that things were true, and the greater the oaths with which he made a promise, the less he observed it. Nonetheless his deceptions always succeeded to his wish, because he thoroughly understood this aspect of the world.

It is not necessary, then, for a prince really to have all the virtues mentioned above, but it is very necessary to seem to have them. I will even venture to say that they damage a prince who possesses them and always observes them, but if he seems to have them they are useful. I mean that he should seem compassionate, trustworthy, humane, honest, and religious, and actually be so; but yet he should have his mind so trained that, when it is necessary not to practice these virtues, he can change to the opposite, and do it skilfully. It is to be understood that a prince, especially a new prince, cannot observe all the things because of which men are considered good, because he is often obliged, if he wishes to maintain his government, to act contrary to faith, contrary to charity, contrary to humanity, contrary to religion. It is therefore necessary that he have a mind capable of turning in whatever direction the winds of Fortune and the variations of affairs require, and, as I said above, that he should not depart from what is morally right, if he can observe it, but should know how to adopt what is bad, when he is obliged to.

A prince, then, should be very careful that there does not issue from his mouth anything that is not full of the above-mentioned five qualities. To those who see and hear him he should seem all compassion, all faith, all honesty, all humanity, all religion. There is nothing more necessary to make a show of possessing than this last quality. For men in general judge more by their eyes than by their hands; everybody is fitted to see, few to understand. Everybody sees what you appear to be; few make out what you really are. And these few do not dare to oppose the opinion of the many, who have the majesty of the state to confirm their view. In the actions of all men, and especially those of princes, where there is no court to which to appeal, people think of the outcome. A prince needs only to conquer and to maintain his position. The means he has used will always be judged honorable and will be praised by everybody, because the crowd is always caught by appearance and by the outcome of events, and the crowd is all there is in the world; there is no place for the few when the many have room enough. A certain prince of the present

4. Rodrigo Borgia, father of Cesare Borgia; he was pope from 1492 to 1503.

day,[5] whom it is not good to name, preaches nothing else than peace and faith, and is wholly opposed to both of them, and both of them, if he had observed them, would many times have taken from him either his reputation or his throne.

["*Fortune Is a Woman*"][6]

THE POWER OF FORTUNE IN HUMAN AFFAIRS, AND TO WHAT EXTENT SHE SHOULD BE RELIED ON

It is not unknown to me that many have been and still are of the opinion that the affairs of this world are so under the direction of Fortune and of God that man's prudence cannot control them; in fact, that man has no resource against them. For this reason many think there is no use in sweating much over such matters, but that one might as well let Chance take control. This opinion has been the more accepted in our times, because of the great changes in the state of the world that have been and now are seen every day, beyond all human surmise. And I myself, when thinking on these things, have now and then in some measure inclined to their view. Nevertheless, because the freedom of the will should not be wholly annulled, I think it may be true that Fortune is arbiter of half of our actions, but that she still leaves the control of the other half, or about that, to us.

I liken her to one of those raging streams that, when they go mad, flood the plains, ruin the trees and the buildings, and take away the fields from one bank and put them down on the other. Everybody flees before them; everybody yields to their onrush without being able to resist anywhere. And though this is their nature, it does not cease to be true that, in calm weather, men can make some provisions against them with walls and dykes, so that, when the streams swell, their waters will go off through a canal, or their currents will not be so wild and do so much damage. The same is true of Fortune. She shows her power where there is no wise preparation for resisting her, and turns her fury where she knows that no walls and dykes have been made to hold her in. And if you consider Italy—the place where these variations occur and the cause that has set them in motion—you will see that she is a country without dykes and without any wall of defence. If, like Germany, Spain, and France, she had had a sufficient bulwark of military vigor, this flood would not have made the great changes it has, or would not have come at all.

And this, I think, is all I need to say on opposing oneself to Fortune, in general. But limiting myself more to particulars, I say that

5. Ferdinand II, "the Catholic," king of Spain. In refraining from mentioning him, Machiavelli apparently had in mind the good relations existing between Spain and the house of Medici.
6. Chapter 25.

a prince may be seen prospering today and falling in ruin tomorrow, though it does not appear that he has changed in his nature or any of his qualities. I believe this comes, in the first place, from the causes that have been discussed at length in preceding chapters. That is, if a prince bases himself entirely on Fortune, he will fall when she varies. I also believe that a ruler will be successful who adapts his mode of procedure to the quality of the times, and likewise that he will be unsuccessful if the times are out of accord with his procedure. Because it may be seen that in things leading to the end each has before him, namely glory and riches, men proceed differently. One acts with caution, another rashly; one with violence, another with skill; one with patience, another with its opposite; yet with these different methods each one attains his end. Still further, two cautious men will be seen, of whom one comes to his goal, the other does not. Likewise you will see two who succeed with two different methods, one of them being cautious and the other rash. These results are caused by nothing else than the nature of the times, which is or is not in harmony with the procedure of men. It also accounts for what I have mentioned, namely, that two persons, working differently, chance to arrive at the same result; and that of two who work in the same way, one attains his end, but the other does not.

On the nature of the times also depends the variability of the best method. If a man conducts himself with caution and patience, times and affairs may come around in such a way that his procedure is good, and he goes on successfully. But if times and circumstances change, he is ruined, because he does not change his method of action. There is no man so prudent as to understand how to fit himself to this condition, either because he is unable to deviate from the course to which nature inclines him, or because, having always prospered by walking in one path, he cannot persuade himself to leave it. So the cautious man, when the time comes to go at a reckless pace, does not know how to do it. Hence he comes to ruin. Yet if he could change his nature with the times and with circumstances, his fortune would not be altered.

Pope Julius II proceeded rashly in all his actions, and found the times and circumstances so harmonious with his mode of procedure that he was always so lucky as to succeed. Consider the first enterprise he engaged in, that of Bologna, while messer Giovanni Bentivogli[7] was still alive. The Venetians were not pleased with it; the King of Spain felt the same way; the Pope was debating such an enterprise with the King of France. Nevertheless, in his courage and rashness Julius personally undertook that expedition. This movement made the King of Spain and the Venetians stand irresolute and

7. Of the ruling family Bentivogli (the prefix *Messer* means "my lord"); the Pope undertook to dislodge him from Bologna, in 1506.

motionless, the latter for fear, and the King because of his wish to recover the entire kingdom of Naples. On the other side, the King of France was dragged behind Julius, because the King, seeing that the Pope had moved and wishing to make him a friend in order to put down the Venetians, judged he could not refuse him soldiers without doing him open injury. Julius, then, with his rash movement, attained what no other pontiff, with the utmost human prudence, would have attained. If he had waited to leave Rome until the agreements were fixed and everything arranged, as any other pontiff would have done, he would never have succeeded, for the King of France would have had a thousand excuses, and the others would have raised a thousand fears. I wish to omit his other acts, which are all of the same sort, and all succeeded perfectly. The brevity of his life did not allow him to know anything different. Yet if times had come in which it was necessary to act with caution, they would have ruined him, for he would never have deviated from the methods to which nature inclined him.

I conclude, then, that since Fortune is variable and men are set in their ways, they are successful when they are in harmony with Fortune and unsuccessful when they disagree with her. Yet I am of the opinion that it is better to be rash than over-cautious, because Fortune is a woman and, if you wish to keep her down, you must beat her and pound her. It is evident that she allows herself to be overcome by men who treat her in that way rather than by those who proceed coldly. For that reason, like a woman, she is always the friend of young men, because they are less cautious, and more courageous, and command her with more boldness.

[*The Roman Dream*][8]

AN EXHORTATION TO TAKE HOLD OF ITALY AND RESTORE HER TO LIBERTY FROM THE BARBARIANS

Having considered all the things discussed above, I have been turning over in my own mind whether at present in Italy the time is ripe for a new prince to win prestige, and whether conditions there give a wise and vigorous ruler occasion to introduce methods that will do him honor, and bring good to the mass of the people of the land. It appears to me that so many things unite for the advantage of a new prince, that I do not know of any time that has ever been more suited for this. And, as I said, if it was necessary to make clear the ability of Moses that the people of Israel should be enslaved in Egypt, and to reveal Cyrus's greatness of mind that the Persians should be oppressed by the Medes, and to demonstrate the excellence of The-

8. Chapter 26.

seus that the Athenians should be scattered, so at the present time, in order to make known the greatness of an Italian soul, Italy had to be brought down to her present position, to be more a slave than the Hebrews, more a servant than the Persians, more scattered than the Athenians; without head, without government; defeated, plundered, torn asunder, overrun; subject to every sort of disaster.

And though before this, certain persons[9] have showed signs from which it could be inferred that they were chosen by God for the redemption of Italy, nevertheless it has afterwards been seen that in the full current of action they have been cast off by Fortune. So Italy remains without life and awaits the man, whoever he may be, who is to heal her wounds, put an end to the plundering of Lombardy and the tribute laid on Tuscany and the kingdom of Naples, and cure her of those sores that have long been suppurating. She may be seen praying God to send some one to redeem her from these cruel and barbarous insults. She is evidently ready and willing to follow a banner, if only some one will raise it. Nor is there at present anyone to be seen in whom she can put more hope than in your illustrious House,[1] because its fortune and vigor, and the favor of God and of the Church, which it now governs,[2] enable it to be the leader in such a redemption. This will not be very difficult, as you will see if you will bring to mind the actions and lives of those I have named above. And though these men were striking exceptions, yet they were men, and each of them had less opportunity than the present gives; their enterprises were not more just than this, nor easier, nor was God their friend more than he is yours. Here justice is complete. "A way is just to those to whom it is necessary, and arms are holy to him who has no hope save in arms."[3] Everything is now fully disposed for the work, and when that is true an undertaking cannot be difficult, if only your House adopts the methods of those I have set forth as examples. Moreover, we have before our eyes extraordinary and unexampled means prepared by God. The sea has been divided. A cloud has guided you on your way. The rock has given forth water. Manna has fallen.[4] Everything has united to make you great. The rest is for you to do. God does not intend to do everything, lest he deprive us of our free will and the share of glory that belongs to us.

It is no wonder if no one of the above-named Italians[5] has been able to do what we hope your illustrious House can. Nor is it strange if in the many revolutions and military enterprises of Italy, the martial vigor of the land always appears to be exhausted. This is because

9. Possibly Cesare Borgia and Francesco Sforza, discussed in an earlier chapter of the book.
1. The house of Medici. The *Prince* was first meant for Giuliano de' Medici; after Giuliano's death it was dedicated to his nephew, Lorenzo, later duke of Urbino. 2. Pope Leo X was a Medici (Giovanni de' Medici). 3. Livy, *History*, Book IX, Chapter 1, paragraph 10. 4. See the allusion to Moses in the preceding paragraph. 5. Possibly a further allusion to Cesare Borgia and Francesco Sforza.

the old military customs were not good, and there has been nobody able to find new ones. Yet nothing brings so much honor to a man who rises to new power, as the new laws and new methods he discovers. These things, when they are well founded and have greatness in them, make him revered and worthy of admiration. And in Italy matter is not lacking on which to impress forms of every sort. There is great vigor in the limbs if only it is not lacking in the heads. You may see that in duels and combats between small numbers, the Italians have been much superior in force, skill, and intelligence. But when it is a matter of armies, Italians cannot be compared with foreigners. All this comes from the weakness of the heads, because those who know are not obeyed, and each man thinks he knows. Nor up to this time has there been a man able to raise himself so high, through both ability and fortune, that the others would yield to him. The result is that for the past twenty years, in all the wars that have been fought when there has been an army entirely Italian, it has always made a bad showing. Proof of this was given first at the Taro, and then at Alessandria, Capua, Genoa, Vailà, Bologna, and Mestri.[6]

If your illustrious House, then, wishes to imitate those excellent men who redeemed their countries, it is necessary, before everything else, to furnish yourself with your own army, as the true foundation of every enterprise. You cannot have more faithful, nor truer, nor better soldiers. And though every individual of these may be good, they become better as a body when they see that they are commanded by their prince, and honored and trusted by him. It is necessary, therefore, that your House should be prepared with such forces, in order that it may be able to defend itself against the foreigners with Italian courage.

And though the Swiss and the Spanish infantry are properly estimated as terribly effective, yet both have defects. Hence a third type would be able not merely to oppose them but to feel sure of overcoming them. The fact is that the Spaniards are not able to resist cavalry, and the Swiss have reason to fear infantry, when they meet any as determined in battle as themselves. For this reason it has been seen and will be seen in experience that the Spaniards are unable to resist the French cavalry, and the Swiss are overthrown by Spanish infantry. And though of this last a clear instance has not been observed, yet an approach to it appeared in the battle of Ravenna,[7] when the Spanish infantry met the German battalions, who use the same methods as the Swiss. There the Spanish, through their ability and the assistance given by their shields, got within the points of the spears from below, and slew their enemies in security, while the

6. Sites of battles occurring between the end of the fifteenth century and the year 1513.
7. Between Spaniards and French in April, 1512.

Germans could find no means of resistance. If the cavalry had not charged the Spanish, they would have annihilated the Germans. It is possible, then, for one who realizes the defects of these two types, to equip infantry in a new manner, so that it can resist cavalry and not be afraid of foot-soldiers; but to gain this end they must have weapons of the right sorts, and adopt varied methods of combat. These are some of the things which, when they are put into service as novelties, give reputation and greatness to a new ruler.[8]

This opportunity, then, should not be allowed to pass, in order that after so long a time Italy may see her redeemer. I am unable to express with what love he would be received in all the provinces that have suffered from these foreign deluges; with what thirst for vengeance, what firm faith, what piety, what tears! What gates would be shut against him? what peoples would deny him obedience? what envy would oppose itself to him? what Italian would refuse to follow him? This barbarian rule stinks in every nostril. May your illustrious House, then, undertake this charge with the spirit and the hope with which all just enterprises are taken up, in order that, beneath its ensign, our native land may be ennobled, and, under its auspices, that saying of Petrarch may come true: "Manhood[9] will take arms against fury, and the combat will be short, because in Italian hearts the ancient valor is not yet dead."

8. Machiavelli was subsequently the author of a treatise on the *Art of War* (1521). 9. An etymological translation of the original *virtù* (from the Latin *vir*, "man.") The quotation is from Petrarch's *canzone* "My Italy."

MARGUERITE DE NAVARRE

1492–1549

In his classic history of French literature Gustave Lanson writes that Marguerite de Navarre "is in her moment the most complete expression of the French Renaissance . . . the accomplished woman, comparable to the best examples offered by Italy." The French "discovery of Italy" had occurred in the latter part of the fifteenth century, both through travel and, starting with the expedition of 1494 under King Charles VIII, through military invasions. It became the ambition of French rulers and aristocrats to transplant and make flourish on the intellectual soil of their vast kingdom the artistic, literary, and social values which had had their decisive assertion in the smaller and more sophisticated Italian city-states (Castiglione's Urbino is one major literary example). In this process, Marguerite de Navarre played a relevant part. One important element in her intellectual makeup is the preoccupation with religious and ethical issues at a time when Christianity was being vivified and made more complex by the Reformation movements and by

that "Christian humanism" of which Erasmus, her senior by about twenty-five years, is the major representative.

Marguerite was born at Angoulême on April 11, 1492, the daughter of Charles of Orléans, count of Angoulême, and of Louise of Savoy. Her brother, the future King Francis I, was born two years later; the next year their father died. From her earliest years Marguerite received an exceptionally good education, being instructed in Latin, Italian, Spanish, German, and in such domestic arts as embroidery; later in life she also cultivated Greek and Hebrew. Marriages in her class were at the time arrangements between ruling houses, dictated by political and social convenience; thus at 17 Marguerite was married to Charles, duke of Alençon, a feudal lord who was culturally not her match. A turning point came in 1515 when her brother succeeded Louis XII to the French throne as Francis I; Marguerite became one of the most influential ladies at Francis's court. She gave him advice and received dignitaries and ambassadors as well as eminent men of letters. One of the most memorable facts about the court of Francis I is that some of the most famous artists of the period worked there, such as Leonardo da Vinci and Benvenuto Cellini.

Francis also inherited the military tradition of his predecessors in carrying on the Italian wars, the complicated conflicts fought on Italian soil between his kingdom and the "Holy Roman" Emperor, Charles V of Spain. The defeat of Francis I in the crucial Battle of Pavia (1525) was a double blow for Marguerite: the king her brother was taken to Madrid as a prisoner, and her husband, alleged to have borne a relevant part of the responsibility for the defeat, died upon his return to France that same year. Marguerite went to Madrid to assist her sick brother and played an important part in the negotiations with Emperor Charles V for his release, which was sanctioned by the Treaty of Madrid in 1526.

The following year Marguerite became "Queen of Navarre" by marrying Henri d'Albret, who was king of Navarre in title only, as most of that domain had been annexed by Spain in 1516, limiting the possessions of the d'Albret dynasty to the lower, French section. This region contained important castles at such places as Pau and Nérac; there Marguerite held court and received visiting intellectuals and reformist religious thinkers. Eleven years younger than Marguerite, Henri d'Albret was a dashing, flighty and intellectually rather disappointing husband (generally considered to be the prototype for the character of Hircan in the *Heptameron*). Their only daughter, Jeanne, was born in 1527 and eventually became the mother of the future King Henry IV of France.

Marguerite's involvement in her royal brother's activities continued sporadically, as when she took part in the negotiations that led to the Treaty of Cambrai (1529) and when she cooperated in diplomatic dealings and peace talks in the years 1536–1538. Marguerite's interest, however, was increasingly focused on intellectual and literary pursuits, and on religious meditation and debate. Throughout her life she was a protector of writers and thinkers accused or suspected of Protestant leanings, including Rabelais, who dedicated the third book of *Gargantua and Pantagruel* to her. Not only the Christian humanist Erasmus, but Calvin also, were among her numerous correspondents. These included, on the other hand, also Pope Paul III.

Her own first published work, *The Mirror of the Sinful Soul* (1531, eventually used by the eleven-year-old princess, and later queen, Elizabeth of England for an exercise in translation) was found by the theologians of the Sorbonne to contain elements of Protestant "heresy," and its 1533 re-edition, containing an additional "Dialogue in the Form of a Night Vision" written much earlier and dealing with the theological problem of salvation, was condemned; the king had to intervene on behalf of both his sister and her chaplain.

Later it became more difficult for Francis to maintain a lenient and conciliatory stance in the rivalry between Catholics and Protestants, as that was, of course, not only a religious conflict but more relevantly and bloodily a political and military one. Protestants and their sympathizers were persecuted; not a few prominent intellectuals went into prudent exile or were burned at the stake. The position of Marguerite, who seems never to have abandoned Catholicism, is generally recognized as that of a person of high intellectual caliber with strong elements of mysticism in her piety, who envisaged reforms conducted from within the Church itself.

Typical of the last part of Marguerite's life are several periods of retreat in a convent at Tusson in the French region of Poitou; there in April of 1547 she received the news of her brother's death. The year 1547 also marks the publication of her *Marguerite de la Marguerite des Princesses* (with a play on the word *marguerite*, which in French also means "pearl"), a collection of works in different genres, including long devotional poems and theatrical pieces ranging from the sacred allegory to the farce. Both in this collection and in some of her later poems, a recurring theme is that of sorrow at her brother Francis's death, tempered and solaced by religious faith. During the following year Marguerite returned only for short periods to the French court, where her relations with the new king, Henry II, her nephew, were far from ideal. Marguerite's husband was at her side as her health failed. She died in one of their castles in Navarre, at Odos, on December 21, 1549.

In literary history Marguerite's name is preeminently associated with the *Heptameron*, a work consisting of short stories within a "frame," the genre which had had its major example in Boccaccio's *Decameron*. Ten (Greek *deka*) days of storytelling were planned for Marguerite's work as well, but we actually have only seven, (*hepta* in Greek), as the work remained unfinished. Opinions on the attribution of the stories to a single author, Marguerite herself, vary considerably; the question is made practically insoluble by differences existing among early collections, both in manuscript and in book form (a first printed edition came out only in 1558, nine years after Marguerite's death); in any case, it seems clear that Marguerite at the very least must have acted as a sort of general editor and that the stories are a product and a reflection of the intellectual, social, and religious interests and experiences of her milieu.

The "frame" within which the stories are assembled presents similarities with that of Boccaccio, but the differences are relevant too. In both cases the premise is a natural disaster. The gentlemen and ladies in the *Decameron* have taken refuge in an isolated place to avoid the plague; in the *Heptameron* a similar group of ten cultivated people—five men and five women in this case—who have just spent three weeks taking the cure at the spa town

of Cauterets in the mountainous Pyrenees region, are impeded on their way back by flooded roads and particularly by the swollen, impassable Gave de Pau River. As narrated in the Prologue, they eventually take refuge in the Abbey of Our Lady at Sarrance, where they come not in one group, but piecemeal, after struggling not only with adverse natural elements but with human beings as well; these range from violent bandits to the abbot himself, described as "not a particularly nice character," and thus exemplifying at the very start Marguerite's often critical presentation of men of the cloth: on receiving the last two arrivals "he did not dare to refuse them board and lodging, for fear of offending the Seigneur de Béarne [i.e., the local feudal lord], who, as he knew perfectly well, was on friendly terms with them. Hypocrite as he was, he put on as pleasant an air as he was able. . . ."

As the river is ever more swollen, the travelers decide to have a bridge built; the construction, however primitive, will take ten or twelve days, which is judged "rather a boring prospect for all of them, men and women alike. However, Parlamente [generally identified with Marguerite herself], the wife of Hircan [identifiable with Marguerite's husband, Henri d'Albret], was not one to let herself become idle or melancholy, and having asked her husband for permission, she spoke to the old lady Oisille" as to the one who occupies "the position of mother in regard to the rest of us women," asking her to "consider some pastime to alleviate the boredom and distress that we shall have to bear during our long stay here."

Lady Oisille had been the first to arrive at the Abbey of Our Lady, having resolved "not to let the treacherous roads frighten her;" she is "a widow, with much experience of life," possibly identifiable with Louise of Savoy, Marguerite's mother, and is characteristically described as "not . . . so superstitious as to believe that the glorious Virgin should leave her seat at her Son's right hand in order to come and take residence in such a desolate spot," a passing remark which may be compared to some of Erasmus's broadsides against Catholic "superstitions." Oisille's prescription for delivering oneself from boredom and sorrow, and for keeping healthy and happy in old age, is in a pure humanistic-evangelical vein: "As soon as I rise in the morning I take the Scriptures and read them . . . whatever the evils of the day, they are to me so many blessings . . . in the evening I ponder in my mind everything I have done during the day, so that I may ask God forgiveness for my sins . . . and this, my children, is the pastime that I long ago adopted."

Hircan's intervention at this point is no less characterizing: after duly stating that all those present are readers of the Holy Scriptures, he proceeds to declare that they have not yet become "so mortified in the flesh that we are not in need of some sort of amusement . . . between dinner and vespers we should choose some pastime, which, while not prejudicial to the soul, will be agreeable to the body." As he cautiously suggests that his choice would fall on a particular pastime if he could be sure that it was "as agreeable to a certain lady among us as it would be to me," his wife Parlamente, "half angrily and half laughing," suggests in her turn that they "leave on one side all pastimes that require only two participants, and concentrate on those which everybody can join in." So after saying that certainly there is not one of them who has not read the hundred tales of Boccaccio (a translation had been done under Marguerite's very auspices, and a plan to produce a French

counterpart to the *Decameron* by members of King Francis' court had been abandoned under the pressure of political events), Parlamente suggests that they take advantage of their present confinement and tell each other stories, "each afternoon from midday to four o'clock," the rest of the day being taken up with more normal occupations, including devotional ones.

Certain roles govern the nature and rhetorics of the storytelling. "Each of us will tell a story which he has either witnessed himself, or which he has heard from somebody worthy of belief." Significantly, in the court project which is now being realized, the idea was "to get together a party of ten people who were qualified to contribute something, excluding those who studied and were men of letters," for fear that "rhetorical ornament would in part falsify the truth of the account." This is as much as to state what will be obvious to anyone acquainted with the *Decameron* on first approaching the *Heptameron*—that Marguerite is a much less expert and sophisticated literary artist than Boccaccio; her language bears hardly any trace of aesthetic self-consciousness and rather tends to be factual, informative, unadorned. See the bluntness of some of the openings: "I've often wished, Ladies, that I'd been able to share the good fortune of the man in the story I'm about to tell you. So here it is" (story 3); or of some of the reports on violent action: "he leaned out of the window and shouted orders for him [his sister's husband] to be killed—orders that were instantly carried out, even as they watched" (story 30). It is quite natural that a casually knowledgeable tone should be maintained in handling characters of high birth (e.g., the king and queen of Naples in our first selection); these are stories told for their own amusement by aristocrats who are very much at ease in court life; the recommendation that the anecdotes be authentic signals a taste for a sort of high-society gossip.

As in much fiction and drama at all times, love is a major theme in the *Heptameron*; it is handled here in many various keys, ranging from loose and even bizarre indulgence (our first two selections) to spirituality and renunciation (the close of our third selection). The subject of love is closely interrelated with social and religious themes, for this was a strictly classified society and one in which religious conflict and debate were rampant. Both elements are insistently present in the stories as they were in Marguerite's mind; this is perhaps most prominently visible in the handling of situations that involve the social and ethical codes of married life. The "frame" of the *Heptameron* is very relevant in this connection. Each story is followed by a discussion among the participating ladies and gentlemen, a device which in some respects may make Marguerite seem closer to Castiglione than to Boccaccio. The debate that follows story 40 (told by Parlamente-Marguerite herself) reflects the views and inner contradictions of a society that was, in turns, free and strict, crude and highly refined, outspoken and hypocritical. As Parlamente describes "the state of matrimony as God and Nature ordain, loving one another virtuously and accepting their parents' wishes," and as the gentlemen present affirm that "they had all been married in this way, and [swear] that they [have] never regretted it," the narrator's typical comment is: "'True or not, the ladies concerned were so pleased with this, that, feeling they could wish to hear nothing better, they got up to go and give thanks to God for it." No less typical is the discussion of the Comte de

Josselin's killing of his brother-in-law: a violent action dictated by entrenched prejudice is not seen as a brutally senseless deed, but as a relatively justifiable action within the prevailing aristocratic code—a code which seems to aim at some sort of workable coexistence between the carnal and the spiritual, between moral laxity and trust in salvation.

P. A. Chilton's introduction to his translation of *The Heptameron* (1984) is excellent; B. J. Davis's *The Storytellers in Marguerite de Navarre's Heptameron* (1978) is an interesting, detailed study of the ten narrators and of their individual identities and positions; Samuel Putnam's *Marguerite de Navarre* (1935) is a well-informed and highly readable biography; Marcel Tetel's *Marguerite de Navarre's Heptameron: Themes, Language, and Structure* (1973) is an in-depth literary study for the more advanced student.

The Heptameron[1]

Story Three

The Queen of Naples has revenge on her unfaithful husband, King Alfonso, by taking his mistress's husband as her lover, an arrangement that endures to the end of their days, without the King ever suspecting.

I've often wished, Ladies, that I'd been able to share the good fortune of the man in the story I'm about to tell you.[2] So here it is. In the town of Naples in the time of King Alfonso,[3] (whose well-known lasciviousness was, one might say, the very sceptre by which he ruled) there lived a nobleman—a handsome, upright and likeable man, a man indeed whose qualities were so excellent that a certain old gentleman granted him the hand of his daughter. In beauty and charm she was in every way her husband's equal, and they lived in deep mutual affection until a carnival, in the course of which the King disguised himself and went round all the houses in the town, where the people vied with one another to give him a good reception. When he came to the house of the gentleman I have referred to, he was entertained more lavishly than in any of the other houses. Preserves, minstrels, music—all were laid before him, but above all there was the presence of the most beautiful lady that the King had ever seen. At the end of the banquet, the lady sang for the King with her husband, and so sweetly did she sing that her beauty was more than ever enhanced. Seeing such physical perfection, the King took

1. Our selections translated by P. A. Chilton. 2. The narrator is Saffredent, one of the younger members of the party, fond of company and pleasure, and a devoted admirer of Parlamente. He is often identified with an Admiral Bonnivet whom Marguerite knew well and some of whose amorous adventures are the subject of other stories in the *Heptameron*. 3. Alfonso V of Aragon (1396–1458), the cultivated and unfaithful husband of Maria, daughter of King Henry III of Castile.

less delight in contemplating the gentle harmony that existed between the lady and her husband, than he did in speculating as to how he might go about spoiling it. The great obstacle to his desires was the evident deep mutual love between them, and so, for the time being, he kept his passion hidden and as secret as he could. But in order to obtain at least some relief for his feelings, he held a series of banquets for the lords and ladies of Naples, to which he did not, of course, omit to invite the gentleman and his fair wife.

As everyone knows, men see and believe just what they want to, and the King thought he caught something in the lady's eyes which augured well—if only the husband were not in the way. To find out if his surmise was correct, therefore, he sent the husband off for two or three weeks to attend to some business in Rome. Up till then the wife had never had him out of her sight, and she was heartbroken the moment he walked out of the door. The King took the opportunity to console her as often as possible, showering blandishments and gifts of all kinds upon her, with the result that in the end she felt not only consoled, but even content in her husband's absence. Before the three weeks were up she had fallen so much in love with the King that she was every bit as upset about her husband's imminent return as she had been about his departure. So, in order that she should not be deprived of the King after her husband's return, it was agreed that she would let her royal lover know whenever her husband was going to his estates in the country. He could then come to see her without running any risks, and in complete secrecy, so that her honour and reputation—which gave her more concern than her conscience—could not possibly be damaged in any way.

Dwelling on the prospect of the King's visits with considerable pleasure, the lady gave her husband such an affectionate reception that, although he had heard during his absence that the King had been paying her a lot of attention, he had not the slightest suspicion of how far things had gone. However, the fire of passion cannot be concealed for long, and as time went by its flames began to be somewhat obvious. He naturally began to guess at the truth, and kept a close watch on his wife until there was no longer any room for doubt. But he decided to keep quiet about it, because he was afraid that if he let on that he knew, he might suffer even worse things at the hands of the King than he had already. He considered, in short, that it was better to put up with the affront, than to risk his life for the sake of a woman who apparently no longer loved him. He was, all the same, angry and bitter, and determined to get his own back if at all possible.

Now he was well aware of the fact that bitterness and jealousy can drive women to do things that love alone will never make them do, and that this is particularly true of women with strong feelings and

high principles of honour. So one day, while he was conversing with the Queen, he made so bold as to say that he felt very sorry for her when he saw how little the King really loved her. The Queen had heard all about the affair between the King and the gentleman's wife, and merely replied:

"I do not expect to be able to combine both honour and pleasure in my position. I am perfectly well aware that while I receive honour and respect, it is *she* who has all the pleasure. But then, I know too that while she may have the pleasure, she does not receive the honour and respect."

He knew, or course, to whom she was referring, and this was his reply: "Madame, you were born to honour and respect. You are after all of such high birth that, being queen or being empress could scarcely add to your nobility. But you are also beautiful, charming and refined, and you deserve to have your pleasures as well. The woman who is depriving you of those pleasures which are yours by right, is in fact doing herself more harm—because her moment of glory will eventually turn to shame and she will forfeit as much pleasure as she, you or any woman in the Kingdom of Naples could ever have. And if I may say so, Madame, if the King didn't have a crown on his head, he wouldn't have the slightest advantage over me as far as giving pleasure to ladies is concerned. What is more, I'm quite sure that in order to satisfy a refined person such as yourself, he really ought to be wishing he could exchange his constitution for one more like my own!"

The Queen laughed, and said: "The King may have a more delicate constitution than your own. Even so, the love which he bears me gives me so much satisfaction that I prefer it to all else."

"Madame, if that were the case, then I would not feel so sorry for you, because I know that you would derive great happiness from the pure love you feel within you, if it were matched by an equally pure love on the part of the King. But God has denied you this, in order that you should not find in this man the answer to all your wants and so make him your god on earth."

"I admit," said the Queen, "that my love for him is so deep that you will never find its like, wherever you may look."

"Forgive me," said the gentlemen, "but there are hearts whose love you've never sounded. May I be so bold as to tell you that there is a certain person who loves you, and loves you so deeply and so desperately, that in comparison your love for the King is as nothing? And his love grows and goes on growing in proportion as he sees the King's love for you diminishing. So, if it were, Madame, to please you, and you were to receive his love, you would be more than compensated for all that you have lost."

The Queen began to realize, both from what he was saying, and

from the expression on his face, that he was speaking from the depths of his heart. She remembered that he had some time ago sought to do her service,[4] and that he had felt so deeply about it that he had become quite melancholy. At the time she had assumed the cause of his mood lay with his wife, but she was now quite convinced that the real reason was his love for her. Love is a powerful force, and will make itself felt whenever it is more than mere pretence, and it was this powerful force that now made her certain of what remained hidden from the rest of the world. She looked at him again. He was certainly more attractive than her husband. He had been left by his wife, too, just as she had been left by the King. Tormented by jealousy and bitterness, allured by the gentleman's passion, she sighed, tears came to her eyes, and she began: "Oh God! Must it take the desire for revenge to drive me to do what love alone would never have driven me to?"

Her words were not lost on the gentleman who replied: "Madame, vengeance is sweet indeed, when instead of taking one's enemy's life, one gives life to a lover who is true. It is time, I think, that the truth freed you from this foolish love for a man who certainly has no love for you. It is time that a just and reasonable love banished from you these fears that so ill become one whose spirit is so strong and so virtuous. Why hesitate, Madame? Let us set aside rank and station. Let us look upon ourselves as a man and a woman, as the two most wronged people in the world, as two people who have been betrayed and mocked by those whom we loved with all our hearts. Let us, Madame, take our revenge, not in order to punish them as they deserve, but in order to do justice to our love. My love for you is unbearable. If it is not requited I shall die. Unless your heart is as hard as diamond or as stone, it is impossible that you should not feel some spark from this fire that burns the more fiercely within me the more I try to stifle it. I am dying for love of you! And if that cannot move you to take pity on me and grant me your love, then at least your own love for yourself must surely force you to do so. For you, who are so perfect that you merit the devotion of all the honourable and worthy men in all the world, have been despised and deserted by the very man for whose sake you have disdained all others!"

At this speech the Queen was quite beside herself. Lest her face betray the turmoil of her mind, she took his arm and led him into the garden adjoining her room. For a long time she walked up and down with him saying nothing. But he knew that the conquest was almost complete, and when they reached the end of the path, where

4. I.e., become her *serviteur*. "According to the *serviteur*'s practice, as the *Heptameron* presents it, a married aristocratic woman has the right to maintain several devoted knights in her service . . . since it is supposed to be chaste, the *serviteur*'s relationship, this remnant of courtly and chivalrous love, can coexist with faithful marriage . . . nevertheless, there is evidently considerable anxiety about the institution as such." [from the translator's Introduction].

no one could see them, he expressed in the clearest possible way the love that for so long he had kept concealed. At last they were of one mind. And so it was, one might say, that together they enacted a Vengeance, having found the Passion too much to bear.[5]

Before they parted they arranged that whenever the husband made his trips to his village, he would, if the King had gone off to the town, go straight to the castle to see the Queen. Thus they would fool the very people who were trying to fool them. Moreover, there would now be four people joining in the fun, instead of just two thinking they had it all to themselves. Once this was settled, the Queen retired to her room and the gentleman went home, both of them now sufficiently cheered up to forget all their previous troubles. No longer did the King's visits to the gentleman's lady distress either of them. Dread had now turned to desire, and the gentleman started to make trips to his village rather more often than he had in the past. It was, after all, only half a league out of the town. Whenever the King heard that the gentleman had gone to the country, he would make his way straight to his lady. Similarly, whenever the gentleman heard that the King had left his castle, he would wait till nightfall and then go straight to the Queen—to act, so to speak, as the King's viceroy. He managed to do this in such secrecy that no one had the slightest inkling of what was going on. They proceeded in this fashion for quite a while, but the King, being a public person, had much greater difficulty concealing his love-affair sufficiently to prevent anyone at all getting wind of it. In fact, there were a few unpleasant wags who started to make fun of the gentleman, saying he was a cuckold, and putting up their fingers like cuckold's horns whenever his back was turned. Anyone with any decency felt very sorry for the man. He knew what they were saying, of course, but derived a good deal of amusement from it, and reckoned his horns were surely as good as the King's crown.

One day when the King was visiting the gentleman and his wife at their home, he noticed a set of antlers mounted on the wall. He burst out laughing, and could not resist the temptation to remark that the horns went very well with the house. The gentleman was a match for the King, however. He had an inscription placed on the antlers which read as follows:

> Io porto le corna, ciascun lo vede,
> Ma tal le porta, che no lo crede.[6]

Next time the king was in the house, he saw the inscription, and asked what it meant.

5. An allusion to medieval mystery plays: after the Passion and Resurrection, the mystery of Vengeance depicted the punishment of Christ's slayers [translator's note]. 6. "I am wearing horns, everyone sees that, / But there is one who wears them who doesn't know it."

The gentleman simply said: "If the King doesn't tell his secrets to his subjects, then there's no reason why his subjects should tell their secrets to the King. And so far as horns are concerned, you should bear in mind that they don't always stick up and push their wearers' hats off. Sometimes they're so soft that you can wear a hat on top of them, without being troubled by them, and even without knowing they're there at all!"

From these words the King realized that the gentleman knew about his affair with his wife. But he never suspected that the gentleman was having an affair with *his* wife. For her part, the Queen was careful to feign displeasure at her husband's behaviour, though secretly she was pleased, and the more she was pleased, the more displeasure she affected. This amicable arrangement permitted the continuation of their amours for many years to come, until at length old age brought them to order.

* * *

"Well, Ladies," concluded Saffredent, "let that story be a lesson to you. When your husbands give you little roe-deer horns, make sure that you give them great big stag's antlers!"

"Saffredent," said Ennasuite[7], laughing, "I'm quite sure that if you were still such an ardent lover as you used to be, you wouldn't mind putting up with horns as big as oaks, as long as you could give a pair back when the fancy took you. But you're starting to go grey, you know, and it really is time you began to give your appetites a rest!"

"Mademoiselle," he replied, "even if the lady I love gives me no hope, and even if age has dampened my ardour somewhat, my desires are as strong as ever. But seeing that you object to my harbouring such noble desires, let me invite you to tell the fourth story, and let's see if you can produce an example to refute what I say."[8]

Story Thirty[9]

A young nobleman of some fourteen or fifteen years of age, thinking he is sleeping with one of his mother's ladies, has relations with his mother, who nine months later gives birth to a little girl, who twelve

7. *Enna* may stand for "Anne," and *suite* means "retinue"; so the character is identifiable with Anne de Vivonne, one of the ladies in Marguerite's entourage who collaborated on the *Heptameron* project at court. Her attitude toward men, as shown here, can be bitter and sharply ironical. 8. Ennasuite is, in fact, the teller of the following story 4, intended to prove that "not all men who are rash enough to try their tricks get what they want." 9. The narrator is Hircan, Parlamente's husband, variously described, in the book itself and by its commentators, as brilliant, flighty, sensual, capable of sarcasm and grossness. The name is related to "Hircania," an imaginary and proverbially wild region in classical literature; the root is that of *hircus*, Latin for "goat" (cf. English "hircine": libidinous).

or thirteen years later marries the young man, who is entirely unaware that he is her father and her brother, just as she is entirely unaware that she is his daughter and his sister.

During the reign of King Louis XII, at the time when the Legate[1] at Avignon was one of the d'Amboise family, in fact the nephew of Georges d'Amboise, who was Legate of France, there lived in Languedoc[2] a certain lady whose name, for the sake of her family, I shall not reveal. She had an income of more than four thousand ducats, had been widowed at an early age, and had been left with one son. Whether out of sorrow at the loss of her husband or whether out of her love for her child, she had vowed never to remarry. To avoid any situation that might lead to her doing so, she insisted on having nothing to do with anyone except people who were devout. She thought that it is opportunity that leads to sin, and did not realize that it is the reverse: sin manufactures opportunity. This young widow gave herself up entirely to attending divine service. She shunned all worldly gatherings—to such an extent that she even made going to weddings and listening to the organ in church a matter of conscience. When her son was seven years of age, she took on a man of saintly ways as the boy's tutor, so that he might be instructed in all devotion and sanctity. But when he was between fourteen and fifteen years old, Nature, that most secret of teachers, found that this well-grown lad had nothing to occupy him and began to teach him lessons somewhat different from those of his tutor. He began to gaze upon and to desire the things that seemed to him full of beauty. And amongst these things there was a young lady who slept in his mother's room. No one suspected anything, since he was regarded as no more than a child, and in any case, in that household nothing was heard but godly conversation. Well, the young gallant started making secret advances to the girl, and the girl came to complain to her mistress. The boy's mother loved her son so much and had such a high opinion of him that she thought the girl was making the complaint simply in order to turn her against him. But the girl persisted in her complaints, and in the end her mistress said:

"I will find out if what you say is true, and if what you say is indeed true, I will punish him. But if your accusation is false, it will be you who shall pay the penalty."

In order to establish the truth of the matter, then, she instructed the girl to make an assignation with her son. He was to come at midnight and join her in the bed where she slept alone by the door of her mistress's chamber. The girl dutifully obeyed, but when the evening came, it was the mother who took her place. If the accusation was true, she was resolved to give her son such a chastising that

1. The Pope's delegate, representing him in a particular place or country. 2. A region in the south of France.

he would never in the whole of his life get in bed with a woman without remembering it. Such were her angry thoughts, when her son appeared and climbed into the bed with her. But, even though he had actually got into the bed, she still could not believe that he would do anything dishonourable. So she did not speak immediately, waiting till he gave some clear sign that his intentions were bad, for she could not believe on such slender evidence that his desires might go as far as anything criminal. She waited to see what he would do. So long did she wait, and so fragile was her nature, that her anger turned to pleasure, a pleasure so abominable, that she forgot she was a mother. Even as the dammed-up torrent flows more impetuously than the freely flowing stream, so it was with this poor lady whose pride and honour had lain in the restraints she had imposed upon her own body. No sooner had she set her foot on the first rung down the ladder of her chastity, than she found herself suddenly swept away to the bottom. That night she became pregnant by the very one whom she had desired to prevent getting others with child. No sooner had the sin been committed than she was seized with the most violent pangs of remorse, remorse so deep that her repentance was to last her whole life long. She rose from her son, who still believed he had lain with the young girl, and in bitter anguish withdrew to a room apart, where, going over in her mind how her good intentions had come to such wicked fruition, she spent the rest of the night in solitary weeping and gnashing of teeth. Yet, instead of humbling herself and recognizing how impossible it is for our flesh to do otherwise than sin unless we have God's help, she tried to give satisfaction for past deeds through her own means, through her tears and through her own prudence, to avoid future evil. Her excuse for her sin was the situation she had been placed in, never evil inclination, for which there can be no remedy but the grace of God. She thought it would be possible in the future to act in such a way as to avoid slipping again into such unfortunate circumstances, and, as if there were but one kind of sin that can damn us, she bent all her efforts to avoiding this one alone. But the root of pride, which external sin should cure, only grew and increased, with the consequence that by avoiding one kind of evil she merely fell in the way of several others. For the very next morning, as soon as day broke, she sent for her son's tutor and said to him:

"My son is growing up now, and it's time he left home. I have a relative who is away beyond the mountains with the Grand-Maître de Chaumont.[3] His name is Captain Montesson, and he will be very pleased to enlist my son. So, take him at once, and to spare me the pain of parting, tell him not to come to bid me farewell."

So saying, she gave him the necessary money for the journey.

3. I.e., fighting in the Italian wars under the lord of Chaumont. Captain Montesson distinguished himself as a soldier at the time of Louis XII, Francis I's predecessor.

That very morning the young man departed for the wars, and, having as he believed spent the night with his paramour, there was nothing better that he could have wished for. The lady remained for a long time plunged into a deep sadness and melancholy. Had it not been for her fear of God, there was many a time when she would gladly have wished that the unhappy fruit of her womb should perish. She pretended to be ill, so that she could wear an outer garment to conceal her fault. When the time of her confinement was near, she turned to the one man in whom she could place her trust, a bastard brother, to whom she had in the past given a great deal. She told him what had befallen her, without telling him about her son, and asked him to help her save her honour, which he gladly agreed to do. A few days before she was due to give birth, he came and invited her to have a change of air, saying that it would help her recover her health if she came to stay in his house for a while. So, accompanied by a small group of attendants, she went with him. Waiting for them they found a midwife who had been told it was the brother's wife she was to attend. One night, without the midwife's realizing who she was, the lady was delivered of a beautiful baby girl. Her brother had the child fostered with a wet-nurse, pretending that it was his own child. The lady stayed one month, and then, fully recovered, returned to her own house, where she began to live a more austere life than ever, subjecting herself to fasts and other disciplines.

When the wars in Italy were over, the lady's son, who by this time had grown to full manhood, sent word to his mother, asking if he might return to her house. But she was afraid of falling into the same sin again, and refused to give her permission. The son persisted, until in the end she could no longer find any reason to continue in her refusal. However, she sent a message to him to the effect that he was never to appear before her unless he was married to somebody he loved deeply. It did not matter who she was; her fortune was not important; so long as she was a girl of gentle birth, that would be sufficient. During this time, the lady's bastard brother saw that his adopted daughter had grown up into a beautiful young girl, and decided that she should be placed in a household in some far-off region where she would not be known. On the advice of her mother she was placed with Catherine, the Queen of Navarre.[4] At the age of twelve or thirteen the girl had indeed grown so beautiful and noble in her ways that the Queen came to hold her very dear, and was anxious that she should be married to someone of high estate. But though the girl had many men to pay her court, because she was poor, she had none to be her husband. One day, however, the noble lord who was her unknown father came back from over the mountains and arrived at

4. Marguerite's mother-in-law.

the house of the Queen. No sooner had he caught sight of his daughter than he fell in love with her. Having received permission from his mother to marry whom he pleased, all he desired to know about the girl was whether she was of gentle birth, and on hearing that indeed she was, he asked the Queen for her hand. The Queen, who knew that he was rich, and not only rich but handsome, noble and good, gladly gave her consent.

Once the marriage had been consummated, the noble lord wrote to his mother again, saying that she could surely no longer refuse to have him, for now he could bring with him a daughter-in-law as perfect as anyone could ever desire. His mother asked further about the match he had made, and on realizing that her son's wife was their own daughter, she sank into a state of such utter desperation that she thought her end was near. For the harder she tried to place impediments in the way of disaster, the more she became the instrument whereby ever new catastrophes overcame her. Not knowing what else she could do, she went to the Legate at Avignon confessed the enormity of her sin, and asked for his advice on what she should now do. In order to satisfy her conscience the Legate summoned several doctors of theology, to whom he explained the whole affair, without revealing the names of the persons involved. In the light of their counsel he concluded that the lady should never say anything to her children, for they had acted in ignorance and consequently had not sinned. But she, their mother, was to do penance for the rest of her life without giving the slightest indication of it to them. The poor lady returned to her house, and not long after that her son and her daughter-in-law arrived. They were very much in love. Never was there such love between husband and wife, never were a husband and wife so close. For she was his daughter, his sister, his wife. And he was her father, brother and husband. They endured for ever in this great love, while the poor lady, their mother, in the extremity of her penitence, could not see them show their love but she would withdraw to weep alone.

* * *

"There, Ladies, that is what becomes of those women who presume by their own strength and virtue to overcome love and nature and all the powers that God has placed therein. Better were it to recognize one's weakness, better not to try to do battle with such an enemy, but turning to the one true lover, to say with the Psalmist[5]: 'Lord, I am oppressed; answer thou for me.' "

"One could not possibly hear a stranger story than that," said Oisille,[6] "and I think that every man and woman here should bow their

5. Actually Isaiah 38:14 [translator's note]. 6. The oldest lady of the group. From here on, the conversation obviously echoes current debate on religious education as well as polemical

heads in the fear of God, to see how, as a result of presuming to do good, so much evil came about."

"Be you assured, the first step man takes trusting in himself alone is a step away from trust in God," said Parlamente.

"He is a wise man," said Geburon,[7] "who recognizes no enemy but himself, and who distrusts his own will and counsel, however good and holy they may appear to be."

"And no matter how good a thing it might appear to be," said Longarine,[8] "nothing should induce a woman to risk sharing a bed with a male relative, however close he may be to her. It's not safe to set a naked flame near tinder."

"Without a doubt she was one of those foolish, vainglorious women who had had her head filled with nonsense by the Franciscans,"[9] said Ennasuite "and thought she was so saintly that she was incapable of sin, as some of them would persuade us to believe that through our own efforts we actually can be, though this is an extreme error."

"Is it possible, Longarine," said Oisille, "that some of them are so foolish as to believe that view?"

"They do better than that!" replied Longarine. "They even say that it's necessary to habituate themselves to the virtue of chastity, and in order to put their strength to the test, they converse with the most beautiful women they can find, with women whom they particularly like. Then by means of fondling and kissing they test themselves to see if they have achieved mortification of the flesh. If they find that they are aroused by these little pleasures, they go into solitude and subject themselves to fasts and austere disciplines. And when they have overcome the desires of the flesh to the point where a conversation and a kiss no longer arouse them, they try out the ultimate temptation of going to bed with a woman and embracing her without lustful desire. However, for every one who survived this test, there were many who did not, and the consequences were so unfortunate that the Archbishop of Milan, where these particular religious practices were rife, was obliged to separate the men from the women, putting the women in women's convents and the men in monasteries of their own."

"Really," said Geburon, "it's the extreme of folly to want to put oneself through one's own efforts above sin, and then actually to go looking for situations where a sin may be committed!"

"Some people do the opposite, however," said Saffredent, "and

attitudes toward alleged Catholic practices which these men and women of the world regard as naive and / or hypocritical. 7. One of the older members of the group, notable for his sententious wisdom. Suggested identifications are with a military man, the lord of Burye, a captain in the "Italian wars"; or with Nicolas Bourbon, a tutor of Jeanne d'Albret, Marguerite's daughter. 8. A young and wisely talkative widow, often identified with one of Marguerite's ladies-in-waiting, who among her titles had that of lady of Longrai (hence her name, which is also interpreted as a word play on *langue orine* meaning "tongue of gold"). 9. In several of Marguerite's stories, the Franciscans are the object of anticlerical satire and criticism.

avoid such situations as much as they can—but even then their concupiscence goes with them. The good Saint Jerome, even after he had flagellated himself and hidden himself away in the wilderness, confessed that he could not get rid of the fire that burned in the marrow of his bones. So we should commend ourselves to God, for if He does not hold us in His grip, we stumble and take great pleasure in so doing."

"But you're not taking any notice of what I can see!" interrupted Hircan. "While we've been telling our stories, the monks have been listening behind the hedge! They didn't even hear the bell for vespers, but now that we've started talking about God they've run off and they're ringing the second bell!"

"We will do well to follow them," said Oisille, "and go to render thanks to God for having spent this day so happily."

At this, they rose and made their way to the church, where they all devoutly heard vespers. Afterwards, when they went for supper, they discussed the things that had been said during the day and recounted many things that had happened in their time, in order to see which were worthy of note. After passing the evening in this happy way, they all retired peacefully to bed, looking forward to continuing on the next day the pastime which they found so agreeable. And so the third day came to its close.

Story Forty[1]

How the sister of the Comte de Jossebelin marries without her brother's knowledge a gentleman; how, in spite of his liking for this gentleman, the brother subsequently has him killed because he is of a different house; and how his widow spends the rest of her days in the austerity of a hermitage.

Rolandine's[2] father, the Comte de Jossebelin, had several sisters, some of whom had made wealthy marriages, and some of whom had entered religious orders. But there was one who stayed at home and never married. She was incomparably more beautiful than the others, and was so loved by her brother that he put her even before his wife and children. Many eligible men sought her hand in marriage, but because of the brother's fear of losing her, and because he was too fond of his money, they were always turned down. Consequently, she remained unmarried for a great part of her life, living respectably in her brother's house. Now in the same house there

1. The narrator is Parlamente, generally identified with Marguerite herself. 2. The heroine of a previous story (31), who after early turmoil, and mistreatment by the count her father, attains happiness and riches in married life.

lived a handsome young gentleman, who had been brought up there since early childhood, and who had grown up to be a person of such handsome appearance and such excellent qualities that he had acquired a certain influence in his master's house. Thus when the Count wished to send messages to his sister, he always did so by means of this young gentleman. He even gave him the authority to visit her alone, with the result that, seeing her morning and evening as he did, the visits blossomed into deep affection. But the young gentleman feared for his life if his master should be offended, and the lady feared likewise for her honour. So their love went no further than words, until the Seigneur de Jossebelin started remarking to his sister that he only wished that the young gentleman was from as good a family as she. There was, he said, nobody he would rather have as a brother-in-law. He said this so often that after discussing the matter carefully, the couple thought that if they were to marry, the brother would forgive them. Those blinded by love believe what they wish to believe and, vainly thinking that nothing but good could come of it, they were married, without anyone but the priest and some female companions knowing.

For several years they enjoyed those pleasures that a married man and woman may take together. They were the handsomest couple in Christendom, and the most deeply and perfectly in love. But Fortune, unable to see two people so happy together, became envious, and roused against them an enemy, who spied on the young lady, and who, though ignorant of her marriage, became aware of her happiness. This enemy came to the Seigneur de Jossebelin and told him that the young gentleman whom he trusted so much was going too often to his sister's room, and at times of the day when gentlemen ought not to. At first the Count did not believe this, because of the great confidence he had both in his sister and in the gentleman. But after much persuasion he was induced in the name of his family's honour to ensure that a watch was placed on them, with the result that the poor couple, who suspected nothing, were discovered. One night the Seigneur de Jossebelin was informed that the gentleman was in his sister's room. He went at once and found the poor love-blind couple in bed. He was speechless with rage, and drawing his sword, chased the gentleman out with the intention of killing him. But the gentleman, who was an agile man, got away, still wearing his nightshirt. Unable to escape by the door, he jumped from a window into the garden. The poor lady, who was also still in her night attire, fell on her knees before her brother, saying:

"Spare my husband's life, Monsieur, I am married to him, and if we have done wrong, then punish me alone, for all that he has done was done at my request."

The brother was beside himself with anger and could only reply: "Even if he were a hundred thousand times your husband, still I

would punish him as a bad servant and as one who has deceived me!"

So saying, he leaned out of the window and shouted orders for him to be killed—orders that were instantly carried out, even as they watched. Having witnessed this piteous spectacle, the lady addressed her brother like someone bereft of her senses:

"Brother, I have neither mother nor father, and I am old enough to marry as I please. I have chosen to marry a man of whom you have said again and again that you wished I could have married him. And because I have followed your advice in doing something that I could quite legally have done without it, you kill the one man in the world you loved above all others! So since my pleading could not save him from death, I beg you, in the name of all the love you have ever had for me, make me his companion in death, even as I have been his companion in all his fortunes. So satisfy the demands of your cruel and unjust anger, grant rest to the body and soul of one who will not and cannot live without her spouse!"

Although the brother was overwrought to the point losing his reason, he had pity on his sister, and without either granting or refusing her request, he walked away and left her standing there. After pondering his deed and ascertaining that the dead gentleman had in fact been married to his sister, he wished that he had never committed the murder. Being afraid that his sister would seek revenge or would appeal to law, he had a castle built in the middle of a forest in which he shut her up, forbidding anyone to speak with her.

After a time, in order to appease his conscience, he tried to regain her confidence and even had the subject of marriage raised. But she sent word back that he had already given her such an unpleasant foretaste that she had no desire to feed further on such fare, and that she hoped to live in such a manner that her own brother would not become the murderer of a second husband. For she could hardly believe that, after committing so vicious a crime against the man he loved best in all the world, he was likely to be merciful to someone else. She also said that in spite of being unable in her weakness to avenge herself, she placed her hope in Him who was the true judge, who left no evil unpunished and in whose love she wished to abide in the lonely castle that was now her hermitage. She was true to her word, for there she remained until she died, living a life of such long-suffering and austerity that after her death people from far and wide visited her remains as if she had been a saint. From then on, the brother's family declined until of his six sons only one was left. They all died miserably. In the end it was his daughter Rolandine who remained sole heiress, as you heard in the earlier story, and inherited the prison which had been built for her aunt.

* * *

"Ladies, I pray God that you will take note of this example, and that none of you will wish to marry merely for your own pleasure, without the consent of those to whom you owe obedience. For marriage is an estate of long duration, and one which should not be entered into lightly or without the approval of our closest friends and relatives. Even then, however wisely one marries, one is bound to find at least as much pain as pleasure."

"That is indeed true," said Oisille, "and if there were no God or laws to teach girls to behave themselves, Parlamente's example would be enough to make them show more respect for their parents and relatives than to take it into their heads to make marriages of their own choosing."

"But, Madame," said Nomerfide[3] "if one had only *one* good day in the year, one can't say one is miserable for the *whole* of one's life! She *did* have the pleasure of seeing, and being able to speak to, the one person she loved best in the world. What is more, she was able to enjoy it through marriage, without having anything on her conscience. I consider that this satisfaction must have been so great that it makes up for the sorrow she had to bear."

"What you mean," said Saffreden, "is that women derive more pleasure from going to bed with their husbands than displeasure from seeing them murdered under their noses?"

"That's *not* what I meant," said Nomerfide; "that would go against what I know of women. What I mean is that an *unusual* pleasure, such as marrying the man one loves most in the world, must be greater than the pain of losing him through death, which is a common occurrence."

"Yes," said Geburon, "but through a natural death, whereas the death in question was excessively cruel. It seems very strange to me that the Seigneur de Jossebelin should dare to go to such extremes of cruelty, seeing that he was neither her husband nor her father, merely her brother, and seeing that she was of an age, at which the law allows daughters to marry as they think fit."

"I don't find it strange at all," said Hircan, "since he didn't kill the sister, whom he loved so much, and over whom he had in any case no authority, but punished the gentleman he had brought up as his son and loved as his own brother. He heaped privileges on him, advanced him in his service and then the man goes and seeks the hand of his master's sister in marriage! He had no right at all to do that."

"Quite," said Nomerfide. "It isn't any common, ordinary pleasure, when a lady of such high birth marries for love alone a gentleman of her household. You may have found his death 'strange,' but

3. The youngest member of the group, who generally views life with joyful optimism.

the pleasure too must have been rare—and all the greater, since it runs counter to the views expressed by all wise men, and has in its favour the fact that a loving heart found satisfaction and that a soul found true repose. For there was nothing in all this to offend God. And as far as his death is concerned, which according to you was so cruel, it seems to me that since death is inevitable, the swifter it is the better. If one thing is certain, it is that we all must pass from this life. I think the fortunate ones are those who do not have to linger on the outskirts of death, and who soar out of the one state in this world that can be called bliss straight into the bliss that is eternal."

"What do you mean by 'lingering on the outskirts of death'?" asked Simontaut.[4]

"I mean those people who suffer torments of the mind," answered Nomerfide, "and those who have been ill a long time, and who, because of the extreme nature of their bodily or mental suffering, no longer fear death, but rather find it slow in coming. I mean those people who have journeyed through the outskirts and can tell you the names of inns where they have wept rather than rested. It was inevitable that the lady in question should at some time lose her husband, but she was, thanks to her brother's violence, spared the experience of seeing her husband suffer from long sickness or distress. Moreover, she could count herself happy indeed in converting the happiness she had enjoyed with her husband to the service of our Lord."

"Do you give no consideration to the humiliation she suffered, and the imprisonment?" said Longarine.

"I believe," said Nomerfide, "that if one loves perfectly, with a love rooted in God's commandments, then one will not experience humiliation or dishonour, provided one does not go astray and fall from the perfection of one's love. For the glory of loving truly knows no shame. And though her body was imprisoned, her heart was free and united with God and her husband, so that I believe she did not experience her solitude as imprisonment but regarded it rather as the highest liberty. For when one can no longer see the person one loves, one's greatest pleasure is to think about that person incessantly. Prison walls are never confining when the mind is allowed to wander as it will."

"Nothing could be more true than what Nomerfide says, "said Simontaut, "but the man who is his fury brought about the separation of the couple ought to consider himself miserable indeed, having offended as he did against God, against Love and against Honour."

"In all truth," said Geburon, "I am amazed by the varied nature of women's love. It seems clear to me that women who love most

4. Identifiable with François de Bourdeille, a nobleman related to the Montaut family; the name permits a pun alluding to masculinity (*monte haut*-rises high). François was married to Anne de Vivonne, hence in the present context he would be the husband of Ennasuite.

are the most virtuous, but that those who love to a lesser degree cover up what love they have, because they wish to appear virtuous."

"It's quite true," said Parlamente, "that a heart which opens itself virtuously to both God and men is capable of stronger love than a sinful heart, and is not afraid of anyone seeing into its true feelings."

"I've always heard it said," said Simontaut, "that men should not be condemned for pursuing women, since it was God who put love in men's breasts in the first place and gave them the boldness to do the asking, while He made women timid and chaste, so that they would do the refusing. If a man is punished for having used the powers implanted in him, he suffers an injustice."

"But," said Longarine, "it was extraordinary that the brother should have sung the young gentleman's praises over such a long period of time. It seems to me that it's either madness or cruelty if the keeper of a fountain praises the beauty of its waters to someone dying of thirst, only to kill him when he wants to drink from it!"

"Without doubt," said Parlamente, "it was the brother with his fair words who kindled the fire, and he had no right to put it out with his sword."

"It astonishes me," Saffredent said, "that anyone should so disapprove of an ordinary *gentilhomme*, who after all used neither subterfuge nor coercion other than devoted service, merely because he succeeded in marrying a woman of high birth. For all the ancient philosophers assert that the lowliest of men is worth far more than the highest born and most virtuous woman in the world."

"The reason is," said Dagoucin,[5] "that in order to maintain peace in the state, consideration is given only to the rank of families, the seniority of individuals and the provisions of the law, and not to men's love and virtue, in order that the monarchy should not be undermined. Consequently, in marriages between social equals which are contracted according to the human judgement of the family concerned, the partners are often so different in the feelings of the heart and in temperament that far from entering into a state leading to salvation, they frequently find themselves on the outskirts of Hell."

"Equally," said Geburon, "there have been many couples who are extremely close in their feelings and in their temperament, couples who marry for love without considering differences of family and lineage, and who have never stopped regretting it. Great but indiscreet love of this kind frequently turns into violent jealousy."

"In my opinion," said Parlamente, "neither of these kinds of marriages is praiseworthy. If people submit to the will of God, they are concerned neither with glory, greed, nor sensual enjoyment, but wish only to live in the state of matrimony as God and Nature ordain,

5. The most philosophical member of the group, described elsewhere (story 11) as "so wise that he would rather die than say something foolish." He is also the saintliest; our translator indicates that his name is "a fairly obvious pun: *de goûts saints* ('of saintly tastes')."

loving one another virtuously and accepting their parents' wishes. Even though there is no condition in life that is without some tribulation, I have seen couples like this live together with no regrets. Indeed we are not so unfortunate that in our present gathering we have no such couples at all!"

Hircan, Geburon, Simontaut and Saffredent affirmed that they had all been married in this way, and swore that they had never regretted it. True or not, the ladies concerned were so pleased at this, that, feeling they could wish to hear nothing better, they got up to go and give thanks to God for it, and found the monks were ready to say vespers. After the service they all had supper, returning to the subject of their own marriages, with the men going on to talk the whole evening about their experiences when wooing their wives. But they all kept interrupting one another, and it has been impossible to memorize their tales in full, tales which would have been no less delightful to record than the ones they told in the meadow. They enjoyed themselves so much that bedtime arrived without their noticing. Madame Oisille retired, and the others, still in merry mood, followed her. So happy were they all that I think the married couples amongst them did not do quite so much sleeping as the rest—what with talking about their love in the past and demonstrating it in the present. Thus the night passed sweetly till morning broke.

FRANCOIS RABELAIS

1495?–1553

The life of François Rabelais, a man of wide humanistic education in the Renaissance tradition, typifies the variety of interests of the period, for he was at various points a law student, a monk, and a practicing physician; and he knew the life of people in cities and on country estates, in monasteries and at court. Born probably about 1494–95 into a middle-class landowning family at La Devinière, near Chinon in the province of Touraine, Rabelais was the son of a successful lawyer. Apparently first drawn to a monastic career, he was trained as a novice in the Franciscan order in the monastery of La Baumette at Angers. Later, as a monk in the Franciscan monastery of Puy-Saint-Martin at Fontenay-le-Comte, he busied himself especially with the "new learning" (Greek and other humanistic studies), which was suspect to conventional theologians. In 1524 he obtained authorization from Pope Clement VII to transfer to the less strict Benedictine order. He maintained close and continuous contacts, both personal and epistolary, with prominent humanists and jurists. He probably studied law at Poitiers. Between 1527 and 1530 he seems to have traveled extensively, and probably to have studied medicine at the University of Paris, a supposition warranted by the fact that when in 1530 he entered the University of Montpellier as a medical student

he received the degree of bachelor of medicine in two months. We know that in 1532 he was a physician in the important hospital of the Pont-du-Rhône at Lyon and practiced medicine with success.

Also in 1532, Rabelais published, under the name of Alcofribas Nasier, an anagram of his own name, the volume of *Pantagruel* which now constitutes Book II of *Gargantua and Pantagruel*. The story of Gargantua, the present Book I, appeared in 1534. In that year Rabelais traveled to Rome as personal physician to Jean du Bellay, then bishop of Paris and later a cardinal. In Rome in 1535 Rabelais obtained papal absolution for having discarded the monk's robe without authorization; later in the same year, back in France, his status became that of a lay priest. In 1537 he received his doctorate of medicine at Montpellier and gave lectures there, using the texts of the ancient Greek physicians such as Hippocrates in the original. In the following years he traveled widely and also acquired some standing at court, holding a minor post in the retinue of King Francis I. Court contacts helped him counteract the condemnations of his literary work by the theologians of the Sorbonne. The seriousness of his difficulties—arising out of accusations of heresy and leanings toward the Protestant Reformation—varied according to the protection that the court could grant him and his own success in compromising. After Book III of *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (1546) was banned, Rabelais resided for two years in voluntary exile at Metz in the Alsace. He was again in Rome in 1548, and in 1551 was appointed to the two curacies of Saint-Martin-de-Meudon and Saint-Christophe-de-Jambet, both of which he resigned early in 1553 because of ill health. The tradition is that Rabelais died in Paris, in the Rue des Jardins, probably in April of that same year. Book IV of *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, which had appeared in 1552, had also been banned; a fifth book, of dubious authenticity, appeared in 1562–64. It is evident from the above that Rabelais' life and work are both highly representative of the period in which he lived and yet conspicuously unique.

Rabelais was by no means exclusively a professional writer; indeed, his story of the giants Gargantua and Pantagruel, written piecemeal during his mature years, is not so much a traditional unified work of fiction as a summation of Rabelais' wide knowledge, of his diverse notions of the world, and of his fantasies. Its peculiar quality may be described in terms of contrasts: the supernatural and realistic in the characters and action; the solemn and comic, lofty and bawdy in the themes; and the erudite and colloquial in the style. Rabelais' heroes, as giants, move in a dimension that is entirely out of proportion to ordinary reality. They belong—with their extraordinary size, power, and longevity—to a tradition known to us through myths, through folk tales, and through biblical narrative. Yet these same fantastic characters express the feelings and attitudes of ordinary men. In fact, they seem to be presented as epitomes of what man, according to Rabelais, ought to be in a reasonable and enjoyable world.

Rabelais' view of the world, we soon realize, is also well reflected in his literary style. High and low, pedantic and farcical, ponderous and mocking, it shows a broad intellectual and moral inclusiveness, an enthusiastic open-mindedness and gusto. As we come across the learned allusion, the solemn Ciceronian phrasing, and the scholastic pedantry, all mingled with the familiar

and folksy, we notice that the presence of the colloquial quality by no means destroys the impact of the erudition or necessarily gives it the tone of parody. For Rabelais attends to both with equal delight and blends them with complete success; the resulting mixture is a consistent whole, sustained throughout by the same rich manipulation of words and the same exuberant vitality. Thus Rabelais' style concretely embodies his view of the world and of man. His message, his view of the human condition, are basically cheerful; his work is usually considered to be a major monument of the Renaissance at its most satisfied and affirmative. The basic theme of drinking, the vast thirst of Rabelais' gigantic protagonists, is conveniently taken to symbolize the healthy and all-embracing sensual and intellectual appetites of the period.

A famous contemporary of Rabelais, Benvenuto Cellini (1500–1571), mentioned in our general introduction, can also be regarded as an instance of the affirmative Renaissance spirit little hampered by doubt and melancholy. In fact, Cellini is even too pure and unmeditative, too "innocent" an example. In his fully adujsted way of living, this somewhat bombastic extrovert does not ask himself about value and meaning. Rabelais, at least implicitly, does take an interest in questions of value; and he seems assured, on what may appear to us relatively scant evidence, of the basic goodness and perfectibility of man. The selections from Rabelais given here emphasize that assurance, showing, among other things, Rabelais' faith in a certain type of physical and mental education; they illustrate his conception of the ideal man fit to live in what he considered to be a new age. It will be observed in this connection that although Rabelais was, among Europeans of the period, as responsible as anyone for the popular notion of an intellectual Renaissance following the aridity and bondage of medieval scholasticism and the barbarism of the Gothic "night," his ideal man also possesses certain qualities that seem to us to be survivals of medieval codes. Rabelais' ideal man remains a kind of knight-at-arms, despite the added emphasis on the intellectual ornaments of humanism. And this is true of other Renaissance writers. For example, in the works of Castiglione, Cervantes, Shakespeare, and Ludovico Ariosto (1474–1533), author of the epic *Orlando Furioso*, the knightly ideal continues to appear, though variously twisted through irony or distorted in other ways. Rabelais' approach is very direct and hopeful; from his pages we receive the impression that a healthy, wise, gallant, and happy type of man is a concrete possibility. Give the young the right tutoring—Rabelais' implication is—do away with hampering scholasticism, let them take proper care of their bodily functions, and certain values of tolerance, *bonhommie*, and substantial well-being will finally and inevitably triumph. The sophistic, the arrogant, the hypocritical will be exposed and defeated in the most reasonable and enjoyable of worlds.

Nowhere is this pleasant view expressed more clearly than in the conception of Thélème, the supremely good place on earth, the "abbey" of Rabelais' heart and imagination, where all restrictions are banned, not because total anarchy and license are advocated but rather because for such supremely civilized "nuns" and "monks" as those of the Thélèmite order instinctive inclinations will coincide with virtue: "The only rule of the house was: DO AS THOU WILT, because men that are free, of gentle birth, well-bred and at home in civilized company possess a natural instinct that inclines them

to virtue and saves them from vice. This instinct they name their honor." Such optimism is qualified, of course, by the very premise of his story. For all its realism, and in spite of the fact that some episodes are mock-heroic versions of actual and even of provincial and domestic events (the Picrochole war that precedes the establishment of the abbey of Thélème), this is still a fable, with giants as its main heroes and fantasy as its normal mode.

Much war, horror, intrigue, and injustice existed in the world as Rabelais knew it. In practical life, he muddled through by his tolerance, wisdom, and capacity for compromise (his temporary sympathy for the Protestant Reformation, in a time of raging religious conflict, stopped "this side of the stake"). But he survived also because with his literary art he invented a world fashioned according to his own aspirations. In that world, the heroes on the side of good and of justice not only win wars but also display an effective and nobly magniloquent clemency toward the vanquished. Its utopian quality again illustrates the tendency of the Renaissance mind to seek a perfect model, an exemplary, ideal form. Some important passages of the book, especially the famous letter (included in our selections) of Gargantua to Pantagruel, dated from Sir Thomas More's ideal land, Utopia, make clear that this chronicle of giants, biblical in its magnitude and in its patriarchal qualities and Renaissance in its aspiration to "achieve mental, moral and technical excellence," symbolized in its serious moments the urge to perpetuate, from father to son, the true and noble form of man and thus idealistically confirm his divine origin, his "dignity."

Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, translated by Helene Iswolsky (1968), views Rabelais' satire in the racy, carnivalesque context of popular culture. Donald M. Frame's *François Rabelais: A Study* (1977), is a solid treatment intended for the general reader. Thomas M. Greene, *Rabelais: A Study in Comic Courage* (1970), gives a brief, comprehensive account of Rabelais' life and work. The general reader will find Brian Masters, *A Student's Guide to Rabelais* (1977), helpful.

Gargantua and Pantagruel[1]

Book I

[Education of a Giant Humanist]

CHAPTER 14

How Gargantua was taught Latin by a Theologian and Sophist.

The excellent Grangousier was rapt with admiration as he listened to his son[2] talking. Truly this lad was marvellously gifted! What a vast intelligence, what cogent understanding! Turning to the governesses:

"Philip, King of Macedon," he declared, "recognized the sound

1. Translated by Jacques Le Clercq. 2. Gargantua.

judgment of Alexander, his son, when he saw how skilfully the lad managed his horse. This beast Bucephalus was so fierce and unruly that it threw all its riders. It cracked one man's neck, smashed another's legs, brained a third, and crushed the jawbone of a fourth. No one, then, dared mount it. Alexander happened to be in the hippodrome watching them breaking in and training the horses; he noticed at once that the beast's frenzy came from fright at its own shadow. He therefore made short shrift of vaulting upon its back and heading it towards the sun. There, its shadow falling behind it, he easily mastered it. Philip, by this token, realized the divine insight rooted in his son's intelligence and had him most carefully reared by Aristotle, then the most renowned philosopher in Greece.

"For my part, the brief conversation I have just had with Gargantua in your presence suffices to convince me that his mind is illumined by the divine spark. How else, pray, could he have proved so acute, so subtle, so profound and withal so serene? Give the boy proper schooling, say I, and he will attain a supreme degree of wisdom! Accordingly, I intend to trust him to some scholar who will instruct him to his capacity. What is more, I shall spare no cost."

The name of Master Tubal Holofernes, a great sophist and Doctor of Theology, was proposed to Grangousier. Subsequently this savant taught Gargantua his A B C so thoroughly that he could say it by heart backwards. This took five years and three months. A succession of standard texts[3] followed; the *Facet* (a treatise of puerile moral precepts), the *Ars Grammatica* of Actius Donatus, the fourth-century grammarian; the *Theodolet* (in which Theodulus, Bishop of Syria in the fifth century, exposed in Latin the falsity of mythology and the truth of Holy Scripture) and the *Alanus in Parabolis* (a series of moral quatrains by Alanus of Lille, a thirteenth-century worthy). It took Gargantua thirteen years, six months and two weeks to master these authorities.

It is only fair to add, however, that Gargantua, in the process, learned to write in Gothic characters. (Printing had not yet been invented and the young student had to write out his own texts.)

He had, therefore, to carry in front of him a tremendous writing apparatus that weighed more than seven hundred thousand pounds. The pencase was as large and as tall as the great columns of the Church of St. Martin of Ainay in Lyons; the inkhorn was suspended to it by great iron chains wide enough to hold five cubic yards of merchandise.

Another book, *De Modis Significandi*—a work of speculative grammar by Thomas Aquinas, or Albert of Saxony or probably Duns Scotus—was Gargantua's next reading, together with comments by Hurtebize or Windjammer, by Fasquin or Roadheaver, by Tropdit-

3. The books mentioned in this chapter were actually part of the educational curriculum which Rabelais is here satirizing.

eux or Toomanysuch, by Gualehault or Galahad, by Jean Le Veau or John Calf, by Billonio or Lickspittle, by Brelinguandus or Timeserver, and by a rabble of others. This took more than eighteen years and eleven months, but Gargantua knew the texts so well that at examinations he could recite them by heart backwards. And he could prove to his mother on his fingers' ends that *de modis significandi non erat scientia*, grammar was no science.

Next he read the *Compost* or *Popular Calendar*, and had spent sixteen years and two months at it, when suddenly, in 1420, his tutor died of the pox.

Holofernes' successor was another wheezy old pedant named Master Jobelin Bridé or Jolter Clotpoll, who read him the *Liber Derivationum* or *Latin Vocabulary* of Hugutio of Pisa, thirteenth-century Bishop of Ferrara . . . the *Grecism* by Everard de Béthune, a philological lexicon illustrating the Latin words derived from the Greek . . . *De Octo Partibus Orationis* or *Of the Eight Parts of Speech* . . . the *Quid Est?* or *What is it?* a school manual in the form of questions and answers . . . the *Supplementum*, a collection of commentaries . . . the *Mammotreptus*, a monkish or monkeyish commentary on the Psalter and the Saints . . . the *Libellus de Moribus in Mensa Servandis* or *Essay on Manners in Serving at Table*, a rhymed treatise on youthful propriety and morals by Sulpizio de Veroli . . . Seneca's *De Quatuor Virtutibus Cardinalibus* or *Of the Four Cardinal Virtues*, a moral work by Martin de Braga, Bishop of Mondonedo in the sixth century . . . the *Specchio della vera Penitenza* or *Mirror of True Penitence* by Jacopo Passavanti, the Florentine monk of the sixteenth century—with its inevitable commentary! . . . a book of sermons, *Dormi Secure* or *Sleep in Peace*, a collection designed to save the preacher the pains of composing his sermons . . . and finally, other stuff of the same ilk, feather, kidney and broth. . . .

Indeed, Gargantua grew as even as any down ever smoothed, as full of matter as any goose liver ever crammed!

CHAPTER 15

How Gargantua was put under other professors.

At last his father realized that though Gargantua was studying most industriously and spending all his time at it, he was profiting not at all. Worse, this training had actually made the lad over into a fool, a dunce, a booby and a nincompoop.

One day Grangousier happened to complain of it to Don Philippe des Marais, Viceroy of Papeligosse, a kingdom of Cockaigne.[4] That monarch assured Grangousier that Gargantua would be better off

4. Rabelais probably alludes to some existing person; his method is to take real people and introduce them into his fantastic world. The kingdom of Cockaigne is the traditional imaginary land of luck and plenty.

learning nothing than studying books of the sort with pedagogues of that school. Their knowledge, said Don Philippe, was but rubbish, this wisdom flapdoodle; they succeeded merely in bastardizing noble spirits and corrupting the flower of youth.

"Upon my word, I'll prove it!" Don Philippe declared. "Take any lad of to-day with but two years' schooling. If he is not superior to your son in judgment, speech, bearing and personality, then I'm the greatest loggerhead and shallowpate from here to Brenne."[5]

This challenge pleased Grangousier mightily; he at once gave orders that a match of wits take place.

That evening, at supper, Don Philippe brought in a young page of his named Eudemon, which means "the fortunate." The lad hailed from Villegongis near St. Genou in Touraine. He was so neat, so spruce, so handsome and his hair was so beautifully combed that he looked more like an angel than like a man.

Don Philippe turned to Grangousier:

"Do you see this lad? He's not twelve years old. Let us prove, if you will, the difference between the pedantic balderdash of yesterday's wiseacres and the intelligence of our modern boys."

Grangousier was agreeable to such a test and bade the page begin the debate. Whereupon Eudemon, asking leave of the Viceroy, his master, to do so, rose, hat in hand. His face was open and frank, his lips red, his glance confident. Looking at Gargantua with youthful modesty, he proceeded to praise and commend the boy—first for his virtues and good manners, next for his knowledge, thirdly for his nobility, fourthly for his bodily excellences and, in the fifth place, exhorted him most gracefully to reverence his father in all respects, because his father was so careful to have him well brought up. Finally, Eudemon prayed Gargantua to admit him among the least of his bondsmen. He added that the only boon he craved from Heaven, at present, was to serve Gargantua in some agreeable manner. Eudemon accompanied the whole speech with gestures so appropriate, his delivery was so distinct, his voice rang so eloquent, his idiom was so elegant and he couched his phrases in such perfect Latin that he seemed rather a Tiberius Gracchus, a Cicero or an Aemilius Lepidus of old, than a youth of our own day.

Gargantua's only reaction was to burst into tears. He bawled like a sick cow, hung his head and hid his face in his cap, until there was about as much possibility of drawing a word from him as a salvo of farts from the rump of a dead donkey.

This so incensed his father that Grangousier vowed to slay Master Jobelin Clotpoll, but Don Philippe remonstrated with him and, by fair persuasions, soothed his ire. Grangousier thereupon ordered them

5. An actual locality. What was said of Rabelais' characters in the preceding footnote applies also to his geography, his local lore, and the like.

to pay the pedagogue off and to get him as properly fuddled up as your finest scholar of the Sorbonne. This accomplished, let him go to the devil!

"There is this consolation!" cried Grangousier. "To-day at least, he will not cost his host much if by chance he dies in his cups like an Englishman."

When Master Jobelin Clotpoll had gone away, Grangousier asked Don Philippe's advice about a tutor for Gargantua. They finally decided to appoint Ponocrates, Eudemon's teacher, to the position; auspiciously enough, in Greek the name means "vigorous." And soon, the three were to go to Paris in order to find out what studies young men were at this period pursuing in France.

CHAPTER 16

How Gargantua went to Paris upon an enormous mare which destroyed the oxflies of the Beauce.

In the same season, Fayolles, fourth king of Numidia, sent Grangousier a mare from Africa. It was the hugest and most enormous mare ever seen, the strangest monster in the world; for Africa, as the saying goes, may always be relied upon to produce something wonderfully new. The beast was as big as six elephants; like Julius Caesar's charger, her feet were cloven into human toes; her ears hung down like those of the goats of Languedoc; and a little horn grew out of one buttock. Save for a few dapple-gray spots as overlay, her coat was the color of burnt sorrel, which shows that she partook of the four elements, earth, water, air and fire. Above all, she had a horrible tail. It was more or less as tall as the tower of St. Mars near Langeais; and just as square, with tufts of hair as tightly spun and woven as the beards on ears of corn.

Do you marvel at this? You have greater cause to marvel at the tails of the rams of Scythia, which weighed more than thirty pounds each, or—if Jean Thenaud speaks truthfully in his *Voyage from Angoulême to Cairo*—at those of the Syrian sheep which are so long and heavy that, to hold them up, the natives have to hitch a small cart to the beast's rump. Ha! my lusty country wenchthumpers, you've no such tails as these!

The mare Fayolles sent Grangousier was brought overseas in three Genoese carracks and a brigantine; she landed at Les Sables d'Olonne in Talmondais.

When Grangousier laid eyes upon her:

"Ah!" he exclaimed. "Here is just what my son needs to bear him to Paris! So now, in God's name, all will go well: Gargantua shall be a great scholar one of these days! Were it not for dumb brutes we should all be scholars!"

Next day, having drunk liberally, as you may imagine, Gargantua set out on his journey, accompanied by his tutor Ponocrates, the young page Eudemon and his train. And, because the weather was serene and temperate, Grangousier had a pair of dun-colored boots made for him. According to Babin and the Chinon cobblers, these are technically known as buskins.

So they travelled along the highway very merrily, living on the fat of the land and making the best of cheer, until a little beyond Orléans they came to a huge forest, about thirty-five leagues long and seventeen wide. Alas! the woods were aswarm with oxflies and hornets of all varieties, so the wretched mares, asses and horses suffered a veritable massacre. But, by means of a trick they never suspected, Gargantua's mare handsomely avenged all the outrages visited upon her kind. For suddenly, when in the heart of the forest the wasps attacked her, she swished her tail and, sweeping all about her, not only felled the stingers but uprooted all the trees. Up and down, right and left, lengthwise and athwart, here and there, over and under, before her and aback, this way and that, she mowed down the woods like so much grass. And this region, which she thus turned into fallow land, has never known tree or wasp since.

Gargantua, delighted by the spectacle, forebore to boast, merely commenting to his followers:

"*Je trouve beau ce!* I find this pleasant!"

Whence this pleasant land has been known as Beauce ever since.

However, when it came to breakfasting, they had to content themselves with their yawns; in memory of which the gentlemen of the Beauce, proverbially poor, still subsist on a diet of yawns and gaping, and find it very nourishing. Indeed, they spit all the better for it.

At last they reached Paris, where Gargantua rested two or three days, making merry with his followers and inquiring about what scholars were then in the city and what wines people drank.

* * *

CHAPTER 21

Gargantua's education and social life under the direction of his preceptors at the Sorbonne.

. . . Gargantua resolved with all his heart to study under the direction of Ponocrates. But the latter, wishing to learn how the lad's former teachers had wasted so much time making a crack-brained, addlepated dunce of him, decided he should do exactly as he had in the past.

Gargantua therefore arranged his schedule so as to awake usually between eight and nine o'clock, rain or shine, dark or daylight, simply because his preceptors had decided this on the strength of the

Psalmist's saw: "*Vanum est vobis ante lucem surgere*, it is vain for you to rise up betimes."[6]

Then he wriggled and writhed, wallowing in his bed and tossing about like a parched pea, the better to stimulate his vital spirits. Next, he would dress, according to the season, but he was always happy to don a long, hanging gown of heavy wool lined with fox. Next, he combed out his hair with the comb of Jacques Almain, the Sorbonne theologian, known in English as John Handy—a comb consisting of four fingers and a thumb—for his mentors maintained that to brush one's hair, wash one's face and make oneself clean were, in this world, a pure waste of time.

Next Gargantua dunged, piddled, vomited, belched, broke wind, yawned, spat, coughed, hiccoughed, sneezed and snotted himself as majestically and bountifully as an archdeacon. Next he proceeded to breakfast in order to fortify himself against the morning mist and cold. His menu consisted of splendid fried tripe, choice meats grilled on charcoal, rich hams, succulent roast venison and numerous soups and brews, with toast, cheese, parsley and chopped meat floating on the surface.

Ponocrates objected that he should not eat so soon after rising without having taken any exercise. To which he replied:

"Exercise? Good God, didn't I tumble and jounce in bed six or seven times before I got up? Surely, that is exercise enough? Pope Alexander VI did this on the advice of his Jew physician, Bonnet de Lates, and lived till the day of his death in spite of his enemies. My first masters taught me this habit, for breakfast, they said, gave man a good mind. So they started the day by drinking. It suits me perfectly and I manage to dine the better for it. Master Tubal Holofernes, who was graduated Licentiate in Paris at the head of his class, used to tell me that hasten was not enough, one must set out betimes. By the same token, the total health of mankind does not consist in drinking down and lapping up, *glub*, *glub*, *glub*, like so many ducks, but rather in falling to, early in the morning. *Unde versus*; so runs the rune:

> Lever matin n'est point bonheur
> Boire matin est le meilleur.
>
> To rise betimes is not enough,
> To drink at morning, that's the stuff!

After an abundant breakfast, Gargantua repaired to church, with, in his train, a varlet bearing a basket. The latter contained a huge breviary swaddled in velvet and weighing about twelve hundred and six

6. "It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep." (Psalm 127:2.)

pounds including the filth of thumbmarks, dogeared corners, golden clasps and nonpareil parchment. Twenty-six, if not thirty, masses ensued for the benefit of Gargantua and his chaplain. Under his tall hood, this chaplain looked for all the world like a peewit . . . and had very thoroughly antidoted his breath against possible poisons with much syrup of the vine! Chaplain and pupil babbled the mumbo jumbo of the litany, thumbing their rosaries so carefully that not one single bead fell to the ground.

As he left the church, they brought him an oxcart laden with a huge heap of paternosters, chaplets and relics from St. Claude in the Jura, each bigger than a hatblock. Gargantua and his chaplain then strolled in the cloisters, galleries or garden, saying more aves than sixteen hermits.

After, Gargantua would study for a short half-hour, his eyes glued to his book but his mind, to quote Terence's *Eunuch*, woolgathering in the kitchen.[7] Then he proceeded to make water, filling a large urinal to capacity, after which he sat down at table, and, being naturally phlegmatic, began his meal with a few dozen hams, smoked tongues of beef, caviar, sausages and other like forerunners of wine.

Then four servants in turn shovelled mustard into his mouth by the spadeful, thus preparing him to drain a horrific draught of white wine to relieve his kidneys. Then the meal proper began with viands to his liking, according to the season; Gargantua ceasing to eat only when his belly had reached bursting point.

When it came to drinking, he acknowledged neither end nor rule; for, he said, there were no limits and boundaries to swilling until the tosspot felt the cork soles of his shoes swell up a half-foot from the ground.

* * *

CHAPTER 23

How Ponocrates gave Gargantua such instruction that not an hour of the day was wasted.

When Ponocrates saw Gargantua's vicious mode of life, he determined to bring him up otherwise. But for the first few days he bore with him, for he realized that nature cannot endure sudden and violent changes.

To begin his work the better, Ponocrates requested a learned physician of the times, Master Theodore—the name means "God-given"—to examine Gargantua thoroughly with a view to steering him on the right course. The scholar purged Gargantua canonically with Anticyrian hellebore, an herb indicated for cerebral disorders

7. See Terence's play *The Eunuch*, l. 816.

and insanity, thus cleansing his brain of its unnatural, perverse condition. Ponocrates, by the same aperient means, made the lad forget all he had learned under his former teachers, just as Timotheus[8] of old treated pupils who had already studied under other musicians. Timotheus, incidentally, used to charge this class of students double!

For Gargantua's further edification, Ponocrates made him mingle among learned men whose company fired him with a desire to emulate them, to study more profitably and to make his mark. Next, Ponocrates so arranged the lad's schedule that not a moment of the day was wasted; all his time was spent in the pursuit of learning and honest knowledge.

By this new dispensation, Gargantua awoke at about four in the morning. While the servants massaged him, he would listen to some page of Holy Scripture, read aloud in clear tones and pronounced with fitting respect for the text. A young page, a native of Basché, near Chinon, was appointed reader, as his name, Anagnostes,[9] shows. According to the purpose and argument of this lesson, Gargantua frequently turned to worship, adore, pray and reverence Almighty God, Whose majesty and wondrous wisdom were made manifest in the reading.

Next, he would repair to secret places to make excretion of his natural digestions; here his tutor repeated what had been read, expounding its more obscure and difficult features. Returning to the house, they would study the heavens. Was it the same sky they had observed the night before? Into what signs was the sun entering that day? and the moon?

After this astronomical survey, Gargantua was dressed, combed, curled, trimmed and perfumed, and, while this was being done, he heard the lessons of the day before. Then, having recited them by heart, he would argue certain practical, human and utilitarian cases based upon the principles enunciated. This part of the program sometimes took two or three hours, though usually he had exhausted it by the time he was fully clad.

Then, for three good hours, he was read or lectured to, after which they went to the Tennis Court at the Grande Bracque in the Place de l'Estrapade or to the playing fields.

On the way, they discussed various aspects of the subject previously treated. Then they would play tennis, handball and three-cornered catch, exercising their bodies as vigorously as they had exercised their minds before.

All their play was free for they left off when they pleased, which was usually when they had sweated a good bit or were otherwise tired. They were thoroughly wiped and rubbed down, after which

8. Timotheus of Miletus, famous musician of the time of Alexander the Great. 9. In Greek meaning "reader."

they changed their shirts and walked quietly home to see if dinner were ready. As they waited, they would go over certain points they had retained of the lectures.

Meanwhile My Lord Appetite put in an appearance and they sat down most opportunely to table.

At the beginning of the meal, they listened to the reading of some agreeable chronicle of chivalry in ancient times, until Gargantua gave the signal for wine to be served. Then, if they wished, the reading went on or they could talk merrily together. Often they discussed the virtues, property, efficacy and nature of what was served at table: bread, wine, water, salt, meat, fish, fruit, herbs, roots and their preparation. Thus Gargantua soon knew all the relevant passages of Pliny's *Natural History* . . . in the grammarian Athenæus' *Deipnosophistes* or *The Banquet of the Sages*, which treats of flowers, fruits and their various uses . . . in Dioscorides' famous medical treatise, the bible of apothecaries . . . in the *Vocabularium* by Julius Pollux, a grammarian and sophist of Marcus Aurelius' day, who wrote of hunting and fishing . . . in Galen's numerous dissertations upon alimentation . . . in the works of Porphyrius, the third-century Greek author of a *Treatise upon Abstinence from Meat* . . . in Oppian's two poems, *Cynegetica* which deals with venery and *Halieutica* with angling . . . in *Of Healthy Diet* by Polybius of Cos, disciple and son-in-law of Hippocrates . . . in Heliodorus of Emesa, Syrian Bishop of Tricca and a celebrated novelist of the fourth century . . . in Aristotle's essays on natural history . . . in the Greek works upon animals by Claudius Ælianus, a Roman contemporary of Heliogabalus . . . and in various other tomes.[1] . . . Often for surer authority as they argued, they would have the book in question brought to the table. Gargantua so thoroughly and cogently learned and assimilated all he heard that no physician of his times knew one-half so much as he.

They discussed the lessons they had learned that morning and topped their meal off with quiddany, a sort of quince marmalade and an excellent digestive. After which Gargantua picked his teeth with a fragment of mastic,[2] washed his hands and daubed his eyes with cool clear water, and, instead of saying grace, sang the glory of God in noble hymns, composed in praise of divine bounty and munificence.

Presently cards were brought them and they played, not for the sake of the pastime itself but to learn a thousand new tricks and inventions all based on arithmetic.

Thus Gargantua developed a keen enthusiasm for mathematics,

1. Some of the most famous scientific treatises of antiquity are listed in Gargantua's new curriculum, which exacting as it is, reflects a less "medieval" type of learning than was embodied in his earlier course of study. See also the enumeration of authors on p. 1101. 2. Wood from the mastic tree.

spending his leisure after dinner and supper every evening as pleasantly as once he had, dicing and gaming. As a result, he knew so much about its theory and practice that Cuthbert Tunstal, Bishop of Durham and secretary to King Henry VIII, a voluminous writer on the subject,[3] confessed that, beside Gargantua, he knew no more about arithmetic than he did about Old High Gothic. Nor was it arithmetic alone our hero learned, but also such sister sciences as geometry, astronomy and music.

Now the digestion of foods is a most important matter. There is the first stage which occurs in the stomach, where the viands are changed into chyle; the second, in the liver, where the chyle is transformed into blood; the third, in the habit of the body, where the blood is finally converted into the substance of each part. So, whilst Gargantua awaited the first stage of digestion, they made a thousand delightful instruments, drew geometrical figures and even applied the principles of astronomy.

After, they amused themselves singing a five-part score or improvising on a theme chosen at random. As for musical instruments, Gargantua learned to play the lute, the spinet, the harp, the nine-holed transverse or German flute, the viol and the sackbut or trombone.

Having spent an hour thus and completed his digestion, he discharged his natural excrements and then settled down again to work three hours or more at his principal study. Either he revised the morning reading, or proceeded in the text at hand or practised penmanship in the most carefully formed characters of modern Roman and ancient Gothic script.

Next, they went out with a young gentleman of Touraine, the esquire Gymnastes, who instructed Gargantua in the art of horsemanship. Having changed his clothes, he proceeded to mount a fiery Italian charger, a Flemish dray horse, a Spanish jennet, an Arab thoroughbred and a hackney. These he would put vigorously through their paces, letting them "career" or gallop a short distance at full speed, making them leap high in the air, jump ditches, clear stiles, and turn short in a ring both to the right and to the left. Next he wielded but did not break his lance, for it is arrant stupidity to boast: "I have broken ten lances in a tilt or fight." A wretched carpenter can do the same. On the contrary, the whole glory of such combat lies in besting ten enemies with one and the same lance. So with strong, stiff, steel-tipped lance, Gargantua would force the outer door of some house, pierce an adversary's armor, beat down a tree, pick up a ring, carry off a cuirassier saddle, a hauberk or a gauntlet. And he performed these feats armed cap-à-pie.[4]

3. Tunstal was the author of the treatise *The Art of Computation* (*De arte supputandi*, 1522).
4. From head to toe; *hauberk*: coat of mail.

In the technique of parading his horse with prances and flourishes to a fanfare of trumpets—the ceremonial of knights as they enter the lists—he had no equal. As for the divers terms of the equine vocabulary from *giddy-up* and *cluck* to *whoa* and *grrr*, no horseman could hold a candle to him. Indeed Cesare Fieschi, the celebrated jockey of Ferrara, was a mere monkey in comparison.

He learned, too, to leap hastily and with singular dexterity from one horse to another without setting foot to the ground (the nags were circus horses or, to be technical, "desultories"). Further, lance in hand, he could leap on horseback from either side without stirrups and rule the beast at will without a bridle, for such accomplishments are highly useful in military engagements.

Another day he would practise wielding the battle-axe, which he managed so skilfully, in the nimblest thrusts, the most powerful lunges and the vast encircling sweeps of the art, that he passed knight-at-arms in the field and at all tests. Sometimes unarmed, sometimes carrying a buckler or a rolled cape of mail over his arm or a small shield over his wrist, Gargantua brandished the pike, plied the double-edged, two-handed sword, the bastard claymore used by archers, the Spanish rapier, the dagger and the poniard.

He hunted, too: stag, roebuck, bear, fallow deer, wild boar, hare, partridge, pheasant and otter . . . he played at ball, ever ready with well-aimed foot or powerful fist to send the great sphere whizzing through the air . . . he learned to wrestle and to run. . . . As for jumping, he did not go in for the various forms of running jumps, such as the three-steps-and-a-leap, the hop-step-and-jump or the German high-jump. As Gymnastes pointed out, these were quite useless in warfare. Instead, he practised the standing jumps. Starting from scratch, he could in one leap top a hedge, clear a ditch, mount six paces upon a wall and thus reach a window-ledge one lance's height from the ground.

Gargantua could swim in the deepest water, breaststroke, back and sidestroke, using his whole body or his feet alone. He could cross the breadth of the Seine or the Loire at Montsoreau, dragging his cloak along in his teeth and holding a book high and dry over the waters—thus renewing the exploit with which Plutarch credits Julius Cæsar during the Alexandrian War. Then, using one hand only, he could, with a single great pull, climb into a boat, whence a moment later he would dive headlong into the water again, sound its utmost depths, touch bottom, explore the hollows of rocks and plunge into any pits and abysses he fancied. He would turn the boat about, managing it perfectly, bringing it swiftly or slowly upstream or down and arresting its course at a milldam. He could guide it with one hand while he plied hard about him with a great oar; he could run up a sail, hoist himself up a mast by the shrouds, dance along the yards, operate the

compass, tackle the bowlines to sail close to the wind and steer the helm.

His water sports done, he would dash full speed up a mountain, then down quite as fast. He climbed trees like a cat, hopping from one to the next like a squirrel and pulling down great boughs—like the celebrated Milo of Crotona who, Pausanias[5] tells us, met his death devoured by wolves, his hands caught in the cleft of an oak he had sought to split. With two well-steeled daggers and a pair of well-tried mason's punches, he could scurry up the side of a house like a rat, then leap down again, from roof to ground, so expertly that he landed without hurt. Gargantua also cast the dart, threw the iron bar, put the stone, tossed the boar-spear, hurled the javelin, shied the halberd. He drew the bow to breaking point; he could shoulder a harquebuss—a great siege piece weighing fifty pounds—and fire it off like a crossbow. He could set a huge cannon on its carriage, hit buttmarks and other targets for horizontal shooting, or, point-blank, bring down papgays (stuffed figures of parrots on poles), clay pigeons and other vertical marks, facing them on a level or upwards, or downwards or sidewise. Like the ancient Parthians, he could even hit them as he retreated.

They would tie a cable to a high tower and let it dangle to the ground. Gargantua hoisted himself up with both hands, then slipped down again as evenly, surely and plumb as a man running along a flat meadow. Or they would set a great pole across two trees for Gargantua to hang from by his hands. He moved along the pole from tree to tree so swiftly, without setting foot on *terra firma*, that a man, running on the ground below, could not have caught him. To expand his chest and exercise his lungs, he would roar like all the devils in hell. Once indeed, I heard him call Eudemon across all Paris, from the Porte St. Victor, the gate by the University, all the way to Montmartre, a village on a hill two miles beyond the walls of the city. Stentor,[6] who cried louder than forty men, displayed no such vocal power, even at the siege of Troy.

To develop his sinews, they made him two great pigs of lead, each weighing eight hundred and five tons. These pigs (called salmons in France because the metal is shaped like this fish) Gargantua named *alteres*, an ancient Greek term for the weights used to give jumpers their initial spring—our modern dumb-bells. Taking one in each hand, Gargantua then performed an inimitable feat. He would raise them high above his head and, never turning a hair, stock-still as a statue, hold them aloft for three-quarters of an hour. He played at Barriers or Tug-of-War with the stoutest champions. When his turn came he took root so firmly as to defy the sturdiest to budge him.

5. Greek geographer and traveler of the second century A.D. 6. The loud-voiced herald in the *Iliad*, Book V.

Nor was it thus alone he emulated Milo of Crotona. Like the ancient athlete, he could hold a pomegranate so fast in his hand that none could wrest it from him, yet so adroitly that he did not crush it.

Having spent his time in such manly sports, he had himself washed, rubbed down and given a change of clothes. Then he returned home at a leisurely pace, passing through some meadow or grassy space to examine the trees and plants. These he would compare with what the authorities wrote of them in their books: among the Ancients, Theophrastus, the successor of Aristotle and teacher of Menander . . . or Palladius, whose poem *De re rustica* was translated by Pietro Marini . . . or Dioscorides Pedanius, the Greek physician of the first century . . . or Pliny or Nicander or Aemilius Macer, the Roman, or Galen himself . . . Gargantua and his companions picked specimens by the handful and took them home to a younger page named Rhizotome or Rootcutter, who watched over them and the various small mattocks, pickaxes, hooks, hoes, pruning-knives, shears and other botanical instruments.

At home, whilst the servants prepared dinner, our young men repeated certain passages of what had been read. Then they sat down to table. Here I would have you note that their dinner was simple and frugal; they ate no more than necessary to quiet the baying of the belly. Supper, on the contrary, was a large and copious meal; they ate what they needed for their sustenance and nourishment. Such indeed is the true system prescribed by the art of sound, self-respecting physicians though a rabble of dunderhead quacks, wrangling eternally in the claptrap routine of the Arab nostrum shop of Avicenna,[7] recommend the exact opposite. During supper, they continued the lesson given at dinner as long as they saw fit; the rest of the meal was spent in earnest and profitable discussion.

Having said grace, they applied their voices to sing tunefully or they played upon harmonious instruments. Or they amused themselves with such minor pastimes as cards, dice cups and dice afforded. Sometimes they tarried here enjoying themselves and making merry until bedtime; they would visit learned men or such as had travelled in foreign lands. Well into the night, before retiring, they would go to the most exposed spot in the house, whence they examined the face of the sky, noting the comets, if any were visible, and the various figures, positions, aspects, oppositions and conjunctions of the heavenly bodies.

According to the Pythagorean system, Gargantua would, with his tutor, recapitulate briefly all that he had read, seen, learned, done and assimilated in the course of the day.

Then they prayed to God the Creator, doing Him worship and

7. Arab physician and philosopher (980–1037).

confirming their faith in Him, glorifying Him for His immense goodness, vouchsafing thanks for all the mighty past and imploring His divine clemency for all the future.

And so they retired to rest.

CHAPTER 24

How Gargantua spent his time in rainy weather.

In intemperate or rainy weather, things went on much the same as usual before dinner except that Gargantua had a fine bright fire lighted to correct the inclemency of the air. But after dinner, instead of gymnastics, they stayed indoors and, by way of apotherapy[8] or exercise amused themselves by bundling hay, splitting logs, sawing wood and threshing sheaves in the barn. Then they studied the arts of painting and sculpture. Or they revived the ancient Roman game of *Tali*, dicing as the Italian humanist Nicolaus Leonicus Thomaeus[9] wrote of it in his dialogue *Sannutus, Of the Game of Dice*, and as our good friend Janus Lascaris,[1] librarian to our sovereign king, plays at the game. In their sport, they reviewed such passages of ancient authors as mention or quote some metaphor drawn from this play.

In much the same way, they might go to watch workmen forging metals or casting pieces of ordnance. Or they might visit the lapidaries, goldsmiths and cutters of precious stones in their ateliers, the alchemists in their laboratories, the coiners at the mint, the tapestry-workers, velvet-workers and weavers at their looms, the watchmakers, looking-glass framers, printers, lutemakers, dyers and other such artisans in their workshops. Wherever they went, they would distribute gratuities, invariably investigating and learning the various inventions and industry of the trade.

Or they might attend public lectures, official convocations, oratorical performances, speeches, pleadings by eloquent attorneys and sermons by evangelical preachers—that is, such priests as wished to restore Christianity to the primitive tradition of the Gospel. Gargantua also frequented fencing halls and tested his skill at all weapons against the masters, proving to them by experience that he knew as much as they and, indeed, even more.

Instead of herborizing,[2] they would inspect the shops of druggists, herbalists and apothecaries, studiously examining the sundry fruits, roots, leaves, gums, seeds and exotic unguents and learning how they could be diluted or adulterated. He viewed jugglers, mountebanks and medicasters—who sold Venice treacle, a cure for all ills—

8. Physical exercise as a regime to maintain health. The terminology is from Galen (the outstanding Greek physician of the second century A.D.). 9. A Venetian, professor at Padua (died 1531). 1. André Jean de Lascaris, librarian to King Francis I and a friend of Rabelais'. 2. Gathering herbs.

carefully observing their tricks and gestures, their agile capers and smooth oratory. His favorites were those from Chauny in Picardy who are born jabberers and the readiest expounders of mealy-mouthed flimflam concerning their ability to weave ropes of sand, extract sunbeams from cucumbers and milk a he-goat into a sieve.

Returning home to supper, they would eat more sparingly than on fine days. Their meats would, by the same token, be more desiccative and extenuating so as to counteract the humidity communicated to their bodies by the necessary contiguity of the atmosphere and to nullify what harm might arise from lack of their customary exercise.

Such was Gargantua's program and so he continued from day to day, benefiting as you would expect a young man of his age and intelligence to benefit under such a system faithfully applied. To be sure, the whole thing may have seemed incredibly difficult to him at the outset, but it soon proved so light, so easy and so pleasant as to appear more like a king's pastime than the study of a schoolboy.

However, Ponocrates was careful to supply relaxation from this violent bodily and mental tension. Once a month, on some very bright serene day, they would clear out of town early in the morning, bound for the near-by villages of Gentilly, Boulogne, Montrouge, Pont-de-Charenton, Vanves or St. Cloud. There they spent the whole day enjoying themselves to their heart's content, sporting and merrymaking, drinking toast for proffered toast, playing, singing, dancing, tumbling about or loafing in some fair meadow, turning sparrows out of their nests, bagging quail and fishing for frogs and crayfish.

But though this holiday was free of books and reading, it was not spent unprofitably. Lying in the green meadow, they usually recited certain delightful lines from Virgil's *Georgics*, from Hesiod's *Works and Days* or from Politian's *Husbandry*.[3] Or they broached some savory epigram in Latin, then turned it into a French roundelay or ballade.

In their feasting, they would sometimes separate the twin elements, isolating the wine and the water in their drink by pouring the latter into a cup of ivy-wood, as Cato teaches in his *De re rustica*, and Pliny elsewhere.[4] Then they would wash the wine in a basin full of water and draw it out with a funnel, as pure as ever. And they pumped the water with a syphon from one glass to another, manufacturing several sorts of automatic or self-operating devices.

3. A poem, *Rusticus*, in the manner of Virgil's *Georgics*, by the Italian fifteenth-century poet Politian. 4. Both Cato in his book *On Farming (De re rustica)*, CIX, and Pliny in his *Natural History* Book XVI, Chapter 63, suggest an ivy-wood cup as a means to detect water in wine.

[The Abbey of Thélème]

CHAPTER 52

How Gargantua had the Abbey of Thélème built for the monk.

There remained only the monk[5] to provide for. Gargantua offered him the Abbey of Seuilly: he refused. What about the Benedictine abbeys of Bourgueil or St. Florent, among the richest in France: he might have either or both?[6] Again, the offer met with a flat refusal: Friar John of the Funnels answered peremptorily that he did not seek the charge or government of monks.

"For," he explained, "how shall I govern others when I cannot possibly govern myself?" There was a pause. "But—" he hesitated. "But if you believe I have given and can give you good service, let me found an abbey after my own heart."

The notion delighted Gargantua: he forthwith offered his estate of Thélème, by the Loire, two leagues away from Port Huault. Thélème in Greek means free will, an auspicious name for Friar John's abbey. Here indeed he could institute a religious order contrary to all others.

"First," said Gargantua, "you must not build a wall around it, for all other abbeys are solidly enclosed."

"Quite so," agreed the monk, "for where there are *mures*, walls, before, and *mures*, walls, behind, we have *murmures*, murmurs of envy and plotting."

Now in certain monasteries it is a rule that if any women enter (I mean honest and chaste ones) the ground they tread upon must be swept over. Therefore it was decreed that if a monk or nun should by any chance enter Thélème, every place that religious passed through should be thoroughly disinfected.

Similarly because all monasteries and convents on earth are compassed, limited and regulated by hours, at Thélème no clock or dial of any sort should be tolerated. On the contrary, their time here would be governed by what occasions and opportunities might arise. As Gargantua sagaciously commented:

"I can conceive of no greater waste of time than to count the hours. What good comes of it? To order your life by the toll of a bell instead of by reason or common sense is the veriest piece of asininity imaginable."

By the same token, they established the qualifications for entrance into their order. Was it not true that at present women took the veil

5. Friar John of the Funnels, the muscular and highly unconventional monk who has had a major part in helping the party of Gargantua's father win the mock-heroic war against the arrogant Picrochole. 6. A satiric allusion to the custom of accumulating church livings.

only if they were wall-eyed, lame, hunchbacked, ill-favored, misshapen, half-witted, unreasonable or somewhat damaged? That only such men entered monasteries as were cankered, ill-bred idiots or plain nuisances?

("Incidentally," said Friar John, "if the woman is neither fair nor good, of what use is the cloth?"

"Let the clot hump her," Gargantua replied.

"I said 'cloth' not 'clot.' "

"Well, what's the answer?"

"To cover her face or her arse with!")

Accordingly, they decided to admit into the new order only such women as were beautiful, shapely, pleasing of form and nature, and such men as were handsome, athletic and personable.

Again, because men entered the convents of this world only by guile and stealth, it was decreed that no women would be in Thélème unless men were there also, and vice-versa.

Moreover, since both men in monasteries and women in convents were forced after their year of noviciate to stay there perpetually, Gargantua and Friar John decided that the Thélèmites, men or women, might come and go whenever they saw fit.

Further, since the religious usually made the triple vow of chastity, poverty and obedience, at Thélème all had full leave to marry honestly, to enjoy wealth and to live in perfect freedom.

As for the age of initiation, they stipulated that women were admissible between the ages of ten and fifteen, men between twelve and eighteen.

CHAPTER 53

How the Abbey of Thélème was built and endowed.

To build and furnish the abbey, Gargantua paid in cash twenty-seven hundred thousand eight hundred and thirty-one crowns in current coin of the realm, fresh from the mint, with a sheep on the obverse and the king's head on the reverse. He undertook to pay yearly, until the project was completed, sixteen hundred and sixty-nine thousand crowns, with the sum on the obverse, and as many again with the seven stars, the whole to be levied upon custom receipts.

For the foundation and maintenance of Thélème, he settled in perpetuity twenty-three hundred and sixty-nine thousand, five hundred and fourteen nobles (a coin stamped by the English kings with the rose of York), free of all tax, burden or fealty, payable yearly at the abbey gate. These privileges were all corroborated by letters patent.

The building was hexagonal; in each corner rose a great, circular tower, each identical, sixty yards in diameter. To the north, the river Loire flowed past the first tower which was named *Arctice* or North-

ern. East of it rose *Calaer* which means "situated in the balmy air"; then, successively, *Anatole* or Eastern; *Mesembrine* or Southern; *Hesperia* or Occidental; and the last, *Cryere* or Glacial. The distance between each tower was three hundred and twelve yards. The building was throughout six storeys high, counting the underground cellar for one. The ground floor was vaulted like a basket handle; the others, covered with Flanders mistletoe, jutting out like brackets and pendants. The roof, of finest slate, was lined with lead and bore little figures of mannikins and animals well assorted and gilt. The gutters jutted out from the walls between the casement arches; they were painted diagonally gold and blue down to the ground, where they ended in pipes which carried the water into the river below.

This building was a hundred times more magnificent than Bonnivet, Chambord or Chantilly.[7] There were nine thousand three hundred and thirty-two suites, each with a salon, a study, a dressing room, an oratory and an exit into a great hall. In the wing between each tower was a winding stairway. The steps, grouped in units of twelve between each landing, were of prophyry, of Numidian stone, of serpentine marble; they were twenty-two feet long and three fingers thick. At each landing, two splendid round antique archways admitted the light and led to an open loggia of the same dimensions. The stairway, rising to the roof, ended in a pavilion; on either side lay a great hall which in turn led to the apartments.

The wing between the towers called *Arctice* and *Cryere* contained rich libraries of Greek, Latin, Hebrew, French, Italian and Spanish volumes, grouped in their respective sections. In the centre rose a marvellous winding ramp conceived in such ample proportions that six soldiers with their lances at rest could ride up it abreast to the top of the palace. Its entry, outside the house, was an archway six fathoms wide.

Between *Anatole* and *Mesembrine* were spacious galleries with murals representing heroic feats of olden times, scenes from history and pictures of the earth. Here again were a stairway and gate as described upon the river side. On this gate, couched in great antique letters, ran the following legend.

CHAPTER 54

Inscription engraved on the main gate at Thélème.

Here enter not, smug hypocrites or holy loons,
Bigots, sham-Abrahams, impostors of the cloth,
Mealy-mouthed humbugs, holier-than-thou baboons,

7. Châteaux built in the early and middle years of the sixteenth century. By referring to actual buildings, building materials, and architectural elements, Rabelais as usual mixes realism with his fantasy.

Lip-service lubbers, smell-feast picaroons.[8]
Else had we to admit the Goth and Ostrogoth
Precursors of the ape and others of that broth.
Hence, sneaks and mischief-makers, colporteurs of lies,
Be off to other parts to sell your merchandise.

Being foul you would befoul
Man, woman, beast or fowl.
The vileness of your ways
Would sully my sweet lays,
Owls—And your own black cowl,
Being foul, you would befoul.

Here enter not, defenders of dishonest pleas,
Clerks, barristers, attorneys who make freemen slaves,
Canon Law pettifoggers, censors, Pharisees,
Judges, assessors, arbitrators, referees
Who blithely doom good people to untimely graves,
The gibbet is your destination, legal knaves!
Be off: indict the rope if you should find it short,
Here there is no abuse; we do not need your court.

Tangle, wrangle, brangle
We loathe, from any angle.
Our aim is joy and sport,
Time's swift, youth's fleet, life's short.
You, go and disentangle
Tangle, wrangle, brangle!

Here enter not, curmudgeon, loan shark, muckworm, hunks,
Bloodsucking usurer, extortioner, pennystint, . . .
Hence, lawsuit-chasing crimps, greedy as starving punks
Tracking a patron; lickgolds, hiding cash in trunks,
Harpyclaws, crunchfists, jaundiced zealots of the mint,
Your crackling, sallow palms are itching. Skin a flint!
Heap up your hoard, O scrub-faced curs, heap up afresh,
And as you grudge and gripe and screw, God rot your flesh!

Those grim and grisly faces
Bear all the ravaged traces
Of hidebound avarice;
We cannot stomach this.
Banish from all blithe places
Those grim and grisly faces.

8. Various ways of saying "hypocritical bigots."

Here enter not, you churls, sour boors, invidious fools,
Old, jealous brabblers, scolds, neither by night nor day,
Nor grumblers, soreheads, sulkers, badgers bred in schools
Of hate; nor ghosts of malaperts; nor firebrands' ghouls
From Rhineland, Greece or Rome, fiercer than wolves at bay;
Nor you, riddled with pox, your face a Milky Way
Of scars not stars; nor you, clapstricken to the bone:
Enjoy your shameless crusts and blemishes alone.

Honor, praise and pleasure
Are here in goodly measure:
Health reigns supreme because
We follow Nature's laws.
Ours is a triple treasure:
Honor, praise and pleasure.

But enter here thrice welcome, men of goodly parts,
Gallants and noble gentlemen, thrice welcome be!
Here you will find an abbey after your own hearts,
Where living is esteemed the highest of the arts.
Come in your tens and hundreds, come in thousands, we
Shall clasp you to our bosoms in fond amity:
Come wise, come proud, come gay, come courteous, come mellow,
Come true sophisticate, come worldling, come, good fellow!

Comrades, companions, friends,
Assemble from the ends
Of earth in this fair place
Where all is mirth and grace.
Felicity here blends
Comrades, companions, friends.

Here enter, all ye loyal scholars who expound
Novel interpretations of the Holy Writ.
Here is a fort and refuge; from this favored ground
You may confound the error that is elsewhere found,
You may found a profound new faith instead of it,
Sweeping away false teachings, bit by fallacious bit.
Come unto us and make your cogent meanings heard:
Destroy the foes of God and of his Holy Word.

The Holy Word of God
Shall never be downtrod
Here in this holy place,
If all deem reason grace,
And use for staff and rod
The Holy Word of God.

Here enter, ladies fair of eminent degree,
Come soon with starry eyes, lips smiling, comely face,
Flowers of loveliness, angels of harmony,
Resplendent, proud yet of the rarest modesty,
Sprightly of flesh, lithe-waisted and compact of grace,
Here is your home. A gallant lord designed this place
For you, that beauty, charm and virtue might find room
Deliciously to breathe, exquisitely to bloom.

Who makes a priceless gift
Wins pardon without shrift.
Donor, recipient
Alike find rich content.
To him your voices lift
Who makes a priceless gift.

CHAPTER 55

How the monks and nuns lived at Thélème.

In the middle of the lower court stood a magnificent alabaster fountain, surmounted by the Three Graces holding cornucopias and spouting water through their breasts, mouths, ears, eyes and other orifices. The buildings above this court stood upon great pillars of chalcedony and porphyry, forming classical arches about lengthy wide galleries adorned with paintings and trophies of various animals: the horns of bucks, unicorns and hippopotami, elephants' tusks and sundry other curiosities.

The ladies' quarters ran from *Arctice* all the way to the *Mesembrine* Gate; the rest of the abbey was reserved for men. In front of this part, between the outer two towers, lay the recreational facilities: the tilting yard, the riding school, the theatre and the natatorium which included wonderful swimming pools on three different levels, with every sort of equipment and myrtle water aplenty.

Near the river was the fine pleasure garden, with, in the middle, a maze. Tennis courts and football fields spread out between the next two towers. Close to *Cryere*, an orchard offered a mass of fruit trees laid out in quincunxes, with, at its end, a sizy park abounding in venison.

The space between the third pair of towers was reserved for the shooting ranges: here were targets and butts for harquebuss, long bow and crossbow. The servants' quarters, one storey high, were situated outside *Hesperia*. Beyond was the falconry, managed by expert falconers and hawk trainers and annually supplied by the Cretans, Venetians and Sarmatian Poles with all manner of birds. There were priceless eagles for hunting hares, foxes and cranes. There were ger-

falcons, goshawks, sakers for hunting wild geese, herons and bitterns. There were falcons, lanners, sparhawks and merlins for hunting larks and partridges. Other birds there were, too, in great quantities, so well trained that when they flew afield for their own sport they never failed to catch every bird they encountered. . . . The venery with its hounds and beagles stood a little further along towards the park.

All the halls, apartments and chambers were richly hung with tapestries varying with the season; the floors were covered with green cloth, the beds all embroidered. Each rear chamber boasted a pier-glass set in a heavy gold frame adorned with pearls. Near the exits of the ladies' halls were the perfumers and hairdressers who ministered to the gentlemen before the latter visited the ladies. These attendants furnished the ladies' rooms with rose water, orange-flower water and angelica, supplying a precious small atomizer to give forth the most exquisite aromatic perfumes.

CHAPTER 56

How the monks and nuns of Thélème were apparelled.

When first the abbey was founded, the ladies dressed according to their taste and pleasure. Subsequently of their own free will they modified their costume as follows.

They wore hose, of scarlet or kermes-red, reaching some three inches above the knee, the edge being exquisitely embroidered or slashed. Their garters, which matched their bracelets, came both a whit over and under the knee. Their shoes, pumps and slippers were of red, violet or crimson velvet and jagged as a lobster's claws.

Over their slips, they put on a tight tunic of pure silk camlet, and over that a taffeta farthingale or petticoat, red, white, beige, gray or of any other color. Above this farthingale went a skirt of silver taffeta, with fine gold embroidery and delicate cross-stitch work. According to the temperature, the season or the ladies' whim, these skirts might be satin, damask or velvet and, in color, orange, green, cendré, blue, canary yellow, scarlet, crimson or white, or of cloth-of-gold, cloth-of-silver, or any other choice material variously embroidered, stitched, brocaded or spangled according to the occasion for which they were worn.

Their gowns, or over-garments, were also governed by timely considerations. They might be cloth-of-gold with silver embossing or red satin with gold brocade or taffeta, white, blue, black or tawny. Or they might be silk rep, silk camlet, velvet, cloth-of-silver, cloth-of-gold or satin variously figured with gold and silver thread.

In summer, instead of these gowns, they wore lovely light smocks made of the same material, or capes, Moorish-fashion, with hoods

to protect and shade their faces from the sun. These Moresco capes were of violet velvet, having raised gold stitching over silver purl or gold piping and cording, with small Indian pearls at their ends. And ever a gay colored plume, the color of their sleeves, bravely garnished with gold! In winter, their gowns were of taffeta in all the colors mentioned above, but lined with lynx, weasel, Calabrian marten, sable and other rare fur. Their beads, rings, chains and necklaces were of precious stones: carbuncles, rubies, balas rubies, diamonds, sapphires, emeralds, turquoises, garnets, agates, beryls and priceless pearls.

Their headgear also varied with the season. In winter, it was in the French fashion with a cap over the temples covered by a velvet hood with hanging veil. In spring it was in the Spanish, with laces and veils. In summer it was in the Tuscan, the hair elaborately entwined with gold chains and jewels. On Sundays and holidays, however, they followed the French mode which is more seemly and modest.

The men, too, dressed according to their personal taste. Their hose were of light wool or serge cloth, white, black, scarlet or kermes-red. Their velvet breeches were of the same hue or almost; they were embroidered or slashed to their taste. The doublet was of cloth-of-gold, cloth-of-silver, velvet, satin or damask, embroidered, panelled or slashed on one model, the points silk to match and the ornaments of fine enamelled gold.

Their cloaks and jerkins were of cloth-of-gold, cloth-of-silver, gold tissue or velvet, purfled or brocaded at pleasure; their over-garments were every whit as costly as the ladies'. Their girdles were silk, matching their doublets. Each wore on his side a handsome sword with gilt hilt and pommel; the scabbard velvet, matching his breeches, and the ferrule a wondrous example of the goldsmith's art. So too the dagger. Their caps were of black velvet, trimmed with jewels and rings and buttons of gold, with a white plume set in jauntily and parted by many rows of spangles from which hung splendent emeralds and various other stones.

Such was the sympathy between the gallants and their ladies that they matched one another's costumes every day. And in order to be sure of it, certain gentlemen were appointed to report every morning to the youths what garments their ladies planned to wear on that occasion. All here was done for the pleasure of the fair.

Handsome though the clothes were and rich the accoutrements, lads or girls wasted no time in dressing. The wardrobe masters had everything ready before their gentlemen arose and the maids were so nimble that in a trice their mistresses were apparelled from head to toe.

To facilitate matters, over a distance of half-a-league, a row of

light, well-appointed cottages housed the goldsmiths, lapidaries, embroiderers, tailors, gold drawers, velvet weavers, tapestry makers and upholsterers. Here each worked at his trade, and all for the jolly friars and comely nuns of the new abbey. They received materials and stuffs from My Lord Nausiclete, famous for his ships, as the name indicates. Each year brought them seven vessels from the Pearl and Cannibal Islands or Antilles, laden with ingots of gold, raw silk, pearls and precious stones.

If pearls through age tended to lose their lustre, the jewellers, following the method of Avicenna, fed them to the roosters, and they regained their native sparkle.

CHAPTER 57

How those of Thélème were governed in their manner of living.

Their whole life was ordered not by law, statute or rule, but according to their free will and pleasure. They arose when they pleased. They ate, drank, worked and slept when the spirit moved them. No one awoke them, forced food or drink upon them or *made* them do anything else. Gargantua's plan called for perfect liberty. The only rule of the house was:

DO AS THOU WILT

because men that are free, of gentle birth, well-bred and at home in civilized company possess a natural instinct that inclines them to virtue and saves them from vice. This instinct they name their honor. Sometimes they may be depressed or enslaved by subjection or constraint; for we all long for forbidden fruit and covet what is denied us. But they usually apply the fine forces that tend to virtue in such a way as to shake off the yoke of servitude.

The Thélèmites, thanks to their liberty, knew the virtues of emulation. All wished to do what they saw pleased one of their number. Let some lad or maid say "Let us drink" and all of them drank, "Let us play" and all of them played, "Let us frolic in the fields" and all of them frolicked. When falconry or hawking were in order, the ladies sat high upon their saddles on fine nags, a sparhawk, lanner or merlin on one daintily gloved wrist, while the men bore other kinds of hawks.

They were so well-bred that none, man or woman, but could read, write, sing, play several instruments, speak five or six languages and readily compose verse and prose in any of them. Never had earth known knights so proud, so gallant, so adroit on horseback and on foot, so athletic, so lively, so well-trained in arms as these. Never were ladies seen so dainty, so comely, so winsome, so deft at hand-

work and needlework, so skilful in feminine arts, so frank and so free as these.

Thus when the time came for a man to leave the abbey (either at his parents' request or for some other reason) he took with him one of the ladies—the particular one who had chosen him for her knight—and they were married. And though they had lived in devotion and friendship at Thélème, their marriage relations proved even more tender and agreeable. Indeed to the end of their lives they loved one another as they had on the day of their wedding. . . .

Gargantua and Pantagruel, Book II

[Pantagruel: Birth and Education]

CHAPTER 2

Of the nativity of the most redoubtable Pantagruel.

At the age of four hundred fourscore and forty-four years, Gargantua begat his son Pantagruel upon his wife named Badebec, daughter to the king of the dimly-seen Amaurotes in Utopia.[9] She died in the throes of childbirth. Alas! Pantagruel was so extraordinarily large and heavy that he could not possibly come to light without suffocating his mother.

If you would fully understand how he came to be christened Pantagruel, you must remember that a terrible drought raged that year throughout the land of Africa. For thirty-six months, three weeks, four days, thirteen hours and even longer, there was no drop of rain. And the sun blazed so fiercely that the whole earth was parched.

Even in the days of Elijah, the soil was no drier, for now no tree on earth bore leaf or flower. The grass had no verdure; rivers and springs ran dry; the luckless fishes, abandoned by their element, crawled on solid earth, crying and screaming most horribly. Birds fell from the air for want of moisture; wolves, foxes, harts, wild boars, fallow deer, hares, rabbits, weasels, martens, badgers and other beasts were found dead in the fields, their mouths agape.

As for the men, their state was very piteous. You should have seen them with their tongues dangling like a hound's after a run of six hours. Not a few threw themselves into the wells. Others lay under a cow's belly to enjoy the shade—these it is whom Homer calls *Alibantes*, the desiccated.[1] The whole country was at a standstill. The strenuous efforts of mortals against the vehemence of this drought

9. Names taken from Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*. Literally, "no place," the word *Utopia* has become synonymous with "ideal country." 1. The allusion to Homer is apparently mistaken, but "Alibantes"—possibly derived from the name of Alibas, a dry river in hell—is used by other ancient writers with reference to the dead or the very old.

was a horrible spectacle. It was hard enough, God knows, to save the holy water in the churches from being wasted; but My Lords the Cardinals and our Holy Father laid down such strict rules that no man dared take more than a lick of it. In the churches, scores of parched, unhappy wretches followed the priest who distributed it, their jaws yawning for one tiny driblet. Like the rich man in *Luke*, who cried for Lazarus to dip his fingers in water, they were tormented by a flame,[2] and would not suffer the slightest drop to be wasted. Ah! thrice happy that year the man who had a cool, well-plenished wine cellar underground!

In discussing the question: "Why is sea water salty?" the philosopher Aristotle, after Empedocles, supplies the following reason. When Phoebus gave the reins of his luminous chariot[3] to Phaéton, his son, the latter, unskilled in the art of driving, was incapable of following the ecliptic lines between the two tropics of the sun's sphere. Accordingly, he strayed from the appointed path and came so close to earth that he dried up all the countries under his course. He also burnished that great portion of heaven which philosophers call *Via Lactea* or the Milky Way, and good drinkers St. James' Way, since it is the starry line that guides pilgrims to Santiago de Compostella. (On the other hand, poets declare that it is here Juno's milk dropped while she was suckling Hercules.)

Earth at that time was so excessively heated that it broke into an enormous sweat which ran over the sea, making the latter salty, since all sweat is salt. If you do not admit this last statement, then taste of your own sweat. Or savor the perspiration of your pox-stricken friends when they are put in sweatboxes for treatment. It is all one to me.

Practically the same thing happened the year I am speaking of. On a certain Friday, all the people were intent upon their devotions. A noble procession was in progress with plenty of litanies and fine preachings. Supplications arose toward Almighty God beseeching Him to cast His eye of mercy upon them in their affliction. Suddenly they clearly saw some great drops of water stand out upon the ground, exactly as from a person sweating copiously.

The wretched populace began to rejoice as though here were a great blessing. Some declared that, since the air lacked all moisture, earth was supplying the deficiency. Other scientists asseverated that it was a shower of the Antipodes, as described by Seneca in *Quaestiones Naturales*, Book IV, where he treats of the Nile's source, attributing its floods to distant rains washed underground into the river. But they were thoroughly deceived. For, the procession done, when each sought to gather up this dew and drink it up by the bowl-

2. "And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame." (Luke 16:24.) 3. The chariot of the sun.

ful, they found it was only pickle, far saltier than the saltiest water of the sea.

Another great mishap befell Gargantua that week. A dungchafing lout, bearing two great bags of salt and a hambone in his gamepouch, walked into poor Gargantua's mouth as the giant lay snoring. The clod spilled a quantity of salt in Gargantua's throat. Gargantua, crazy with a thirst he could not slake, angrily snapped his mouth shut. He gnashed his teeth fiercely; they ground like millstones. Later the rascal told me he was so terrified you could have stopped up his nose with a bale of hay. He fell flat on his face like a dead man, dropping the two saltbags that had tormented Gargantua. They were at once swallowed up and entombed.

My rogue vowed vengeance. Thrusting his hand in his gamepouch, he drew out a great hambone, highly salted, still covered with hair, and twenty-eight inches long. Ragefully he rammed it down Gargantua's throat. The giant, drier than ever, felt the pig's hair tickling his belly and, willy-nilly, spewed up all he had. Eighteen tumbrils could not have drawn away the rich nauseous yield. My dungchafer, hidden in the cavity of one of his teeth, was forced to take French leave in such pitiful condition that all who saw him were horrified. Gargantua, looking down, noticed this jackpudding whirling about in a great puddle.

"Here is some worm that sought to sting me in the belly," he mused, happy to have expelled him from his body.

Because he was born that very day, his father called him Pantagruel or All-Athirst, a name derived from the Greek *panta* meaning all, and the Hagarene or Saracen *gruel* meaning athirst. Gargantua inferred thereby that at his son's birth the entire universe was wholly parched. Prophetically, too, he realized that some day Pantagruel would become Supreme Lord of the Thirsty, a fact indicated even more surely by a further portent.

For while his mother Badebec was bringing him forth and the midwives stood by ready to receive him, there first issued from her belly seventy-eight salt-vendors, each leading a salt-laden mule by the halter. They were followed by nine dromedaries, bearing hams and smoked oxtongues; seven camels bearing chitterlings; twenty-five cartloads of leeks, garlic, onions and chives. This terrified some midwives, but others said:

"Here is good provision! As it is, we drink but lazily, instead of vigorously. This must be a good omen, since these victuals are spurs to bibbing wine!"

As they were tattling away, out pops Pantagruel, hairy as a bear! At which, prophetically, one of them exclaimed:

"God help us, he is born hair and all, straight from the arse of

Satan in flight. He will do terrible wonders. If he lives, he will grow to a lusty age!"

Of Pantagruel's race are those who drink so heavily in the evening that they must rise at night to drink again, quenching the coals of fire and blistering thirst in their throats. This form of thirst is called Pantagruel, in memory of the giant.

[Father's Letter from Home]

CHAPTER 8

How Pantagruel in Paris received a letter from his father Gargantua.

As you may suppose, Pantagruel studied very hard and profited much by his study, for his intelligence was naturally active and his memory as full as twelve casks of olives. While in Paris,[4] he received the following letter from his father:

MY BELOVED SON,

Among the gifts, graces and prerogatives with which our sovereign Creator, God Almighty, blessed and enriched humanity from the beginning, there is one that I deem supreme. By its means, though we be mortal, we can yet achieve a sort of immortality; through it, we may, in the course of our transitory lives, yet perpetuate our name and race.

To be sure, what we gain by a progeny born of lawful wedlock cannot make up for what we lost through the sin of our first parents. Adam and Eve disobeyed the commandments of the Lord their God: mortality was their punishment. By death the magnificent mould in which Man was fashioned vanished into the dust of oblivion.

However, thanks to seminal propagation, what a man loses his children revive and, where they fail, their children prevail. So it has gone, and so it shall be, from generation to generation, until the Day of Judgment, when Christ shall restore to God the Father His kingdom pacified, secured and cleansed of all sin. Then all generations and corruption shall cease, for the elements will have completed their continuous transmutations. The peace humanity has craved so anxiously will have been attained; all things will have been reduced to their appointed end and period.

I therefore have reason to give thanks to God, my Saviour, for having granted me the joy of beholding my old age blossom anew in

4. Like his father before him, Pantagruel has been sent to Paris to study. The following letter, patterned after Ciceronian models of eloquence, summarizes Rabelais' view of an ideal education, and generally illustrates the attitude of the Renaissance intellectual elite toward culture.

your youth. When, by His pleasure, which rules and orders everything, my soul must abandon this human habitation, I shall not believe I am dying utterly, but rather passing from one place to another. For in you my visible image will continue to live on earth; by you, I shall go on frequenting honorable men and true friends, as I was wont to do.

My associations have not been without sin, I confess. We all transgress and must continually beseech God to forgive us our trespasses. But they have been without reproach in the eyes of men.

That is why if, beside my bodily image, my soul did not likewise shine in you, you would not be accounted worthy of guarding the precious immortality of my name. In that case, the least part of me (my body) would endure. Scant satisfaction, that, when the best part (my soul, which should keep my name blessed among men) had degenerated and been bastardized. I say this not through any doubt as to your virtue, which I have already often tested, but to encourage you to go on doing ever better and profiting by your constant improvement.

My purpose is not so much to keep you absolutely on your present virtuous course as to make you rejoice that you have kept and are keeping on it. I seek to quicken your heart with resolutions for the future. To help you make and carry these out, remember that I have spared nothing. I have helped you as though my sole treasure on earth were once in my lifetime to see you well-bred and accomplished in honesty and valor as well as in knowledge and civility. Ay, I have longed to leave you after my death as a mirror of your father's personality. The reflection may not prove perfect in practice, but certainly I could not more studiously wish for its perfection.

My late father Grangousier, of blessed memory, made every effort that I might achieve mental, moral and technical excellence. The fruit of my studies and labors matched, indeed surpassed, his dearest wish. But you can realize that conditions were not as favorable to learning as they are to-day. Nor had I such gifted teachers as you. We were still in the dark ages; we still walked in the shadow of the dark clouds of ignorance; we suffered the calamitous consequences of the destruction of good literature by the Goths. Now, by God's grace, light and dignity have been restored to letters, and I have lived to see it. Indeed, I have watched such a revolution in learning that I, not erroneously reputed in my manhood the leading scholar of the century, would find it difficult to enter the bottom class in a grammar school.

I tell you all this not through boastfulness, though in writing to you I might be proud with impunity. Does not Marcus Tullius[5]

5. Cicero.

authorize it in his book *Of Old Age*, and Plutarch in *How a Man May Praise Himself without Envy?* Both authors recognize that such pride is useful in fostering the spirit of emulation. No—I do it simply to give you a proof of my love and affection.

To-day, the old sciences are revived, knowledge is systematized, discipline reëstablished. The learned languages are restored: Greek, without which a man would be ashamed to consider himself educated; Hebrew, Chaldean and Latin.[6] Printing is now in use, an art so accurate, and elegant that it betrays the divine inspiration of its discovery,[7] which I have lived to witness. Alas! Conversely, I was not spared the horror of such diabolic works as gunpowder[8] and artillery.

To-day, the world is full of learned men, brilliant teachers and vast libraries: I do not believe that the ages of Plato, Cicero or Papinian[9] afforded such facilities for culture. From now on, it is unthinkable to come before the public or move in polite circles without having worshipped at Minerva's shrine. Why, the robbers, hangmen, adventurers and jockeys of to-day are infinitely better educated than the doctors and preachers of my time. More, even women and girls aspire to the glory, the heavenly manna of learning. Thus, at my advanced age, I have been forced to take up Greek. Not that I had despised it, like Cato;[1] I never had the opportunity to learn it. Now I delight in reading Plutarch's *Morals*, Plato's noble *Dialogues*, the *Monuments* of Pausanias and the *Antiquities* of Athenæus,[2] as I await the hour when it shall please God, my Creator, to call me back to His bosom.

That is why, my dear son, I urge you to spend your youth making the most of your studies and developing your moral sense. You are in Paris, which abounds in noble men upon whom to pattern yourself; you have Epistemon, an admirable tutor, who can inspire you by direct oral teaching. But I demand more of you. I insist you learn languages perfectly! Greek first, as old Quintilian prescribes;[3] then Latin; then Hebrew for the sake of the Holy Scripture; then Chaldee and Arabic, too. Model your Greek style on Plato, your Latin on Cicero. Let no history slip your memory; cultivate cosmography, for you will find its texts helpful.

As for the liberal arts of geometry, arithmetic and music, I gave you a taste of them when you were a little lad of five or six. Proceed further in them yourself, learning as much as you can. Be sure to

6. The languages which are the instruments of classical learning are listed along with those useful for the study of the Old Testament. 7. Printing from movable type was independently invented in Europe about the middle of the fifteenth century; the idea of its divine origin was commonplace during the Renaissance. 8. Probably introduced into Europe through the Arabs, rather than invented, in the fourteenth century. 9. Jurisconsult of the time of Emperor Septimius Severus (reigned A.D. 193–211). 1. Plutarch's life of Cato is the source of the notion that he despised Greek. 2. The works of Pausanias and Athenaeus were standard sources of information on ancient geography, art, and everyday life. 3. In his *Institutio oratoria*, Book I, Chapter 1, paragraph 12, he recommends studying Greek before Latin.

master all the rules of astronomy; but dismiss astrology and the divinatory art of Lullius[4] as but vanity and imposture. Of civil law, I would have you know the texts of the Code by heart, then compare them with philosophy.

A knowledge of nature is indispensable; devote yourself to this study with unflagging curiosity. Let there be no sea, river or fountain but you know the fish that dwell in it. Be familiar with all the shrubs, bushes and trees in forest or orchard, all the plants, herbs and flowers that grow on the ground, all the birds of the air, all the metals in the bowels of earth, all the precious stones in the orient and the south. In a word, be well informed in everything that concerns the physical world we live in.

Then carefully consult the works of Greek, Arabian and Latin physicians, without slighting the Jewish doctors, Talmudists and Cabbalists. By frequent exercises in dissection, acquire a perfect knowledge of that other world, which is man.

Devote a few hours a day to the study of Holy Writ. Take up the New Testament and the Epistles in Greek; then, the Old Testament in Hebrew. Strive to make your mind an inexhaustible storehouse of knowledge. For you are growing to manhood now: soon you will have to give up your studious repose to lead a life of action. You will have to learn to bear arms, to achieve knighthood, so as to defend my house and help our allies frustrate the attacks of evildoers.

Further, I wish you soon to test what profit you have gained from your education. This you can best do by public discussion and debate on all subjects against all comers, and by frequenting learned men both in Paris and elsewhere.

But remember this. As Solomon says, wisdom entereth not into a malicious soul, and science without conscience spells but destruction of the spirit. Therefore serve, love and fear God, on Him pin all your thoughts and hopes; by faith built of charity, cling to Him so closely that never a sin come between you. Hold the abuses of the world in just suspicion. Set not your heart upon vanity, for this life is a transitory thing, but the Word of God endureth forever. Be serviceable to your neighbor, love him as you do yourself. Honor your teachers. Shun the company of all men you would not wish to resemble; receive not in vain the favors God has bestowed upon you.

When you realize that you have acquired all the knowledge Paris has to offer, come back so I may see you and give you my blessing before I die.

My son, the peace and grace of Our Lord be with you. Amen.

Your father,

GARGANTUA

4. Raymond Lully, Spanish philosopher of the thirteenth century, who dabbled in magic.

From Utopia, the seventeenth day of September.

Having read this letter, Pantagruel, greatly encouraged, strove more ardently than ever to profit in his work. Had you seen him studying vigorously, practically and tirelessly, you would have compared his spirit moving among his books to flames blazing through a bonfire of dry branches.

CHAPTER 16

Of the character and condition of Panurge.[5]

Panurge was then about thirty-five years old and as fine to gild as a dagger of lead. Of medium height, neither too tall nor too short, he had an aquiline nose, shaped like the handle of a razor. He cut a very gallant figure though he was a trifle lewd by nature, and subject to a disease at that time called impecunitis, an incomparable malady.

Yet when he needed money, he knew thirty-three methods of acquiring it, the most ordinary and honorable of which was filching. He was a quarrelsome fellow, a sharper, a toper, a roisterer and a profligate, if ever there was one in the city of Paris. In every other respect, he was the best fellow in the world.

He was constantly plotting against the sergeants and the watch. Sometimes he assembled three or four sportsmen, plied them with drink until they were boozy as Knights Templars,[6] then took them up the hill to Ste. Geneviève or near the Collège de Navarre. Placing his sword on the pavement and his ear to his sword, he waited till he heard the blade shake—an infallible sign that the watch was not far off. Then he and his companions took a dung cart and rolled it down hill. Ere it was halfway down, they had fled in the opposite direction, for in less than two days Panurge knew every street and alley in Paris as well as his postprandial grace: *Deus det nobis pacem suam*, God grant us His peace.

Another time he laid down a train of gunpowder where the watch was due to pass. Just as the troop debouched, he set fire to it, vastly delighted in observing how gracefully they took to their heels, in mortal terror that St. Anthony's fire had caught them by the legs.

The luckless Masters of Arts and theologians he persecuted more than any other class of men. When he met one, he never failed to

5. Panurge (*Panourgos* in Greek, the "all-doer") is the major character in *Gargantua and Pantagruel* except for the heroes themselves: a magnification of the perennial-student type, Panurge is an imaginative and scandalous pauper, erudite and bawdy, a lover of outrageous pranks. On first meeting Pantagruel he addressed him in thirteen different languages, a couple of them invented, before discovering that they both spoke French. He has since become a permanent fixture of the young lord's retinue. 6. A medieval religious and medical order, suppressed in 1312. The original *templiers*, not capitalized, suggests a current proverbial expression.

do him some harm, either slipping a turd into his hood or pinning little foxtails or hares' ears to his back.

One day when all the theologians had been summoned to the Sorbonne to examine the articles of the faith, he made a tart of garlic, asafoetida, galbanum, castoreum[7] and steaming excrement, which he steeped and tempered in the corrupt manner of chancres and pockbiles. Very early in the morning he so theologically greased and anointed the lattices and grates of the trellised gallery of the Hall of Records that not even the devil himself had dared stay there. The worthy pedagogues pewked in public as abundantly as though they had flayed the fox. Ten or twelve died of the plague, fourteen contracted leprosy, eight came down with pestiferous ulcers, and more than twenty-eight caught the pox. But Panurge was jubilant.

Usually he carried a whip under his gown with which he mercilessly belabored such pages as he met bearing wine for their masters, in order to speed them on their way.

In his coat he had more than twenty-six little pockets and pouches which were always full. One held a pair of loaded dice and a small knife like a glover's awl to cut purses with. Another, verjuice to throw in the eyes of those who annoyed him. A third, burrs, penned with gosling or capon feathers, to stick on to the robes and bonnets of honest people. He often gave married men a fine pair of horns which they bore through the city sometimes all their lives long. To the back of the women's hoods, he liked to affix various knicknacks shaped like the sexual organ of man.

Another pocket held a lot of little packages filled with fleas and lice which he recruited from the tramps of St. Innocent's graveyard and cast with small sticks or quills down the backs of the smartest gentlewomen he could find. He did this even in church, for he never sat up in the choir, preferring to stand in the nave among the women during mass, vespers or sermon. Another pocket held a large supply of bent nails with which he would couple men and women together where they sat. This was particularly amusing when the victims wore gowns of costly sarsenet taffeta, because they ripped them to shreds as they sought to separate. Still another pocket held a squib with tinder, flints, matches, vesuvians, sulphur and other combustibles. Another, two or three burning-glasses with which he tortured and disconcerted men and women at church. For he said there was only an antistrophe between *femme folle à la messe* and *molle à la fesse* or working a cunning stunt and a stunning cunt. Another pouch held needles, threads and pins for all manner of minor deviltries.

Once at the door of the Great Hall in the Palais de Justice, Panurge saw a Cordelier father getting ready to say mass before the pro-

7. Asafoetida and galbanum are resins extracted from Persian plants; castoreum is a substance obtained from the inguinal region of the beaver; all three produce nauseous smells.

ceedings of the day. Immediately he ran up to help the holy man don his vestments and, in the process, managed to sew his alb to his robe and shirt. Then, as the magistrates arrived for mass, Panurge withdrew. Mass done, as he reached the formula *Ite, missa est*, the wretched friar tried to take off his alb. But, at the same time, off came the robe and shirt solidly sewn to it. Our Cordelier, thus stripped to the shoulders, revealed his dangledingus to all the world—and it was no small crosier, as you may imagine. The harder he tugged, the more he exposed himself. So much so, indeed, that one of the counsellors cried:

"What is the matter? Is this good friar making an offering of his tail for us to kiss? No, by heaven, let St. Anthony's fire kiss it for us!"

From then on, an ordinance forbade the poor good fathers to disrobe before the world, the vestry-room being indicated as the only fit place for this. They were especially warned against doing so in the presence of women, lest it tempt the latter to sin through longing. When people wondered why the fathers were genitally so well-equipped, Panurge solved the problem.

"What makes the ears of asses so long?" he asked, and answering his own question: "Their dams put no caps on their ears. Alliacus,[8] Chancellor of the University and Chaplain to Charles VI, proves this in his *Suppositiones*. Similarly, what makes the whangle-tools of our holy fathers hang so low? Well, they never wear dark breeches, so their lusty organs, dangling down at liberty like a horse given head, knock against their knees like women's beads. Why are they correspondingly large? Because, with all this waggling to and fro, the humors of the body sink down into these parts. Do not the legists point out that continual agitation and continual motion are the cause of attraction?"

Another of Panurge's pouches held stone-alum, an itching-powder which he poured down the backs of those he considered the proudest and most stately ladies. Some would at once strip off their clothes then and there before the public . . . others danced like cats on hot coals or a drumstick on a tabor . . . others again rushed madly into the street and he at their heels. . . . Those inclined to disrobe, he assisted by sheltering them under his cape, as any courteous and gallant gentleman would have done.

In another pocket he had a small leather bottle full of old oil. If he saw a man or woman in a handsome costume, he would grease and stain it in the most conspicuous places. His technique here was an art. Pretending to admire the material, he would finger it.

"Rare cloth, this, sir," or "Fine satin, upon my word!" or "Oh, what lovely taffeta, Madame!" he would exclaim. "God give you all

8. Latinized name of Pierre d'Ailly (1350–1425).

your noble heart desires. You have a new suit, My Lord! And you a new dress, My Lady. Well, you know the saying: New clothes, new friends. God give you joy in them!"

As he spoke, his hands passed lightly over the shoulders and a long ugly smear remained.

So indelible a spot
Stamped on body, soul and fame
That the devil could not blot
Out its testament of shame.

As he took his leave of the ladies, he would say:

"Madame, take care not to fall. You've a huge filthy hole out of sight in front of you, there!"

In another pocket he kept euphorbium, very finely pulverized and spread over a dainty handkerchief he had stolen from a pretty saleswgirl in the Galleries of the Sainte-Chapelle,[9] hard by the law courts and frequented by the gallants of the day. (He filched it while removing from between her breasts a louse he had dropped there.)

When he happened to be in gentle company, he would steer the conversation on to the subject of lace and lingerie. Then, thrusting his hands into some lady's bosom:

"Glorious work, this. Is it Flanders or Hainault?"

Then, drawing his handkerchief:

"Just look at this kerchief, Madame. Would you say it was Frontignan or Fontarabia?"

Shaking it hard under her nose, he would make her sneeze for hours at a time. Then he would fart like a dray horse.

"Tut, tut," the lady would say. "Are you whiffling, Panurge?"

"No, Madame," he would reply gallantly, "I am merely tuning my tail to the plain song you make with your nose."

Panurge was never without pincers, a picklock, a pelican, a jimmy, a crook or other tools against which no chest or door could avail. Finally, in another pocket he kept a whole battery of small goblets which he worked with amazing skill, for his fingers were nimble and adroit as those of Minerva or Arachne.[1] He had indeed once been an itinerant quack, barking antidotes for poison. When he presented a sum of money and asked for change, the changer had to be spry as Argus[2] to catch Panurge spiriting away five, six or seven coins at a time, visibly, openly, manifestly, without lesion or hurt, whilst all the changer noticed was a slight draught.

9. A shopping center in old Paris.

1. In Greek mythology the goddess Athena, being enraged at the Lydian maid Arachne's irreverence and weaving skill, transformed her into a spider.

2. The Greek mythological figure with a hundred eyes.

CHAPTER 21

How Panurge fell in love with a Parisienne of high degree.

As a result of his debate with the English scholar,[3] Panurge had acquired quite a reputation in Paris. The activity of his codpiece was proportionally greater, and, to that effect, he had it pinked and slashed with ornate embroidery, after the Roman fashion. His praises became a topic of general conversation. There was even a song written to celebrate his exploits; the little children sang it as they went to fetch mustard. Best of all, he was made welcome in the most elegant circles. But it went to his head; he actually had the presumption to beleaguer one of the great ladies of the city.

Scorning the rigmarole of prefaces and preliminaries dear to such languishing, dreamy lovers as never touch meat in Lent, Panurge popped the question outright.

"Madame," he told this lofty lady, "it would prove beneficent to the commonwealth, pleasurable to your person, honorable to your progeny and necessary to me that I cover you for the propagation of my race. You may take my word for this, Madame; experience will prove it to you conclusively."

The lady, indignant, thrust him a thousand leagues away.

"You crazy knave, how dare you talk like that? Who do you think I am? Get out of here at once and never let me lay eyes upon you again. For two pins, I'd have your arms and legs sawed off!"

"Madame," he protested, "I would not care two pins if my arms and legs were sawed off, providing you and I had first fought a merry bout of spermary-snuggery. For," he showed her his long cod-piece, "here is Master Johnny Inigo, a master instrumentalist who begs to fiddle and thrum, sweep the *viola d'amore*, play the manichord, tweedle the gittern, strike the lyre, beat the drum, wind the horn and grind the organ until you feel his music throbbing in the marrow of your bones. A wily gallant, Master Johnny: he will not fail to find all the cranks, winches, wedges, pullies, nippers, clutches, teeth, springs and rigging stored in your delicate cockpit. You'll be needing no scouring or brushing up after *him*."

"Go to, scoundrel, and away! One more word out of you and I'll shout for help; I'll have my servants beat you to death."

"No, Madame," Panurge protested. "You are not as cruel as you pretend. You cannot be or else your face is a living lie. Let earth soar upward into the firmament, let high heaven sink into the bottomless pit, let the whole concert of nature be annihilated ere your beauty and grace secrete one drop of gall or malice. They say that it is virtually impossible for man:

3. Thaumastes, who in the previous chapters has long argued with Panurge, using both words and signs, and has been "nonplussed" by the latter's knowledge.

To find in women beauty unallied
With arrogance or cruelty or pride

but that holds only for vulgar beauties. Your own is so priceless, so unique, so heavenly that I vow Nature has bestowed it on you as a paragon to prove what she can do when she cares to muster all her power and science. Everything in you is honey, sugar, celestial manna. To you Paris should have awarded the golden apple, not to Venus or Juno or Minerva. For Juno possessed no such nobility, Minerva no such wisdom, Venus no such comeliness.

"O ye heavenly gods and goddesses! how happy the man whom you allow to kiss and fondle you, to cosset, nuzzle and cockle you, to thrust his prolific engine of pleasure into the pod of your quivering quim. By God, I am that man, I plainly feel it. Already she loves me her bellyful I swear; ay, Panurge is predestined to it by the nixies and fairies. Let us lose no time: come, slap-dash, helter-skelter, holus-bolus, to horse and fair riding, tantivy, hoicks!"

Whereupon he sought to embrace her; but she moved towards the window as if to call for help, so Panurge made off hastily. Yet ere retreating:

"Madame," he said, "wait for me here; I'll call your friends, don't bother!"

And he withdrew, unfeased and no less cheerful despite the rebuff.

Next day, as she arrived at church, Panurge stood waiting at the door, offered her holy water, bowed deep as she passed, then kneeled familiarly beside her:

"Madame," he declared, "you must know how madly in love with you I am. Why, I can neither piddle nor cack for love of you! I don't know how *you* feel, but, Madame, suppose I took ill from it, wouldn't you be responsible?"

"Go away, I don't care anything about it. Leave me alone to my prayers."

"One moment!" Panurge begged. "Please equivocate on '*à Beaumont le Viconte?*' or on 'Runt and Codger are fellow-muckers!' "

"I don't know what you mean!"

"Quite easy! '*A beau con le vit monte,*' 'Cunt and Rodger are mellow fuckers!' Now, pray to God that He grant whatever your noble heart desires. And oh, Madame, I beg you: give me those beads a moment."

"Here you are, stop bothering me."

She was about to take off her rosary—it was of cestrin wood with gold ornamentation—when Panurge promptly drew one of his knives and neatly cut it. Before carrying it off to pawn:

"Would you like my knife?" he asked.

"No, certainly not!"

"It's yours to grind or sheathe, Madame, body and soul, bag and baggage, tripe and guts."

But the lady was worried over the loss of her beads, so many implements to help her keep her countenance in church:

"This chattering scoundrel must be some eccentric foreigner," she mused. "He will never return my rosary. What will my dear husband say? He'll be furious! But I'll tell him a sneak thief cut it off me at church. He must believe me: I've still the end fastened on my girdle."

After dinner, Panurge went to call on her with, in his sleeve, a purse full of tokens specially struck for use in the law courts.

"Which of us is the better lover, Madame, you or I?"

"For my part I cannot hate you," she said magnanimously. "God commands us to love our neighbors."

"Aren't you in love with me?"

"I've told you repeatedly not to talk to me like that!" she insisted. "If you mention it again, I'll show you I'm not to be trifled with. Go away, I tell you. But give me back my rosary; my husband might ask me for it."

"Give you back your rosary? No, by heaven, I shall do nothing of the sort. But I'll tell you what I *will* do: I'll gladly give you another. Would you like one in beautifully enamelled gold with beads shaped like great pendulous knockers? Or like loveknots or ingots, heavy in the hand? Or ebony or broad zircons or square-cut garnets with mountings of rare turquoises, or costly topazes or priceless sapphires or precious rubies set with glittering diamonds of twenty-eight facets? No, no, that is a trumpery gift. I know of a marvellous rosary: it's made of exquisite emeralds with a mounting of speckled gray amber; at the buckle there's a Persian pearl fat as an orange . . . and the bauble costs but a paltry five-and-twenty thousand ducats. I will make you a present of it; I've heaps of cash!"

He made his tokens ring as though they were genuine, authentic golden crowns with the shining sun of France stamped upon them.

"Do you fancy a piece of violet or crimson velure, dyed in grain, or a piece of scarlet or brocaded satin? Is it your pleasure to accept chains, brooches, tiaras or rings? You have but to say the word: fifty thousand is a trifle!"

His offer made her mouth water. Yet she stood her ground.

"No, thank you, I want nothing to do with you."

"By God, I certainly want to do something with *you!* What I want will cost you nothing; you'll be out nothing when you've given it. Look, Madame," and he showed her his long codpiece. "Here is Master Johnny Scramblecunney who craves lodging."

He was about to strike root there, when she started to cry out, though none too loud. The mask of courtesy fell from Panurge's face.

"So you won't let me have a little harmless fun, eh? Not even a morsel for me, eh? A bucket of turds to you! you don't deserve the honor or pleasure of it. But by God! I'll make the dogs ride you!"

With which he beat a hasty retreat in dread of blows. (He was by nature fearful of them.)

CHAPTER 22

How Panurge played a none too pleasant trick on the Parisienne of high degree.

Next day was Corpus Christi, a feast on which the ladies of Paris put on their stateliest apparel. Panurge's charmer was decked out in a rich gown of crimson velvet, with a skirt of costly white velure.

The day before, Panurge scoured the town for a bitch in heat. Having found one, he tied his belt around her neck and took her home. All that day and through the night, he fed her abundantly; in the morning he killed her, plucked out that part the Greek geomancians[4] know, cut it as fine as he could, tucked it away in one of his innumerable pockets and went to the church. He was sure his lady would soon arrive to take part in the procession always held on that day.

When she entered, Panurge bowed courteously, offered her some holy water and, shortly after she had finished her petty devotions, sat down on the bench beside her. As she looked up, he passed her a paper on which he had written the following rondeau:

Sweet lady, once, once only I expressed
My admiration; you denied my quest,
You drove me irremediably away
Although I never harmed you (welladay!)
In act or word or libel or the rest. . . .
Granted my wooing stirred no answering zest,
You could have been more honest, and confessed:
"I do not wish it, friend. Leave me, I pray!"
  Sweet lady, once,
Once more and never again I shall protest
Ere love's flame utterly consume my breast,
One boon alone I languish for: to lay
My peacock, shoveller, cockerel, popinjay
Deep in the shelter of your downy nest.
  Sweet lady, once!

4. A species of magicians.

While she was unfolding the paper to see what was inside, Panurge deftly sprinkled his drug all over her, spilling it impartially in the folds of her sleeves and skirt.

"Madame," he said before taking his leave, "a lover's life is not always a bed of roses. In my case I can only hope the anguished nights, the sorrows and tribulation I undergo for love of you will be deducted from my trials in purgatory. At least pray God He give me patience to bear my affliction."

Panurge had scarcely spoken when all the dogs in the church, attracted by the odor of the drug, scurried over to the lady. Big and little, large and small, one and all came up, sniffed, raised their legs, cocked their members and let fly on her dress. It was the most horrible sight imaginable.

Panurge pretended to chase them off, then bowed and retired to watch the sport from the vantage point of a chapel. Those wretched curs were squirting all over her clothes. One huge greyhound placed a paw on her shoulder to aim at her head . . . other dogs pumped in her sleeves . . . still others drenched her backside, while the puppies piddled in her shoes. . . . The women close to her sought to keep the beasts off, but with scant success. Meanwhile, holding his sides, Panurge, between guffaws of laughter, told certain lords who were next to him:

"I think that lady's in heat. Or some wolfhound covered her recently."

Seeing the dogs crowded as thick about her as about a bitch in heat, he ran off to fetch Pantagruel. On the way, he stopped to kick every dog he met, crying:

"To church with you! To your genuflexions! Follow the odor of sanctity! Be off and join your fellows at the urinarian baptism! Forward, by all the devils, be off, devil take you!"

"Master," he said breathlessly to Pantagruel, "please come and see all the dogs of the country gathered about the loveliest lady in town, and every one of them agog to scrounge her!"

Pantagruel, delighted at the novelty of it, accompanied Panurge back to church and enjoyed the fun immensely. By the time the procession began, matters had reached a crisis. There were more than six hundred thousand and fourteen dogs thronging about her and finding one thousand and one means of harassing her. Whichever way she turned, the newcomers followed the scent, dogged her heels and flooded whatever spot her dress touched. The only course left her was to go home. As she fled through the streets, every one stopped to watch the dogs leaping high as her neck, turning her elegant toilette into a very toilet, as she ran on, helpless and steaming. It was impossible to give them the slip, the trail was too pungent. So they followed her to her residence.

While she hid in her room and her chambermaids burst into laughter behind politely raised aprons, all the dogs within a radius of a half-league came rushing up and showered so hard against the gate as to form a stream in which ducks might very well have swum. Today this same current, now called the creek of Bièvre, flows through the grounds of the Abbey of St. Victor and past the Gobelin dyeworks.[5] Materials steeped in its waters turn a rare scarlet thanks to some special virtue of these pissdogs, as our learned Master Doribus recently pointed out in a brilliant sermon. God help us, a mill could have ground corn there, though not so much as the famous Bazacle in Toulouse on the Garonne.

5. The geography is correct. At the time of Rabelais' writing the celebrated dye-works were still run by the Gobelin family. Mysterious qualities were attributed to the water of the small river Bièvre, and urine was actually used in the industry on account of its ammonia content.

MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE

1533–1592

Like his fellow Frenchman Rabelais, though in a different context and manner, Michel Eyquem de Montaigne was representative of his age and unique at the same time. Though involved in the political and religious conflicts of the day, he yet maintained an unmistakable sense of individuality and a considerable degree of detachment. These same qualities characterize his writing.

Montaigne was born on February 28, 1533, in the castle of Montaigne (in the wine-rich Bordeaux region), which had been bought by his great-grandfather and from which his family of traders derived their surname. His father, Pierre Eyquem, was for two terms mayor of Bordeaux and had fought in Italy under Francis I. Montaigne's inclination to tolerance and naturalness may have had its origin in his background and early training: his mother, of Spanish-Jewish descent, was a Protestant, as were his brother Beauregard and his sister Jeanne; the third of nine children, Michel himself, like his other brothers and sisters, was raised a Catholic. His father, though no man of learning, had unconventional ideas of upbringing: Michel, who had a peasant nurse and peasant godparents, was awakened in the morning by the sound of music and had Latin taught him as his mother tongue by a German tutor. At six he went to the famous Collège de Guienne at Bordeaux; later he studied law, probably at Toulouse. In his youth he already had first-hand experience of court life. (At the court celebrations at Rouen for the coming of age of Charles IX in 1560, he saw cannibals, brought from Brazil, who became the subject of the famous essay reprinted here.) In 1557 he was a member of the Bordeaux parliament; during that period he formed the deepest friendship of his life, with the young nobleman and fellow lawyer Étienne de la Boétie, who was to die of the plague a few years later. During his

friend's last illness, Montaigne assisted him day and night despite the contagiousness of the disease. In 1565 he married Françoise de la Chassaigne, daughter of a colleague in the Bordeaux parliament, and the object of his temperate love. It is possible that disappointed political ambitions contributed to Montaigne's decision to "retire" at the age of thirty-eight to his castle of Montaigne and devote himself to meditation and writing. His stay there, however, had various interruptions. France was split between the Protestants, led by Henry of Navarre, and two Catholic factions: those faithful to the reigning kings of the house of Valois (first Charles IX and then Henry III) and the "leaguers," i.e., the followers of the house of Guise. Though his sympathies went to the unfanatical Navarre, the future founder of the Bourbon dynasty as Henry IV, Montaigne's attitude was balanced and conservative (both Henry III of Valois and Henry of Navarre bestowed honors upon him), and in 1574 Montaigne attempted to mediate an agreement between Henry and the Duke of Guise.

In 1580 he undertook a journey through Switzerland, Germany, and Italy (partly to cure his gallstones); while in Italy he received news that he had been appointed mayor of Bordeaux, an office he held competently for two terms (1581–85). Toward the end of his life he began an important friendship with the intelligent and ardently devoted Marie de Gournay, who became a kind of adopted daughter and was his literary executrix. When Henry of Navarre, who had visited him twice in his castle, became King Henry IV, Montaigne expressed his joy, though he refused Henry's offers of money; he did not live to witness in Paris, as he probably would have, the entry of the king turned Catholic ("Paris," Henry said, "is well worth a Mass"), for he died on September 13, 1592, and was buried in a church in Bordeaux.

Montaigne's major claim to fame, the *Essays*, were started as a collection of interesting quotations, observations, recordings of remarkable events, and the like, and slowly developed to their large form and bulk. Of the three books, I and II were first published in 1580; III (together with I and II revised and amplified) appeared in 1588. A posthumous edition prepared by Mlle. de Gournay, and containing some further additions, appeared in 1595. A noteworthy early English translation by John Florio was published in 1603.

Although the quality of Montaigne's *Essays* can perhaps be fully appreciated only by a direct experience of them, let us attempt to describe this unique genre and place it within the context of its time. If one accepts the common view that in the Renaissance the individual human being was exalted, and therefore a special emphasis was placed on the study of man in his "virtues" and singularities, it might be appropriate to think of Montaigne as a typical product of that new emphasis. As the inventor of the personal essay, he obviously felt that the characteristics of his individual mind and heart—all their minute aspects, variations, and even whims—were worthy of being carefully recorded. Indeed, of the writers presented in this book, Montaigne is the one who most openly speaks in his own right, clearly and unabashedly as himself. While, for instance, Erasmus adopts the ambiguous mouthpiece of "Folly" to express his views, Montaigne's characteristic and somewhat rambling prose is in the simplest and most quintessential first person. Perhaps at no other time in literature—certainly not in the nineteenth-century

age of romanticism, where in spite of widespread notions about the "free" expression of individual feelings writers so often wrapped themselves in an alter ego or a heroic mask—has a writer so thoroughly attempted to present himself without in the least assuming a pose, of falling into a type. "Had my intention been to court the world's favor," Montaigne writes in the foreword to his *Essays*, "I should have trimmed myself more bravely, and stood before it in a studied attitude. I desire to be seen in my simple, natural, and every-day dress, without artifice or constraint; for it is myself I portray." And elsewhere he affirms:

> Authors communicate themselves to the world by some special and extrinsic mark; I am the first to do so by my general being, as Michel de Montaigne, not as a grammarian or a poet or a lawyer. If the world finds fault with me for speaking too much of myself, I find fault with the world for not even thinking of itself.

Yet nothing would be more erroneous than to suppose that Montaigne's focusing on his individual self implies a sense of the extraordinary importance of man, of his central place in the world, or of the special power of his understanding. As a matter of fact, the contrary is true. In the first place, in temperament Montaigne is singularly opposed to assuming an attitude of importance: one of the keynotes of his writing, and one of his premises in undertaking it, is that the subject is average, "mediocre." In describing himself he insists that he is presenting an example of the ordinary human being, for the benefit of a few intimates. He declares that he has "but a private and family end in view," and in that sense, in fact, the way he introduces himself to the reader shows a nobly elegant and perhaps vaguely ironic humbleness—not to mention a considerable degree of the artfulness he disclaims! "So, Reader, I am myself the subject of my book; it is not reasonable to expect you to waste your leisure on a matter so frivolous and empty."

And there is an even more fundamental reason why Montaigne's presentation of himself is free from any heroic posturing or intellectual pride—a reason which involves his whole view of man's place in the world. In deciding to write about himself to probe, to "essay," his own nature, the implication is that this is the only subject on which a man can speak with any degree of certainty. Actually, then, this writer whose work is the most acute exposure of an individual personality in the literature of the Renaissance, is at the same time one of the highest illustrations of man's ironic awareness of his intellectual limits.

It would be a mistake to forget, however, that Montaigne's work remains an outstanding assertion of an individuality, even though it is an assertion of doubt, contradiction, change. Here as always the quality and novelty of the work should be experienced in the actual text, in terms of "style." Montaigne's style conjoins a solid classical manner, reflected in certain elements of the syntactical structure and in the continous support of classical quotations, with the variety, the apparent disconnectedness, and the dramatic assertiveness of a man who is continuously analyzing a constantly changing subject, and—his modesty notwithstanding—a singularly attractive one.

> Others form man; I describe him, and portray a particular, very ill-made one, who, if I had to fashion him anew, should indeed be very different from what he is. But now it is done. . . . The world is but a perennial see-saw. All things in it are incessantly on the swing, the earth, the rocks of the Caucasus, the Egyptian pyramids. . . . Even fixedness is nothing but a more sluggish motion. I cannot fix my object; it is befogged, and reels with a natural intoxication. . . . I do not portray the thing in itself. I portray the passage. . . .

In spite of what may often seem a leisurely gait, Montaigne is permanently on the alert, listening to the promptings of his thought, his sensibility, his imagination—and recording them. The affirmation of the fluidity of the human personality, of the universality of the flux, is therefore both the premise of his writing and the sum of his study of man; it is both his method and his result.

Thus Montaigne writes in terms of one individual, and with a fairly obvious abhorrence of any sort of classification or description of human types in the manner of conventional moralists; yet at the same time a powerfully keen observation of man in general emerges from his writings—an observation of man's nature, intellectual power, and capacity for coherent action; of his place on earth among other beings; of his place in Creation.

If we keep in mind the broad range of Renaissance literature, poised between positive and negative, enthusiasm and melancholy, we shall probably find that the general temper of Montaigne's assertions of doubt, and his consciousness of vanity, by no means imply an attitude of despair and gloom. His attitude is positive and negative in the same breath; it is a rich and fruitful sense of the relativity of everything. Thus if he examines and "essays" man's capacity to act purposefully and coherently (see the essay "Of the Inconsistency of Our Actions" among our selections), his implicit verdict is not that man's action is absolutely futile. Rather, observing the usual example—himself—and seeing that there is nothing he can say "absolutely, simply, and steadily" on the subject, he refuses to attribute to the human personality a coherence it does not possess and which, we may be tempted to surmise, would rather impoverish it. "Our actions are but a patchwork. . . . We are all made up of bits. . . . There is as much difference between us and ourselves, as between us and others." And he sustains his arguments, as usual, with a wealth of examples and anecdotes which are at once evidence of his vital curiosity about human nature and, in many instances, of his direct familiarity with antiquity: Emperor Augustus, to mention one, pleases him because his character successfully escapes an all-of-a-piece description; he has "slipped through the fingers of even the most daring critics."

A sense of relativity and a balanced outlook—rather than a desperate reversal of the optimistic view of the human situation—are apparent also from Montaigne's observation of man, and particularly of the civilized Renaissance man whom he exemplifies, in relation to his fellow human beings. In the famous essay "Of Cannibals," where a comparison is made between the behavioral codes of primitive tribes and those of "ourselves," the basic idea

is not a disparagement of our civilization but a relativistic warning, for "we all call barbarism that which does not fit in with our usages." The cannibals' acts of barbarity are recognized, but the writer is "not so much concerned that we should remark on the horrible barbarity of such acts, as that, whilst rightly judging their errors, we should be so blind to our own." We do much worse, adds Montaigne, who wrote in times of violent religious strife, and we do it under the guise of piety. The enlightening sense of relativity—rather than a more extreme and totally paradoxical view of the "nobility" of savages—permits Montaigne to see and admire what he considers superior elements in the customs of the cannibals (for instance, their conception of valor and their conduct of warfare). Here, in fact, Montaigne describes and admires a code of unrewarded gallantry, of valor for valor's sake, which was not uncommonly cherished by writers of the Renaissance (Castiglione, for example). "The acquisition of the victor," writes Montaigne, "is the glory and advantage of having proved himself the superior in valour and virtue. . . . The honour of virtue consists in combating, not in beating." We may incidentally add that acceptance of this notion of pure "virtue," practiced for no material purposes—as self-rewarding as a beautiful object—appears to have been, for a writer like Montaigne, the way to preserve his admiration for the warrior's code of manly courage and valor in spite of the basically pacifist tendencies of his temperament and his revulsion from the spectacles of conflict and bloodshed witnessed in his own time.

Naturally, an even larger sense of relativity emerges from Montaigne's writing when he examines man's place in the universal frame of things, as he does, in an outstanding instance, in some famous passages of the "Apology for Raimond Sebond" (a selection from which is included in this volume). Man's notion of his privileged position in Creation is eloquently questioned: "What has induced him to believe that that wonderful motion of the heavenly vault, the eternal light of those torches rolling so proudly over his head, the awe-inspiring agitations of that infinite sea, were established, and endure through so many centuries for his service and convenience?" The tone of this whole section is particularly revealing. In many other writers a similar anxiety about man's smallness and ignorance casts a light of tragic vanity upon the human condition. Montaigne's acceptance of the situation is—to use some of our other examples as convenient points of reference—more like Erasmus than Hamlet. If he asks questions which involve, to say the very least, the whole Renaissance conception of man's "dignity," our impression is never really one of negation and gloom. While man's advantages over other beings are quietly evaluated and discredited ("this licence of thought . . . is an advantage sold to him very dearly. . . . For from it springs the principal source of . . . sin, sickness, irresolution, affliction, despair"), Montaigne maintains a balanced and often humorous tone in which even the frivolous aside of the personal essayist is not dissonant, but characteristic: "When I play with my cat, who knows but that she regards me more as a plaything than I do her?" So without raising his voice he achieves a point of view that suggests broadness and inclusiveness rather than gloom and despair. For, while his view of the "mediocrity" of man among other beings debunks any form of intellectual conceit, on the other

hand an all-encompassing sense of natural fellowship in Creation is envisaged: "I have said all this to establish the resemblance to human conditions, and to bring us back and join us to the majority."

This sense of a "natural" fellowship seems to characterize not only Montaigne's veiw of man's place in Creation but also his conception of man as a moral individual in relation to other men. This can be clearly seen at the end of our final selection, where the practice of goodness—as, in other instances, that of valor—is seen as a beautiful and self-rewarding act of "virtue":

> There is . . . no goodness in which a well-born nature does not delight. . . . There is no small pleasure in feeling oneself preserved from the contagion of so corrupt an age, and saying to oneself, "Should any one look into my very soul, he would yet not find me guilty of the affliction or ruin of any man. . . ." These testimonies of a good conscience please; and this natural satisfaction is a great boon to us, and the only payment that will never fail us.

In conclusion—and difficult as it is to reduce Montaigne's views to short and abstract statements—we are left with the impression that here Montaigne's vision of man, and of the possibility of a good life, is nearer to hopefulness than to despair. Although his attitude is far from Rabelais' optimism and exuberance, it too is based on a balance between the "natural" and the intellectual, between instinct and reason. He belittles, at times even scornfully, the power of the human intellect, and like Erasmus he points to instinctive simplicity of mind as being more conducive to happiness and even to true knowledge; but on the other hand the whole tone of his work, its intellectual sophistication, its very bulk, and the loving manner with which he attended to it, show that his own thought was not something that "sicklied o'er" his life, but something that gave it sustenance and delight. Thus we see in him some of the basic contrasts of the Renaissance mind—the acceptance and the rejection of the intellectual dignity of man—leading not to disruption but to temperately positive results. Though his work offers anything but the abstract scheme of an ideal man, and he is not proposing a model or a formula, yet in passages like the one cited in the preceding paragraph, some kind of pattern of the truly virtuous man seems to emerge unobtrusively. And though it is not imposed upon the audience, any reader is free to think that conforming to this pattern would result in better spiritual balance in the individual and a more harmonious and sensible fellowship in society. Montaigne does not preach ("Others form man; I describe him . . .") because his code of conduct is one which cannot be taught but only experienced. He limits himself to exemplifying it in his own wise and unheroic self.

Donald M. Frame's *Montaigne: A Biography* (1965), is a modern work by one of the leading contemporary scholars of French literature. Frame is also author of *Montaigne's Essais: A Study* (1969), a brief, clear, cogent account. Frederick Rider's *The Dialectic of Selfhood in Montaigne* (1973), assesses Montaigne's personal development and the creation of his self-image in the *Essais*.

Essays[1]

Of Cannibals[2]

When King Pyrrhus[3] passed over into Italy, after acknowledging the good order that prevailed in the army that the Romans had sent to meet him, he said, 'I know not what barbarians are these (for so the Greeks called all foreign nations), but the disposition of this army I see is by no means barbarous.' The Greeks said the same of the army which Flaminius brought into their country, as did also Philip, on viewing from an eminence the orderly distribution of the Roman camp, in his kingdom, under Publius Sulpicius Galba.[4] Thereby we may see how we should be on our guard against clinging to vulgar opinions, and how we should judge things by the light of reason, and not from common rumour.

I had living with me for a long time a man who had lived for ten or twelve years in that other world which was discovered in our century, in that place where Villegaignon landed, which he called *Antarctic France*.[5] This discovery of an unbounded country seems to me worthy of consideration. I do not know that I could pledge myself that some other discovery may not be made in the future, so many persons greater than we having been mistaken about this one. I fear our eyes are greater than our bellies, and that we have more curiosity than capacity. We embrace all, but we clasp only wind.

Plato introduces Solon,[6] telling how he had learned of the priests of the city of Saïs in Egypt that, in days of old and before the Deluge, there was a large island named Atlantis, directly at the mouth of the Strait of Gibraltar, which contained more countries than all Asia and Africa together; and that the kings of that region, who not only possessed that island, but had extended their dominion so far into the mainland, that of the breadth of Africa they held as far as Egypt, and of the length of Europe as far as Tuscany, attempted to stride even into Asia, and to subjugate all the nations that border on the Mediterranean Sea as far as the gulf of the Greater Sea,[7] and to that end traversed the Spains, Gaul, Italy, as far as Greece, where the Athenians stood up against them; but that some time after both the Athenians and they and their island were swallowed up by the Flood.

It is most likely that that extreme watery devastation has caused some wonderful alterations in the habitations of the earth, as it is thought that the sea cut off Sicily from Italy,

1. Translated by E. J. Trechmann. 2. Book I, Chapter 31. 3. King of Epirus, in Greece, fought the Romans in Italy in 280 B.C. 4. Both Titus Quinctius Flaminius (mentioned earlier in this sentence) and Publius Sulpicius Galba were Roman statesmen and generals who fought Philip V of Macedon in the early years of the second century B.C. 5. In Brazil. Villegaignon landed there in 1557. 6. In his *Timaeus*. 7. The Black Sea.

These lands, 'tis said, one continent of yore
(Such change can ages work) an earthquake tore
Asunder; in with havoc rushed the main,
And far Sicilia from Hesperia bore,
And now, where leapt the parted lands in twain,
The narrow tide pours through, 'twixt severed town and plain;
(Virgil.)[8]

Cyprus from Syria, the island of Negropont from the mainland of Boeotia; and elsewhere joined lands which were divided, by filling up the channels between them with sand and mud:

Swamps, sterile long, all plashy, rank and drear,
Groan 'neath the plough, and feed whole cities near.
(Horace.)[9]

But it does not appear very likely that that great island was the new world that we have lately discovered, for it almost touched Spain, and it would have been an incredible result of an inundation to have removed it as far back as it is, more than twelve hundred leagues; besides that our modern navigators have already almost discovered it to be no island, but a firm land holding together with the East Indies on the one hand, and on the other with the lands which lie under the two poles; or, if it is separated from them, it is by so narrow a strait and interval, that it does not on that account deserve to be called an island.

It would seem that there are movements, some natural, others diseased, in those great bodies as well as in our own. When I consider the inroads that my river, the Dordogne, is making even in my time, upon the right bank in its descent, and that in twenty years it has gained so much ground, and robbed many buildings of their foundations, I plainly see that an extraordinary disturbance is going on; for if it had always been going on at this rate, or were to do so in the future, the face of the world would be entirely altered. But rivers are subject to changes: now they overflow in one direction, now in another, now they keep within their beds. I do not speak of the sudden inundations whose causes are manifest. In Médoc, along the sea-shore, my brother the Sieur d'Arsac sees an estate of his buried beneath the sands that the sea vomits before it; the tops of several buildings are still visible; his rents and domains have been converted into very poor pasturage. The inhabitants say that the sea has been for some time pushing so strongly towards them, that they have lost

8. *Aeneid*, Book III, ll. 414 ff. 9. *Art of Poetry*, ll. 65 ff.

four leagues of land. These sands are its harbingers, and we see great dunes of moving sand, that march half a league before it, and are gaining ground.

The other testimony from antiquity, from which some infer this discovery, is in Aristotle, if at least that little book *Of Unheard-of Marvels* be his. He there relates how certain Carthaginians, having ventured across the Atlantic Sea, outside the Strait of Gibraltar, and navigated a long time, had at last discovered a large fertile island, all clothed in woods, and watered by broad and deep rivers, far remote from any mainland; and that they, and others after them, attracted by the goodness and fertility of the soil, had gone thither with their wives and children and begun to settle there. The lords of Carthage, seeing that their country was gradually becoming depopulated, expressly forbade any more to go there, on pain of death, and drove out those new settlers, fearing, it is said, lest in course of time they might multiply to such an extent as to supplant themselves and ruin their state. This narration of Aristotle no more agrees with our new-found lands than the other.

This man I had was a simple and ignorant fellow: hence the more fit to give true evidence; for your sophisticated men are more curious observers, and take in more things, but they glose[1] them; to lend weight to their interpretations and induce your belief, they cannot help altering their story a little. They never describe things as they really are, but bend them and mask them according to the point of view from which they see things, and, to make their judgements the more credible and attractive, they are not loath to add a little to their matter, and to spin out and amplify their tale. Now we need either a very truthful man, or one so simple that he has not the art of building up and giving an air of probability to fictions, and is wedded to no theory. Such was my man; and he has besides at different times brought several sailors and traders to see me, whom he had known on that voyage. So I shall content myself with his information, without troubling myself about what the cosmographers may say about it.

We need topographers who would give us an exact account of the places which they have visited. But because they have this advantage over us that they have seen Palestine, they claim to enjoy the privilege of telling us new things of all the rest of the world. I would have every man write about what he knows, and no more than he knows, not only in this but on all other subjects. For a man may have some particular knowledge or experience of the nature of a river or a fountain, who otherwise knows no more than what everybody knows. Yet he will undertake, in order to circulate this little scrap of knowledge,

1. Gloze; gloss.

to write a book on the whole science of physics. From this fault spring many great abuses.

Now, to return to my subject, from what I have heard of that nation, I can see nothing barbarous or uncivilized about it, except that we all call barbarism that which does not fit in with our usages. And indeed we have no other level of truth and reason but the example and model of the opinions and usages of the country we live in. There we always see the perfect religion, the perfect government, the perfect and accomplished manner of doing all things. Those people are wild in the sense in which we call wild the fruits that Nature has produced by herself and in her ordinary progress; whereas in truth it is those we have altered artificially and diverted from the common order, that we should rather call wild. In the first we still see, in full life and vigour, the genuine and most natural and useful virtues and properties, which we have bastardized in the latter, and only adapted to please our corrupt taste. And yet in some of the uncultivated fruits of those countries there is a delicacy of flavour that is excellent even to our taste, and rivals even our own. It is not reasonable that art should gain the point of honour over our great and powerful mother Nature. We have so overburdened the beauty and richness of her works with our inventions, that we have quite smothered her. And yet, wherever she shines in her purity, she marvellously puts to shame our vain and trivial efforts,

> Uncared, unmarked the ivy blossoms best;
> Midst desert rocks the ilex clusters still;
> And sweet the wild bird's untaught melody.
> (Propertius.)[2]

With all our efforts we are unable even to copy the nest of the smallest of little birds, its contexture, its beauty and convenience; not so much as the web of the poor spider.

All things, says Plato,[3] are produced either by Nature, or by chance, or by art: the greatest and most beautiful by one or other of the two first; the least and most imperfect by the latter.

Those nations, then, appear to me so far barbarous in this sense, that their minds have been formed to a very slight degree, and that they are still very close to their original simplicity. They are still ruled by the laws of Nature, and very little corrupted by ours; but they are still in such a state of purity, that I am sometimes vexed that they were not known earlier, at a time when there were men who could have appreciated them better than we do.

2. *Elegies*, Book I, Elegy ii, ll. 10 ff. 3. See his *Laws*.

I am sorry that Lycurgus[4] and Plato had no knowledge of them, for it seems to me that what we have learned by contact with those nations surpasses not only all the beautiful colours in which the poets have depicted the golden age, and all their ingenuity in inventing a happy state of man, but also the conceptions and desires of Philosophy herself. They were incapable of imagining so pure and native a simplicity, as that which we see by experience; nor could they have believed that human society could have been maintained with so little human artifice and solder. This is a nation,[5] I should say to Plato, which has no manner of traffic; no knowledge of letters; no science of numbers; no name of magistrate or statesman; no use for slaves; neither wealth nor poverty; no contracts; no successions; no partitions; no occupation but that of idleness; only a general respect of parents; no clothing; no agriculture; no metals; no use of wine or corn. The very words denoting falsehood, treachery, dissimulation, avarice, envy, detraction, pardon, unheard of. How far removed from this perfection would he find the ideal republic he imagined! *Men newly come from the hands of the gods* (Seneca).

> These manners first by nature taught. (Virgil.)[6]

For the rest, they live in a region with a very agreeable and very temperate climate, so that, according to my witnesses, a sick man is rarely seen; and they assured me that they had never seen any man shaking with palsy, or with dripping eyes, toothless or bent with age. They are settled along the sea-coast, and closed in on the land side by large and high mountains, the land between them and the sea extending for a hundred leagues or thereabouts. They have great abundance of fish and flesh, which bear no resemblance to ours, and they eat them roasted without any other preparation. The first man who brought a horse thither, although he had associated with them on several previous voyages, so horrified them in the riding posture, that they shot him dead with arrows before recognizing him.

Their buildings are very long, capable of holding two or three hundred souls, covered with the bark of tall trees, the strips resting by one end on the ground, and leaning to and supporting one another at the top, after the manner of some of our barns, the coverings of which slope down to the ground and serve as sidewalls. They have a wood so hard that they can cut with it, of which they make their swords, and gridirons to roast their meat. Their beds are made of cotton tissue, suspended from the roof like those in our ships, each one having his own: for the women sleep apart from their husbands.

4. The half-legendary Spartan lawgiver (ninth century B.C.). 5. The passage beginning here is always compared with Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, Act II, Scene 1, ll. 154 ff. 6. *Georgics*, Book II, l. 20. *Seneca: Epistles*, Epistle XC.

They rise with the sun and eat immediately after rising, for the whole day: for they have no other meal. They drink nothing with that meal, like some other Eastern peoples of whom Suidas[7] tells us, who drank apart from eating; but they drink several times a day, and to excess. Their drink is made of some root, and is of the colour of our claret wines, and they only drink it warm. This beverage will keep only two or three days; it has a slightly pungent taste, is anything but heady, good for the stomach, and laxative for such as are not used to it, but a very pleasant drink for those who are. For bread they use a certain white material resembling preserved coriander. I have tried some of it: it is sweet but rather tasteless.

The whole day is spent in dancing. The younger men hunt animals with bows. Some of the women meanwhile spend their time warming their drink, which is their chief duty. One of their old men, in the morning before they begin to eat, preaches to the whole barnful of people in common, walking from one end to the other, repeating the same words several times, until he has finished the round (for the buildings are quite a hundred paces in length). He recommends only two things, valour against the enemy and love to their wives. And they never fail to stress this obligation, which forms their refrain, 'that it is they who keep their wine warm and seasoned.'

In several places, among others in my house, may be seen the formation of their beds, of their ropes, their wooden swords and bracelets, with which they cover their wrists in battle, and large canes open at one end, by the sound of which they keep the time and rhythm of their dances. They are close shaven all over, and remove the hair much more neatly than we do although their razors are only made of wood or stone. They believe the soul to be immortal, and that those who have deserved well of the gods are lodged in that part of the heaven where the sun rises, and those who are damned in the west.

They have some kind of priest and prophet, who very seldom appears among the people, having his dwelling in the mountains. On his arrival there is a great feast and a solemn assembly of several villages (each barn, as I have described it, forms a village, and they are about a French league[8] distant one from the other). This prophet speaks to them in public, exhorting them to virtue and their duty; but their whole ethical science comprises only these two articles: an unfaltering courage in war and affection to their women. This man foretells things to come, and the issue they are to expect from their enterprises; urges them to war, or holds them back; but he does so on the understanding that, where he fails to prophesy correctly, and if things turn out otherwise than he has predicted, he is cut into a thousand

7. A Byzantine lexicographer. 8. About 2.49 miles.

pieces if he is caught, and condemned for a false prophet. For that reason he who has once miscalculated is seen no more.

Divination is a gift of God, wherefore to abuse it ought to be regarded as a punishable imposture. Among the Scythians, when the prophets failed to hit the mark, they were laid, shackled hand and foot, on a little cart filled with heather and drawn by oxen, on which they were burned. They who take in hand such matters as depend on the conduct of human capacity are to be excused if they do their best. But those others who come and delude us with assurances of an extraordinary faculty that is beyond our ken, should they not be punished when they fail to carry out what they promise, and for the temerity of their imposture?

They have their wars with the nations beyond their mountains, further back on the mainland, to which they go quite naked, with no other weapons but bows or wooden swords pointed at one end, after the fashion of the tongues of our boar-spears. It is marvellous with what obstinacy they fight their battles, which never end but in massacre and bloodshed: for of routs and terrors they know not even the meaning. Each man brings back as a trophy the head of the enemy he has slain, and fixes it over the entrance to his dwelling. After treating his prisoner well for a considerable time, and giving him all that hospitality can devise, his captor convokes a great gathering of his acquaintance. He ties a cord to one of his prisoner's arms, holding him at some distance for fear of being hurt, and gives the other arm to be held in the same way by his best friend; and these two, in presence of the whole assembly, dispatch him with their swords. This done, they roast and eat him in common, and send bits of him to their absent friends. Not, as one might suppose, for nourishment, as the ancient Scythians used to do, but to signify an extreme revenge.

And that it is so, may be seen from this: having perceived that the Portuguese, who had allied themselves with their adversaries, inflicted a different kind of death on their prisoners, which was to bury them up to the waist, shoot the upper part of the bodies full of arrows, and afterwards to hang them; they imagined that these people of another world (seeing that they had sown the knowledge of a great many vices among their neighbours, and were much greater masters than themselves in every kind of wickedness) had some reason for adopting this kind of vengeance, and that it must be more painful than their own; wherefore they began to give up their old method, and followed this one.

I am not so much concerned that we should remark on the horrible barbarity of such acts, as that, whilst rightly judging their errors, we should be so blind to our own. I think there is more barbarity in eating a live than a dead man, in tearing on the rack and torturing

the body of a man still full of feeling, in roasting him piecemeal and giving him to be bitten and mangled by dogs and swine (as we have not only read, but seen within fresh memory, not between old enemies, but between neighbours and fellow citizens, and, what is worse, under the cloak of piety and religion),[9] than in roasting and eating him after he is dead.

Chrysippus and Zeno, the leaders of the Stoic sect, thought indeed that there was no harm in making use of our carrion for any purpose in case of necessity, and of extracting nourishment from it. And our ancestors,[1] when besieged by Caesar in the city of Alexia, decided to relieve the famine during the siege by eating the bodies of the old men, women, and other persons incapable of fighting;

> Time was, the Gascons, as old tales relate,
> Thus fed, contended long with cruel fate.
> (Juvenal.)[2]

And physicians are not afraid of using it in all sorts of ways as cures, either for inward or outward application. But no man's brain was ever so disordered that he would excuse treachery, disloyalty, cruelty, tyranny, which are our ordinary vices.

We may therefore well call those people barbarians in respect to the rules of reason, but not in respect to ourselves, who surpass them in every kind of barbarity.

Their warfare is entirely noble and generous, and is as fair and excusable as can be expected in that human disease: their only motive being a zeal for valour. They do not strive to conquer new territory, for they still enjoy that luxuriance of nature which provides them, without labour and pains, with all necessary things in such abundance, that they have no need to enlarge their borders. They are still in that happy state of not desiring more than their natural needs demand: all that is over and above it is for them superfluity.

They generally call each other, if of the same age, brothers; if younger, children; and the old men are fathers to all the others. These latter leave to their heirs in common the full and undivided possession of their property, without any but that pure title that Nature gives to her creatures, by bringing them into the world. If their neighbours cross the mountains to attack them, and gain the victory over them, the acquisition of the victor is the glory and advantage of having proved himself the superior in valour and virtue, for otherwise they have no need for the spoils of the vanquished; and so they return to their own country, where they have no want of any neces-

9. The allusion is to the spectacles of religious warfare which Montaigne himself had witnessed in his time and country. 1. The Gauls. 2. *Satires*. Satire xv, ll. 93 ff.

saries, nor even of that great portion, which is to know how to enjoy happily their condition, and be content with it. These do the same in their turn. They ask of their prisoners no other ransom but a confession and acknowledgement of being vanquished. But you will not find one in a whole century who would not rather die than yield, either by word or look, one tittle of an invincible greatness of courage; not one who would not rather be killed and eaten than even pray to be spared. They are very liberal in their treatment of their prisoners, in order to make life the more dear to them, and usually entertain them with threats of their impending death, the torments they will suffer, the preparations made to that end, the cutting up of their limbs, and the banquet that will be made at their expense. All this is done with the sole purpose of extorting from them a weak or spiritless word, or to give them a desire to escape, in order to gain the advantage of having terrified them and shaken their firmness. For indeed, if rightly taken, therein alone lies the real victory:

> The victor's wreath no triumphs more attest
> Than when the foe's subjection is confest.
> (Claudian.)[3]

The Hungarians, very bellicose fighters, did not formerly pursue their advantage further than making their enemy cry for mercy. For, after forcing from them that confession, they let them go without hurt or ransom, except, at the most, making them pledge their word not again to take up arms against them.

We often enough gain an advantage over our enemy which is a borrowed advantage, and to which we have no real claim. To have more muscular arms and legs is the quality of a porter, not a sign of valour; skill is a dead and corporal quality: it is a stroke of fortune that causes our adversary to stumble or to be dazzled by the glare of the sun; it is a trick of art and science that makes an able fencer, who may easily be a coward and an insignificant fellow.

A man's value and estimation consists in heart and will: there lies his true honour. Valour is strength, not of legs and arms, but of heart and soul; it lies not in the goodness of our horse, or our weapons, but in our own. He who falls fighting with obstinate courage, *if his legs fail him, he fights on his knees* (Seneca).[4] He who, in spite of being in danger of imminent death, abates nothing of his assurance, who, in yielding up his soul, still fixes on his enemy a firm and scornful glance, is vanquished, not by us, but by Fortune: he is slain but not conquered.

The most valiant are sometimes the most unfortunate. Hence there are triumphant defeats that vie in glory with victories. Neither did

3. *Of the Sixth Consulate of Honorius*, ll. 248 ff. 4. *Of Providence*, Book II.

those four sister victories, the most glorious that the sun has ever beheld with its eyes, of Salamis, Plataea, Mycale, and Sicily,[5] ever dare to oppose their combined glories to the glory of the discomfiture of King Leonidas and his comrades at the pass of Thermopylae.[6]

What man ever hastened with a more glorious and ambitious desire to the winning, than Captain Ischolas did to the losing, of a battle? What man ever used more care and ingenuity to secure his own safety than he did to ensure his destruction? He was charged to defend a certain pass in the Peloponnesus against the Arcadians. But knowing that he was wholly unable to do so, on account of the nature of the place and the inequality of the forces, and being sure that every man who confronted the enemy must needs remain on the spot; on the other hand, deeming it unworthy both of his own virtue and magnanimity, and of the name of a Spartan, to fail in his charge, he adopted a middle course between these two extremes, which was in this manner: the youngest and most active of his band he reserved for the service and defence of their country, and sent them home; and with those whose loss would be of less account he decided to hold the pass, and with their death make the enemy purchase their entry as dear as possible. And so it fell out: for, being presently surrounded on every side by the Arcadians, after a great butchery of them he and his comrades were all put to the sword. Was ever a trophy raised to a victor that was not rather due to these vanquished men? The part that true victory plays is the struggle, not the coming off safe; and the honour of virtue consists in combating, not in beating.

To return to our narrative. Far from giving in, in spite of all they suffer, these prisoners, on the contrary, during the two or three months that they are held in captivity, bear a cheerful countenance; they urge their captors to hasten to put them to the proof, defy them, insult them, reproach them with their cowardice and the number of battles lost against their own countrymen.

I have a song composed by a prisoner, which contains this outburst: 'Come boldly, every one of you, and assemble together to dine off me, for you shall at the same time eat your fathers and grandfathers, whose flesh has served to feed and nourish this body. These muscles, this flesh and these veins are yours, poor fools that you are! can you not see that they still contain the substance of your ancestors' limbs? Relish them well, you will find that they have the flavour of your own flesh.' A fiction that by no means savours of barbarity. On the pictures which represent these prisoners being executed or at the point of death, they are seen spitting in the face of their slayers

5. Montaigne here refers to the famous Greek victories against the Persians and (at Himera, Sicily) against the Carthaginians in or about 480 B.C. 6. The Spartan king Leonidas' defense of the pass at Thermopylae also took place in 480 B.C., during the war against the Persians.

or making mouths at them. Indeed they never cease to challenge and defy them by word and look until the breath is out of their body. Verily here we see men who are indeed savages if we compare them with ourselves: for either they must be so in good sooth, or we; there is a wonderful distance between their character and ours.

The men there have several wives, and the higher their reputation for valour the greater is the number of their wives. It is a remarkably beautiful feature in their marriages, that the same jealousy that our wives have to keep us from the love and favors of other women, they have to an equal degree to procure it. Being more solicitous for their husbands' honour than for anything else, they use their best endeavours to have as many companions as they can, seeing that that is a proof of their husbands' worth.

Ours will cry 'miracle,' but it is not so. It is after all a proper matrimonial virtue, but of the highest order. And in the Bible, Leah, Rachel, Sarah and Jacob's wives accommodated their husbands with their fair handmaids; and Livia gratified Augustus' appetites to her own detriment; and Stratonice, the wife of King Deiotarus,[7] not only lent her husband the use of a very beautiful young chambermaid in her service, but carefully brought up her children, and gave them a shoulder in succeeding to their father's estates.

And, that it may not be supposed that all this is done through a simple and slavish obligation to follow usage, and under the weight of authority of their ancient customs, without reasoning or judgement, and because their minds are too dull to imagine any other, I must give a few proofs of their intellectual capacity. Besides the warlike song I have just cited I have another, of an amorous nature, which begins thus: 'Adder, stay; stay, adder, that thy colours may serve as a pattern for my sister to work a rich girdle to give to my love: thus shall thy beauty and disposition of thy spots be preferred for all time to all other serpents.' This first verse is the burden of the song. Now, I have enough knowledge of poetry to judge this much: that not only is there nothing barbarous in this idea, but that it is altogether Anacreontic.[8] Their language, by the way, is a soft language, with an agreeable tone, and their terminations resemble the Greek.

Three men of this nation, not knowing how dear, in tranquillity and happiness, it will one day cost them to know the corruptions of this side of the world, and that this intercourse will be the cause of their ruin, which indeed I imagine is already advanced (poor wretches, to be allured by the desire to see new things and to leave their own serene sky to come and see ours!), were at Rouen at a time when the late King Charles the Ninth was there. The King had a long talk

7. Tetrarch of Galatia, in Asia Minor. 8. Worthy of Anacreon (572?–488? B.C.), major Greek writer of amatory lyrics.

with them. They were shown our ways, our pomp, the form of a fine city. After that somebody asked their opinion, desiring to know what they most wondered at. They mentioned three things, the third of which I am sorry to have forgotten, but I still remember two. They said that in the first place they thought it very strange that so many big men with beards, strong and armed, who were about the King (they were probably thinking of the Swiss who formed his guard) should submit to obey a child, and that they did not rather choose one of their own number to command them. Secondly (they have a way of speaking of men as if they were halves of one another), that they had observed that there were men amongst us, full and gorged with all kinds of good things, and that their halves were begging at their doors, emaciated with hunger and poverty; and they thought it strange how these necessitous halves could suffer such injustice, and that they did not seize the others by the throat, or set fire to their houses.

I had a long talk with one of them; but I had an interpreter who followed my meaning so badly, and was at such a loss, in his stupidity, to take in my ideas, that I could get little satisfaction out of him. When I asked the native, 'What he gained from his superior position among his people?' (for he was a captain, and our sailors called him a king), he said it was 'to march foremost in war.' How many men did he lead? He pointed to a piece of ground, to signify as many as that space could hold: it might be four or five thousand men. Did all his authority lapse with the war? He said 'that this remained, that, when he visited the villages that were dependent on him, they made paths through their thickets, by which he might pass at his ease.' All this does not sound too ill; but hold! they don't wear trousers.

Of the Inconsistency of Our Actions[9]

They who make a practice of comparing human actions are never so perplexed as when they try to piece them together and place them in the same light, for they commonly contradict one another so strangely that it seems impossible they should have come out of the same shop. Marius the younger[1] is now a son of Mars, now a son of Venus.[2] Some one said that Pope Boniface the Eighth entered upon his charge like a fox, behaved therein like a lion, and died like a dog. And who could believe that it was Nero, the very image of cruelty, who, when the sentence of a condemned criminal was brought to him to be signed in the usual way, exclaimed, 'Would to God that I had never learned to write!' So grieved was he in his heart to doom a man to death!

9. Book II, Chapter 1. 1. Nephew of the older and better known Marius. Montaigne's source is Plutarch's *Life of Marius*. 2. *Mars . . . Venus*: war and love.

The world is full of such examples, nay, any man may provide such an abundance of them out of his own experience, that I sometimes wonder to see intelligent men at pains to sort the pieces, seeing that irresolution is, in my view, the most common and conspicuous defect of our nature: witness that famous line of Publilius the writer of low comedies,

> Poor is the plan that never can be changed.
> (Publilius Syrus.)[3]

It seems reasonable to judge a man by the most ordinary acts of his life, but in view of the natural instability of our habits and opinions, I have often thought that even good authors are wrong in obstinately attributing to us a steadfast and consistent character. They hit upon a general feature in a man and arrange and interpret all his actions in accordance with this fanciful conception; and if they are unable to twist them sufficiently, set them down to dissimulation. Augustus has escaped them, for we see in this man, throughout the course of his life, so manifest, abrupt, and continual a variety of actions, that he has slipped through the fingers of even the most daring critics, and been left undecided. I find nothing more difficult to believe than man's consistency, and nothing more easy than his inconsistency. If we examine him in detail and judge of his actions separately, bit by bit, we shall most often find this true.

Throughout ancient history it would be difficult to choose a dozen men who have steered their lives in one certain and constant course, which is the principal aim of wisdom. For, to comprise it all in one word, as an ancient writer says,[4] and to embrace all the rules of life in one, is 'to wish and not to wish always the same thing. I will not vouchsafe to add, he says, provided the wish be right; for if it be not right, it is impossible it should be always the same.' I once learned indeed that vice is no more than want of rule and moderation, and that it is consequently impossible to associate it with consistency. It is a saying attributed to Demosthenes, 'that the beginning of all virtue is consultation and deliberation; and the end and perfection, constancy.' If reason directed our course we should choose the fairest; but no one has thought of that:

> He scorns that which he sought, seeks what he scorned of late;
> He flows and ebbs, his whole life contradiction. (Horace.)[5]

Our ordinary practice is to follow the inclinations of our appetite, to right, to left, up hill, down dale, as we are borne along by the wind

3. *Apothegms (Sententiae)*, l. 362. 4. Seneca, in *Epistles*, Epistle xx. 5. *Epistles*, Book I, Epistle i, ll. 98 ff.

of opportunity. We do not consider what we wish except at the moment of wishing it, and we change like that animal which takes its colour from what it is laid upon. What we have but now determined we presently alter, and soon again we retrace our steps: it is nothing but wavering and uncertainty;

> We are led as a puppet is moved by the strings.
> (Horace.)[6]

We do not go, we are carried along, like things floating, now smoothly, now perturbedly, according as the water is angry or calm;

> We see them, knowing not
> What 'tis they want, and seeking ever and ever
> A change of place, as if to drop the burden.
> (Lucretius.)[7]

Every day a new fancy; and our humours move with the changes of weather:

> So change the minds of men, like days
> That Father Jove sends down to earth,
> To alternate 'twixt wet and fine. (Homer.)[8]

We waver between different minds; we wish nothing freely, nothing absolutely, nothing constantly. Should any man prescribe and establish definite laws and a definite policy in his own head, he would present throughout his life a shining example of even habits, an order and an unfailing relation of one action to another.

(Empedocles remarked in the inhabitants of Agrigentum this discrepancy, that they abandoned themselves to their pleasures as if they were to die on the morrow, and that they built as if they were never to die.)[9]

The reason will be easily found, as we see in the case of the younger Cato;[1] he who touches one note of the keyboard touches all: there is a harmony of sounds, all in perfect tune with each other, which is not to be mistaken. With us, on the other hand, the rule is: so many actions, so many particular judgments to be passed. The surest, in my opinion, would be to refer them to the nearest circumstances, without seeking any farther, and without drawing from them any other inferences.

It was told me, during the tumultuous times our poor State had to

6. *Satire*, Book II, Satire vii, l. 82. 7. *On the Nature of Things*, Book III, ll. 1057 ff. 8. *Odyssey*, Book XVIII, l. 135. 9. From the life of the fifth-century Greek philosopher Empedocles, by Diogenes Laertius. 1. The philosopher, Cato "Uticensis" (first century B.C.); to Montaigne, and also traditionally, he is an epitome of moral and intellectual integrity.

go through,[2] that a young woman who lived quite near to where I then was, had thrown herself from a high window to avoid the forcible caresses of a poor knave of a soldier who was quartered in her house; the fall did not kill her, and, repeating the attempt on her life, she would have cut her throat with a knife, but was prevented; not however without inflicting a serious wound. She herself then confessed that the soldier had done no more than importune her with gifts, entreaties, and solicitations, but that she feared he would in the end proceed to violence. And all this, her words, her mien, and the blood which testified to her virtue, in the true manner of a second Lucretia![3]

Now I have heard, as a fact, that, both before and after, she was a wench not very difficult to come by. As the tale[4] has it, 'Be as handsome and as fine a gentleman as you will, when you have failed in your pursuit, do not immediately conclude an inviolable chastity in your mistress; it does not follow that the muleteer will not find his opportunity.'

Antigonus,[5] having taken a liking to one of his soldiers, on account of his virtue and valour, ordered his physicians to attend him for a persistent internal malady which had long tormented him, and perceiving that after his cure he went much more coldly to work than before, asked him what it was that had so altered and cowed him. 'You yourself, Sire, he replied, by delivering me from the ill which made me indifferent to life.' A soldier of Lucullus,[6] having been plundered by enemies, devised a bold stroke for his revenge; when he had retrieved his loss with interest, Lucullus, whose good opinion he had gained, tried to induce him, with the best persuasions he could think of, to undertake some risky business:

> With words that might have stirred a coward's heart.
> (Horace.)[7]

'Employ, he replied, some wretched soldier who has been plundered;'

> Though but a rustic clown, he'll go
> Who's lost his money-belt,' he said; (Horace.)[8]

and resolutely refused to go.

When we read that Mahomet having furiously rated Chasan, chief of his Janissaries, for allowing his line of troops to be broken by the Hungarians, and bearing himself like a coward in the battle; and that

2. See footnote, page 1153, and the corresponding passage in the text of "Of Cannibals." 3. The legendary, virtuous Roman who stabbed herself after being raped by King Tarquinius' son. 4. A common folk tale. 5. Macedonian king. 6. Roman general of the first century B.C. 7. *Epistles*, Book II, Epistle ii, l. 36. 8. *Epistles*, Book II, Epistle ii, ll. 39 f.

Chasan made no reply but, alone and just as he was with his weapon in his hand, rushed furiously into the first body of enemies that he met with, and was immediately overwhelmed; it was not so much a justification of his conduct as a change of mood, not so much natural prowess as a new spite.

Do not think it strange that the man who was so venturesome yesterday should prove such a poltroon on the morrow; either anger, or necessity, or company, or wine, or the sound of the trumpet had put his heart into his belly; it was not a courage thus formed by reason, but a courage stiffened by those circumstances; it was no marvel if other contrary circumstances made a new man of him.

These so supple changes and contradictions which we manifest have made some to imagine that we have two souls, others, that we have two powers which, each in its own way, accompany and stir us, the one to good, the other to evil, since so abrupt a diversity is not to be reconciled with a single subject.

Not only does the wind of accidents stir me according to its blowing, but I am also stirred and troubled by the instability of my attitude; and he who examines himself closely will seldom find himself twice in the same state. I give to my soul now one face, now another, according to the side to which I turn it. If I speak differently of myself, it is because I regard myself differently. All the contradictions are to be found in me, according as the wind turns and changes. Bashful, insolent; chaste, lascivious; talkative, taciturn; clumsy, gentle; witty, dull; peevish, sweet-tempered; mendacious, truthful; knowing, ignorant; and liberal and avaricious and prodigal: all this I see in myself in some degree, according as I veer about; and whoever will study himself very attentively will find in himself, yea, in his judgement, this discordance and unsteadiness. I can say nothing of myself absolutely, simply, and steadily, without confusion and mixture, nor in one word. *Distinguo*[9] is the most universal member of my logic.

Though I am ever inclined to speak well of what is good, and rather to interpret favourably the things that are capable of such interpretation, yet such is the strangeness of our nature that we are often driven to do good, even by vice; if it were not that well-doing is judged by the intention alone.

Therefore a courageous deed ought not to imply a valiant man: the man who is really brave will be always so, and on all occasions. If valour were a habit, and not a sudden eruption, it would make a man equally resolute for all emergencies, the same alone as in company, the same in single combat as in a battle; for let them say what they will, there is not one valour for the pavement and another for the field. As bravely would he bear sickness in his bed as a wound in

9. I distinguish; I separate into its components.

camp, nor would he fear death in his own home any more than in an assault. We should not see the same man charge with brave assurance into the breach, and afterwards worrying like a woman, over the loss of a law-suit or a son. When, though afraid of infamy, he bears up against poverty; when, though wincing at a surgeon's lancet, he stiffly faces the enemy's sword, the action is praiseworthy, but not the man.

Many Greeks, says Cicero, cannot look upon an enemy, and are brave in sickness. The Cimbrians and the Celtiberians, quite the contrary: *For nothing can be consistent that has not reason for its foundation* (Cicero).[1]

No valour could be more extreme in its kind than Alexander's; but it is of one kind only, and is not complete enough, nor universal on all occasions. Incomparable though it be, it has its blemishes. So it is that we see him so desperately disturbed by the slightest suspicions that his subjects may be plotting against his life, and carried away in his investigations to such violent and indiscriminate acts of injustice, and haunted by a fear that upsets his natural good sense. The superstition too with which he was so strongly tainted bears some likeness to pusillanimity. And the excess of his penitence for the murder of Clytus[2] is also evidence of uneven temper.

Our actions are but a patchwork (*they despise pleasure, but are cowardly in pain; they are indifferent to fame, but infamy breaks their spirit*[3]), and we try to gain honour by false pretences. Virtue will not be wooed but for her own sake, and if we sometimes borrow her mask for some other purpose, she will very soon snatch it from our face. When the soul is once steeped in it, the dye is strong and vivid, and will not go without taking the skin with it. Wherefore, to judge a man, we must long and carefully follow his traces. If constancy does not stand firm and wholly on its own foundation, *if the path of life has not been well considered and preconcerted* (Cicero);[4] if changing circumstances make him alter his pace (I should say his route, for the pace may be accelerated or retarded by them), let him go: that man will go *A vau le vent* (down the wind), as the motto of our Talebot[5] has it.

It is no wonder, says an ancient writer,[6] that chance has so great a hold over us, since we live by chance. Unless a man has directed his life as a whole to a certain fixed goal, he cannot possibly dispose his particular actions. Unless he have an image of the whole in his mind, he cannot possibly arrange the pieces. How can a painter lay in a stock of colours, if he knows not what he is going to paint? No man draws a definite outline of his life, and we only think it out in

1. *Tusculan Disputations*, Book II, Chapter 27. 2. Clytus, a commander in Alexander's army, was killed by him during an argument, an act which Alexander immediately and bitterly regretted, as related by Plutarch in his *Life of Alexander*, Chapters 50–52. 3. Cicero, *Of Duties (De officiis)*, Book I, Chapter 21. 4. *Paradoxes*, Paradox v. 5. Talbot, an English captain who fought in France and died there in 1453. 6. Seneca, in *Epistles*, Epistle lxxi.

details. The archer must first know at what he is aiming, and then accommodate his hand, his bow, the string, the arrow, and his movements, accordingly. Our plans go wrong because they have neither aim nor direction. No wind serves the ship that has no port of destination.

I cannot agree with those judges who, on the strength of seeing one of his tragedies, declared in favour of Sophocles, when accused by his son of being incapable of managing his domestic affairs. Nor do I hold with the conclusions arrived at by the Parians who were sent to reform the Milesians. Visiting the island, they remarked the best-cultivated lands and the best-kept country-houses, and made a note of their owners; and then, having called an assembly of the citizens in the town, they appointed these owners the new governors and magistrates, concluding that, being careful of their private affairs, they would be equally careful of those of the public.

We are all made up of bits, and so shapelessly and diversely put together, that every piece, at every moment, plays its own game. And there is as much difference between us and ourselves, as between us and others. *Be sure that it is very difficult to be always the same man* (Seneca).[7] Since ambition can teach a man valour, temperance, and liberality, yea and justice too; since greed can implant in the heart of a shop-apprentice, bred up in obscurity and neglect, the confidence to entrust himself, so far from the domestic hearth, to the mercy of the waves and angry Neptune in a frail bark; since it teaches also discretion and prudence; and since Venus herself can put resolution and temerity into the boy who is still under the discipline of the rod, and embolden the heart of the tender virgin in her mother's arms,

> With Love for guide,
> Alone the maid steps o'er her prostrate guards,
> And steals by night into the young man's arms;
> (Tibullus.)[8]

it is not enough for a sober understanding to judge us simply by our external actions: we must sound the innermost recesses, and observe the springs which give the swing. But since it is a high and hazardous undertaking, I would rather that fewer people meddled with it.

Apology for Raimond Sebond[9]

[MAN'S PRESUMPTION AND LITTLENESS]

What does Truth[1] preach to us, when she preaches to us to fly worldly philosophy,[2] when she so often impresses upon us, That our

7. *Epistles*, Epistle cxx. 8. *Elegies*, Book II, Elegy i, ll. 75 ff. 9. Book II, Chapter 12. A small but significant section of the very long "Apology" is reprinted here. 1. Revealed truth, the Scriptures. 2. Colossians 2:8.

wisdom is but folly in the sight of God;[3] That of all vain things the most vain is man; That man, who presumes on his learning, does not yet know what it is to know;[4] and That if man, who is nothing, thinks himself something, he deceives and beguiles himself?[5] These sayings of the Holy Spirit so clearly and vividly express what I wish to maintain, that I should need no other proof against men who would bow with all submission and obedience to its authority. But the others[6] would rather be whipped to their own cost, and will not suffer their reason to be combated except by itself.

Let us then for the nonce consider man alone, without outside assistance, armed only with his own weapons, and destitute of the divine grace and knowledge, which comprise all his honour, his strength and the foundation of his being. Let us see how he will hold out in this fine equipment. Let him explain to me, by the force of his reason, on what foundation he has built those great advantages he thinks he has over the other creatures. What has induced him to believe that that wonderful motion of the heavenly vault, the eternal light of those torches rolling so proudly over his head, the awe-inspiring agitations of that infinite sea, were established, and endure through so many centuries for his service and convenience?

Is it possible to imagine anything more ridiculous than that this miserable and puny creature, who is not so much as master of himself, exposed to shocks on all sides should call himself Master and Emperor of the universe, of which it is not in his power to know the smallest part, much less to command it? And that privilege which he assumes of being the only creature in this great edifice that has the capacity to know the beauty and the several parts of it, the only one who is able to give thanks to the architect, and to keep an account of the receipts and outlay of the world: who has sealed him this privilege? Let him show us his letters-patent for this great and noble charge.

Have they been granted in favour of the wise only? Then few people would be concerned. Are the fools and the wicked deserving of so extraordinary a favour, and, being the worst lot in the world, of being preferred to all the rest?

Shall we believe the man who says this, *For whose sake shall we then say that the world has been made? Undoubtedly for those creatures that have the use of reason: these are gods and men, to whom assuredly nothing is superior?* (Balbus the Stoic, according to Cicero).[7] We could never sufficiently deride the impudence of this coupling of gods and men.

3. I Corinthians 3:19. 4. I Corinthians 8:2. 5. Galatians 6:3. This and the previous passages from St. Paul were among those inscribed on the walls of Montaigne's library. 6. Those who pretend to arrive at certainty through their human means, their reason, alone. 7. Quoted in Cicero's *Of the Nature of the Gods*, Book II, Chapter 53.

But, poor devil, what is there in him deserving of such a privilege? When we consider the incorruptible life of the heavenly bodies, their beauty, their grandeur, their continual motion by so exact a rule:

> When we gaze aloft
> Upon the skiey vaults of yon great world
> The ether, fixt high over twinkling stars,
> And into our thought there come the journeyings
> Of sun and moon; (Lucretius.)[8]

when we consider the dominion and power those bodies have, not only over our lives and the conditions of our fortune,

> Our lives and actions on the stars depend,
> (Manilius.)[9]

but even over our dispositions, our judgement, our will, which they govern, impel and stir at the mercy of their influence, as our reason discovers and tells us:

> This we learn: the far, far distant stars
> Govern by silent laws; the world is ruled
> By periodic causes, and the turns of destiny
> Observed by certain signs; (Manilius.)[1]

when we see that not only a man, not only a king, but kingdoms, empires, and all this world here below are moved according to the lightest swing of the heavenly motions:

> How great a change each little motion brings!
> So great this kingdom that it governs kings;
> (Manilius.)[2]

if our virtue, our vices, our talents and our knowledge, if even this dissertation of mine on the power of the stars, this comparison between them and ourselves, comes, as our reason supposes, by their means and their favour;

> Maddened by love, Leander swims the strait,
> A Grecian king o'erturns the walls of Troy.
> 'Tis this man's lot to give his country laws.
> Sons kill their fathers, fathers kill their sons,
> And brothers arm themselves in mutual strife.
> Not we have made these wars; 'tis Fate compels

8. *On the Nature of Things*, Book V, ll. 1204 ff. 9. *Astronomicon*, Book III, l. 58.
1. *Astronomicon*, Book I, ll. 60 ff. 2. *Astronomicon*, Book I, l. 57, and Book IV, l. 93.

To bear such pains with lacerated limbs.
And Fate it is that makes me ponder Fate; (Manilius.)[3]

if this little portion of reason we possess has been allotted to us by heaven, how can reason make us the equal of heaven? How can it subject its essence and conditions to our knowledge? All that we see in those bodies fills us with amazement. *What apparatus, what instruments, what levers, what engines, what craftsmen were employed about so mighty a work?* (Cicero).[4]

Why do we deny them a soul, and life and reason? Have we discovered in them any stubborn, senseless stupidity, we who have no concern with them but to obey them? Shall we say that we have seen no other creature but man in possession of a reasoning mind? Why! have we seen anything comparable to the sun? Does it exist the less for our not having seen its like? Does it move the less because no other movement is to be compared with it? If what we have not seen does not exist, our knowledge is marvellously shortsighted: *How close the confines of our mind!* (Cicero).[5]

Is it not a delusion of human vanity to make the moon a celestial earth, and to imagine that there are mountains and valleys upon it, as did Anaxagoras;[6] to set up human habitations and dwellings and establish colonies upon it for our convenience, as do Plato and Plutarch,[7] and to make our earth a bright and shining star? *Amongst other infirmities of human nature is that mental blindness which not only forces man to err, but makes him hug his errors* (Seneca).[8] *The corruptible body weighs down the soul, and this earthly habitation prevents it from pondering on many things* (The Book of Wisdom, quoted by Saint Augustine).[9]

Presumption is our natural and original infirmity. The frailest and most vulnerable of all creatures is man, and at the same time the most arrogant.[1] He sees and feels himself lodged here in the mud and filth of the world, nailed and riveted to the worst, the deadest and most stagnant part of the universe, at the lowest story of the house and the most remote from the vault of heaven, with the animals of the worst condition of the three; and he goes and sets himself in imagination above the circle of the moon, and brings heaven under his feet.

With this same vanity of imagination he makes himself the equal of God, assumes to himself divine qualities, selects and separates himself from among the multitude of other creatures, carves out

3. *Astronomicon*, Book IV, ll. 79 ff., and l. 118. 4. *Of the Nature of the Gods*, Book I, Chapter 8. 5. *Of the Nature of the Gods*, Book I, Chapter 31. 6. According to Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Anaxagoras*, Book II, Chapter 8. 7. For the notion that the moon is inhabited, Montaigne refers to Plutarch's *Of the Face of the Moon*. 8. *Of Wrath*, Book II, Chapter 9. 9. *City of God*, Book XII, Section 15. 1. The phrase, originally Pliny's, is another of those engraved on the walls of Montaigne's library.

their shares to each of his fellows and comrades, the animals, and allots to them their portion of faculties and powers according as it seems good to him. How can he know, by the force of his understanding, the secret and internal motions of the animals? By what comparison between them and himself does he suppose them to be as stupid as he thinks?

When I play with my cat, who knows but that she regards me more as a plaything than I do her? [We amuse each other with our respective monkey-tricks; if I have my moments for beginning and refusing, so she has hers.]

Plato,[2] in his picture of the golden age under Saturn, numbers, among the chief advantages of the man of that time, his communion with the beasts, of whom inquiring and learning he knew the real attributes and differences of each of them; whereby he acquired a very perfect understanding and wisdom, and in consequence passed his life very much more happily than we are able to do. Do we need a better proof of the impudence of man where the beasts are concerned? That great author[3] opined that, in giving them their bodily shape, Nature for the most part only considered the use they could be put to in the prognostications which were drawn from them in his time.

That defect which hinders communication between us and them, why may it not as well be in ourselves as in them? It is a matter of conjecture with whom the fault lies that we do not understand one another; for we understand them no more than they do us. By the same reasoning they may regard us as beasts, as we do them.

It is no great wonder if we do not understand them for neither do we understand the Basques[4] and the Troglodytes. Yet some have boasted of understanding them, as Apollonius of Tyana, Melampus, Tiresias, Thales, and others.[5] And since it is the case that, as the cosmographers tell, there are nations that receive a dog for their king, they must needs in some way interpret its voice and actions.

We must observe the parity there is between us. We have some halfway understanding of their meaning, as the animals have of ours, in about the same degree. They cajole us, they threaten us, they entreat us, as we do them. Moreover, it is very evident to us that they are able fully and completely to communicate with one another, that they understand one another, and not only those of the same species, but also those of different species.

2. In his *Statesman*. 3. Plato, in the *Timaeus*. 4. Inhabitants of the Pyrenees region on the Bay of Biscay, known for the difficulty and peculiarity of their language. *Troglodytes*: Cave dwellers. 5. A mixture of mythical and historical figures: Apollonius of Tyana, Greek neo-Pythagorean philosopher and magician (first century A.D.); Melampus, mythical physician and sage; Tiresias, mythical blind prophet of Thebes: Thales, regarded as the first Greek philosopher (sixth century B.C.), one of the Seven Sages of Greece.

Since even the speechless herds, aye, since
The very generations of wild beasts
Are wont dissimilar and diverse sounds
To rouse from in them, when there's fear or pain,
And when they burst with joys. (Lucretius.)[6]

A horse knows that a dog is angry when it barks in a certain way, but is not afraid when it gives voice in another way. Even in those creatures that have no voice we may easily infer, from the mutual services we see them rendering each other, that they have some other means of communication; their movements speak and negotiate:

In much the same way as the lack-speech years
Compel young children into gesturings. (Lucretius.)[7]

Why not? just as well as our deaf-mutes dispute, argue and tell stories by means of signs? I have seen some so skilful and practised in that language, that in truth they did not fall short of perfection in making themselves understood. Lovers use their eyes to express anger, reconciliation, entreaty, thanks, to make appointments, in short for every purpose;

Silence too our thought and wish betrays.
(Tasso.)[8]

What of the hands? We beg, we promise, we call, we send away, threaten, pray, entreat, deny, refuse, question, wonder, count, confess, repent, we express fear and shame, we doubt, inform, command, incite, encourage, swear, testify, accuse, condemn, absolve, insult, despise, challenge, we show vexation, we flatter, applaud, bless, humiliate, mock, reconcile, recommend, exalt, welcome, rejoice, complain, we express grief, dejection, despair, astonishment, protestation, silence, and what not, in such varied and numerous ways, in rivalry with the tongue.

With the head we invite, we dismiss, admit, disclaim, give the lie, welcome, honour, reverence, disdain, demand, show the door, we cheer, lament, caress, chide, submit, defy, exhort, threaten, assure, and inquire. What of the eye-brows? What of the shoulders? There is no movement that does not speak an intelligible, untaught language, that is understood by all. Which shows that, seeing the variety that distinguishes the spoken languages in use, this one must rather be considered the proper and natural speech of humankind. I pass over that which a particular necessity teaches one who is taken unawares; and the finger-alphabet; and grammar and the sciences

6. *On the Nature of Things*, Book V, ll. 1058 ff. 7. *On the Nature of Things*, Book V, ll. 1029 ff. 8. Torquato Tasso, in the pastoral drama *Aminta*, Act II, Scene 3, ll. 35–36.

which are only practised and expressed by gestures; and the nations that Pliny tells of, who have no other language.

An ambassador of the city of Abdera, after speaking at great length to King Agis of Sparta, said to him, 'Well, Sire, what answer do you wish me to carry back to our citizens?' 'That I allowed you to say all that you would and as much as you would, without ever a word.'[9] Was not that a very speaking and intelligible silence?

After all, which of our arts do we not see in the activities of animals? Is there any organization regulated with more order, with a better distribution of charges and functions, and more consistently maintained, than that of the bees? Can we imagine that so well-ordered a disposition of activities and occupations could be carried on without reason and foresight?

> Following signs and instances like these,
> Some testify that bees possess a share
> Of the world-spirit and the mind divine. (Virgil.)[1]

Do the swallows that we see at the return of spring, ferreting out all the corners of the houses, conduct their search without judgment? Do they choose without discrimination, out of a thousand places, that which is most commodious for their lodging? Are the birds, when they weave those beautiful and wonderful habitations of theirs, able to use a square figure rather than a round, an obtuse rather than a right angle, without knowing their properties and effects? Do they fetch, now water, now clay, without having concluded that hardness is softened by moisture? Do they line the floors of their palaces with moss or down unless they have foreseen that the tender limbs of their young will lie more softly and comfortably? Do they shelter themselves from the rainy wind and build their cabins to the east, without knowing the different properties of the winds, and without considering that one is more healthy for them than the other?

Why does the spider thicken her web in one place and slacken it in another? Why does she use now one kind of knot, now another, unless she possesses thought, deliberation and the power of inference?

We may see well enough, in most of their works, how much the animals surpass us, and how much we fall short in the art of imitating them. And yet, in our ruder performances, we are sensible of what faculties we employ, and we know that our mind applies to them its utmost powers; why do we not conclude the same of the animals? Why do we ascribe to I know not what slavish instinct of nature those works that excel anything we can do by nature or art?

9. The story is told by Plutarch in *Apothegms of the Lacedaemonians*. 1. *Georgics*, Book IV, ll. 219 ff.

Herein we unconsciously give them a very great advantage over ourselves, in making Nature, with a maternal kindness, to accompany and lead them as it were by the hand, to all the activities and conveniences of their life; whilst us she abandons to chance and fortune, and forces us to seek by art the things necessary for our preservation, at the same time denying us the means of attaining, by any education or mental effort, to the natural skill of the animals. So that their brutish stupidity surpasses in all their contrivances everything we are able to do with our divine intelligence.

Truly, by this reckoning, we might with great reason call her a very unjust stepmother; but that is not so. Our organization is not so formless and unregulated. Nature has been universally kind to all her creatures, and there is none that she has not very amply furnished with all the means necessary for the preservation of its being. For those common complaints that I hear men uttering (as the licence of their opinions now lifts them up above the clouds, now brings them down to the antipodes), that we are the only outcast animal, bare on the bare earth, bound and tied down, with no means of arming or covering ourselves but with others' spoils; whereas all the other creatures have been clothed by Nature with shells, husks, bark, hair, wool, spikes, leather, down, feathers, scales, fleece, bristles, according to the need of their being; armed with claws, teeth, horns for attack and defence, and has herself instructed them in what is requisite to each, to swim, run, fly, sing, whilst man cannot even walk or speak, nor eat, nor do anything but weep, without an apprenticeship:

> Then again the babe,
> Like to the castaway of the raging surf,
> Lies naked on the ground, speechless, in want
> Of every help for life, when Nature first
> Hath poured him forth upon the shores of light
> With birth-pangs from within the mother's womb,
> And with a plaintive wail he fills the place,—
> As well befitting one for whom remains
> In life a journey through so many ills.
> But all the flocks and herds and all wild beasts
> Come forth and grow, nor need the little rattles,
> Nor must be treated to the humouring nurse's
> Dear broken chatter; nor seek they divers clothes
> To suit the changing skies; nor need, in fine,
> Nor arms, nor lofty ramparts, wherewithal
> Their own to guard—because the earth herself
> And Nature, artificer of the world, bring forth
> Aboundingly all things for all. (Lucretius.)[2]

2. *On the Nature of Things*, Book V, ll. 222 ff.

These complaints are unfounded; there is in the governance of the world a much greater equality and a more uniform relationship. Our skin is provided as abundantly as theirs with power to resist the inclemency of the weather. Witness the many nations that have not yet tried the use of clothes. Our ancient Gauls wore hardly any clothes, like our neighbours the Irish of the present day, in spite of their cold climate.

But we may judge better by ourselves: for all those parts of our person which we are pleased to expose to the wind and air are adapted to endure it, the feet, the face, the hands, the legs, the shoulders, the head, according to the demands of usage. For if there is in us a tender spot, in which we should seem to fear the cold, it should be the stomach, where digestion takes place; our fathers used to leave it uncovered, and our ladies, soft and delicate as they are, sometimes go half-covered down to the navel.

Nor are the bindings and swaddlings of infants any more necessary. The Lacedemonian mothers reared their children in all freedom to move their limbs, without any wrappings or fastenings.

Our weeping we have in common with most of the other animals; there are hardly any that do not wail and whine long after their birth, seeing that it is a natural effect of their helplessness at that age. As to the habit of eating, it is natural to us as well as to them, and comes without instruction:

> For each creature feels
> By instinct to what use to put its powers.
> (Lucretius.)[3]

Who doubts but that a child, having acquired the strength to feed himself, is able to seek his food? And the earth yields and offers him enough for his needs, without any cultivation and artifice; and if not at all times, no more does she do it for the animals. Witness the provision we see made by the ants and other creatures, in view of the barren season of the year. Those nations we have lately discovered, so abundantly provided with meat and a natural drink, without care or trouble on their part, have now made us realize that bread is not our only sustenance, and that, without any tilling, our Mother Nature has plentifully provided us with all that we need. Nay, as seems very probable, more amply and richly than she does now that we have taken to meddling with it by our contrivances:

> She first, the Earth, of own accord
> The shining grains and vineyards of all joy
> Created for mortality; herself

3. *On the Nature of Things*, Book V, ll. 1033 ff.

Gave the sweet fruitage and the pastures glad,
Which now to-day yet scarcely wax in size,
Even when, aided by our toiling arms,
We break the ox, and wear away the strength
Of sturdy farm-hands; (Lucretius.)[4]

the excess and unruliness of our appetite outstripping all the inventions wherewith we seek to satisfy it.

With regard to weapons, we are better provided by Nature than most other animals; we are more able to move our limbs about and to extract service from them, naturally and without being taught. Those who are trained to fight naked are seen to rush into dangers just like our own soldiers. If some of the beasts surpass us in this advantage, we surpass many others in the same. We possess by a natural instinct and teaching the skill to fortify our bodies and protect them by acquired means. That this is so is proved by the example of the elephant who sharpens and grinds the teeth which he makes use of in warfare (for he has special teeth which he saves and employs for this purpose only). When bulls go to battle they throw up and scatter the dust around them; the boars whet their tusks; the ichneumon, when it is about to grapple with the crocodile, fortifies its body by coating it all over with a crust of mud, well kneaded and compressed, as with a cuirass. Why shall we not say that it is as natural to us to arm ourselves with wood and iron?

As to speech, it is certain that, if it is not natural neither is it necessary. Nevertheless I believe that a child brought up in complete solitude, far from all intercourse (which would be a difficult experiment to make), would have some kind of speech to express his ideas. And it is not to be believed that Nature has denied us this power which she has given to many other animals; for what else but speech is that faculty we observe in them of complaining, rejoicing, calling to one another for succour, inviting to love, which they do by the use of their voice?

Why should they not speak with one another? They speak to us, and we to them: in how many different tones do we not speak to our dogs? and they answer us. We use another language with them, than we do in talking to birds, pigs, oxen and horses, and give them other names; we change the idiom according to the kind.

So ants amidst their sable-coloured band
One with another mouth to mouth confer,
Haply their way or state to understand. (Dante.)[5]

Lactantius seems to attribute to beasts not only the power of speech but also of laughter. And the same difference of tongues which,

4. *On the Nature of Things*, Book II, ll. 1157 ff. 5. *Purgatory*, Canto XXVI, ll. 34 ff.

according to the differences of countries, is found in human beings, is also found in animals of the same species. Aristotle, writing on this subject, instances the various calls of partridges, according to locality:

> The dappled birds
> Utter at other times far other cries
> Than when they fight for food, or with their prey
> Struggle and strain. And birds there are which change
> With changing weather their own raucous songs.
> (Lucretius.)[6]

But it is yet to be known what language the supposed child would speak; and what has been conjectured about it has no great probability. If any one declares to me, in opposition to this belief, that those deaf by nature do not speak, I reply that it is not only because they have not been taught to speak by ear, but more because the sense of hearing, of which they are deprived, is related to that of speech, and that they hold together by a natural tie; in such a way that the words we speak must in the first place be spoken to ourselves, and be made to strike upon our own inward ears, before being sent out to others' ears.

I have said all this to establish the resemblance to human conditions, and to bring us back and join us to the majority. We are neither superior nor inferior to the rest. All that is under heaven, says the sage, is subject to one law and one fate:

> Enshackled in the gruesome bonds of doom.
> (Lucretius.)[7]

Some difference there is; there are orders and degrees, but under the aspect of one same Nature:

> But each sole thing
> Proceeds according to its proper wont,
> And all conserve their own distinctions, based
> In Nature's fixed decree. (Lucretius.)[8]

Man must be forced and lined up within the barriers of this organization. The poor wretch has no mind really to step over them. He is shackled and entangled, he is subjected to the same obligation as the other creatures of his order, and is of a very mediocre condition, without any real and essential prerogative and preeminence. That which he thinks and imagines himself to possess, neither has body nor can it be perceived. And if it be so that he alone of all the

6. *On the Nature of Things*, Book V, ll. 1078 ff. 7. *On the Nature of Things*, Book V, l. 874. 8. *On the Nature of Things*, Book V, ll. 921 ff.

animals has this freedom of imagination, this licence of thought, which represents to him that which is, that which is not, that which he wills, the false and the true; it is an advantage sold to him very dearly, and of which he has very little cause to boast. For from it springs the principal source of all the ills that press upon him, sin, sickness, irresolution, affliction, despair.

Of Repentance[9]

["THESE TESTIMONIES OF A GOOD CONSCIENCE"]

Others form man; I describe him, and portray a particular, very ill-made one, who, if I had to fashion him anew, should indeed be very different from what he is. But now it is done.

Now the features of my painting do not err, although they change and vary. The world is but a perennial see-saw. All things in it are incessantly on the swing, the earth, the rocks of the Caucasus, the Egyptian pyramids, both with the common movement and their own particular movement. Even fixedness is nothing but a more sluggish motion.

I cannot fix my object; it is befogged, and reels with a natural intoxication. I seize it at this point, as it is at the moment when I beguile myself with it. I do not portray the thing in itself. I portray the passage; not a passing from one age to another, or, as the people put it, from seven years to seven years,[1] but from day to day, from minute to minute. I must adapt my history to the moment. I may presently change, not only by chance, but also by intention. It is a record of diverse and changeable events, of undecided, and when the occasion arises, contradictory ideas; whether it be that I am another self, or that I grasp a subject in different circumstances and see it from a different point of view. So it may be that I contradict myself, but, as Demades[2] said, the truth I never contradict. If my mind could find a firm footing, I should not speak tentatively, I should decide; it is always in a state of apprenticeship, and on trial.

I am holding up to view a humble and lustreless life; that is all one. Moral philosophy, in any degree, may apply to an ordinary and secluded life as well as to one of richer stuff; every man carries within him the entire form of the human constitution.

Authors communicate themselves to the world by some special and extrinsic mark; I am the first to do so by my general being, as Michel de Montaigne, not as a grammarian or a poet or a lawyer. If the world finds fault with me for speaking too much of myself, I find fault with the world for not even thinking of itself.

9. Book III, Chapter 2. The opening part of the essay is reprinted here. 1. An allusion to the popular notion that the human body is completely renewed every seven years. 2. Greek orator and politician of the fourth century B.C.

But is it reasonable that I, who am so retired in actual life, should aspire to make myself known to the public? And is it reasonable that I should show up to the world, where artifice and ceremony enjoy so much credit and authority, the crude and simple results of nature, and of a nature besides very feeble? Is it not like making a wall without stone or a similar material, thus to build a book without learning or art? The ideas of music are guided by art, mine by chance. This I have at least in conformity with rules, that no man ever treated of a subject that he knew and understood better than I do this that I have taken up; and that in this I am the most learned man alive. Secondly, that no man ever penetrated more deeply into his matter, nor more minutely analysed its parts and consequences, nor more fully and exactly reached the goal he had made it his business to set up. To accomplish it I need only bring fidelity to it; and that is here, as pure and sincere as may be found.

I speak the truth, not enough to satisfy myself, but as much as I dare to speak. And I become a little more daring as I grow older; for it would seem that custom allows this age more freedom to prate, and more indiscretion in speaking of oneself. It cannot be the case here, as I often see elsewhere, that the craftsman and his work contradict each other. 'How could a man who shows to such advantage in company write so foolish a book?' or, 'Are these learned writings the work of a man of such feeble conversation?'

When a man of ordinary conversation writes uncommon things, it means that his talent lies in the place from which he borrows them, and not in himself. A learned man is not learned at all things; but the accomplished man is accomplished in all things, even in ignorance.

Here, my book and I go hand in hand together, and keep one pace. In other cases we may commend or censure the work apart from the workman; not so here. Who touches the one touches the other. He who judges the one without knowing the other will wrong himself more than he does me; he who has come to know the work will completely satisfy me. Happy beyond my deserts if I have only this share of public approval, that intelligent persons will be made to feel that I was capable of profiting by learning, if I had any; and that I deserved more assistance from my memory!

In this place let me offer an excuse for what I often repeat, that I seldom repent, and that my conscience is satisfied with itself, not as the conscience of an angel or a horse, but as the conscience of a man; always with the addition of this refrain, not a formal or conventional refrain, but prompted by a real and natural modesty, 'that I speak as an inquirer and an ignoramus, leaving the decision purely and simply to the common and authorized beliefs.' I do not teach, I relate.

There is no vice, that is really a vice, which is not hurtful and which a sound judgement does not condemn; for its ugliness and evil consequences are so apparent that they are perhaps right who say that it is chiefly begotten of stupidity and ignorance. So hard it is to imagine that a man may know it and not hate it!

Wickedness sucks in the greater part of its own venom, and poisons itself with it.

Vice, like an ulcer in the flesh, leaves a repentance in the soul, which is always scratching itself and drawing blood. For Reason blots out all other grief and sorrow, but begets that of repentance, which is the more hard to bear since it is born from within; as the chill and heat of a fever are more acutely felt than those which are external. I regard as vices (but each according to its measure), not only those which are condemned by reason and Nature, but those too which have been created by human opinion, even false and erroneous opinion, if it is authorized by laws and custom.

There is likewise no goodness in which a well-born nature does not delight. We feel indeed a certain self-congratulation when we do a good deed, which gives us inward satisfaction, and that generous pride which accompanies a good conscience. A boldly wicked soul may perhaps arm itself with assurance; but with that complacency and satisfaction it cannot provide itself.

There is no small pleasure in feeling oneself preserved from the contagion of so corrupt an age, and saying to oneself, 'Should any one look into my very soul, he would yet not find me guilty of the affliction or ruin of any man, or of revenge or envy, of publicly offending against the laws, of innovation or disturbance, or of failing to keep my word. And whatever the licence of the times may permit or suggest to any man, I have laid hands on no Frenchman's property nor dived into his purse. I have never lived but on what is my own, either in war or peace time; and have never used another man's labour without hire.' These testimonies of a good conscience please; and this natural satisfaction is a great boon to us, and the only payment that will never fail us.

MIGUEL DE CERVANTES

1547–1616

The author of Don Quixote's extravagant adventures himself had a very unusual and adventurous life. The son of an apothecary, Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra was born in 1547 in Alcalá de Henares, a university town near Madrid. Almost nothing is known of his childhood and early educa-

tion. Only in 1569 is he mentioned as a favorite pupil by a Madrid humanist, Juan López. Records indicate that by the end of that year he had left Spain and was living in Rome, for a time in the service of Giulio Acquaviva, who later became a cardinal. We know that he enlisted in the Spanish fleet under the command of Don John of Austria and that he took part in the struggle of the allied forces of Christendom against the Turks. He was at the crucial Battle of Lepanto (1571), where in spite of fever he fought valiantly and received three gunshot wounds, one of which permanently impaired the use of his left hand, "for the greater glory of the right." After further military action and garrison duty at Palermo and Naples, he and his brother Rodrigo, bearing testimonials from Don John and from the viceroy of Sicily, began the journey back to Spain, where Miguel hoped to obtain a captaincy. In September 1575 their ship was captured near the Marseille coast by Barbary pirates, and the two brothers were taken as prisoners to Algiers. Cervantes's captors, considering him a person of some consequence, held him as a slave for a high ransom. He repeatedly attempted to escape, and his daring and fortitude excited the admiration of Hassan Pasha, the viceroy of Algiers, who bought him for five hundred crowns after five years of captivity.

Cervantes was freed on September 15, 1580, and reached Madrid in December of that year. There his literary career began rather inauspiciously; he wrote twenty or thirty plays, with little success, and in 1585 published a pastoral romance, *Galatea*. At about this time he had a natural daughter by Ana Franca de Rojas, and during the same period married Catalina de Salazar, who was eighteen years his junior. Seeking nonliterary employment, he obtained a position in the navy, requisitioning and collecting supplies for the Invincible Armada. Irregularities in his administration, for which he was held responsible if not directly guilty, caused him to spend time in prison. In 1590 he tried unsuccessfully to obtain colonial employment in the New World. Later he served as tax collector in the province of Granada, but was dismissed from government service in 1597.

The following years of Cervantes's life are the most obscure: there is a legend that *Don Quixote* was first conceived and planned while its author was in prison in Seville. In 1604 he was in Valladolid, then the temporary capital of Spain, living in sordid surroundings with the numerous women of his family (his wife, daughter, niece, and two sisters). It was in Valladolid, in late 1604, that he obtained the official license for the publication of *Don Quixote* (Part I). The book appeared in 1605 and was a popular success. Cervantes followed the Spanish court when it returned to Madrid, where he continued to live poorly in spite of a popularity with readers that quickly made proverbial figures of his heroes. A false sequel to his book appeared, prompting him to write his own continuation, *Don Quixote*, Part II, published in 1615. His *Exemplary Tales* had appeared in 1613. He died on April 23, 1616, and was buried in the convent of the Barefooted Trinitarian nuns. *Persiles and Sigismunda*, his last novel, was published posthumously in 1617.

Although, as we have indicated, *The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote de la Mancha* was a popular success from the time Part I was published in 1605, it was only later recognized as an important work of literature. This delay was due partly to the fact that in a period of established and well-defined literary genres such as the epic, the tragedy, and the pastoral romance

(Cervantes himself had tried his hand at some of these forms), the unconventional combination of elements in *Don Quixote* resulted in a work of considerable novelty, with the serious aspects hidden under a mocking surface.

The initial and overt purpose of the book was to satirize the romances of chivalry. In those long yarns, which had to do with the Carolingian and Arthurian legends and which were full of supernatural deeds of valor, implausible and complicated adventures, duels, and enchantments, the literature that had expressed the medieval spirit of chivalry and romance had degenerated to the same extent to which, in our day, certain conventions of romantic literature have degenerated in "pulp" fiction and film melodrama. Up to a point, then, what Cervantes set out to do was to produce a parody, a caricature of a literary type. But neither the nature of his genius nor the particular method he chose allowed him to limit himself to such a relatively simple and direct undertaking. The actual method he followed in order to expose the silliness of the romances of chivalry was to show to what extraordinary consequences they would lead a man insanely infatuated with them, once this man set out to live "now" according to their patterns of action and belief.

So what we have is not mere parody or caricature; for there is a great deal of difference between presenting a remote and more or less imaginary world, and presenting a modern man deciding to live by the standards of that world in a modern and realistic context. The first consequence is a mingling of genres. On the one hand, much of the book has the color and intonation of the world of medieval chivalry as its poets had portrayed it. The fact that that vision and that tone depend for their existence in the book on the self-deception of the hero makes them no less operative artistically, and adds, in fact, an important element of idealization. On the other hand, the chivalric world is continuously jostled by elements of contemporary life evoked by the narrator—the realities of landscape and speech, peasants and nobles, inns and highways. So the author can draw on two sources, roughly the realistic and the romantic, truth and vision, practical facts and lofty values. In this respect—having found a way to bring together concrete actuality and highly ideal values—Cervantes can be said to have fathered the modern novel.

The consequences of Cervantes's invention are more apparent when we begin to analyze a little more closely the nature of these worlds, romantic and realistic, and the kind of impact the first exerts on the second. The hero embodying the world of the romances is not, as we know, a cavalier; he is an impoverished country gentleman who embraces that code in the "modern" world. Chivalry is not directly satirized; it is simply placed in a context different from its native one. The result of that new association is a new whole, a new unity. The "code" is renovated; it is put into a different perspective, given another chance.

We should remember at this point that in the process of deterioration which the romances of chivalry had undergone, certain basically attractive ideals had become empty conventions—for instance, the ideal of love as devoted "service." In this connection, it may be especially interesting to observe that the treatment of love, and Don Quixote's conception of it, are not limited to his well-known admiration for his purely fantastic lady Dul-

cinea, but are also dealt with from a feminine point of view. See, as illustration, Marcela's elaborate, logical, and poetic speech (Part I, chapter 14, reprinted here) which Don Quixote warmly admires; in it the noble shepherdesss defends herself against the accusation of being "a wild beast and a basilisk" for having caused Grisóstomo's death, and proclaims her right to choose her particular kind of freedom in nature, where "these mountain trees are my company, the clear running waters in these brooks are my mirror. . . ."

No less relevant are Quixote's ideals of adventurousness, of loyalty to high concepts of valor and generosity. In the new context those values are reexamined. Cervantes may well have gained a practical sense of them in his own life while still a youth, for instance at the Battle of Lepanto (the great victory of the European coalition against the "infidels"), and as a pirate's captive. Since he began writing *Don Quixote* in his late fifties, a vantage point from which the adventures of his youth must have appeared impossibly remote, a factor of nostalgia—which could hardly have been present in a pure satire—may well have entered into his work. Furthermore, had he undertaken a direct caricature of the romance genre, the serious and noble values of chivalry could not have been made apparent except negatively, whereas in the context devised by him in *Don Quixote* they find a way to assert themselves positively as well.

The book in its development is, to a considerable extent, the story of that assertion—of the impact that Don Quixote's revitalization of the chivalric code has on a contemporary world. We must remember, of course, that there is ambiguity in the way the assertion is made; it works slowly on the reader, as his own discovery rather than as the narrator's overt suggestion. Actually, whatever attraction the chivalric world of his hero's vision may have had for Cervantes, he does not openly support Don Quixote at all. He even seems at times to go further in repudiating him than he needs to, for the hero is officially insane, and the narrator never tires of reminding us of this. One critic has described the attitude Cervantes affects toward his creature as "animosity." Nevertheless, by the very magniloquence and, often, the extraordinary coherence and beauty which the narrator allows his hero to display in his speeches in defense of his vision and his code, we are gradually led to discover for ourselves the serious and important elements these contain. For instance, Don Quixote's speech evoking the lost Golden Age and justifying the institution of knight-errantry (in Part I, chapter 12, reprinted here) is described by the narrator—after Don Quixote has delivered it—as a "futile harangue" which "Might very well have been dispensed with"; but there it is, in all of its fervor and effectiveness. Thus the narrator's so-called animosity ultimately does nothing but intensify our interest in Don Quixote and our sympathy for him. And in that process we are, as audience, simply repeating the experience many characters have on the "stage" of the book, in their relationships with him.

Generally speaking, the encounters between the ordinary world and Don Quixote are encounters between the world of reality and that of illusion, between reason and imagination, ultimately between the world in which action is prompted by material considerations and interests and a world in which action is prompted by ideal motives. Our selections illustrate these

aspects of the experience. Among the first adventures are some which have most contributed to popularize the Don Quixote legend: he sees windmills and decides they are giants; country inns become castles; flocks of sheep, armies. Though the conclusions of such episodes often have the ludicrousness of slapstick comedy, there is a powerfully imposing quality about Don Quixote's insanity: his madness always has method, a commanding persistence and coherence. And there is perhaps an inevitable sense of moral grandeur in the spectacle of anyone remaining so unflinchingly faithful to his own vision. The world of "reason" may win in point of fact, but we come to wonder whether from a moral point of view Quixote is not the victor.

Furthermore, we increasingly realize that Quixote's own manner of action has greatness in itself, and not only the greatness of persistence: his purpose is to redress wrongs, to come to the aid of the afflicted, to offer generous help, to challenge danger and practice valor. And we finally feel the impact of the arguments that sustain his action—for example, in the section from Part II (the episode of the lions) in which he expounds "the meaning of valor." The ridiculousness of the situation is counterbalanced by the basic seriousness of Quixote's motives; his notion of courage for its own sake appears, and is recognized, as singularly noble, a sort of generous display of integrity in a world usually ruled by lower standards. Thus the distinction between "reason" and "madness," truth and illusion, becomes, to say the least, ambiguous. The hero's delusions are indeed exposed when they come up against hard facts, but the authority of such facts is seen to be morally questionable.

The effectiveness of Don Quixote's conduct and vision is seen most clearly in his relationship with his "squire" Sancho Panza. It would be a crude oversimplification to say that Don Quixote and Sancho represent illusion and reality, the insane code of knight-errantry versus down-to-earth practicalities. Actually Sancho—though his nature is strongly defined by such elements as his common sense, his earthy speech, his simple phrases studded with proverbs set against the hero's magniloquence—is mainly characterized in his development by the degree to which he believes in his master. He is caught in the snare of Don Quixote's vision; the seeds of the imaginative life are successfully implanted in him.

The impact of Quixote's view of life on Sancho serves therefore to illustrate one of the important qualities of the protagonist and, we may finally say, one of the important aspects of Renaissance literature: the attempt, ultimately frustrated but extremely attractive as long as it lasts, of the individual mind to produce a vision and a system of its own, in a world that often seems to have lost a universal frame of reference and a fully satisfactory sense of the value and meaning of action. What Don Quixote presents is a vision of a world which, for all its aberrant qualities, appears generally to be more colorful and more thrilling, and also, incidentally, to be inspired by more honorable rules of conduct, than the world of ordinary people, "realism," current affairs, private interests, easy jibes, and petty pranks. It is a world in which actions are performed out of a sense of their beauty and excitement, not for the sake of their usefulness. It is, again, the world as stage, animated by "folly"; in this case the lights go out at the end, an end which is "reason-

able" and therefore gloomy. Sancho provides the main example of one who is exposed to that vision and absorbs that light while it lasts. How successfully he has done so is seen during Don Quixote's death scene, in which Sancho begs his master not to die but to continue the play, as has been suggested, in a new costume—that of shepherds in an Arcadian setting. But at that final point the hero is "cured" and killed, and Sancho is restored to the petty interests of the world as he can see it by his own lights, after the cord connecting him to his imaginative master is cut by the latter's "repentance" and death.

William Byron's *Cervantes: A Biography* (1978) is very thorough. The more advanced student of *Don Quixote* will find useful Howard Mancing's detailed study, *The Chivalric World of Don Quijote: Style, Structure, and Narrative Technique* (1982). Lowry Nelson, ed., *Cervantes: A Collection of Critical Essays* (1969), offers the views of eminent scholars and authors.

Don Quixote[1]

Part I

["I Know Who I Am, and Who I May Be, If I Choose"]

CHAPTER 1

Which treats of the station in life and the pursuits of the famous gentleman, Don Quixote de la Mancha.

In a village of La Mancha[2] the name of which I have no desire to recall, there lived not so long ago one of those gentlemen who always have a lance in the rack, an ancient buckler, a skinny nag, and a greyhound for the chase. A stew with more beef than mutton in it, chopped meat for his evening meal, scraps for a Saturday, lentils on Friday, and a young pigeon as a special delicacy for Sunday, went to account for three-quarters of his income. The rest of it he laid out on a broadcloth greatcoat and velvet stockings for feast days, with slippers to match, while the other days of the week he cut a figure in a suit of the finest homespun. Living with him were a housekeeper in her forties, a niece who was not yet twenty, and a lad of the field and market place who saddled his horse for him and wielded the pruning knife.

This gentleman of ours was close on to fifty, of a robust constitution but with little flesh on his bones and a face that was lean and gaunt. He was noted for his early rising, being very fond of the hunt. They will try to tell you that his surname was Quijada or Quesada—there is some difference of opinion among those who have written

1. Abridged. Translated by Samuel Putnam. 2. Efforts at identifying the village have proved inconclusive; La Mancha is a section of Spain south of Madrid.

on the subject—but according to the most likely conjectures we are to understand that it was really Quejana. But all this means very little so far as our story is concerned, providing that in the telling of it we do not depart one iota from the truth.

You may know, then, that the aforesaid gentleman, on those occasions when he was at leisure, which was most of the year around, was in the habit of reading books of chivalry with such pleasure and devotion as to lead him almost wholly to forget the life of a hunter and even the administration of his estate. So great was his curiosity and infatuation in this regard that he even sold many acres of tillable land in order to be able to buy and read the books that he loved, and he would carry home with him as many of them as he could obtain.

Of all those that he thus devoured none pleased him so well as the ones that had been composed by the famous Feliciano de Silva,[3] whose lucid prose style and involved conceits were as precious to him as pearls; especially when he came to read those tales of love and amorous challenges that are to be met with in many places, such a passage as the following, for example: "The reason of the unreason that afflicts my reason, in such a manner weakens my reason that I with reason lament me of your comeliness." And he was similarly affected when his eyes fell upon such lines as these: ". . . the high Heaven of your divinity divinely fortifies you with the stars and renders you deserving of that desert your greatness doth deserve."

The poor fellow used to lie awake nights in an effort to disentangle the meaning and make sense out of passages such as these, although Aristotle himself would not have been able to understand them, even if he had been resurrected for that sole purpose. He was not at ease in his mind over those wounds that Don Belianís[4] gave and received; for no matter how great the surgeons who treated him, the poor fellow must have been left with his face and his entire body covered with marks and scars. Nevertheless, he was grateful to the author for closing the book with the promise of an interminable adventure to come; many a time he was tempted to take up his pen and literally finish the tale as had been promised, and he undoubtedly would have done so, and would have succeeded at it very well, if his thoughts had not been constantly occupied with other things of greater moment.

He often talked it over with the village curate, who was a learned man, a graduate of Sigüenza,[5] and they would hold long discussions as to who had been the better knight, Palmerin of England or Amadis of Gaul;[6] but Master Nicholas, the barber of the same village, was in the habit of saying that no one could come up to the Knight of

3. A sixteenth-century author of romances; the quotation which follows is from his *Don Florisel de Niquea*. 4. The allusion is to a romance by Jeronimo Fernández. 5. Ironical, for Sigüenza was the seat of a minor and discredited university. 6. Heroes of two very famous romances of chivalry.

Phoebus,[7] and that if anyone *could* compare with him it was Don Galaor, brother of Amadis of Gaul, for Galaor was ready for anything—he was none of your finical knights, who went around whimpering as his brother did, and in point of valor he did not lag behind him.

In short, our gentleman became so immersed in his reading that he spent whole nights from sundown to sunup and his days from dawn to dusk in poring over his books, until, finally, from so little sleeping and so much reading, his brain dried up and he went completely out of his mind. He had filled his imagination with everything that he had read, with enchantments, knightly encounters, battles, challenges, wounds, with tales of love and its torments, and all sorts of impossible things, and as a result had come to believe that all these fictitious happenings were true; they were more real to him than anything else in the world. He would remark that the Cid Ruy Díaz had been a very good knight, but there was no comparison between him and the Knight of the Flaming Sword, who with a single backward stroke had cut in half two fierce and monstrous giants. He preferred Bernardo del Carpio, who at Roncesvalles had slain Roland despite the charm[8] the latter bore, availing himself of the stratagem which Hercules employed when he strangled Antaeus, the son of Earth, in his arms.[9]

He had much good to say for Morgante[1] who, though he belonged to the haughty, overbearing race of giants, was of an affable disposition and well brought up. But, above all, he cherished an admiration for Rinaldo of Montalbán,[2] especially as he beheld him sallying forth from his castle to rob all those that crossed his path, or when he thought of him overseas stealing the image of Mohammed which, so the story has it, was all of gold. And he would have liked very well to have had his fill of kicking that traitor Galalón,[3] a privilege for which he would have given his housekeeper with his niece thrown into the bargain.

At last, when his wits were gone beyond repair, he came to conceive the strangest idea that ever occurred to any madman in this world. It now appeared to him fitting and necessary, in order to win a greater amount of honor for himself and serve his country at the same time, to become a knight-errant and roam the world on horseback, in a suit of armor; he would go in quest of adventures, by way

7. Or Knight of the Sun. Heroes of romances customarily adopted emblematic names and also changed them according to circumstances. See in the following paragraph the reference to the Knight of the Flaming Sword. 8. The magic gift of invulnerability. 9. The mythological Antaeus was invulnerable as long as he maintained contact with his mother, Earth; Hercules killed him while holding him raised in his arms. 1. In Pulci's *Morgante maggiore*, a comic-epic poem of the Italian Renaissance. 2. In Boiardo's *Roland in Love (Orlando innamorato)* and Ariosto's *Roland Mad (Orlando furioso)*, romantic and comic-epic poems of the Italian Renaissance. Rinaldo is Roland's cousin. 3. Ganelon, the villain in the Charlemagne legend who betrayed the French at Roncesvalles.

of putting into practice all that he had read in his books; he would right every manner of wrong, placing himself in situations of the greatest peril such as would redound to the eternal glory of his name. As a reward for his valor and the might of his arm, the poor fellow could already see himself crowned Emperor of Trebizond at the very least; and so, carried away by the strange pleasure that he found in such thoughts as these, he at once set about putting his plan into effect.

The first thing he did was to burnish up some old pieces of armor, left him by his great-grandfather, which for ages had lain in a corner, moldering and forgotten. He polished and adjusted them as best he could, and then he noticed that one very important thing was lacking: there was no closed helmet, but only a morion, or visorless headpiece, with turned up brim of the kind foot soldiers wore. His ingenuity, however, enabled him to remedy this, and he proceeded to fashion out of cardboard a kind of half-helmet, which, when attached to the morion, gave the appearance of a whole one. True, when he went to see if it was strong enough to withstand a good slashing blow, he was somewhat disappointed; for when he drew his sword and gave it a couple of thrusts, he succeeded only in undoing a whole week's labor. The ease with which he had hewed it to bits disturbed him no little, and he decided to make it over. This time he placed a few strips of iron on the inside, and then, convinced that it was strong enough, refrained from putting it to any further test; instead, he adopted it then and there as the finest helmet ever made.

After this, he went out to have a look at his nag; and although the animal had more *cuartos*, or cracks, in its hoof than there are quarters in a real,[4] and more blemishes than Gonela's steed which *tantum pellis et ossa fuit*,[5] it nonetheless looked to its master like a far better horse than Alexander's Bucephalus or the Babieca of the Cid.[6] He spent all of four days in trying to think up a name for his mount; for—so he told himself—seeing that it belonged to so famous and worthy a knight, there was no reason why it should not have a name of equal renown. The kind of name he wanted was one that would at once indicate what the nag had been before it came to belong to a knight-errant and what its present status was; for it stood to reason that, when the master's worldly condition changed, his horse also ought to have a famous, high-sounding appellation, one suited to the new order of things and the new profession that it was to follow.

After he in his memory and imagination had made up, struck out, and discarded many names, now adding to and now subtracting from the list, he finally hit upon "Rocinante," a name that impressed him as being sonorous and at the same time indicative of what the steed

4. A coin (about five cents); a *cuarto* was one eighth of a *real*. 5. Was so much skin and bones. 6. "The chief," Ruy Diaz, celebrated hero of the twelfth-century *Poema del Cid*.

had been when it was but a hack, whereas now it was nothing other than the first and foremost of all the hacks[7] in the world.

Having found a name for his horse that pleased his fancy, he then desired to do as much for himself, and this required another week, and by the end of that period he had made up his mind that he was henceforth to be known as Don Quixote, which, as has been stated, has led the authors of this veracious history to assume that his real name must undoubtedly have been Quijada, and not Quesada as others would have it. But remembering that the valiant Amadis was not content to call himself that and nothing more, but added the name of his kingdom and fatherland that he might make it famous also, and thus came to take the name Amadis of Gaul, so our good knight chose to add his place of origin and become "Don Quixote de la Mancha"; for by this means, as he saw it, he was making very plain his lineage and was conferring honor upon his country by taking its name as his own.

And so, having polished up his armor and made the morion over into a closed helmet, and having given himself and his horse a name, he naturally found but one thing lacking still: he must seek out a lady of whom he could become enamored; for a knight-errant without a lady-love was like a tree without leaves or fruit, a body without a soul.

"If," he said to himself, "as a punishment for my sins or by a stroke of fortune I should come upon some giant hereabouts, a thing that very commonly happens to knights-errant, and if I should slay him in a hand-to-hand encounter or perhaps cut him in two, or, finally, if I should vanquish and subdue him, would it not be well to have someone to whom I may send him as a present, in order that he, if he is living, may come in, fall upon his knees in front of my sweet lady, and say in a humble and submissive tone of voice, 'I, lady, am the giant Caraculiambro, lord of the island Malindrania, who has been overcome in single combat by that knight who never can be praised enough, Don Quixote de la Mancha, the same who sent me to present myself before your Grace that your Highness may dispose of me as you see fit'?"

Oh, how our good knight reveled in this speech, and more than ever when he came to think of the name that he should give his lady! As the story goes, there was a very good-looking farm girl who lived near by, with whom he had once been smitten, although it is generally believed that she never knew or suspected it. Her name was Aldonza Lorenzo, and it seemed to him that she was the one upon whom he should bestow the title of mistress of his thoughts. For her he wished a name that should not be incongruous with his own and

7. In Spanish, *rocin*.

that would convey the suggestion of a princess or a great lady; and, accordingly, he resolved to call her "Dulcinea del Toboso," she being a native of that place. A musical name to his ears, out of the ordinary and significant, like the others he had chosen for himself and his appurtenances.

CHAPTER 2

Which treats of the first sally that the ingenious Don Quixote made from his native heath.

Having, then, made all these preparations, he did not wish to lose any time in putting his plan into effect, for he could not but blame himself for what the world was losing by his delay, so many were the wrongs that were to be righted, the grievances to be redressed, the abuses to be done away with, and the duties to be performed. Accordingly, without informing anyone of his intention and without letting anyone see him, he set out one morning before daybreak on one of those very hot days in July. Donning all his armor, mounting Rocinante, adjusting his ill-contrived helmet, bracing his shield on his arm, and taking up his lance, he sallied forth by the back gate of his stable yard into the open countryside. It was with great contentment and joy that he saw how easily he had made a beginning toward the fulfillment of his desire.

No sooner was he out on the plain, however, than a terrible thought assailed him, one that all but caused him to abandon the enterprise he had undertaken. This occurred when he suddenly remembered that he had never formally been dubbed a knight, and so, in accordance with the law of knighthood, was not permitted to bear arms against one who had a right to that title. And even if he had been, as a novice knight he would have had to wear white armor, without any device on his shield, until he should have earned one by his exploits. These thoughts led him to waver in his purpose, but, madness prevailing over reason, he resolved to have himself knighted by the first person he met, as many others had done if what he had read in those books that he had at home was true. And so far as white armor was concerned, he would scour his own the first chance that offered until it shone whiter than any ermine. With this he became more tranquil and continued on his way, letting his horse take whatever path it chose, for he believed that therein lay the very essence of adventures.

And so we find our newly fledged adventurer jogging along and talking to himself. "Undoubtedly," he is saying, "in the days to come, when the true history of my famous deeds is published, the learned chronicler who records them, when he comes to describe my first sally so early in the morning, will put down something like this: 'No

sooner had the rubicund Apollo spread over the face of the broad and spacious earth the gilded filaments of his beauteous locks, and no sooner had the little singing birds of painted plumage greeted with their sweet and mellifluous harmony the coming of the Dawn, who, leaving the soft couch of her jealous spouse, now showed herself to mortals at all the doors and balconies of the horizon that bounds La Mancha—no sooner had this happened than the famous knight, Don Quixote de la Mancha, forsaking his own downy bed and mounting his famous steed, Rocinante, fared forth and began riding over the ancient and famous Campo de Montiel.' "[8]

And this was the truth, for he was indeed riding over that stretch of plain.

"O happy age and happy century," he went on, "in which my famous exploits shall be published, exploits worthy of being engraved in bronze, sculptured in marble, and depicted in paintings for the benefit of posterity. O wise magician, whoever you be, to whom shall fall the task of chronicling this extraordinary history of mine! I beg of you not to forget my good Rocinante, eternal companion of my wayfarings and my wanderings."

Then, as though he really had been in love: "O Princess Dulcinea, lady of this captive heart! Much wrong have you done me in thus sending me forth with your reproaches and sternly commanding me not to appear in your beauteous presence. O lady, deign to be mindful of this your subject who endures so many woes for the love of you."

And so he went on, stringing together absurdities, all of a kind that his books had taught him, imitating insofar as he was able the language of their authors. He rode slowly, and the sun came up so swiftly and with so much heat that it would have been sufficient to melt his brains if he had had any. He had been on the road almost the entire day without anything happening that is worthy of being set down here; and he was on the verge of despair, for he wished to meet someone at once with whom he might try the valor of his good right arm. Certain authors say that his first adventure was that of Puerto Lápice, while others state that it was that of the windmills; but in this particular instance I am in a position to affirm what I have read in the annals of La Mancha; and that is to the effect that he went all that day until nightfall, when he and his hack found themselves tired to death and famished. Gazing all around him to see if he could discover some castle or shepherd's hut where he might take shelter and attend to his pressing needs, he caught sight of an inn not far off the road along which they were traveling, and this to him was like a star guiding him not merely to the gates, but rather, let us

8. Famous because it had been the scene of a battle in 1369.

say, to the palace of redemption. Quickening his pace, he came up to it just as night was falling.

By chance there stood in the doorway two lasses of the sort known as "of the district"; they were on their way to Seville in the company of some mule drivers who were spending the night in the inn. Now, everything that this adventurer of ours thought, saw, or imagined seemed to him to be directly out of one of the storybooks he had read, and so, when he caught sight of the inn, it at once became a castle with its four turrets and its pinnacles of gleaming silver, not to speak of the drawbridge and moat and all the other things that are commonly supposed to go with a castle. As he rode up to it, he accordingly reined in Rocinante and sat there waiting for a dwarf to appear upon the battlements and blow his trumpet by way of announcing the arrival of a knight. The dwarf, however, was slow in coming, and as Rocinante was anxious to reach the stable, Don Quixote drew up to the door of the hostelry and surveyed the two merry maidens, who to him were a pair of beauteous damsels or gracious ladies taking their ease at the castle gate.

And then a swineherd came along, engaged in rounding up his drove of hogs—for, without any apology, that is what they were. He gave a blast on his horn to bring them together, and this at once became for Don Quixote just what he wished it to be: some dwarf who was heralding his coming; and so it was with a vast deal of satisfaction that he presented himself before the ladies in question, who, upon beholding a man in full armor like this, with lance and buckler, were filled with fright and made as if to flee indoors. Realizing that they were afraid, Don Quixote raised his pasteboard visor and revealed his withered, dust-covered face.

"Do not flee, your Ladyships," he said to them in a courteous manner and gentle voice. "You need not fear that any wrong will be done you, for it is not in accordance with the order of knighthood which I profess to wrong anyone, much less such highborn damsels as your appearance shows you to be."

The girls looked at him, endeavoring to scan his face, which was half hidden by his ill-made visor. Never having heard women of their profession called damsels before, they were unable to restrain their laughter, at which Don Quixote took offense.

"Modesty," he observed, "well becomes those with the dower of beauty, and, moreover, laughter that has not good cause is a very foolish thing. But I do not say this to be discourteous or to hurt your feelings; my only desire is to serve you."

The ladies did not understand what he was talking about, but felt more than ever like laughing at our knight's unprepossessing figure. This increased his annoyance, and there is no telling what would have happened if at that moment the innkeeper had not come out.

He was very fat and very peaceably inclined; but upon sighting this grotesque personage clad in bits of armor that were quite as oddly matched as were his bridle, lance, buckler, and corselet, mine host was not at all indisposed to join the lasses in their merriment. He was suspicious, however, of all this paraphernalia and decided that it would be better to keep a civil tongue in his head.

"If, Sir Knight," he said, "your Grace desires a lodging, aside from a bed—for there is none to be had in this inn—you will find all else that you may want in great abundance."

When Don Quixote saw how humble the governor of the castle was—for he took the innkeeper and his inn to be no less than that—he replied, "For me, Sir Castellan,[9] anything will do, since

> Arms are my only ornament,
> My only rest the fight, etc."

The landlord thought that the knight had called him a castellan because he took him for one of those worthies of Castile, whereas the truth was, he was an Andalusian from the beach of Sanlúcar, no less a thief than Cacus[1] himself, and as full of tricks as a student or a page boy.

"In that case," he said,

> "Your bed will be the solid rock,
> Your sleep: to watch all night.

This being so, you may be assured of finding beneath this roof enough to keep you awake for a whole year, to say nothing of a single night."

With this, he went up to hold the stirrup for Don Quixote, who encountered much difficulty in dismounting, not having broken his fast all day long. The knight then directed his host to take good care of his steed, as it was the best piece of horseflesh in all the world. The innkeeper looked it over, and it did not impress him as being half as good as Don Quixote had said it was. Having stabled the animal, he came back to see what his guest would have and found the latter being relieved of his armor by the damsels, who by now had made their peace with the new arrival. They had already removed his breastplate and backpiece but had no idea how they were going to open his gorget or get his improvised helmet off. That piece of armor had been tied on with green ribbons which it would be necessary to cut, since the knots could not be undone, but he would not hear of this, and so spent all the rest of that night with his headpiece

9. The original, *castellano*, means both "castellan" and "Castilian." 1. In Roman mythology he stole some of the cattle of Hercules, concealing the theft by having them walk backward into his cave, but was finally discovered and slain.

in place, which gave him the weirdest, most laughable appearance that could be imagined.

Don Quixote fancied that these wenches who were assisting him must surely be the chatelaine and other ladies of the castle, and so proceeded to address them very gracefully and with much wit:

> Never was knight so served
> By any noble dame
> As was Don Quixote
> When from his village he came,
> With damsels to wait on his every need
> While princesses cared for his hack . . .

"By hack," he explained, "is meant my steed Rocinante, for that is his name, and mine is Don Quixote de la Mancha. I had no intention of revealing my identity until my exploits done in your service should have made me known to you; but the necessity of adapting to present circumstances that old ballad of Lancelot has led to your becoming acquainted with it prematurely. However, the time will come when your Ladyships shall command and I will obey and with the valor of my good right arm show you how eager I am to serve you."

The young women were not used to listening to speeches like this and had not a word to say, but merely asked him if he desired to eat anything.

"I could eat a bite of something, yes," replied Don Quixote. "Indeed, I feel that a little food would go very nicely just now."

He thereupon learned that, since it was Friday, there was nothing to be had in all the inn except a few portions of codfish, which in Castile is called *abadejo*, in Andalusia *bacalao*, in some places *curadillo*, and elsewhere *truchuella* or small trout. Would his Grace, then, have some small trout, seeing that was all there was that they could offer him?

"If there are enough of them," said Don Quixote, "they will take the place of a trout, for it is all one to me whether I am given in change eight reales or one piece of eight. What is more, those small trout may be like veal, which is better than beef, or like kid, which is better than goat. But however that may be, bring them on at once, for the weight and burden of arms is not to be borne without inner sustenance."

Placing the table at the door of the hostelry, in the open air, they brought the guest a portion of badly soaked and worse cooked codfish and a piece of bread as black and moldy as the suit of armor that he wore. It was a mirth-provoking sight to see him eat, for he still had

his helmet on with his visor fastened, which made it impossible for him to put anything into his mouth with his hands, and so it was necessary for one of the girls to feed him. As for giving him anything to drink, that would have been out of the question if the innkeeper had not hollowed out a reed, placing one end in Don Quixote's mouth while through the other end he poured the wine. All this the knight bore very patiently rather than have them cut the ribbons of his helmet.

At this point a gelder of pigs approached the inn, announcing his arrival with four or five blasts on his horn, all of which confirmed Don Quixote in the belief that this was indeed a famous castle, for what was this if not music that they were playing for him? The fish was trout, the bread was the finest, the wenches were ladies, and the innkeeper was the castellan. He was convinced that he had been right in his resolve to sally forth and roam the world at large, but there was one thing that still distressed him greatly, and that was the fact that he had not as yet been dubbed a knight; as he saw it, he could not legitimately engage in any adventure until he had received the order of knighthood.

CHAPTER 3

Of the amusing manner in which Don Quixote had himself dubbed a knight.

Wearied of his thoughts, Don Quixote lost no time over the scanty repast which the inn afforded him. When he had finished, he summoned the landlord and, taking him out to the stable, closed the doors and fell on his knees in front of him.

"Never, valiant knight," he said, "shall I arise from here until you have courteously granted me the boon I seek, one which will redound to your praise and to the good of the human race."

Seeing his guest at his feet and hearing him utter such words as these, the innkeeper could only stare at him in bewilderment, not knowing what to say or do. It was in vain that he entreated him to rise, for Don Quixote refused to do so until his request had been granted.

"I expected nothing less of your great magnificence, my lord," the latter then continued, "and so I may tell you that the boon I asked and which you have so generously conceded me is that tomorrow morning you dub me a knight. Until that time, in the chapel of this your castle, I will watch over my armor, and when morning comes, as I have said, that which I so desire shall then be done, in order that I may lawfully go to the four corners of the earth in quest of

adventures and to succor the needy, which is the chivalrous duty of all knights-errant such as I who long to engage in deeds of high emprise."

The innkeeper, as we have said, was a sharp fellow. He already had a suspicion that his guest was not quite right in the head, and he was now convinced of it as he listened to such remarks as these. However, just for the sport of it, he determined to humor him; and so he went on to assure Don Quixote that he was fully justified in his request and that such a desire and purpose was only natural on the part of so distinguished a knight as his gallant bearing plainly showed him to be.

He himself, the landlord added, when he was a young man, had followed the same honorable calling. He had gone through various parts of the world seeking adventures, among the places he had visited being the Percheles of Málaga, the Isles of Riarán, the District of Seville, the Little Market Place of Segovia, the Olivera of Valencia, the Rondilla of Granada, the beach of Sanlúcar, the Horse Fountain of Cordova, the Small Taverns of Toledo, and numerous other localities[2] where his nimble feet and light fingers had found much exercise. He had done many wrongs, cheated many widows, ruined many maidens, and swindled not a few minors until he had finally come to be known in almost all the courts and tribunals that are to be found in the whole of Spain.

At last he had retired to his castle here, where he lived upon his own income and the property of others; and here it was that he received all knights-errant of whatever quality and condition, simply out of the great affection that he bore them and that they might share with him their possessions in payment of his good will. Unfortunately, in this castle there was no chapel where Don Quixote might keep watch over his arms, for the old chapel had been torn down to make way for a new one; but in case of necessity, he felt quite sure that such a vigil could be maintained anywhere, and for the present occasion the courtyard of the castle would do; and then in the morning, please God, the requisite ceremony could be performed and his guest be duly dubbed a knight, as much a knight as anyone ever was.

He then inquired if Don Quixote had any money on his person, and the latter replied that he had not a cent, for in all the storybooks he had never read of knights-errant carrying any. But the innkeeper told him he was mistaken on this point: supposing the authors of those stories had not set down the fact in black and white, that was because they did not deem it necessary to speak of things as indispensable as money and a clean shirt, and one was not to assume for that reason that those knights-errant of whom the books were so full

2. All the places mentioned were reputed to be haunts of robbers and rogues.

did not have any. He looked upon it as an absolute certainty that they all had well-stuffed purses, that they might be prepared for any emergency; and they also carried shirts and a little box of ointment for healing the wounds that they received.

For when they had been wounded in combat on the plains and in desert places, there was not always someone at hand to treat them, unless they had some skilled enchanter for a friend who then would succor them, bringing to them through the air, upon a cloud, some damsel or dwarf bearing a vial of water of such virtue that one had but to taste a drop of it and at once his wounds were healed and he was as sound as if he had never received any.

But even if this was not the case, knights in times past saw to it that their squires were well provided with money and other necessities, such as lint and ointment for healing purposes; and if they had no squires—which happened very rarely—they themselves carried these objects in a pair of saddlebags very cleverly attached to their horses' croups in such a manner as to be scarcely noticeable, as if they held something of greater importance than that, for among the knights-errant saddlebags as a rule were not favored. Accordingly, he would advise the novice before him, and inasmuch as the latter was soon to be his godson, he might even command him, that henceforth he should not go without money and a supply of those things that have been mentioned, as he would find that they came in useful at a time when he least expected it.

Don Quixote promised to follow his host's advice punctiliously; and so it was arranged that he should watch his armor in a large barnyard at one side of the inn. He gathered up all the pieces, placed them in a horse trough that stood near the well, and, bracing his shield on his arm, took up his lance and with stately demeanor began pacing up and down in front of the trough even as night was closing in.

The innkeeper informed his other guests of what was going on, of Don Quixote's vigil and his expectation of being dubbed a knight; and, marveling greatly at so extraordinary a variety of madness, they all went out to see for themselves and stood there watching from a distance. For a while the knight-to-be, with tranquil mien, would merely walk up and down; then, leaning on his lance, he would pause to survey his armor, gazing fixedly at it for a considerable length of time. As has been said, it was night now, but the brightness of the moon, which well might rival that of Him who lent it, was such that everything the novice knight did was plainly visible to all.

At this point one of the mule drivers who were stopping at the inn came out to water his drove, and in order to do this it was necessary to remove the armor from the trough.

As he saw the man approaching, Don Quixote cried out to him,

"O bold knight, whoever you may be, who thus would dare to lay hands upon the accouterments of the most valiant man of arms that ever girded on a sword, look well what you do and desist if you do not wish to pay with your life for your insolence!"

The muleteer gave no heed to these words—it would have been better for his own sake had he done so—but, taking it up by the straps, tossed the armor some distance from him. When he beheld this, Don Quixote rolled his eyes heavenward and with his thoughts apparently upon his Dulcinea exclaimed, "Succor, O lady mine, this vassal heart in this my first encounter; let not your favor and protection fail me in the peril in which for the first time I now find myself."

With these and other similar words, he loosed his buckler, grasped his lance in both his hands, and let the mule driver have such a blow on the head that the man fell to the ground stunned; and had it been followed by another one, he would have had no need of a surgeon to treat him. Having done this, Don Quixote gathered up his armor and resumed his pacing up and down with the same calm manner as before. Not long afterward, without knowing what had happened—for the first muleteer was still lying there unconscious—another came out with the same intention of watering his mules, and he too was about to remove the armor from the trough when the knight, without saying a word or asking favor of anyone, once more adjusted his buckler and raised his lance, and if he did not break the second mule driver's head to bits, he made more than three pieces of it by dividing it into quarters. At the sound of the fracas everybody in the inn came running out, among them the innkeeper; whereupon Don Quixote again lifted his buckler and laid his hand on his sword.

"O lady of beauty," he said, "strength and vigor of this fainting heart of mine! Now is the time to turn the eyes of your greatness upon this captive knight of yours who must face so formidable an adventure."

By this time he had worked himself up to such a pitch of anger that if all the mule drivers in the world had attacked him he would not have taken one step backward. The comrades of the wounded men, seeing the plight those two were in, now began showering stones on Don Quixote, who shielded himself as best he could with his buckler, although he did not dare stir from the trough for fear of leaving his armor unprotected. The landlord, meanwhile, kept calling for them to stop, for he had told them that this was a madman who would be sure to go free even though he killed them all. The knight was shouting louder than ever, calling them knaves and traitors. As for the lord of the castle, who allowed knights-errant to be treated in this fashion, he was a lowborn villain, and if he, Don

Quixote, had but received the order of knighthood, he would make him pay for his treachery.

"As for you others, vile and filthy rabble, I take no account of you; you may stone me or come forward and attack me all you like; you shall see what the reward of your folly and insolence will be."

He spoke so vigorously and was so undaunted in bearing as to strike terror in those who would assail him; and for this reason, and owing also to the persuasions of the innkeeper, they ceased stoning him. He then permitted them to carry away the wounded, and went back to watching his armor with the same tranquil, unconcerned air that he had previously displayed.

The landlord was none too well pleased with these mad pranks on the part of his guest and determined to confer upon him that accursed order of knighthood before something else happened. Going up to him, he begged Don Quixote's pardon for the insolence which, without his knowledge, had been shown the knight by those of low degree. They, however, had been well punished for their impudence. As he had said, there was no chapel in this castle, but for that which remained to be done there was no need of any. According to what he had read of the ceremonial of the order, there was nothing to this business of being dubbed a knight except a slap on the neck and one across the shoulder, and that could be performed in the middle of a field as well as anywhere else. All that was required was for the knight-to-be to keep watch over his armor for a couple of hours, and Don Quixote had been at it more than four. The latter believed all this and announced that he was ready to obey and get the matter over with as speedily as possible. Once dubbed a knight, if he were attacked one more time, he did not think that he would leave a single person in the castle alive, save such as he might command be spared, at the bidding of his host and out of respect to him.

Thus warned, and fearful that it might occur, the castellan brought out the book in which he had jotted down the hay and barley for which the mule drivers owed him, and, accompanied by a lad bearing the butt of a candle and the two aforesaid damsels, he came up to where Don Quixote stood and commanded him to kneel. Reading from the account book—as if he had been saying a prayer—he raised his hand and, with the knight's own sword, gave him a good thwack upon the neck and another lusty one upon the shoulder, muttering all the while between his teeth. He then directed one of the ladies to gird on Don Quixote's sword, which she did with much gravity and composure; for it was all they could do to keep from laughing at every point of the ceremony, but the thought of the knight's prowess which they had already witnessed was sufficient to restrain their mirth.

"May God give your Grace much good fortune," said the worthy lady as she attached the blade, "and prosper you in battle."

Don Quixote thereupon inquired her name, for he desired to know to whom it was he was indebted for the favor he had just received, that he might share with her some of the honor which his strong right arm was sure to bring him. She replied very humbly that her name was Tolosa and that she was the daughter of a shoemaker, a native of Toledo who lived in the stalls of Sancho Bicnaya.[3] To this the knight replied that she would do him a very great favor if from then on she would call herself Doña Tolosa, and she promised to do so. The other girl then helped him on with his spurs, and practically the same conversation was repeated. When asked her name, she stated that it was La Molinera and added that she was the daughter of a respectable miller of Antequera. Don Quixote likewise requested her to assume the "don" and become Doña Molinera and offered to render her further services and favors.

These unheard-of ceremonies having been dispatched in great haste, Don Quixote could scarcely wait to be astride his horse and sally forth on his quest for adventures. Saddling and mounting Rocinante, he embraced his host, thanking him for the favor of having dubbed him a knight and saying such strange things that it would be quite impossible to record them here. The innkeeper, who was only too glad to be rid of him, answered with a speech that was no less flowery, though somewhat shorter, and he did not so much as ask him for the price of a lodging, so glad was he to see him go.

CHAPTER 4

Of what happened to our knight when he sallied forth from the inn.

Day was dawning when Don Quixote left the inn, so well satisfied with himself, so gay, so exhilarated, that the very girths of his steed all but burst with joy. But remembering the advice which his host had given him concerning the stock of necessary provisions that he should carry with him, especially money and shirts, he decided to turn back home and supply himself with whatever he needed, and with a squire as well; he had in mind a farmer who was a neighbor of his, a poor man and the father of a family but very well suited to fulfill the duties of squire to a man of arms. With this thought in mind he guided Rocinante toward the village once more, and that animal, realizing that he was homeward bound, began stepping out at so lively a gait that it seemed as if his feet barely touched the ground.

The knight had not gone far when from a hedge on his right hand he heard the sound of faint moans as of someone in distress.

"Thanks be to Heaven," he at once exclaimed, "for the favor it

3. An old square in Toledo.

has shown me by providing me so soon with an opportunity to fulfill the obligations that I owe to my profession, a chance to pluck the fruit of my worthy desires. Those, undoubtedly, are the cries of someone in distress, who stands in need of my favor and assistance."

Turning Rocinante's head, he rode back to the place from which the cries appeared to be coming. Entering the wood, he had gone but a few paces when he saw a mare attached to an oak, while bound to another tree was a lad of fifteen or thereabouts, naked from the waist up. It was he who was uttering the cries, and not without reason, for there in front of him was a lusty farmer with a girdle who was giving him many lashes, each one accompanied by a reproof and a command, "Hold your tongue and keep your eyes open"; and the lad was saying, "I won't do it again, sir; by God's Passion, I won't do it again. I promise you that after this I'll take better care of the flock."

When he saw what was going on, Don Quixote was very angry. "Discourteous knight," he said, "it ill becomes you to strike one who is powerless to defend himself. Mount your steed and take your lance in hand"—for there was a lance leaning against the oak to which the mare was tied—"and I will show you what a coward you are."

The farmer, seeing before him this figure all clad in armor and brandishing a lance, decided that he was as good as done for. "Sir Knight," he said, speaking very mildly, "this lad that I am punishing here is my servant; he tends a flock of sheep which I have in these parts and he is so careless that every day one of them shows up missing. And when I punish him for his carelessness or his roguery, he says it is just because I am a miser and do not want to pay him the wages that I owe him, but I swear to God and upon my soul that he lies."

"It is you who lie, base lout," said Don Quixote, "and in my presence; and by the sun that gives us light, I am minded to run you through with this lance. Pay him and say no more about it, or else, by the God who rules us, I will make an end of you and annihilate you here and now. Release him at once."

The farmer hung his head and without a word untied his servant. Don Quixote then asked the boy how much has master owed him. For nine months' work, the lad told him, at seven reales the month. The knight did a little reckoning and found that this came to sixty-three reales; whereupon he ordered the farmer to pay over the money immediately, as he valued his life. The cowardly bumpkin replied that, facing death as he was and by the oath that he had sworn—he had not sworn any oath as yet—it did not amount to as much as that; for there were three pairs of shoes which he had given the lad that were to be deducted and taken into account, and a real for two bloodlettings when his servant was ill.

"That," said Don Quixote, "is all very well; but let the shoes and the blood-lettings go for the undeserved lashings which you have given him; if he has worn out the leather of the shoes that you paid for, you have taken the hide off his body, and if the barber let a little blood for him when he was sick,[4] you have done the same when he was well; and so far as that goes, he owes you nothing."

"But the trouble is, Sir Knight, that I have no money with me. Come along home with me, Andrés, and I will pay you real for real."

"I go home with him!" cried the lad. "Never in the world! No, sir, I would not even think of it; for once he has me alone he'll flay me like a St. Bartholomew."

"He will do nothing of the sort," said Don Quixote. "It is sufficient for me to command, and he out of respect will obey. Since he has sworn to me by the order of knighthood which he has received, I shall let him go free and I will guarantee that you will be paid."

"But look, your Grace," the lad remonstrated, "my master is no knight; he has never received any order of knighthood whatsoever. He is Juan Haldudo, a rich man and a resident of Quintanar."

"That makes little difference," declared Don Quixote, "for there may well be knights among the Haldudos, all the more so in view of the fact that every man is the son of his works."

"That is true enough," said Andrés, "but this master of mine—of what works is he the son, seeing that he refuses me the pay for my sweat and labor?"

"I do not refuse you, brother Andrés," said the farmer. "Do me the favor of coming with me, and I swear to you by all the orders of knighthood that there are in this world to pay you, as I have said, real for real, and perfumed at that."

"You can dispense with the perfume," said Don Quixote; "just give him the reales and I shall be satisfied. And see to it that you keep your oath, or by the one that I myself have sworn I shall return to seek you out and chastise you, and I shall find you though you be as well hidden as a lizard. In case you would like to know who it is that is giving you this command in order that you may feel the more obliged to comply with it, I may tell you that I am the valorous Don Quixote de la Mancha, righter of wrongs and injustices; and so, God be with you, and do not fail to do as you have promised, under that penalty that I have pronounced."

As he said this, he put spurs to Rocinante and was off. The farmer watched him go, and when he saw that Don Quixote was out of the wood and out of sight, he turned to his servant, Andrés.

4. Barbers were also surgeons.

"Come here, my son," he said. "I want to pay you what I owe you as that righter of wrongs has commanded me."

"Take my word for it," replied Andrés, "your Grace would do well to observe the command of that good knight—may he live a thousand years; for as he is valorous and a righteous judge, if you don't pay me then, by Rocque,[5] he will come back and do just what he said!"

"And I will give you my word as well," said the farmer; "but seeing that I am so fond of you, I wish to increase the debt, that I may owe you all the more." And with this he seized the lad's arm and bound him to the tree again and flogged him within an inch of his life. "There, Master Andrés, you may call on that righter of wrongs if you like and you will see whether or not he rights this one. I do not think I have quite finished with you yet, for I have a good mind to flay you alive as you feared."

Finally, however, he unbound him and told him he might go look for that judge of his to carry out the sentence that had been pronounced. Andrés left, rather down in the mouth, swearing that he would indeed go look for the brave Don Quixote de la Mancha; he would relate to him everything that had happened, point by point, and the farmer would have to pay for it seven times over. But for all that, he went away weeping, and his master stood laughing at him.

Such was the manner in which the valorous knight righted this particular wrong. Don Quixote was quite content with the way everything had turned out; it seemed to him that he had made a very fortunate and noble beginning with his deeds of chivalry, and he was very well satisfied with himself as he jogged along in the direction of his native village, talking to himself in a low voice all the while.

"Well may'st thou call thyself fortunate today, above all other women on earth, O fairest of the fair, Dulcinea del Toboso! Seeing that it has fallen to thy lot to hold subject and submissive to thine every wish and pleasure so valiant and renowned a knight as Don Quixote de la Mancha is and shall be, who, as everyone knows, yesterday received the order of knighthood and this day has righted the greatest wrong and grievance that injustice ever conceived or cruelty ever perpetrated, by snatching the lash from the hand of the merciless foeman who was so unreasonably flogging that tender child."

At this point he came to a road that forked off in four directions, and at once he thought of those crossroads where knights-errant would pause to consider which path they should take. By way of imitating them, he halted there for a while; and when he had given the subject much thought, he slackened Rocinante's rein and let the hack follow

5. The origin of the oath is unknown.

its inclination. The animal's first impulse was to make straight for its own stable. After they had gone a couple of miles or so Don Quixote caught sight of what appeared to be a great throng of people, who, as was afterward learned, were certain merchants of Toledo on their way to purchase silk at Murcia. There were six of them altogether with their sunshades, accompanied by four attendants on horseback and three mule drivers on foot.

No sooner had he sighted them than Don Quixote imagined that he was on the brink of some fresh adventure. He was eager to imitate those passages at arms of which he had read in his books, and here, so it seemed to him, was one made to order. And so, with bold and knightly bearing, he settled himself firmly in the stirrups, couched his lance, covered himself with his shield, and took up a position in the middle of the road, where he paused to wait for those other knights-errant (for such he took them to be) to come up to him. When they were near enough to see and hear plainly, Don Quixote raised his voice and made a haughty gesture.

"Let everyone," he cried, "stand where he is, unless everyone will confess that there is not in all the world a more beauteous damsel than the Empress of La Mancha, the peerless Dulcinea del Toboso."

Upon hearing these words and beholding the weird figure who uttered them, the merchants stopped short. From the knight's appearance and his speech they knew at once that they had to deal with a madman; but they were curious to know what was meant by that confession that was demanded of them, and one of their number who was somewhat of a jester and a very clever fellow raised his voice.

"Sir Knight," he said, "we do not know who this beauteous lady is of whom you speak. Show her to us, and if she is as beautiful as you say, then we will right willingly and without any compulsion confess the truth as you have asked of us."

"If I were to show her to you," replied Don Quixote, "what merit would there be in your confessing a truth so self-evident? The important thing is for you, without seeing her, to believe, confess, affirm, swear, and defend that truth. Otherwise, monstrous and arrogant creatures that you are, you shall do battle with me. Come on, then, one by one, as the order of knighthood prescribes; or all of you together, if you will have it so, as is the sorry custom of those of your breed. Come on, and I will await you here, for I am confident that my cause is just."

"Sir Knight," responded the merchant, "I beg your Grace, in the name of all the princes here present, in order that we may not have upon our consciences the burden of confessing a thing which we have never seen nor heard, and one, moreover, so prejudicial to the

empresses and queens of Alcarria and Estremadura,[6] that your Grace will show us some portrait of this lady, even though it be no larger than a grain of wheat, for by the thread one comes to the ball of yarn; and with this we shall remain satisfied and assured, and your Grace will likewise be content and satisfied. The truth is, I believe that we are already so much of your way of thinking that though it should show her to be blind of one eye and distilling vermilion and brimstone from the other, nevertheless, to please your Grace, we would say in her behalf all that you desire."

"She distills nothing of the sort, infamous rabble!" shouted Don Quixote, for his wrath was kindling now. "I tell you, she does not distill what you say at all, but amber and civet[7] wrapped in cotton; and she is neither one-eyed nor hunchbacked but straighter than a spindle that comes from Guadarrama. You shall pay for the great blasphemy which you have uttered against such a beauty as is my lady!"

Saying this, he came on with lowered lance against the one who had spoken, charging with such wrath and fury that if fortune had not caused Rocinante to stumble and fall in mid-career, things would have gone badly with the merchant and he would have paid for his insolent gibe. As it was, Don Quixote went rolling over the plain for some little distance, and when he tried to get to his feet, found that he was unable to do so, being too encumbered with his lance, shield, spurs, helmet, and the weight of that ancient suit of armor.

"Do not flee, cowardly ones," he cried even as he struggled to rise. "Stay, cravens, for it is not my fault but that of my steed that I am stretched out here."

One of the muleteers, who must have been an ill-natured lad, upon hearing the poor fallen knight speak so arrogantly, could not refrain from giving him an answer in the ribs. Going up to him, he took the knight's lance and broke it into bits, and then with a companion proceeded to belabor him so mercilessly that in spite of his armor they milled him like a hopper of wheat. The merchants called to them not to lay on so hard, saying that was enough and they should desist, but the mule driver by this time had warmed up to the sport and would not stop until he had vented his wrath, and, snatching up the broken pieces of the lance, he began hurling them at the wretched victim as he lay there on the ground. And through all this tempest of sticks that rained upon him Don Quixote never once closed his mouth nor ceased threatening Heaven and earth and these ruffians, for such he took them to be, who were thus mishandling him.

6. Ironical, since both were known as particularly backward regions. 7. A musky substance used as perfume, imported from Africa in cotton packings.

Finally the lad grew tired, and the merchants went their way with a good story to tell about the poor fellow who had had such a cudgeling. Finding himself alone, the knight endeavored to see if he could rise; but if this was a feat that he could not accomplish when he was sound and whole, how was he to achieve it when he had been thrashed and pounded to a pulp? Yet nonetheless he considered himself fortunate; for as he saw it, misfortunes such as this were common to knights-errant, and he put all the blame upon his horse; and if he was unable to rise, that was because his body was so bruised and battered all over.

CHAPTER 5

In which is continued the narrative of the misfortune that befell our knight.

Seeing, then, that he was indeed unable to stir, he decided to fall back upon a favorite remedy of his, which was to think of some passage or other in his books; and as it happened, the one that he in his madness now recalled was the story of Baldwin and the Marquis of Mantua, when Carloto left the former wounded upon the mountainside,[8] a tale that is known to children, not unknown to young men, celebrated and believed in by the old, and, for all of that, not any truer than the miracles of Mohammed. Moreover, it impressed him as being especially suited to the straits in which he found himself; and, accordingly, with a great show of feeling, he began rolling and tossing on the ground as he feebly gasped out the lines which the wounded knight of the wood is supposed to have uttered:

"Where art thou, lady mine,
That thou dost not grieve for my woe?
Either thou art disloyal,
Or my grief thou dost not know."

He went on reciting the old ballad until he came to the following verses:

"O noble Marquis of Mantua,
My uncle and liege lord true!"

He had reached this point when down the road came a farmer of the same village, a neighbor of his, who had been to the mill with a load of wheat. Seeing a man lying there stretched out like that, he went up to him and inquired who he was and what was the trouble that

8. The allusion is to an old ballad about Charlemagne's son Charlot (Carloto) wounding Baldwin, nephew of the Marquis of Mantua.

caused him to utter such mournful complaints. Thinking that this must undoubtedly be his uncle, the Marquis of Mantua, Don Quixote did not answer but went on with his recitation of the ballad, giving an account of the Marquis' misfortunes and the amours of his wife and the emperor's son, exactly as the ballad has it.

The farmer was astounded at hearing all these absurdities, and after removing the knight's visor which had been battered to pieces by the blows it had received, the good man bathed the victim's face, only to discover, once the dust was off, that he knew him very well.

"Señor Quijana," he said (for such must have been Don Quixote's real name when he was in his right senses and before he had given up the life of a quiet country gentleman to become a knight-errant), "who is responsible for your Grace's being in such a plight as this?"

But the knight merely went on with his ballad in response to all the questions asked of him. Perceiving that it was impossible to obtain any information from him, the farmer as best he could relieved him of his breastplate and backpiece to see if he had any wounds, but there was no blood and no mark of any sort. He then tried to lift him from the ground, and with a great deal of effort finally managed to get him astride the ass, which appeared to be the easier mount for him. Gathering up the armor, including even the splinters from the lance, he made a bundle and tied it on Rocinante's back, and, taking the horse by the reins and the ass by the halter, he started out for the village. He was worried in his mind at hearing all the foolish things that Don Quixote said, and that individual himself was far from being at ease. Unable by reason of his bruises and his soreness to sit upright on the donkey, our knight-errant kept sighing to Heaven, which led the farmer to ask him once more what it was that ailed him.

It must have been the devil himself who caused him to remember those tales that seemed to fit his own case; for at this point he forgot all about Baldwin and recalled Abindarráez, and how the governor of Antequera, Rodrigo de Narváez, had taken him prisoner and carried him off captive to his castle. Accordingly, when the countryman turned to inquire how he was and what was troubling him, Don Quixote replied with the very same words and phrases that the captive Abindarráez used in answering Rodrigo, just as he had read in the story *Diana* of Jorge de Montemayor,[9] where it is all written down, applying them very aptly to the present circumstances as the farmer went along cursing his luck for having to listen to such a lot of nonsense. Realizing that his neighbor was quite mad, he made

9. The reference is to the tale of the love of Abindarráez, a captive Moor, for the beautiful Jarifa (mentioned in the following paragraph), contained in the second edition of *Diana*, the pastoral romance by Jorge de Montemayor.

haste to reach the village that he might not have to be annoyed any longer by Don Quixote's tiresome harangue.

"Señor Don Rodrigo de Narváez," the knight was saying, "I may inform your Grace that this beautiful Jarifa of whom I speak is not the lovely Dulcinea del Toboso, in whose behalf I have done, am doing, and shall do the most famous deeds of chivalry that ever have been or will be seen in all the world."

"But, sir," replied the farmer, "sinner that I am, cannot your Grace see that I am not Don Rodrigo de Narváez nor the Marquis of Mantua, but Pedro Alonso, your neighbor? And your Grace is neither Baldwin nor Abindarráez but a respectable gentleman by the name of Señor Quijana."

"I know who I am," said Don Quixote, "and who I may be, if I choose: not only those I have mentioned but all the Twelve Peers of France and the Nine Worthies[1] as well; for the exploits of all of them together, or separately, cannot compare with mine."

With such talk as this they reached their destination just as night was falling; but the farmer decided to wait until it was a little darker in order that the badly battered gentleman might not be seen arriving in such a condition and mounted on an ass. When he thought the proper time had come, they entered the village and proceeded to Don Quixote's house, where they found everything in confusion. The curate and the barber were there, for they were great friends of the knight, and the housekeeper was speaking to them.

"Señor Licentiate Pero Pérez," she was saying, for that was the manner in which she addressed the curate, "what does your Grace think could have happened to my master? Three days now, and not a word of him, nor the hack, nor the buckler, nor the lance, nor the suit of armor. Ah, poor me! I am as certain as I am that I was born to die that it is those cursed books of chivalry he is always reading that have turned his head; for now that I recall, I have often heard him muttering to himself that he must become a knight-errant and go through the world in search of adventures. May such books as those be consigned to Satan and Barabbas,[2] for they have sent to perdition the finest mind in all La Mancha."

The niece was of the same opinion. "I may tell you, Señor Master Nicholas," she said, for that was the barber's name, "that many times my uncle would sit reading those impious tales of misadventure for two whole days and nights at a stretch; and when he was through, he would toss the book aside, lay his hand on his sword, and begin

1. In the French medieval epics the Twelve Peers (Roland, Olivier, and so on) were warriors all equal in rank forming a sort of guard of honor around Charlemagne. The Nine Worthies, in a tradition originating in France, were nine famous figures, three biblical, three classical, and three Christian (David, Hector, Alexander, Charlemagne, and so on). 2. The thief whose release, rather than that of Jesus Christ, the crowd requested when Pilate, conforming to Passover custom, was ready to have one prisoner set free.

slashing at the walls. When he was completely exhausted, he would tell us that he had just killed four giants as big as castle towers, while the sweat that poured off him was blood from the wounds that he had received in battle. He would then drink a big jug of cold water, after which he would be very calm and peaceful, saying that the water was the most precious liquid which the wise Esquife, a great magician and his friend, had brought to him. But I blame myself for everything. I should have advised your Worships of my uncle's nonsensical actions so that you could have done something about it by burning those damnable books of his before things came to such a pass; for he has many that ought to be burned as if they were heretics."

"I agree with you," said the curate, "and before tomorrow's sun has set there shall be a public *auto da fé*, and those works shall be condemned to the flames that they may not lead some other who reads them to follow the example of my good friend."

Don Quixote and the farmer overheard all this, and it was then that the latter came to understand the nature of his neighbor's affliction.

"Open the door, your Worships," the good man cried. "Open for Sir Baldwin and the Marquis of Mantua, who comes badly wounded, and for Señor Abindarráez the Moor whom the valiant Rodrigo de Narváez, governor of Antequera, brings captive."

At the sound of his voice they all ran out, recognizing at once friend, master, and uncle, who as yet was unable to get down off the donkey's back. They all ran up to embrace him.

"Wait, all of you," said Don Quixote, "for I am sorely wounded through fault of my steed. Bear me to my couch and summon, if it be possible, the wise Urganda to treat and care for my wounds."

"There!" exclaimed the housekeeper. "Plague take it! Did not my heart tell me right as to which foot my master limped on? To bed with your Grace at once, and we will take care of you without sending for that Urganda of yours. A curse, I say, and a hundred other curses, on those books of chivalry that have brought your Grace to this."

And so they carried him off to bed, but when they went to look for his wounds, they found none at all. He told them it was all the result of a great fall he had taken with Rocinante, his horse, while engaged in combating ten giants, the hugest and most insolent that were ever heard of in all the world.

"Tut, tut," said the curate. "So there are giants in the dance now, are there? Then, by the sign of the cross, I'll have them burned before nightfall tomorrow."

They had a thousand questions to put to Don Quixote, but his only answer was that they should give him something to eat and let

him sleep, for that was the most important thing of all; so they humored him in this. The curate then interrogated the farmer at great length concerning the conversation he had had with his neighbor. The peasant told him everything, all the absurd things their friend had said when he found him lying there and afterward on the way home, all of which made the licentiate more anxious than ever to do what he did the following day,[3] when he summoned Master Nicholas and went with him to Don Quixote's house.

[Fighting the Windmills and a Choleric Biscayan]

CHAPTER 7

Of the second sally of our good knight, Don Quixote de la Mancha.

. . . After that he remained at home very tranquilly for a couple of weeks, without giving sign of any desire to repeat his former madness. During that time he had the most pleasant conversations with his two old friends, the curate and the barber, on the point he had raised to the effect that what the world needed most was knights-errant and a revival of chivalry. The curate would occasionally contradict him and again would give in, for it was only by means of this artifice that he could carry on a conversation with him at all.

In the meanwhile Don Quixote was bringing his powers of persuasion to bear upon a farmer who lived near by, a good man—if this title may be applied to one who is poor—but with very few wits in his head. The short of it is, by pleas and promises, he got the hapless rustic to agree to ride forth with him and serve him as his squire. Among other things, Don Quixote told him that he ought to be more than willing to go, because no telling what adventure might occur which would win them an island, and then he (the farmer) would be left to be the governor of it. As a result of these and other similar assurances, Sancho Panza forsook his wife and children and consented to take upon himself the duties of squire to his neighbor.

Next, Don Quixote set out to raise some money, and by selling this thing and pawning that and getting the worst of the bargain always, he finally scraped together a reasonable amount. He also asked a friend of his for the loan of a buckler and patched up his broken helmet as well as he could. He advised his squire, Sancho, of the day and hour when they were to take to the road and told him to see to laying in a supply of those things that were most necessary, and, above all, not to forget the saddlebags. Sancho replied that he would see to all this and added that he was also thinking of taking

3. What he and the barber did was to burn most of Don Quixote's library.

along with him a very good ass that he had, as he was not much used to going on foot.

With regard to the ass, Don Quixote had to do a little thinking, trying to recall if any knight-errant had ever had a squire thus asininely mounted. He could not think of any, but nevertheless he decided to take Sancho with the intention of providing him with a nobler steed as soon as occasion offered; he had but to appropriate the horse of the first discourteous knight he met. Having furnished himself with shirts and all the other things that the innkeeper had recommended, he and Panza rode forth one night unseen by anyone and without taking leave of wife and children, housekeeper or niece. They went so far that by the time morning came they were safe from discovery had a hunt been started for them.

Mounted on his ass, Sancho Panza rode along like a patriarch, with saddlebags and flask, his mind set upon becoming governor of that island that his master had promised him. Don Quixote determined to take the same route and road over the Campo de Montiel that he had followed on his first journey; but he was not so uncomfortable this time, for it was early morning and the sun's rays fell upon them slantingly and accordingly did not tire them too much.

"Look, Sir Knight-errant," said Sancho, "your Grace should not forget that island you promised me; for no matter how big it is, I'll be able to govern it right enough."

"I would have you know, friend Sancho Panza," replied Don Quixote, "that among the knights-errant of old it was a very common custom to make their squires governors of the islands or the kingdoms that they won, and I am resolved that in my case so pleasing a usage shall not fall into desuetude. I even mean to go them one better; for they very often, perhaps most of the time, waited until their squires were old men who had had their fill of serving their masters during bad days and worse nights, whereupon they would give them the title of count, or marquis at most, of some valley or province more or less. But if you live and I live, it well may be that within a week I shall win some kingdom with others dependent upon it, and it will be the easiest thing in the world to crown you king of one of them. You need not marvel at this, for all sorts of unforeseen things happen to knights like me, and I may readily be able to give you even more than I have promised."

"In that case," said Sancho Panza, "if by one of those miracles of which your Grace was speaking I should become king, I would certainly send for Juana Gutiérrez, my old lady, to come and be my queen, and the young ones could be infantes."

"There is no doubt about it," Don Quixote assured him.

"Well, I doubt it," said Sancho, "for I think that even if God were

to rain kingdoms upon the earth, no crown would sit well on the head of Mari Gutiérrez,[4] for I am telling you, sir, as a queen she is not worth two maravedis.[5] She would do better as a countess, God help her."

"Leave everything to God, Sancho," said Don Quixote, "and he will give you whatever is most fitting; but I trust you will not be so pusillanimous as to be content with anything less than the title of viceroy."

"That I will not," said Sancho Panza, "especially seeing that I have in your Grace so illustrious a master who can give me all that is suitable to me and all that I can manage."

CHAPTER 8

Of the good fortune which the valorous Don Quixote had in the terrifying and never-before-imagined adventure of the windmills, along with other events that deserve to be suitably recorded.

At this point they caught sight of thirty or forty windmills which were standing on the plain there, and no sooner had Don Quixote laid eyes upon them than he turned to his squire and said, "Fortune is guiding our affairs better than we could have wished; for you see there before you, friend Sancho Panza, some thirty or more lawless giants with whom I mean to do battle. I shall deprive them of their lives, and with the spoils from this encounter we shall begin to enrich ourselves; for this is righteous warfare, and it is a great service to God to remove so accursed a breed from the face of the earth."

"What giants?" said Sancho Panza.

"Those that you see there," replied his master, "those with the long arms some of which are as much as two leagues in length."

"But look, your Grace, those are not giants but windmills, and what appear to be arms are their wings which, when whirled in the breeze, cause the millstone to go."

"It is plain to be seen," said Don Quixote, "that you have had little experience in this matter of adventures. If you are afraid, go off to one side and say your prayers while I am engaging them in fierce, unequal combat."

Saying this, he gave spurs to his steed Rocinante, without paying any heed to Sancho's warning that these were truly windmills and not giants that he was riding forth to attack. Nor even when he was close upon them did he perceive what they really were, but shouted at the top of his lungs, "Do not seek to flee, cowards and vile creatures that you are, for it is but a single knight with whom you have to deal!"

4. Sancho's wife; she is called Juana Gutiérrez a few lines earlier. 5. Coin worth 1/34 real.

At that moment a little wind came up and the big wings began turning.

"Though you flourish as many arms as did the giant Briareus,"[6] said Don Quixote when he perceived this, "you still shall have to answer to me."

He thereupon commended himself with all his heart to his lady Dulcinea, beseeching her to succor him in this peril; and, being well covered with his shield and with his lance at rest, he bore down upon them at a full gallop and fell upon the first mill that stood in his way, giving a thrust at the wing, which was whirling at such a speed that his lance was broken into bits and both horse and horseman went rolling over the plain, very much battered indeed. Sancho upon his donkey came hurrying to his master's assistance as fast as he could, but when he reached the spot, the knight was unable to move, so great was the shock with which he and Rocinante had hit the ground.

"God help us!" exclaimed Sancho, "did I not tell your Grace to look well, that those were nothing but windmills, a fact which no one could fail to see unless he had other mills of the same sort in his head?"

"Be quiet, friend Sancho," said Don Quixote. "Such are the fortunes of war, which more than any other are subject to constant change. What is more, when I come to think of it, I am sure that this must be the work of that magician Frestón, the one who robbed me of my study and my books,[7] and who has thus changed the giants into windmills in order to deprive me of the glory of overcoming them, so great is the enmity that he bears me; but in the end his evil arts shall not prevail against this trusty sword of mine."

"May God's will be done," was Sancho Panza's response. And with the aid of his squire the knight was once more mounted on Rocinante, who stood there with one shoulder half out of joint. And so, speaking of the adventure that had just befallen them, they continued along the Puerto Lápice highway; for there, Don Quixote said, they could not fail to find many and varied adventures, this being a much traveled thoroughfare. The only thing was, the knight was exceedingly downcast over the loss of his lance.

"I remember," he said to his squire, "having read of a Spanish knight by the name of Diego Pérez de Vargas, who, having broken his sword in battle, tore from an oak a heavy bough or branch and with it did such feats of valor that day, and pounded so many Moors, that he came to be known as Machuca,[8] and he and his descendants from that day forth have been called Vargas y Machuca. I tell you this because I too intend to provide myself with just such a bough as

6. Mythological giant with a hundred arms. 7. Don Quixote had promptly attributed the ruin of his library, performed by the curate and the barber, to magical intervention. 8. Machuca, meaning "The Crusher," was the hero of a folk ballad.

the one he wielded, and with it I propose to do such exploits that you shall deem yourself fortunate to have been found worthy to come with me and behold and witness things that are almost beyond belief."

"God's will be done," said Sancho. "I believe everything that your Grace says; but straighten yourself up in the saddle a little, for you seem to be slipping down on one side, owing, no doubt, to the shaking-up that you received in your fall."

"Ah, that is the truth," replied Don Quixote, "and if I do not speak of my sufferings, it is for the reason that it is not permitted knights-errant to complain of any wound whatsoever, even though their bowels may be dropping out."

"If that is the way it is," said Sancho, "I have nothing more to say; but, God knows, it would suit me better if your Grace did complain when something hurts him. I can assure you that I mean to do so, over the least little thing that ails me—that is, unless the same rule applies to squires as well."

Don Quixote laughed long and heartily over Sancho's simplicity, telling him that he might complain as much as he liked and where and when he liked, whether he had good cause or not; for he had read nothing to the contrary in the ordinances of chivalry. Sancho then called his master's attention to the fact that it was time to eat. The knight replied that he himself had no need of food at the moment, but his squire might eat whenever he chose. Having been granted this permission, Sancho seated himself as best he could upon his beast, and, taking out from his saddlebags the provisions that he had stored there, he rode along leisurely behind his master, munching his victuals and taking a good, hearty swig now and then at the leather flask in a manner that might well have caused the biggest-bellied tavernkeeper of Málaga to envy him. Between draughts he gave not so much as a thought to any promise that his master might have made him, nor did he look upon it as any hardship, but rather as good sport, to go in quest of adventures however hazardous they might be.

The short of the matter is, they spent the night under some trees, from one of which Don Quixote tore off a withered bough to serve him as a lance, placing it in the lance head from which he had removed the broken one. He did not sleep all night long for thinking of his lady Dulcinea; for this was in accordance with what he had read in his books, of men of arms in the forest or desert places who kept a wakeful vigil, sustained by the memory of their ladies fair. Not so with Sancho, whose stomach was full, and not with chicory water. He fell into a dreamless slumber, and had not his master called him, he would not have been awakened either by the rays of the sun in his face or by the many birds who greeted the coming of the new day with their merry song.

Upon arising, he had another go at the flask, finding it somewhat more flaccid then it had been the night before, a circumstance which grieved his heart, for he could not see that they were on the way to remedying the deficiency within any very short space of time. Don Quixote did not wish any breakfast; for, as has been said, he was in the habit of nourishing himself on savorous memories. They then set out once more along the road to Puerto Lápice, and around three in the afternoon they came in sight of the pass that bears that name.

"There," said Don Quixote as his eyes fell upon it, "we may plunge our arms up to the elbow in what are known as adventures. But I must warn you that even though you see me in the greatest peril in the world, you are not to lay hand upon your sword to defend me, unless it be that those who attack me are rabble and men of low degree, in which case you may very well come to my aid; but if they be gentlemen, it is in no wise permitted by the laws of chivalry that you should assist me until you yourself shall have been dubbed a knight."

"Most certainly, sir," replied Sancho, "your Grace shall be very well obeyed in this; all the more so for the reason that I myself am of a peaceful disposition and not fond of meddling in the quarrels and feuds of others. However, when it comes to protecting my own person, I shall not take account of those laws of which you speak, seeing that all laws, human and divine, permit each one to defend himself whenever he is attacked."

"I am willing to grant you that," assented Don Quixote, "but in this matter of defending me against gentlemen you must restrain your natural impulses."

"I promise you I shall do so," said Sancho. "I will observe this precept as I would the Sabbath day."

As they were conversing in this manner, there appeared in the road in front of them two friars of the Order of St. Benedict, mounted upon dromedaries—for the she-mules they rode were certainly no smaller than that. The friars wore travelers' spectacles and carried sunshades, and behind them came a coach accompanied by four or five men on horseback and a couple of muleteers on foot. In the coach, as was afterwards learned, was a lady of Biscay, on her way to Seville to bid farewell to her husband, who had been appointed to some high post in the Indies. The religious were not of her company although they were going by the same road.

The instant Don Quixote laid eyes upon them he turned to his squire. "Either I am mistaken or this is going to be the most famous adventure that ever was seen; for those black-clad figures that you behold must be, and without any doubt are, certain enchanters who are bearing with them a captive princess in that coach, and I must do all I can to right this wrong."

"It will be worse than the windmills," declared Sancho. "Look you, sir, those are Benedictine friars and the coach must be that of some travelers. Mark well what I say and what you do, lest the devil lead you astray."

"I have already told you, Sancho," replied Don Quixote, "that you know little where the subject of adventures is concerned. What I am saying to you is the truth, as you shall now see."

With this, he rode forward and took up a position in the middle of the road along which the friars were coming, and as soon as they appeared to be within earshot he cried out to them in a loud voice, "O devilish and monstrous beings, set free at once the highborn princesses whom you bear captive in that coach, or else prepare at once to meet your death as the just punishment of your evil deeds."

The friars drew rein and sat there in astonishment, marveling as much at Don Quixote's appearance as at the words he spoke. "Sir Knight," they answered him, "we are neither devilish nor monstrous but religious of the Order of St. Benedict who are merely going our way. We know nothing of those who are in that coach, nor of any captive princesses either."

"Soft words," said Don Quixote, "have no effect on me. I know you for what you are, lying rabble!" And without waiting for any further parley he gave spur to Rocinante and, with lowered lance, bore down upon the first friar with such fury and intrepidity that, had not the fellow tumbled from his mule of his own accord, he would have been hurled to the ground and either killed or badly wounded. The second religious, seeing how his companion had been treated, dug his legs into his she-mule's flanks and scurried away over the countryside faster than the wind.

Seeing the friar upon the ground, Sancho Panza slipped lightly from his mount and, falling upon him, began stripping him of his habit. The two mule drivers accompanying the religious thereupon came running up and asked Sancho why he was doing this. The latter replied that the friar's garments belonged to him as legitimate spoils of the battle that his master Don Quixote had just won. The muleteers, however, were lads with no sense of humor, nor did they know what all this talk of spoils and battles was about; but, perceiving that Don Quixote had ridden off to one side to converse with those inside the coach, they pounced upon Sancho, threw him to the ground, and proceeded to pull out the hair of his beard and kick him to a pulp, after which they went off and left him stretched out there, bereft at once of breath and sense.

Without losing any time, they then assisted the friar to remount. The good brother was trembling all over from fright, and there was not a speck of color in his face, but when he found himself in the saddle once more, he quickly spurred his beast to where his compan-

ion, at some little distance, sat watching and waiting to see what the result of the encounter would be. Having no curiosity as to the final outcome of the fray, the two of them now resumed their journey, making more signs of the cross than the devil would be able to carry upon his back.

Meanwhile Don Quixote, as we have said, was speaking to the lady in the coach.

"Your beauty, my lady, may now dispose of your person as best may please you, for the arrogance of your abductors lies upon the ground, overthrown by this good arm of mine; and in order that you may not pine to know the name of your liberator, I may inform you that I am Don Quixote de la Mancha, knight-errant and adventurer and captive of the peerless and beauteous Doña Dulcinea del Toboso. In payment of the favor which you have received from me, I ask nothing other than that you return to El Toboso and on my behalf pay your respects to this lady, telling her that it was I who set you free."

One of the squires accompanying those in the coach, a Biscayan,[9] was listening to Don Quixote's words, and when he saw that the knight did not propose to let the coach proceed upon its way but was bent upon having it turn back to El Toboso, he promptly went up to him, seized his lance, and said to him in bad Castilian and worse Biscayan, "Go, *caballero*, and bad luck go with you; for by the God that created me, if you do not let this coach pass, me kill you or me no Biscayan."

Don Quixote heard him attentively enough and answered him very mildly, "If you were a *caballero*,[1] which you are not, I should already have chastised you, wretched creature, for your foolhardiness and your impudence."

"Me no *caballero*." cried the Biscayan "Me swear to God, you lie like a Christian. If you will but lay aside your lance and unsheath your sword, you will soon see that you are carrying water to the cat![2] Biscayan on land, gentleman at sea, but a gentleman in spite of the devil, and you lie if you say otherwise."

" 'You shall see as to that presently," said Agrajes,' " Don Quixote quoted.[3] He cast his lance to the earth, drew his sword, and, taking his buckler on his arm, attacked the Biscayan with intent to slay him. The latter, when he saw his adversary approaching, would have liked to dismount from his mule, for she was one of the worthless sort that are let for hire and he had no confidence in her; but there was no time for this, and so he had no choice but to draw his

9. From the Basque region in northeastern Spain. 1. *Caballero* means both "knight" and "gentleman." 2. An inversion of a proverbial phrase, "carrying the cat to the water." 3. Agrajes is a violent character in the romance *Amadis de Gaul*; his challenging phrase is the conventional opener of a fight.

own sword in turn and make the best of it. However, he was near enough to the coach to be able to snatch a cushion from it to serve him as a shield; and then they fell upon each other as though they were mortal enemies. The rest of those present sought to make peace between them but did not succeed, for the Biscayan with his disjointed phrases kept muttering that if they did not let him finish the battle then he himself would have to kill his mistress and anyone else who tried to stop him.

The lady inside the carriage, amazed by it all and trembling at what she saw, directed her coachman to drive on a little way; and there from a distance she watched the deadly combat, in the course of which the Biscayan came down with a great blow on Don Quixote's shoulder, over the top of the latter's shield, and had not the knight been clad in armor, it would have split him to the waist.

Feeling the weight of this blow, Don Quixote cried out, "O lady of my soul, Dulcinea, flower of beauty, succor this your champion who out of gratitude for your many favors finds himself in so perilous a plight!" To utter these words, lay hold of his sword, cover himself with his buckler, and attack the Biscayan was but the work of a moment; for he was now resolved to risk everything upon a single stroke.

As he saw Don Quixote approaching with so dauntless a bearing, the Biscayan was well aware of his adversary's courage and forthwith determined to imitate the example thus set him. He kept himself protected with his cushion, but he was unable to get his she-mule to budge to one side or the other, for the beast, out of sheer exhaustion and being, moreover, unused to such childish play, was incapable of taking a single step. And so, then, as has been stated, Don Quixote was approaching the wary Biscayan, his sword raised on high and with the firm resolve of cleaving his enemy in two; and the Biscayan was awaiting the knight in the same posture, cushion in front of him and with uplifted sword. All the bystanders were trembling with suspense at what would happen as a result of the terrible blows that were threatened, and the lady in the coach and her maids were making a thousand vows and offerings to all the images and shrines in Spain, praying that God would save them all and the lady's squire from this great peril that confronted them.

But the unfortunate part of the matter is that at this very point the author of the history breaks off and leaves the battle pending, excusing himself upon the ground that he has been unable to find anything else in writing concerning the exploits of Don Quixote beyond those already set forth. It is true, on the other hand, that the second author[4] of this work could not bring himself to believe that so unusual

4. Cervantes himself, adopting here—with tongue in cheek—a device used in the romances of chivalry to create suspense.

a chronicle would have been consigned to oblivion, nor that the learned ones of La Mancha were possessed of so little curiosity as not to be able to discover in their archives or registry offices certain papers that have to do with this famous knight. Being convinced of this, he did not despair of coming upon the end of this pleasing story. . . .

CHAPTER 9

In which is concluded and brought to an end the stupendous battle between the gallant Biscayan and the valiant Knight of La Mancha.

. . . we left the valorous Biscayan and the famous Don Quixote with swords unsheathed and raised aloft, about to let fall furious slashing blows which, had they been delivered fairly and squarely, would at the very least have split them in two and laid them wide open from top to bottom like a pomegranate; and it was at this doubtful point that the pleasing chronicle came to a halt and broke off, without the author's informing us as to where the rest of it might be found.

I was deeply grieved by such a circumstance, and the pleasure I had had in reading so slight a portion was turned into annoyance as I thought of how difficult it would be to come upon the greater part which it seemed to me must still be missing. It appeared impossible and contrary to all good precedent that so worthy a knight should not have had some scribe to take upon himself the task of writing an account of these unheard-of exploits; for that was something that had happened to none of the knights-errant who, as the saying has it, had gone forth in quest of adventures, seeing that each of them had one or two chroniclers, as if ready at hand, who not only had set down their deeds, but had depicted their most trivial thoughts and amiable weaknesses, however well concealed they might be. The good knight of La Mancha surely could not have been so unfortunate as to have lacked what Platir and others like him had in abundance. And so I could not bring myself to believe that this gallant history could have remained thus lopped off and mutilated, and I could not but lay the blame upon the malignity of time, that devourer and consumer of all things, which must either have consumed it or kept it hidden.

On the other hand, I reflected that inasmuch as among the knight's books had been found such modern works as *The Disenchantments of Jealousy* and *The Nymphs and Shepherds of Henares*, his story likewise must be modern, and that even though it might not have been written down, it must remain in the memory of the good folk of his village and the surrounding ones. This thought left me somewhat confused and more than ever desirous of knowing the real and true story, the whole story, of the life and wondrous deeds of our

famous Spaniard, Don Quixote, light and mirror of the chivalry of La Mancha, the first in our age and in these calamitous times to devote himself to the hardships and exercises of knight-errantry and to go about righting wrongs, succoring widows, and protecting damsels—damsels such as those who, mounted upon their palfreys and with riding-whip in hand, in full possession of their virginity, were in the habit of going from mountain to mountain and from valley to valley; for unless there were some villain, some rustic with an ax and hood, or some monstrous giant to force them, there were in times past maiden ladies who at the end of eighty years, during all which time they had not slept for a single day beneath a roof, would go to their graves as virginal as when their mothers had borne them.

If I speak of these things, it is for the reason that in this and in all other respects our gallant Quixote is deserving of constant memory and praise, and even I am not to be denied my share of it for my diligence and the labor to which I put myself in searching out the conclusion of this agreeable narrative; although if heaven, luck, and circumstance had not aided me, the world would have had to do without the pleasure and the pastime which anyone may enjoy who will read this work attentively for an hour or two. The manner in which it came about was as follows:

I was standing one day in the Alcaná, or market place, of Toledo when a lad came up to sell some old notebooks and other papers to a silk weaver who was there. As I am extremely fond of reading anything, even though it be but the scraps of paper in the streets, I followed my natural inclination and took one of the books, whereupon I at once perceived that it was written in characters which I recognized as Arabic. I recognized them, but reading them was another thing; and so I began looking around to see if there was any Spanish-speaking Moor near by who would be able to read them for me. It was not very hard to find such an interpreter, nor would it have been even if the tongue in question had been an older and a better one.[5] To make a long story short, chance brought a fellow my way; and when I told him what it was I wished and placed the book in his hands, he opened it in the middle and began reading and at once fell to laughing. When I asked him what the cause of his laughter was, he replied that it was a note which had been written in the margin.

I besought him to tell me the content of the note, and he, laughing still, went on, "As I told you, it is something in the margin here: 'This Dulcinea del Toboso, so often referred to, is said to have been the best hand at salting pigs of any woman in all La Mancha.' "

No sooner had I heard the name Dulcinea del Toboso than I was astonished and held in suspense, for at once the thought occurred to

5. I.e., the Hebrew language.

me that those notebooks must contain the history of Don Quixote. With this in mind I urged him to read me the title, and he proceeded to do so, turning the Arabic into Castilian upon the spot: *History of Don Quixote de la Mancha, Written by Cid Hamete Benengeli*[6] *Arabic Historian*. It was all I could do to conceal my satisfaction and, snatching them from the silk weaver, I bought from the lad all the papers and notebooks that he had for half a real; but if he had known or suspected how very much I wanted them, he might well have had more than six reales for them.

The Moor and I then betook ourselves to the cathedral cloister, where I requested him to translate for me into the Castilian tongue all the books that had to do with Don Quixote, adding nothing and subtracting nothing; and I offered him whatever payment he desired. He was content with two arrobas of raisins and two fanegas of wheat[7] and promised to translate them well and faithfully and with all dispatch. However, in order to facilitate matters, and also because I did not wish to let such a find as this out of my hands, I took the fellow home with me, where in a little more than a month and a half he translated the whole of the work just as you will find it set down here.

In the first of the books there was a very lifelike picture of the battle between Don Quixote and the Biscayan, the two being in precisely the same posture as described in the history, their swords upraised, the one covered by his buckler, the other with his cushion. As for the Biscayan's mule, you could see at the distance of a crossbow shot that it was one for hire. Beneath the Biscayan there was a rubric which read: "Don Sancho de Azpeitia," which must undoubtedly have been his name; while beneath the feet of Rocinante was another inscription: "Don Quixote." Rocinante was marvelously portrayed: so long and lank, so lean and flabby, so extremely consumptive-looking that one could well understand the justness and propriety with which the name of "hack" had been bestowed upon him.

Alongside Rocinante stood Sancho Panza, holding the halter of his ass, and below was the legend: "Sancho Zancas." The picture showed him with a big belly, a short body and long shanks, and that must have been where he got the names of Panza y Zancas[8] by which he is a number of times called in the course of the history. There are other small details that might be mentioned, but they are of little importance and have nothing to do with the truth of the story—and no story is bad so long as it is true.

If there is any objection to be raised against the veracity of the present one, it can be only that the author was an Arab, and that

6. Citing some ancient chronicle as the author's source and authority is very much in the tradition of the romances. *Benengeli*, incidentally, means "eggplant." 7. About 50 pounds of the first and 3 bushels of the second. 8. I.e., Paunch and Shanks.

nation is known for its lying propensities; but even though they be our enemies, it may readily be understood that they would more likely have detracted from, rather than added to, the chronicle. So it seems to me, at any rate; for whenever he might and should deploy the resources of his pen in praise of so worthy a knight, the author appears to take pains to pass over the matter in silence; all of which in my opinion is ill done and ill conceived, for it should be the duty of historians to be exact, truthful, and dispassionate, and neither interest nor fear nor rancor nor affection should swerve them from the path of truth, whose mother is history, rival of time, depository of deeds, witness of the past, exemplar and adviser to the present, and the future's counselor. In this work, I am sure, will be found all that could be desired in the way of pleasant reading; and if it is lacking in any way, I maintain that this is the fault of that hound of an author rather than of the subject.

But to come to the point, the second part, according to the translation, began as follows:

As the two valorous and enraged combatants stood there, swords upraised and poised on high, it seemed from their bold mien as if they must surely be threatening heaven, earth, and hell itself. The first to let fall a blow was the choleric Biscayan, and he came down with such force and fury that, had not his sword been deflected in mid-air, that single stroke would have sufficed to put an end to this fearful combat and to all our knight's adventures at the same time; but fortune, which was reserving him for greater things, turned aside his adversary's blade in such a manner that, even though it fell upon his left shoulder, it did him no other damage than to strip him completely of his armor on that side, carrying with it a good part of his helmet along with half an ear, the headpiece clattering to the ground with a dreadful din, leaving its wearer in a sorry state.

Heaven help me! Who could properly describe the rage that now entered the heart of our hero of La Mancha as he saw himself treated in this fashion? It may merely be said that he once more reared himself in the stirrups, laid hold of his sword with both hands,and dealt the Biscayan such a blow, over the cushion and upon the head, that, even so good a defense proving useless, it was as if a mountain had fallen upon his enemy. The latter now began bleeding through the mouth, nose, and ears; he seemed about to fall from his mule, and would have fallen, no doubt, if he had not grasped the beast about the neck, but at that moment his feet slipped from the stirrups and his arms let go, and the mule, frightened by the terrible blow, began running across the plain, hurling its rider to the earth with a few quick plunges.

Don Quixote stood watching all this very calmly. When he saw his enemy fall, he leaped from his horse, ran over very nimbly, and

thrust the point of his sword into the Biscayan's eyes, calling upon him at the same time to surrender or otherwise he would cut off his head. The Biscayan was so bewildered that he was unable to utter a single word in reply, and things would have gone badly with him, so blind was Don Quixote in his rage, if the ladies of the coach, who up to then had watched the struggle in dismay, had not come up to him at this point and begged him with many blandishments to do them the very great favor of sparing their squire's life.

To which Don Quixote replied with much haughtiness and dignity, "Most certainly, lovely ladies, I shall be very happy to do that which you ask of me, but upon one conditon and understanding, and that is that this knight promise me that he will go to El Toboso and present himself in my behalf before Doña Dulcinea, in order that she may do with him as she may see fit."

Trembling and disconsolate, the ladies did not pause to discuss Don Quixote's request, but without so much as inquiring who Dulcinea might be they promised him that the squire would fulfill that which was commanded of him.

"Very well, then, trusting in your word, I will do him no further harm, even though he has well deserved it."

CHAPTER 10

Of the pleasing conversation that took place between Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, his squire.

By this time Sancho Panza had got to his feet, somewhat the worse for wear as the result of the treatment he had received from the friars' lads. He had been watching the battle attentively and praying God in his heart to give the victory to his master, Don Quixote, in order that he, Sancho, might gain some island where he could go to be governor as had been promised him. Seeing now that the combat was over and the knight was returning to mount Rocinante once more, he went up to hold the stirrup for him; but first he fell on his knees in front of him and, taking his hand, kissed it and said, "May your Grace be pleased, Señor Don Quixote, to grant me the governorship of that island which you have won in this deadly affray; for however large it may be, I feel that I am indeed capable of governing it as well as any man in this world has ever done."

To which Don Quixote replied, "Be advised, brother Sancho, that this adventure and other similar ones have nothing to do with islands; they are affairs of the crossroads in which one gains nothing more than a broken head or an ear the less. Be patient, for there will be others which will not only make you a governor, but more than that."

Sancho thanked him very much and, kissing his hand again and

the skirt of his cuirass, he assisted him up on Rocinante's back, after which the squire bestraddled his own mount and started jogging along behind his master, who was now going at a good clip. Without pausing for any further converse with those in the coach, the knight made for a near-by wood, with Sancho following as fast as his beast could trot; but Rocinante was making such speed that the ass and its rider were left behind, and it was necessary to call out to Don Quixote to pull up and wait for them. He did so, reining in Rocinante until the weary Sancho had drawn abreast of him.

"It strikes me, sir," said the squire as he reached his master's side, "that it would be better for us to take refuge in some church; for in view of the way you have treated that one with whom you were fighting, it would be small wonder if they did not lay the matter before the Holy Brotherhood[9] and have us arrested; and faith, if they do that, we shall have to sweat a-plenty before we come out of jail."

"Be quiet," said Don Quixote. "And where have you ever seen, or read of, a knight being brought to justice no matter how many homicides he might have committed?"

"I know nothing about omecils,"[1] replied Sancho, "nor ever in my life did I bear one to anybody; all I know is that the Holy Brotherhood has something to say about those who go around fighting on the highway, and I want nothing of it."

"Do not let it worry you," said Don Quixote, "for I will rescue you from the hands of the Chaldeans, not to speak of the Brotherhood. But answer me upon your life: have you ever seen a more valorous knight than I on all the known face of the earth? Have you ever read in the histories of any other who had more mettle in the attack, more perseverance in sustaining it, more dexterity in wounding his enemy, or more skill in overthrowing him?"

"The truth is," said Sancho, "I have never read any history whatsoever, for I do not know how to read or write; but what I would wager is that in all the days of my life I have never served a more courageous master than your Grace; I only hope your courage is not paid for in the place that I have mentioned. What I would suggest is that your Grace allow me to do something for that ear, for there is much blood coming from it, and I have here in my saddlebags some lint and a little white ointment."

"We could well dispense with all that," said Don Quixote, "if only I had remembered to bring along a vial of Fierabrás's[2] balm, a single drop of which saves time and medicines."

"What vial and what balm is that?" inquired Sancho Panza.

9. A tribunal instituted by Ferdinand and Isabella at the end of the fifteenth century to punish highway robbers. 1. In the original, a word play on *homecidio-omecillo*. Not to bear an *omecillo* to anybody means not to bear a grudge; and good-natured Sancho does not. 2. Fierabrás is a giant Saracen healer in the medieval epics of the Twelve Peers (cf. footnote 1, p. 1204).

"It is a balm the receipt[3] for which I know by heart; with it one need have no fear of death nor think of dying from any wound. I shall make some of it and give it to you; and thereafter, whenever in any battle you see my body cut in two—as very often happens—all that is necessary is for you to take the part that lies on the ground, before the blood has congealed, and fit it very neatly and with great nicety upon the other part that remains in the saddle, taking care to adjust it evenly and exactly. Then you will give me but a couple of swallows of the balm of which I have told you, and you will see me sounder than an apple in no time at all."

"If that is so," said Panza, "I herewith renounce the governorship of the island you promised me and ask nothing other in payment of my many and faithful services than that your Grace give me the receipt for this wonderful potion, for I am sure that it would be worth more than two reales the ounce anywhere, and that is all I need for a life of ease and honor. But may I be so bold as to ask how much it costs to make it?"

"For less than three reales you can make something like six quarts," Don Quixote told him.

"Sinner that I am!" exclaimed Sancho. "Then why does your Grace not make some at once and teach me also?"

"Hush, my friend," said the knight, "I mean to teach you greater secrets than that and do you greater favors; but, for the present, let us look after this ear of mine, for it is hurting me more than I like."

Sancho thereupon took the lint and the ointment from his saddlebags; but when Don Quixote caught a glimpse of his helmet, he almost went out of his mind and, laying his hand upon his sword and lifting his eyes heavenward, he cried, "I make a vow to the Creator of all things and to the four holy Gospels in all their fullness of meaning that I will lead from now on the life that the great Marquis of Mantua did after he had sworn to avenge the death of his nephew Baldwin: not to eat bread of a tablecloth, not to embrace his wife, and other things which, although I am unable to recall them, we will look upon as understood—all this until I shall have wreaked an utter vengeance upon the one who has perpetrated such an outrage upon me."

"But let me remind your Grace," said Sancho when he heard these words, "that if the knight fulfills that which was commanded of him, by going to present himself before my lady Dulcinea del Toboso, then he will have paid his debt to you and merits no further punishment at your hands, unless it be for some fresh offense."

"You have spoken very well and to the point," said Don Quixote, "and so I annul the vow I have just made insofar as it has to do with

3. Recipe.

any further vengeance, but I make it and confirm it anew so far as leading the life of which I have spoken is concerned, until such time as I shall have obtained by force of arms from some other knight another headpiece as good as this. And do not think, Sancho, that I am making smoke out of straw; there is one whom I well may imitate in this matter, for the same thing happened in all literalness in the case of Mambrino's helmet which cost Sacripante so dear."[4]

"I wish," said Sancho, "that your Grace would send all such oaths to the devil, for they are very bad for the health and harmful for the conscience as well. Tell me, please; supposing that for many days to come we meet no man wearing a helmet, then what are we to do? Must you still keep your vow in spite of all the inconveniences and discomforts, such as sleeping with your clothes on, not sleeping in any town, and a thousand other penances contained in the oath of that old madman of a Marquis of Mantua, an oath which you would now revive? Mark you, sir, along all these roads you meet no men of arms but only muleteers and carters, who not only do not wear helmets but quite likely have never heard tell of them in all their livelong days."

"In that you are wrong," said Don Quixote, "for we shall not be at these crossroads for the space of two hours before we shall see more men of arms than came to Albraca to win the fair Angélica."[5] "Very well, then," said Sancho, "so be it, and pray God that all turns out for the best so that I may at last win that island that is costing me so dearly, and then let me die."

"I have already told you, Sancho, that you are to give no thought to that; should the island fail, there is the kingdom of Denmark or that of Sobradisa,[6] which would fit you like a ring on your finger, and you ought, moreover, to be happy to be on *terra firma*.[7] But let us leave all this for some other time, while you look and see if you have something in those saddlebags for us to eat, after which we will go in search of some castle where we may lodge for the night and prepare that balm of which I was telling you, for I swear to God that my ear is paining me greatly."

"I have here an onion, a little cheese, and a few crusts of bread," said Sancho, "but they are not victuals fit for a valiant knight like your grace."

"How little you know about it!" replied Don Quixote. "I would inform you, Sancho, that it is a point of honor with knights-errant to go for a month at a time without eating, and when they do eat, it is whatever may be at hand. You would certainly know that if you had read the histories as I have. There are many of them, and in

4. The enchanted helmet of Mambrino, a Moorish king, is stolen by Rinaldo in the fifteenth-century epic poem *Orlando Innamorato* ("Roland in Love") by Matteo Maria Boiardo. 5. Also an allusion to an episode in Boiardo's poem. 6. A nonexistent realm. 7. *Solid earth*, here also *Firm Island*, an imaginary final destination for the squires of knights-errant.

none have I found any mention of knights eating unless it was by chance or at some sumptuous banquet that was tendered them; on other days they fasted. And even though it is well understood that, being men like us, they could not go without food entirely, any more than they could fail to satisfy the other necessities of nature, nevertheless, since they spent the greater part of their lives in forest and desert places without any cook to prepare their meals, their diet ordinarily consisted of rustic viands such as those that you now offer me. And so, Sancho my friend, do not be grieved at that which pleases me, nor seek to make the world over, nor to unhinge the institution of knight-errantry."

"Pardon me, your Grace," said Sancho, "but seeing that, as I have told you I do not know how to read or write, I am consequently not familiar with the rules of the knightly calling. Hereafter, I will stuff my saddlebags with all manner of dried fruit for your Grace, but inasmuch as I am not a knight, I shall lay in for myself a stock of fowls and other more substantial fare."

"I am not saying, Sancho, that it is incumbent upon knights-errant to eat only those fruits of which you speak; what I am saying is that their ordinary sustenance should consist of fruit and a few herbs such as are to be found in the fields and with which they are well acquainted, as am I myself."

"It is a good thing,' said Sancho, "to know those herbs, for, so far as I can see, we are going to have need of that knowledge one of these days."

With this, he brought out the articles he had mentioned, and the two of them ate in peace, and most companionably. Being desirous, however, of seeking a lodging for the night, they did not tarry long over their humble and unsavory repast. They then mounted and made what haste they could that they might arrive at a shelter before nightfall but the sun failed them, and with it went the hope of attaining their wish. As the day ended they found themselves beside some goatherds' huts, and they accordingly decided to spend the night there. Sancho was as much disappointed at their not having reached a town as his master was content with sleeping under the open sky; for it seemed to Don Quixote that every time this happened it merely provided him with yet another opportunity to establish his claim to the title of knight-errant.

[Of Goatherds, Roaming Shepherdesses, and Unrequited Loves]

CHAPTER 11

Of what happened to Don Quixote in the company of certain goatherds.

He was received by the herders with good grace, and Sancho having looked after Rocinante and the ass to the best of his ability, the

knight, drawn by the aroma, went up to where some pieces of goat's meat were simmering in a pot over the fire. He would have liked then and there to see if they were done well enough to be transferred from pot to stomach, but he refrained in view of the fact that his hosts were already taking them off the fire. Spreading a few sheepskins on the ground, they hastily laid their rustic board and invited the strangers to share what there was of it. There were six of them altogether who belonged to that fold, and after they had urged Don Quixote, with rude politeness, to seat himself upon a small trough which they had turned upside down for the purpose, they took their own places upon the sheep hides round about. While his master sat there, Sancho remained standing to serve him the cup, which was made of horn. When the knight perceived this, he addressed his squire as follows:

"In order, Sancho, that you may see the good that there is in knight-errantry and how speedily those who follow the profession, no matter what the nature of their service may be, come to be honored and esteemed in the eyes of the world, I would have you here in the company of these good folk seat yourself at my side, that you may be even as I who am your master and natural lord, and eat from my plate and drink from where I drink; for of knight-errantry one may say the same as of love: that it makes all things equal."

"Many thanks!" said Sancho, "but if it is all the same to your Grace, providing there is enough to go around, I can eat just as well, or better, standing up and alone as I can seated beside an emperor. And if the truth must be told, I enjoy much more that which I eat in my own corner without any bowings and scrapings, even though it be only bread and onions, than I do a meal of roast turkey where I have to chew slowly, drink little, be always wiping my mouth, and can neither sneeze nor cough if I feel like it, nor do any of those other things that you can when you are free and alone.

"And so, my master," he went on, "these honors that your Grace would confer upon me as your servant and a follower of knight-errantry—which I am, being your Grace's squire—I would have you convert, if you will, into other things that will be of more profit and advantage to me; for though I hereby acknowledge them as duly received, I renounce them from this time forth to the end of the world."

"But for all that," said Don Quixote, "you must sit down; for whosoever humbleth himself, him God will exalt." And, laying hold of his squire's arm, he compelled him to take a seat beside him.

The goatherds did not understand all this jargon about squires and knights-errant; they did nothing but eat, keep silent, and study their guests, who very dexterously and with much appetite were stowing away chunks of meat as big as your fist. When the meat course was

finished, they laid out upon the sheepskins a great quantity of dried acorns and half a cheese, which was harder than if it had been made of mortar. The drinking horn all this while was not idle but went the rounds so often—now full, now empty, like the bucket of a water wheel—that they soon drained one of the two wine bags that were on hand. After Don Quixote had well satisfied his stomach, he took up a handful of acorns and, gazing at them attentively, fell into a soliloquy.

"Happy the age and happy those centuries to which the ancients gave the name of golden, and not because gold, which is so esteemed in this iron age of ours, was then to be had without toil, but because those who lived in that time did not know the meaning of the words 'thine' and 'mine.' In that blessed year all things were held in common, and to gain his daily sustenance no labor was required of any man save to reach forth his hand and take it from the sturdy oaks that stood liberally inviting him with their sweet and seasoned fruit. The clear-running fountains and rivers in magnificent abundance offered him palatable and transparent water for his thirst; while in the clefts of the rocks and the hollows of the trees the wise and busy honey-makers set up their republic so that any hand whatever might avail itself, fully and freely, of the fertile harvest which their fragrant toil had produced. The vigorous cork trees of their own free will and grace, without the asking, shed their broad, light bark with which men began to cover their dwellings, erected upon rude stakes merely as a protection against the inclemency of the heavens.

"All then was peace, all was concord and friendship; the crooked plowshare had not as yet grievously laid open and pried into the merciful bowels of our first mother, who without any forcing on man's part yielded her spacious fertile bosom on every hand for the satisfaction, sustenance, and delight of her first sons. Then it was that lovely and unspoiled young shepherdesses, with locks that were sometimes braided, sometimes flowing, went roaming from valley to valley and hillock to hillock with no more garments than were needed to cover decently that which modesty requires and always had required should remain covered. Nor were their adornments such as those in use today—of Tyrian purple and silk worked up in tortured patterns; a few green leaves of burdock or of ivy, and they were as splendidly and as becomingly clad as our ladies of the court with all the rare and exotic tricks of fashion that idle curiosity has taught them.

"Thoughts of love, also, in those days were set forth as simply as the simple hearts that conceived them, without any roundabout and artificial play of words by way of ornament. Fraud, deceit, and malice had not yet come to mingle with truth and plain-speaking. Justice kept its own domain, where favor and self-interest dared not trespass, dared not impair her rights, becloud, and persecute her as they now

do. There was no such thing then as arbitrary judgments, for the reason that there was no one to judge or be judged. Maidens in all their modesty, as I have said, went where they would and unattended; whereas in this hateful age of ours none is safe, even though she go to hide and shut herself up in some new labyrinth like that of Crete; for in spite of all her seclusion, through chinks and crevices or borne upon the air, the amorous plague with all its cursed importunities will find her out and lead her to her ruin.

"It was for the safety of such as these, as time went on and depravity increased, that the order of knights-errant was instituted, for the protection of damsels, the aid of widows and orphans, and the succoring of the needy. It is to this order that I belong, my brothers, and I thank you for the welcome and the kindly treatment that you have accorded to me and my squire. By natural law, all living men are obliged to show favor to knights-errant, yet without being aware of this you have received and entertained me; and so it is with all possible good will that I acknowledge your own good will to me."

This long harangue on the part of our knight—it might very well have been dispensed with—was all due to the acorns they had given him, which had brought back to memory the age of gold; whereupon the whim had seized him to indulge in this futile harangue with the goatherds as his auditors. They listened in open-mouthed wonderment, saying not a word, and Sancho himself kept quiet and went on munching acorns, taking occasion very frequently to pay a visit to the second wine bag, which they had suspended from a cork tree to keep it cool.

It took Don Quixote much longer to finish his speech than it did to put away his supper; and when he was through, one of the goatherds addressed him.

"In order that your Grace may say with more truth that we have received you with readiness and good will, we desire to give you solace and contentment by having one of our comrades, who will be here soon, sing for you. He is a very bright young fellow and deeply in love, and what is more, you could not ask for anything better than to hear him play the three-stringed lute."

Scarcely had he done saying this when the sound of a rebec was heard, and shortly afterward the one who played it appeared. He was a goodlooking youth, around twenty-two years of age. His companions asked him if he had had his supper, and when he replied that he had, the one who had spoken to Don Quixote said to him, "Well, then, Antonio, you can give us the pleasure of hearing you sing, in order that this gentleman whom we have as our guest may see that we of the woods and mountains also know something about music. We have been telling him how clever you are, and now we want you to show him that we were speaking the truth. And so I beg you by

all means to sit down and sing us that lovesong of yours that your uncle the prebendary composed for you and which the villagers liked so well."

"With great pleasure," the lad replied, and without any urging he seated himself on the stump of an oak that had been felled and, tuning up his rebec, soon began singing, very prettily, the following ballad:

The Ballad That Antonio Sang

I know well that thou dost love me,
My Olalla, even though
Eyes of thine have never spoken—
Love's mute tongues—to tell me so.
Since I know thou knowest my passion,
Of thy love I am more sure:
No love ever was unhappy
When it was both frank and pure.
True it is, Olalla, sometimes
Thou a heart of bronze hast shown,
And it seemed to me that bosom,
White and fair, was made of stone.
Yet in spite of all repulses
And a chastity so cold,
It appeared that I Hope's garment
By the hem did clutch and hold.
For my faith I ever cherished;
It would rise to meet the bait;
Spurned, it never did diminish;
Favored, it preferred to wait.
Love, they say, hath gentle manners:
Thus it is it shows its face;
Then may I take hope, Olalla,
Trust to win a longed for grace.
If devotion hath the power
Hearts to move and make them kind,
Let the loyalty I've shown thee
Plead my cause, be kept in mind.
For if thou didst note my costume,
More than once thou must have seen,
Worn upon a simple Monday
Sunday's garb so bright and clean.
Love and brightness go together.
Dost thou ask the reason why

I thus deck myself on Monday?
It is but to catch thine eye.
I say nothing of the dances
I have danced for thy sweet sake;
Nor the serenades I've sung thee
Till the first cock did awake.
Nor will I repeat my praises
Of that beauty all can see;
True my words but oft unwelcome—
Certain lasses hated me.
One girl there is, I well remember—
She's Teresa on the hill—
Said, "You think you love an angel,
But she is a monkey still.
"Thanks to all her many trinkets
And her artificial hair
And her many aids to beauty,
Love's own self she would ensnare."
She was lying, I was angry,
And her cousin, very bold,
Challenged me upon my honor;
What ensued need not be told.
Highflown words do not become me;
I'm a plain and simple man.
Pure the love that I would offer,
Serving thee as best I can.
Silken are the bonds of marriage,
When two hearts do intertwine;
Mother Church the yoke will fasten;
Bow your neck and I'll bow mine.
Or if not, my word I'll give thee,
From these mountains I'll come down—
Saint most holy be my witness—
Wearing a Capuchin gown.

With this the goatherd brought his song to a close, and although Don Quixote begged him to sing some more, Sancho Panza would not hear of this as he was too sleepy for any more ballads.

"Your Grace," he said to his master, "would do well to find out at once where his bed is to be, for the labor that these good men have to perform all day long does not permit them to stay up all night singing."

"I understand, Sancho," replied Don Quixote. "I perceive that those visits to the wine bag call for sleep rather than music as a recompense."

"It tastes well enough to all of us, God be praised," said Sancho.

"I am not denying that," said his master; "but go ahead and settle yourself down wherever you like. As for men of my profession, they prefer to keep vigil. But all the same, Sancho, perhaps you had better look after this ear, for it is paining me more than I like."

Sancho started to do as he was commanded, but one of the goatherds, when he saw the wound, told him not to bother, that he would place a remedy upon it that would heal it in no time. Taking a few leaves of rosemary, of which there was a great deal growing thereabouts, he mashed them in his mouth and, mixing them with a little salt, laid them on the ear, with the assurance that no other medicine was needed; and this proved to be the truth.

CHAPTER 12

Of the story that one of the goatherds told to Don Quixote and the others.

Just then, another lad came up, one of those who brought the goatherds their provisions from the village.

"Do you know what's happening down there, my friends?" he said.

"How should we know?" one of the men answered him.

"In that case," the lad went on, "I must tell you that the famous student and shepherd known as Grisóstomo died this morning, muttering that the cause of his death was the love he had for that bewitched lass of a Marcela, daughter of the wealthy Guillermo—you know, the one who's been going around in these parts dressed like a shepherdess."

"For love of Marcela, you say?" one of the herders spoke up.

"That is what I'm telling you," replied the other lad. "And the best part of it is that he left directions in his will that he was to be buried in the field, as if he were a Moor, and that his grave was to be at the foot of the cliff where the Cork Tree Spring is; for, according to report, and he is supposed to have said so himself, that is the place where he saw her for the first time. There were other provisions, which the clergy of the village say cannot be carried out, nor would it be proper to fulfill them, seeing that they savor of heathen practices. But Grisóstomo's good friend, the student Ambrosio, who also dresses like a shepherd, insists that everything must be done to the letter, and as a result there is great excitement in the village.

"Nevertheless, from all I can hear, they will end by doing as Ambrosio and Grisóstomo's other friends desire, and tomorrow they will bury him with great ceremony in the place that I have mentioned. I believe it is going to be something worth seeing; at any rate,

I mean to see it, even though it is too far for me to be able to return to the village before nightfall."

"We will all do the same," said the other goatherds. "We will cast lots to see who stays to watch the goats."

"That is right, Pedro," said one of their number, "but it will not be necessary to go to the trouble of casting lots. I will take care of the flocks for all of us; and do not think that I am being generous or that I am not as curious as the rest of you; it is simply that I cannot walk on account of the splinter I picked up in this foot the other day."

"Well, we thank you just the same," said Pedro.

Don Quixote then asked Pedro to tell him more about the dead man and the shepherd lass; to which the latter replied that all he knew was that Grisóstomo was a rich gentleman who had lived in a near-by village. He had been a student for many years at Salamanca and then had returned to his birthplace with the reputation of being very learned and well read; he was especially noted for his knowledge of the science of the stars and what the sun and moon were doing up there in the heavens, "for he would promptly tell us when their clips was to come."

"*Eclipse*, my friend, not *clips*," said Don Quixote, "is the name applied to the darkening-over of those major luminaries."

But Pedro, not pausing for any trifles, went on with his story. "He could also tell when the year was going to be plentiful or estil—"

"*Sterile*, you mean to say, friend—"

"*Sterile* or *estil*," said Pedro, "it all comes out the same in the end. But I can tell you one thing, that his father and his friends, who believed in him, did just as he advised them and they became rich; for he would say to them, 'This year, sow barley and not wheat'; and again, 'Sow chickpeas and not barley'; or, 'This season there will be a good crop of oil[8] but the three following ones you will not get a drop.' "

"That science," Don Quixote explained, "is known as astrology."

"I don't know what it's called," said Pedro, "but he knew all this and more yet. Finally, not many months after he returned from Salamanca, he appeared one day dressed like a shepherd with crook and sheepskin jacket; for he had resolved to lay aside the long gown that he wore as a scholar, and in this he was joined by Ambrosio, a dear friend of his and the companion of his studies. I forgot to tell you that Grisóstomo was a great one for composing verses; he even wrote the carols for Christmas Eve and the plays that were performed at Corpus Christi by the lads of our village, and everyone said that they were the best ever.

"When the villagers saw the two scholars coming out dressed like

8. Olive oil.

shepherds, they were amazed and could not imagine what was the reason for such strange conduct on their part. It was about that time that Grisóstomo's father died and left him the heir to a large fortune, consisting of land and chattels, no small quantity of cattle, and a considerable sum of money, of all of which the young man was absolute master; and, to tell the truth, he deserved it, for he was very sociable and charitably inclined, a friend to all worthy folk, and he had a face that was like a benediction. Afterward it was learned that if he had changed his garments like this, it was only that he might be able to wander over the wastelands on the trail of that shepherdess Marcela of whom our friend was speaking, for the poor fellow had fallen in love with her. And now I should like to tell you, for it is well that you should know, just who this lass is; for it may be—indeed, there is no maybe about it—you will never hear the like in all the days of your life, though you live to be older than Sarna."

"You should say *Sarah*," Don Quixote corrected him; for he could not bear hearing the goatherd using the wrong words all the time.[9]

"The itch," said Pedro, "lives long enough; and if, sir, you go on interrupting me at every word, we'll never be through in a year."

"Pardon me, friend," said Don Quixote, "it was only because there is so great a difference between Sarna and Sarah that I pointed it out to you; but you have given me a very good answer, for the itch does live longer than Sarah; and so go on with your story, and I will not contradict you any more."

"I was about to say, then, my dear sir," the goatherd went on, "that in our village there was a farmer who was richer still than Grisóstomo's father. His name was Guillermo, and, over and above his great wealth, God gave him a daughter whose mother, the most highly respected woman in these parts, died in bearing her. It seems to me I can see the good lady now, with that face that rivaled the sun and moon; and I remember, above all, what a friend she was to the poor, for which reason I believe that her soul at this very moment must be enjoying God's presence in the other world.

"Grieving for the loss of so excellent a wife, Guillermo himself died, leaving his daughter Marcela, now a rich young woman, in the custody of one of her uncles, a priest who holds a benefice in our village. The girl grew up with such beauty as to remind us of her mother, beautiful as that lady had been. By the time she was fourteen or fifteen no one looked at her without giving thanks to God who had created such comeliness, and almost all were hopelessly in love with her. Her uncle kept her very closely shut up, but, for all of that, word of her great beauty spread to such an extent that by reason of it, as much as on account of the girl's wealth, her uncle

9. Actually in this case the goatherd is not really wrong, for *sarna* means "itch" and "older than the itch" was a proverbial expression.

found himself besought and importuned not only by the young men of our village, but by those for leagues around who desired to have her for a wife.

"But he, an upright Christian, although he wished to marry her off as soon as she was of age, had no desire to do so without her consent, not that he had any eye to the gain and profit which the custody of his niece's property brought him while her marriage was deferred. Indeed, this much was said in praise of the good priest in more than one circle of the village; for I would have you know, Sir Knight, that in these little places everything is discussed and becomes a subject of gossip; and you may rest assured, as I am for my part, that a priest must be more than ordinarily good if his parishioners feel bound to speak well of him, especially in the small towns."

"That is true," said Don Quixote, "but go on. I like your story very much, and you, good Pedro, tell it with very good grace."

"May the Lord's grace never fail me, for that is what counts. But to go on: Although the uncle set forth to his niece the qualities of each one in particular of the many who sought her hand, begging her to choose and marry whichever one she pleased, she never gave him any answer other than this: that she did not wish to marry at all, since being but a young girl she did not feel that she was equal to bearing the burdens of matrimony. As her reasons appeared to be proper and just, the uncle did not insist but thought he would wait until she was a little older, when she would be capable of selecting someone to her taste. For, he said, and quite right he was, parents ought not to impose a way of life upon their children against the latters' will. And then, one fine day, lo and behold, there was the finical Marcela turned shepherdess; and without paying any attention to her uncle or all those of the village who advised against it, she set out to wander through the fields with the other lasses, guarding flocks as they did.

"Well, the moment she appeared in public and her beauty was uncovered for all to see, I really cannot tell you how many rich young bachelors, gentlemen, and farmers proceeded to don a shepherd's garb and go to make love to her in the meadows. One of her suitors, as I have told you, was our deceased friend, and it is said that he did not love but adored her. But you must not think that because Marcela chose so free and easy a life, and one that offers little or no privacy, that she was thereby giving the faintest semblance of encouragement to those who would disparage her modesty and prudence; rather, so great was the vigilance with which she looked after her honor that of all those who waited upon her and solicited her favors, none could truly say that she had given him the slightest hope of attaining his desire.

"For although she does not flee nor shun the company and con-

versation of the shepherds, treating them in courteous and friendly fashion, the moment she discovers any intentions on their part, even though it be the just and holy one of matrimony, she hurls them from her like a catapult. As a result, she is doing more damage in this land than if a plague had fallen upon it; for her beauty and graciousness win the hearts of all who would serve her, but her disdain and the disillusionment it brings lead them in the end to despair, and then they can only call her cruel and ungrateful, along with other similar epithets that reveal all too plainly the state of mind that prompts them. If you were to stay here some time, sir, you would hear these uplands and valleys echo with the laments of those who have followed her only to be deceived.

"Not far from here is a place where there are a couple of dozen tall beeches, and there is not a one of them on whose smooth bark Marcela's name has not been engraved; and above some of these inscriptions you will find a crown, as if by this her lover meant to indicate that she deserved to wear the garland of beauty above all the women on the earth. Here a shepherd sighs and there another voices his lament. Now are to be heard amorous ballads, and again despairing ditties. One will spend all the hours of the night seated at the foot of some oak or rock without once closing his tearful eyes, and the morning sun will find him there, stupefied and lost in thought. Another, without giving truce or respite to his sighs, will lie stretched upon the burning sands in the full heat of the most exhausting summer noontide, sending up his complaint to merciful Heaven.

"And, meanwhile, over this one and that one, over one and all, the beauteous Marcela triumphs and goes her own way, free and unconcerned. All those of us who know her are waiting to see how far her pride will carry her, and who will be the fortunate man who will succeed in taming this terrible creature and thus come into possession of a beauty so matchless as hers. Knowing all this that I have told you to be undoubtedly true, I can readily believe this lad's story about the cause of Grisóstomo's death. And so I advise you, sir, not to fail to be present tomorrow at his burial; it will be well worth seeing, for he has many friends, and the place is not half a league from here."

"I will make a point of it," said Don Quixote, "and I thank you for the pleasure you have given me by telling me so delightful a tale."

"Oh," said the goatherd, "I do not know the half of the things that have happened to Marcela's lovers; but it is possible that tomorrow we may meet along the way some shepherd who will tell us more. And now it would be well for you to go and sleep under cover, for the night air may not be good for your wound, though with the remedy that has been put on it there is not much to fear."

Sancho Panza, who had been sending the goatherd to the devil for talking so much, now put in a word with his master, urging him to come and sleep in Pedro's hut. Don Quixote did so; and all the rest of the night was spent by him in thinking of his lady Dulcinea, in imitation of Marcela's lovers. As for Sancho, he made himself comfortable between Rocinante and the ass and at once dropped off to sleep, not like a lovelorn swain but, rather, like a man who has had a sound kicking that day.

CHAPTER 13

In which is brought to a close the story of the shepherdess Marcela, along with other events.

Day had barely begun to appear upon the balconies of the east when five or six goatherds arose and went to awaken Don Quixote and tell him that if he was still of a mind to go see Grisóstomo's famous burial they would keep him company. The knight, desiring nothing better, ordered Sancho to saddle at once, which was done with much dispatch, and then they all set out forthwith.

They had not gone more than a quarter of a league when, upon crossing a footpath, they saw coming toward them six shepherds clad in black sheepskins and with garlands of cypress and bitter rosebay on their heads. Each of them carried a thick staff made of the wood of the holly, and with them came two gentlemen on horseback in handsome traveling attire, accompanied by three lads on foot. As the two parties met they greeted each other courteously, each inquiring as to the other's destination, whereupon they learned that they were all going to the burial, and so continued to ride along together.

Speaking to his companion, one of them said, "I think, Señor Vivaldo, that we are going to be well repaid for the delay it will cost us to see this famous funeral; for famous it must surely be, judging by the strange things that these shepherds have told us of the dead man and the homicidal shepherdess."

"I think so too," agreed Vivaldo. "I should be willing to delay our journey not one day, but four, for the sake of seeing it."

Don Quixote then asked them what it was they had heard of Marcela and Grisóstomo. The traveler replied that on that very morning they had fallen in with those shepherds and, seeing them so mournfully trigged out, had asked them what the occasion for it was. One of the fellows had then told them of the beauty and strange demeanor of a shepherdess by the name of Marcela, her many suitors, and the death of this Grisóstomo, to whose funeral they were bound. He related, in short, the entire story as Don Quixote had heard it from Pedro.

Changing the subject, the gentleman called Vivaldo inquired of Don Quixote what it was that led him to go armed in that manner in a land that was so peaceful.

"The calling that I profess," replied Don Quixote, "does not permit me to do otherwise. An easy pace, pleasure, and repose—those things were invented for delicate courtiers; but toil, anxiety, and arms—they are for those whom the world knows as knights-errant, of whom I, though unworthy, am the very least."

No sooner had they heard this than all of them immediately took him for a madman. By way of assuring himself further and seeing what kind of madness it was of which Don Quixote was possessed, Vivaldo now asked him what was meant by the term knights-errant.

"Have not your Worships read the annals and the histories of England that treat of the famous exploits of King Arthur, who in our Castilian balladry is always called King Artús? According to a very old tradition that is common throughout the entire realm of Great Britain, this king did not die, but by an act of enchantment was changed into a raven; and in due course of time he is to return and reign once more, recovering his kingdom and his scepter; for which reason, from that day to this, no Englishman is known to have killed one of those birds. It was, moreover, in the time of that good king that the famous order of the Knights of the Round Table was instituted; and as for the love of Sir Lancelot of the Lake and Queen Guinevere, everything took place exactly as the story has it, their confidante and go-between being the honored matron Quintañona; whence comes that charming ballad that is such a favorite with us Spaniards:

Never was there a knight
So served by maid and dame
As the one they call Sir Lancelot
When from Britain he came—

to carry on the gentle, pleasing course of his loves and noble deeds.

"From that time forth, the order of chivalry was passed on and propagated from one individual to another until it had spread through many and various parts of the world. Among those famed for their exploits was the valiant Amadis of Gaul, with all his sons and grandsons to the fifth generation; and there was also the brave Felixmarte of Hircania, and the never sufficiently praised Tirant lo Blanch; and in view of the fact that he lived in our own day, almost, we came near to seeing, hearing, and conversing with that other courageous knight, Don Belianís of Greece.

"And that, gentlemen, is what it means to be a knight-errant, and what I have been telling you of is the order of chivalry which such a knight professes, an order to which, as I have already informed you, I, although a sinner, have the honor of belonging; for I have made

the same profession as have those other knights. That is why it is you find me in these wild and lonely places, riding in quest of adventure, being resolved to offer my arm and my person in the most dangerous undertaking fate may have in store for me, that I may be of aid to the weak and needy."

Listening to this speech, the travelers had some while since come to the conclusion that Don Quixote was out of his mind, and were likewise able to perceive the peculiar nature of his madness, and they wondered at it quite as much as did all those who encountered it for the first time. Being endowed with a ready wit and a merry disposition and thinking to pass the time until they reached the end of the short journey which, so he was told, awaited them before they should arrive at the mountain where the burial was to take place, Vivaldo decided to give him a further opportunity of displaying his absurdities.

"It strikes me, Sir Knight-errant," he said, "that your Grace has espoused one of the most austere professions to be found anywhere on earth—even more austere, if I am not mistaken, than that of the Carthusian monks."

"Theirs may be as austere as ours," Don Quixote replied, "but that it is as necessary I am very much inclined to doubt. For if the truth be told, the soldier who carries out his captain's order does no less than the captain who gives the order. By that I mean to say that the religious, in all peace and tranquility, pray to Heaven for earth's good, but we soldiers and knights put their prayers into execution by defending with the might of our good right arms and at the edge of the sword those things for which they pray; and we do this not under cover of a roof but under the open sky, beneath the insufferable rays of the summer sun and the biting cold of winter. Thus we become the ministers of God on earth, and our arms the means by which He executes His decrees. And just as war and all the things that have to do with it are impossible without toil, sweat, and anxiety, it follows that those who have taken upon themselves such a profession must unquestionably labor harder than do those who in peace and tranquility and at their ease pray God to favor the ones who can do little in their own behalf.

"I do not mean to say—I should not think of saying—that the state of knight-errant is as holy as that of the cloistered monk; I merely would imply, from what I myself endure, that ours is beyond a doubt the more laborious and arduous calling, more beset by hunger and thirst, more wretched, ragged, and ridden with lice. It is an absolute certainty that the knights-errant of old experienced much misfortune in the course of their lives; and if some by their might and valor came to be emperors, you may take my word for it, it cost them dearly in blood and sweat, and if those who rose to such a rank had

lacked enchanters and magicians to aid them, they surely would have been cheated of their desires, deceived in their hopes and expectations."

"I agree with you on that," said the traveler, "but there is one thing among others that gives me a very bad impression of the knights-errant, and that is the fact that when they are about to enter upon some great and perilous adventure in which they are in danger of losing their lives, they never at that moment think of commending themselves to God as every good Christian is obliged to do under similar circumstances, but, rather, commend themselves to their ladies with as much fervor and devotion as if their mistresses were God himself; all of which to me smacks somewhat of paganism."

"Sir," Don Quixote answered him, "it could not by any means be otherwise; the knight-errant who did not do so would fall into disgrace, for it is the usage and custom of chivalry that the knight, before engaging in some great feat of arms, shall behold his lady in front of him and shall turn his eyes toward her, gently and lovingly, as if beseeching her favor and protection in the hazardous encounter that awaits him, and even though no one hears him, he is obliged to utter certain words between his teeth, commending himself to her with all his heart; and of this we have numerous examples in the histories. Nor is it to be assumed that he does not commend himself to God also, but the time and place for that is in the course of the undertaking."

"All the same," said the traveler, "I am not wholly clear in this matter; for I have often read of two knights-errant exchanging words until, one word leading to another, their wrath is kindled; whereupon, turning their steeds and taking a good run up the field, they whirl about and bear down upon each other at full speed, commending themselves to their ladies in the midst of it all. What commonly happens then is that one of the two topples from his horse's flanks and is run through and through with the other's lance; and his adversary would also fall to the ground if he did not cling to his horse's mane. What I do not understand is how the dead man would have had time to commend himself to God in the course of this accelerated combat. It would be better if the words he wasted in calling upon his lady as he ran toward the other knight had been spent in paying the debt that he owed as a Christian. Moreover, it is my personal opinion that not all knights-errant have ladies to whom to commend themselves, for not all of them are in love."

"That," said Don Quixote, "is impossible. I assert there can be no knight-errant without a lady; for it is as natural and proper for them to be in love as it is for the heavens to have stars, and I am quite sure that no one ever read a story in which a loveless man of arms was to be met with, for the simple reason that such a one would not be

looked upon as a legitimate knight but as a bastard one who had entered the fortress of chivalry not by the main gate, but over the walls, like a robber and a thief."

"Nevertheless," said the traveler, "if my memory serves me right, I have read that Don Galaor, brother of the valorous Amadis of Gaul, never had a special lady to whom he prayed, yet he was not held in any the less esteem for that but was a very brave and famous knight."

Once again, our Don Quixote had an answer. "Sir, one swallow does not make a summer. And in any event, I happen to know that this knight was secretly very much in love. As for his habit of paying court to all the ladies that caught his fancy, that was a natural propensity on his part and one that he was unable to resist. There was, however, one particular lady whom he had made the mistress of his will and to whom he did commend himself very frequently and privately; for he prided himself upon being a reticent knight."

"Well, then," said the traveler, "if it is essential that every knight-errant be in love, it is to be presumed that your Grace is also, since you are of the profession. And unless it be that you pride yourself upon your reticence as much as did Don Galaor, then I truly, on my own behalf and in the name of all this company, beseech your Grace to tell us your lady's name, the name of the country where she resides, what her rank is, and something of the beauty of her person, that she may esteem herself fortunate in having all the world know that she is loved and served by such a knight as your Grace appears to me to be."

At this, Don Quixote heaved a deep sigh. "I cannot say," he began, "as to whether or not my sweet enemy would be pleased that all the world should know I serve her. I can only tell you, in response to the question which you have so politely put to me, that her name is Dulcinea, her place of residence El Toboso, a village of La Mancha. As to her rank, she should be at the very least a princess, seeing that she is my lady and my queen. Her beauty is superhuman, for in it are realized all the impossible and chimerical attributes that poets are accustomed to give their fair ones. Her locks are golden, her brow the Elysian Fields, her eyebrows rainbows, her eyes suns, her cheeks roses, her lips coral, her teeth pearls, her neck alabaster, her bosom marble, her hands ivory, her complexion snow-white. As for those parts which modesty keeps covered from the human sight, it is my opinion that, discreetly considered, they are only to be extolled and not compared to any other."

"We should like," said Vivaldo, "to know something as well of her lineage, her race and ancestry."

"She is not," said Don Quixote, "of the ancient Roman Curtii, Caii, or Scipios, nor of the modern Colonnas and Orsini, nor of the Moncades and Requesenses of Catalonia, nor is she of the Rebellas

and Villanovas of Valencia, or the Palafoxes, Nuzas, Rocabertis, Corellas, Lunas, Alagones, Urreas, or Gurreas of Aragon, the Cerdas, Manriques, Mendozas, or Guzmanes of Castile, the Alencastros, Pallas, or Menezes of Portugal; but she is of the Tobosos of La Mancha, and although the line is a modern one, it well may give rise to the most illustrious families of the centuries to come. And let none dispute this with me, unless it be under the conditions which Zerbino has set forth in the inscription beneath Orlando's arms:

These let none move
Who dares not with Orlando his valor prove."[1]

"Although my own line," replied the traveler, "is that of the Gachupins of Laredo, I should not venture to compare it with the Tobosos of La Mancha, in view of the fact that, to tell you the truth, I have never heard the name before."

"How does it come that you have never heard it!" exclaimed Don Quixote.

The others were listening most attentively to the conversation of these two, and even the goatherds and shepherds were by now aware that our knight of La Mancha was more than a little insane. Sancho Panza alone thought that all his master said was the truth, for he was well acquainted with him, having known him since birth. The only doubt in his mind had to do with the beauteous Dulcinea del Toboso, for he knew of no such princess and the name was strange to his ears, although he lived not far from that place.

They were continuing on their way, conversing in this manner, when they caught sight of some twenty shepherds coming through the gap between two high mountains, all of them clad in black woolen garments and with wreaths on their heads, some of the garlands, as was afterward learned, being of cypress, others of yew. Six of them were carrying a bier covered with a great variety of flowers and boughs.

"There they come with Grisóstomo's body," said one of the goatherds, "and the foot of the mountain yonder is where he wished to be buried."

They accordingly quickened their pace and arrived just as those carrying the bier had set it down on the ground. Four of the shepherds with sharpened picks were engaged in digging a grave alongside the barren rock. After a courteous exchange of greetings, Don Quixote and his companions turned to look at the bier. Upon it lay a corpse covered with flowers, the body of a man dressed like a shepherd and around thirty years of age. Even in death it could be seen that he had had a handsome face and had been of a jovial disposi-

1. From Lodovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, canto XXIV, stanza 57.

tion. Round about him upon the bier were a number of books and many papers, open and folded.

Meanwhile, those who stood gazing at the dead man and those who were digging the grave—everyone present, in fact—preserved an awed silence, until one of the pallbearers said to another, "Look well, Ambrosio, and make sure that this is the place that Grisóstomo had in mind, since you are bent upon carrying out to the letter the provisions of his will."

"This is it," replied Ambrosio; "for many times my unfortunate friend told me the story of his misadventure. He told me that it was here that he first laid eyes upon that mortal enemy of the human race, and it was here, also, that he first revealed to her his passion, for he was as honorable as he was lovelorn; and it was here, finally, at their last meeting, that she shattered his illusions and showed him her disdain, thus bringing to an end the tragedy of his wretched life. And here, in memory of his great misfortune, he wished to be laid in the bowels of eternal oblivion."

Then, turning to Don Quixote and the travelers, he went on, "This body, gentlemen, on which you now look with pitying eyes was the depository of a soul which heaven had endowed with a vast share of its riches. This is the body of Grisóstomo, who was unrivaled in wit, unequaled in courtesy, supreme in gentleness of bearing, a model of friendship, generous without stint, grave without conceit, merry without being vulgar—in short, first in all that is good and second to none in the matter of misfortunes. He loved well and was hated, he adored and was disdained; he wooed a wild beast, importuned a piece of marble, ran after the wind, cried out to loneliness, waited upon ingratitude, and his reward was to be the spoils of death midway in his life's course—a life that was brought to an end by a shepherdess whom he sought to immortalize that she might live on in the memory of mankind, as those papers that you see there would very plainly show if he had not commanded me to consign them to the flames even as his body is given to the earth."

"You," said Vivaldo, "would treat them with greater harshness and cruelty than their owner himself, for it is neither just nor fitting to carry out the will of one who commands what is contrary to all reason. It would not have been a good thing for Augustus Caesar to consent to have them execute the behests of the divine Mantuan in his last testament.[2] And so, Señor Ambrosio, while you may give the body of your friend to the earth, you ought not to give his writings to oblivion. If out of bitterness he left such an order, that does not mean that you are to obey it without using your own discretion. Rather, by granting life to these papers, you permit Marcela's cruelheartedness to live forever and serve as an example to the others in

2. Virgil (born near Mantua) had left instructions that his Roman epic, the *Aeneid*, should be burned.

the days that are to come in order that they may flee and avoid such pitfalls as these.

"I and those that have come with me know the story of this love-sick and despairing friend of yours; we know the affection that was between you, and what the occasion of his death was, and the things that he commanded be done as his life drew to a close. And from this lamentable tale anyone may see how great was Marcela's cruelty; they may behold Grisóstomo's love, the loyalty that lay in your friendship, and the end that awaits those who run headlong, with unbridled passion, down the path that doting love opens before their gaze. Last night we heard of your friend's death and learned that he was to be buried here, and out of pity and curiosity we turned aside from our journey and resolved to come see with our own eyes that which had aroused so much compassion when it was told to us. And in requital of that compassion, and the desire that has been born in us to prevent if we can a recurrence of such tragic circumstances, we beg you, O prudent Ambrosio!—or, at least, I for my part implore you—to give up your intention of burning these papers and let me carry some of them away with me."

Without waiting for the shepherd to reply he put out his hand and took a few of those that were nearest him.

"Out of courtesy, sir," said Ambrosio when he saw this, "I will consent for you to keep those that you have taken; but it is vain to think that I will refrain from burning the others."

Vivaldo, who was anxious to find out what was in the papers, opened one of them and perceived that it bore the title "Song of Despair."

Hearing this, Ambrosio said, "That is the last thing the poor fellow wrote; and in order, sir, that you may see the end to which his misfortunes brought him, read it aloud if you will, for we shall have time for it while they are digging the grave."

"That I will very willingly do," said Vivaldo.

And since all the bystanders had the same desire, they gathered around as he in a loud clear voice read the following poem.

CHAPTER 14

In which are set down the despairing verses of the deceased shepherd, with other unlooked-for happenings.

Grisóstomo's Song

Since thou desirest that thy cruelty
Be spread from tongue to tongue and land to land,
The unrelenting sternness of thy heart

Shall turn my bosom's hell to minstrelsy
That all men everywhere may understand
The nature of my grief and what thou art.
And as I seek my sorrows to impart,
Telling of all the things that thou hast done,
My very entrails shall speak out to brand
Thy heartlessness, thy soul to reprimand,
Where no compassion ever have I won.
Then listen well, lend an attentive ear;
This ballad that thou art about to hear
Is not contrived by art; 'tis a simple song
Such as shepherds sing each day throughout the year—
Surcease of pain for me, for thee a prong.
Then let the roar of lion, fierce wolf's cry,
The horrid hissing of the scaly snake,
The terrifying sound of monsters strange,
Ill-omened call of crow against the sky,
The howling of the wind as it doth shake
The tossing sea where all is constant change,
Bellow of vanquished bull that cannot range
As it was wont to do, the piteous sob
Of the widowed dove as if its heart would break,
Hoot of the envied owl,[3] *ever awake,*
From hell's own choir the deep and mournful throb—
Let all these sounds come forth and mingle now.
For if I'm to tell my woes, why then, I vow,
I must new measures find, new modes invent,
With sound confusing sense, I may somehow
Portray the inferno where my days are spent.
The mournful echoes of my murmurous plaint
Father Tagus[4] *shall not hear as he rolls his sand,*
Nor olive-bordered Betis; my lament shall be
To the tall and barren rock as I acquaint
The caves with my sorrow; the far and lonely strand
No human foot has trod shall hear from me
The story of thine inhumanity
As told with lifeless tongue but living word.
I'll tell it to the valleys near at hand
Where never shines the sun upon the land;
By venomous serpents shall my tale be heard
On the low-lying, marshy river plain.
And yet, the telling will not be in vain;
For the reverberations of my plight,

3. Envied by other birds as the only one that witnessed the Crucifixion.
4. The river Tagus. *Betis:* the Guadalquivir.

Thy matchless austerity and this my pain,
Through the wide world shall go, thee to indict.
Disdain may kill; suspicion false or true
May slay all patience; deadliest of all
Is jealousy; while absence renders life
Worse than a void; Hope lends no roseate hue
Against forgetfulness or the dread call
Of death inevitable, the end of strife.
Yet—unheard miracle!—with sorrows rife,
My own existence somehow still goes on;
The flame of life with me doth rise and fall.
Jealous I am, disdained; I know the gall
Of those suspicions that will not be gone,
Which leave me not the shadow of a hope,
And, desperate, I will not even grope
But rather will endure until the end,
And with despair eternally I'll cope,
Knowing that things for me will never mend.
Can one both hope and fear at the same season?
Would it be well to do so in any case,
Seeing that fear, by far, hath the better excuse?
Confronting jealousy, is there any reason
For me to close my eyes to its stern face,
Pretend to see it not? What is the use,
When its dread presence I can still deduce
From countless gaping wounds deep in my heart?
When suspicion—bitter change!—to truth gives place,
And truth itself, losing its virgin grace,
Becomes a lie, is it not wisdom's part
To open wide the door to frank mistrust?
When disdain's unveiled, to doubt is only just.
O ye fierce tyrants of Love's empery!
Shackle these hands with stout cord, if ye must.
My pain shall drown your triumph—woe is me!
I die, in short, and since nor life nor death
Yields any hope, to my fancy will I cling.
That man is freest who is Love's bond slave:
I'll say this with my living-dying breath,
And the ancient tyrant's praises I will sing.
Love is the greatest blessing Heaven e'er gave.
What greater beauty could a lover crave
Than that which my fair enemy doth show
In soul and body and in everything?
E'en her forgetfulness of me doth spring
From my own lack of grace, that I well know.

In spite of all the wrongs that he has wrought,
Love rules his empire justly as he ought.
Throw all to the winds and speed life's wretched span
By feeding on his self-deluding thought.
No blessing holds the future that I scan.
Thou whose unreasonableness reason doth give
For putting an end to this tired life of mine,
From the deep heart wounds which thou mayest plainly see,
Judge if the better course be to die or live.
Gladly did I surrender my will to thine,
Gladly I suffered all thou didst to me;
And now that I'm dying, should it seem to thee
My death is worth a tear from thy bright eyes,
Pray hold it back, fair one, do not repine,
For I would have from thee no faintest sign
Of penitence, e'en though my soul thy prize.
Rather, I'd have thee laugh, be very gay,
And let my funeral be a festive day—
But I am very simple! knowing full well
That thou art bound to go thy blithesome way,
And my untimely end thy fame shall swell.
Come, thirsting Tantalus from out Hell's pit;
Come, Sisyphus with the terrifying weight
Of that stone thou rollest; Tityus, bring
Thy vulture and thine anguish infinite;
Ixion[5] *with thy wheel, be thou not late;*
Come, too, ye sisters ever laboring;[6]
Come all, your griefs into my bosom fling,
And then, with lowered voices, intone a dirge,
If dirge be fitting for one so desperate,
A body without a shroud, unhappy fate!
And Hell's three-headed gateman,[7] *do thou emerge*
With a myriad other phantoms, monstrous swarm,
Beings infernal of fantastic form,
Raising their voices for the uncomforted
In a counterpoint of grief, harmonious storm.
What better burial for a lover dead?
Despairing song of mine, do not complain,
Nor let our parting cause thee any pain,
For my misfortune is not wholly bad,

5. In Greek myth, all four are proverbial images of mortals punished by the Gods with different forms of torture: *Tantalus*, craving water and fruit which he always fails to reach; *Sisyphus*, forever vainly trying to roll a stone upward to the top of a hill; *Tityus*, having his liver devoured by a vulture; and *Ixion*, being bound to a revolving wheel. 6. In classical mythology the three Fates (Moerae to the Greeks, Parcae to the Romans), spinners of man's destiny. 7. Cerberus, a dog-like three-headed monster, the mythological guardian of Hell.

Seeing her fortune's bettered by my demise.
Then, even in the grave, be thou not sad.

Those who had listened to Grisóstomo's poem liked it well enough, but the one who read it remarked that it did not appear to him to conform to what had been told him of Marcela's modesty and virtue, seeing that in it the author complains of jealousy, suspicion, and absence, all to the prejudice of her good name. To this Ambrosio, as one who had known his friend's most deeply hidden thoughts, replied as follows:

"By way of satisfying, sir, the doubt that you entertain, it is well for you to know that when the unfortunate man wrote that poem, he was by his own volition absent from Marcela, to see if this would work a cure; but when the enamored one is away from his love, there is nothing that does not inspire in him fear and torment, and such was the case with Grisóstomo, for whom jealous imaginings, fears, and suspicions became a seeming reality. And so, in this respect, Marcela's reputation for virtue remains unimpaired; beyond being cruel and somewhat arrogant, and exceedingly disdainful, she could not be accused by the most envious of any other fault."

"Yes, that is so," said Vivaldo.

He was about to read another of the papers he had saved from the fire when he was stopped by a marvelous vision—for such it appeared—that suddenly met his sight; for there atop the rock beside which the grave was being hollowed out stood the shepherdess Marcela herself, more beautiful even than she was reputed to be. Those who up to then had never seen her looked on in silent admiration, while those who were accustomed to beholding her were held in as great a suspense as the ones who were gazing upon her for the first time.

No sooner had Ambrosio glimpsed her than, with a show of indignation, he called out to her, "So, fierce basilisk[8] of these mountains, have you perchance come to see if in your presence blood will flow from the wounds of this poor wretch whom you by your cruelty have deprived of life?[9] Have you come to gloat over your inhuman exploits, or would you from that height look down like another pitiless Nero upon your Rome in flames and ashes?[1] Or perhaps you would arrogantly tread under foot this poor corpse, as an ungrateful daughter did that of her father Tarquinius?[2] Tell us quickly why you have come and what it is that you want most; for I know that Grisóstomo's

8. A mythical lizard-like creature whose look and breath were supposed to be lethal. 9. According to folklore, the corpse of a murdered person was supposed to bleed in the presence of the murderer. 1. The Roman emperor Nero is supposed, in tale and proverb, to have been singing while from a tower he observed the burning of Rome in A.D. 64. 2. The inaccurate allusion is to Tullia, actually the wife of the last of the legendary kings of early Rome, Tarquinius; she let the wheel of her carriage trample over the body of her father—the previous king Servius Tullius—whom her husband Tarquinius had liquidated.

thoughts never failed to obey you in life, and though he is dead now, I will see that all those who call themselves his friends obey you likewise."

"I do not come, O Ambrosio, for any of the reasons that you have mentioned," replied Marcela. "I come to defend myself and to demonstrate how unreasonable all those persons are who blame me for their sufferings and for Grisóstomo's death. I therefore ask all present to hear me attentively. It will not take long and I shall not have to spend many words in persuading those of you who are sensible that I speak the truth.

"Heaven made me beautiful, you say, so beautiful that you are compelled to love me whether you will or no; and in return for the love that you show me, you would have it that I am obliged to love you in return. I know, with that natural understanding that God has given me, that everything beautiful is lovable; but I cannot see that it follows that the object that is loved for its beauty must love the one who loves it. Let us suppose that the lover of the beautiful were ugly and, being ugly, deserved to be shunned; it would then be highly absurd for him to say, 'I love you because you are beautiful; you must love me because I am ugly.'

"But assuming that two individuals are equally beautiful, it does not mean that their desires are the same; for not all beauty inspires love, but may sometimes merely delight the eye and leave the will intact. If it were otherwise, no one would know what he wanted, but all would wander vaguely and aimlessly with nothing upon which to settle their affections; for the number of beautiful objects being infinite, desires similarly would be boundless. I have heard it said that true love knows no division and must be voluntary and not forced. This being so, as I believe it is, then why would you compel me to surrender my will for no other reason than that you say you love me? But tell me: supposing that Heaven which made me beautiful had made me ugly instead, should I have any right to complain because you did not love me? You must remember, moreover, that I did not choose this beauty that is mine; such as it is, Heaven gave it to me of its grace, without any choice or asking on my part. As the viper is not to be blamed for the deadly poison that it bears, since that is a gift of nature, so I do not deserve to be reprehended for my comeliness of form.

"Beauty in a modest woman is like a distant fire or a sharp-edged sword: the one does not burn, the other does not cut, those who do not come near it. Honor and virtue are the adornments of the soul, without which the body is not beautiful though it may appear to be. If modesty is one of the virtues that most adorn and beautify body and soul, why should she who is loved for her beauty part with that virtue merely to satisfy the whim of one who solely for his own plea-

sure strives with all his force and energy to cause her to lose it? I was born a free being, and in order to live freely I chose the solitude of the fields; these mountain trees are my company, the clear-running waters in these brooks are my mirror, and to the trees and waters I communicate my thoughts and lend them of my beauty.

"In short, I am that distant fire, that sharp-edged sword, that does not burn or cut. Those who have been enamored by the sight of me I have disillusioned with my words; and if desire is sustained by hope, I gave none to Grisóstomo or any other, and of none of them can it be said that I killed them with my cruelty, for it was rather their own obstinacy that was to blame. And if you reproach me with the fact that his intentions were honorable and that I ought for that reason to have complied with them, I will tell you that when, on this very spot where his grave is now being dug, he revealed them to me, I replied that it was my own intention to live in perpetual solitude and that only the earth should enjoy the fruit of my retirement and the spoils of my beauty; and if he with all this plain-speaking was still stubbornly bent upon hoping against hope and sailing against the wind, is it to be wondered at if he drowned in the gulf of his own folly?

"Had I led him on, it would have been falsely; had I gratified his passion, it would have been against my own best judgment and intentions; but, though I had disillusioned him, he persisted, and though I did not hate him, he was driven to despair. Ask yourselves, then, if it is reasonable to blame me for his woes! Let him who has been truly deceived complain; let him despair who has been cheated of his promised hopes; if I have enticed any, let him speak up; if I have accepted the attentions of any, let him boast of it; but let not him to whom I have promised nothing, whom I have neither enticed nor accepted, apply to me such terms as cruel and homicidal. It has not as yet been Heaven's will to destine me to love any man, and there is no use expecting me to love of my own free choice.

"Let what I am saying now apply to each and every one of those who would have me for their own, and let it be understood from now on that if any die on account of me, he is not to be regarded as an unfortunate victim of jealousy, since she that cares for none can give to none the occasion for being jealous; nor is my plain-speaking to be taken as disdain. He who calls me a wild beast and a basilisk, let him leave me alone as something that is evil and harmful; let him who calls me ungrateful cease to wait upon me; let him who finds me strange shun my acquaintance; if I am cruel, do not run after me; in which case this wild beast, this basilisk, this strange, cruel, ungrateful creature will not run after them, seek them out, wait upon them, nor endeavor to know them in any way.

"The thing that killed Grisóstomo was his impatience and the impetuosity of his desire; so why blame my modest conduct and

retiring life? If I choose to preserve my purity here in the company of the trees, how can he complain of my unwillingness to lose it who would have me keep it with other men? I, as you know, have a worldly fortune of my own and do not covet that of others. My life is a free one, and I do not wish to be subject to another in any way. I neither love nor hate anyone; I do not repel this one and allure that one; I do not play fast and loose with any. The modest conversation of these village lasses and the care of my goats is sufficient to occupy me. Those mountains there represent the bounds of my desire, and should my wishes go beyond them, it is but to contemplate the beauty of the heavens, that pathway by which the soul travels to its first dwelling place."

Saying this and without waiting for any reply, she turned her back and entered the thickest part of a near-by wood, leaving all present lost in admiration of her wit as well as her beauty. A few—those who had felt the powerful dart of her glances and bore the wounds inflicted by her lovely eyes—were of a mind to follow her, taking no heed of the plainly worded warning they had just had from her lips; whereupon Don Quixote, seeing this and thinking to himself that here was an opportunity to display his chivalry by succoring a damsel in distress, laid his hand upon the hilt of his sword and cried out, loudly and distinctly, "Let no person of whatever state or condition he may be dare to follow the beauteous Marcela under pain of incurring my furious wrath. She has shown with clear and sufficient reasons that little or no blame for Grisóstomo's death is to be attached to her; she has likewise shown how far she is from acceding to the desires of any of her suitors, and it is accordingly only just that in place of being hounded and persecuted she should be honored and esteemed by all good people in this world as the only woman in it who lives with such modesty and good intentions."

Whether it was due to Don Quixote's threats or because Ambrosio now told them that they should finish doing the things which his good friend had desired should be done, no one stirred from the spot until the burial was over and Grisóstomo's papers had been burned. As the body was laid in the grave, many tears were shed by the bystanders. Then they placed a heavy stone upon it until the slab which Ambrosio was thinking of having made should be ready, with an epitaph that was to read:

Here lies a shepherd by love betrayed,
His body cold in death,
Who with his last and faltering breath
Spoke of a faithless maid.
He died by the cruel, heartless hand
Of a coy and lovely lass,

Who by bringing men to so sorry a pass
Love's tyranny doth expand.

They then scattered many flowers and boughs over the top of the grave, and, expressing their condolences to the dead man's friend, Ambrosio, they all took their leave, including Vivaldo and his companions. Don Quixote now said good-by to the travelers as well, although they urged him to come with them to Seville, assuring him that he would find in every street and at every corner of that city more adventures than are to be met with anywhere else. He thanked them for the invitation and the courtesy they had shown him in offering it, but added that for the present he had no desire to visit Seville, not until he should have rid these mountains of the robbers and bandits of which they were said to be full.

Seeing that his mind was made up, the travelers did not urge him further but, bidding him another farewell, left him and continued on their way; and the reader may be sure that in the course of their journey they did not fail to discuss the story of Marcela and Grisóstomo as well as Don Quixote's madness. As for the good knight himself, he was resolved to go seek the shepherdess and offer her any service that lay in his power; but things did not turn out the way he expected. . . .

[Fighting the Sheep]

CHAPTER 18

In which is set forth the conversation that Sancho Panza had with his master, Don Quixote, along with other adventures deserving of record.

. . . Don Quixote caught sight down the road of a large cloud of dust that was drawing nearer.

"This, O Sancho," he said, turning to his squire, "is the day when you shall see the boon that fate has in store for me; this, I repeat, is the day when, as well as on any other, shall be displayed the valor of my good right arm. On this day I shall perform deeds that will be written down in the book of fame for all centuries to come. Do you see that dust cloud rising there, Sancho? That is the dust stirred up by a vast army marching in this direction and composed of many nations."

"At that rate," said Sancho, "there must be two of them, for there is another one just like it on the other side."

Don Quixote turned to look and saw that this was so. He was overjoyed by the thought that these were indeed two armies about to meet and clash in the middle of the broad plain; for at every hour

and every moment his imagination was filled with battles, enchantments, nonsensical adventures, tales of love, amorous challenges, and the like, such as he had read of in the books of chivalry, and every word he uttered, every thought that crossed his mind, every act he performed, had to do with such things as these. The dust clouds he had sighted were raised by two large droves of sheep coming along the road in opposite directions, which by reason of the dust were not visible until they were close at hand, but Don Quixote insisted so earnestly that they were armies that Sancho came to believe it.

"Sir," he said, "what are we to do?"

"What are we to do?" echoed his master. "Favor and aid the weak and needy. I would inform you, Sancho, that the one coming toward us is led and commanded by the great emperor Alifanfarón, lord of the great isle of Trapobana. This other one at my back is that of his enemy, the king of the Garamantas, Pentapolín of the Rolled-up Sleeve, for he always goes into battle with his right arm bare."

"But why are they such enemies?" Sancho asked.

"Because," said Don Quixote, "this Alifanfarón is a terrible pagan and in love with Pentapolín's daughter, who is a very beautiful and gracious lady and a Christian, for which reason her father does not wish to give her to the pagan king unless the latter first abjures the law of the false prophet, Mohammed, and adopts the faith that is Pentapolín's own."

"Then, by my beard," said Sancho, "if Pentapolín isn't right, and I am going to aid him all I can."

"In that," said Don Quixote, "you will only be doing your duty; for to engage in battles of this sort you need not have been dubbed a knight."

"I can understand that," said Sancho, "but where are we going to put this ass so that we will be certain of finding him after the fray is over? As for going into battle on such a mount, I do not think that has been done up to now."

"That is true enough," said Don Quixote. "What you had best do with him is to turn him loose and run the risk of losing him; for after we emerge the victors we shall have so many horses that even Rocinante will be in danger of being exchanged for another. But listen closely to what I am about to tell you, for I wish to give you an account of the principal knights that are accompanying these two armies; and in order that you may be the better able to see and take note of them, let us retire to that hillock over there which will afford us a very good view."

They then stationed themselves upon a slight elevation from which they would have been able to see very well the two droves of sheep that Don Quixote took to be armies if it had not been for the blinding clouds of dust. In spite of this, however, the worthy gentleman con-

trived to behold in his imagination what he did not see and what did not exist in reality.

Raising his voice, he went on to explain, "That knight in the gilded armor that you see there, bearing upon his shield a crowned lion crouched at the feet of a damsel, is the valiant Laurcalco, lord of the Silver Bridge; the other with the golden flowers on his armor, and on his shield three crowns argent on an azure field, is the dread Micocolembo, grand duke of Quirocia. And that one on Micocolembo's right hand, with the limbs of a giant, is the ever undaunted Brandabarbarán de Boliche, lord of the three Arabias. He goes armored in a serpent's skin and has for shield a door which, so report has it, is one of those from the temple that Samson pulled down, that time when he avenged himself on his enemies with his own death.

"But turn your eyes in this direction, and you will behold at the head of the other army the ever victorious, never vanquished Timonel de Carcajona, prince of New Biscay, who comes with quartered arms—azure, vert, argent, and or—and who has upon his shield a cat or on a field tawny, with the inscription *Miau*, which is the beginning of his lady's name; for she, so it is said, is the peerless Miulina, daughter of Alfeñquén, duke of Algarve. And that one over there, who weights down and presses the loins of that powerful charger, in a suit of snow-white armor with a white shield that bears no device whatever—he is a novice knight of the French nation, called Pierres Papin, lord of the baronies of Utrique. As for him you see digging his iron spurs into the flanks of that fleet-footed zebra courser and whose arms are vairs azure, he is the mighty duke of Nervia, Espartafilardo of the Wood, who has for device upon his shield an asparagus plant with a motto in Castilian that says '*Rastrea mi suerte.*' "[3]

In this manner he went on naming any number of imaginary knights on either side, describing on the spur of the moment their arms, colors, devices, and mottoes; for he was completely carried away by his imagination and by this unheard-of madness that had laid hold of him.

Without pausing, he went on, "This squadron in front of us is composed of men of various nations. There are those who drink the sweet waters of the famous Xanthus; woodsmen who tread the Massilian plain; those that sift the fine gold nuggets of Arabia Felix; those that are so fortunate as to dwell on the banks of the clear-running Thermodon, famed for their coolness; those who in many and diverse ways drain the golden Pactolus; Numidians, whose word is never to be trusted; Persians, with their famous bows and arrows; Medes and Parthians, who fight as they flee; Scythians, as cruel as they are fair

3. Probably a pun on *rastrear:* the meaning of the motto may be either "On Fortune's track" or "My Fortune creeps."

of skin; Ethiopians, with their pierced lips; and an infinite number of other nationalities whose visages I see and recognize although I cannot recall their names.

"In this other squadron come those that drink from the crystal currents of the olive-bearing Betis; those that smooth and polish their faces with the liquid of the ever rich and gilded Tagus; those that enjoy the beneficial waters of the divine Genil; those that roam the Tartessian plains with their abundant pasturage; those that disport themselves in the Elysian meadows of Jerez; the men of La Mancha, rich and crowned with golden ears of corn; others clad in iron garments, ancient relics of the Gothic race; those that bathe in the Pisuerga, noted for the mildness of its current; those that feed their herds in the wide-spreading pasture lands along the banks of the winding Guadiana, celebrated for its underground course;[4] those that shiver from the cold of the wooded Pyrenees or dwell amid the white peaks of the lofty Apennines—in short, all those whom Europe holds within its girth."

So help me God! How many provinces, how many nations did he not mention by name, giving to each one with marvelous readiness its proper attributes; for he was wholly absorbed and filled to the brim with what he had read in those lying books of his! Sancho Panza hung on his words, saying nothing, merely turning his head from time to time to have a look at those knights and giants that his master was pointing out to him; but he was unable to discover any of them.

"Sir," he said, "may I go to the devil if I see a single man, giant, or knight of all those that your Grace is talking about. Who knows? Maybe it is another spell, like last night."[5]

"How can you say that?" replied Don Quixote. "Can you not hear the neighing of the horses, the sound of trumpets, the roll of drums?"

"I hear nothing," said Sancho, "except the bleating of sheep."

And this, of course, was the truth; for the flocks were drawing near.

"The trouble is, Sancho," said Don Quixote, "you are so afraid that you cannot see or hear properly; for one of the effects of fear is to disturb the senses and cause things to appear other than what they are. If you are so craven as all that, go off to one side and leave me alone, and I without your help will assure the victory to that side to which I lend my aid."

Saying this, he put spurs to Rocinante and, with his lance at rest, darted down the hillside like a flash of lightning.

As he did so, Sancho called after him, "Come back, your Grace, Señor Don Quixote; I vow to God those are sheep that you are charg-

4. The Guadiana does run underground part of the way through La Mancha. 5. The inn where they had spent the previous night had been pronounced by Don Quixote an enchanted castle.

ing. Come back! O wretched father that bore me! What madness is this? Look you, there are no giants, nor knights, nor cats, nor shields either quartered or whole, nor vairs azure or bedeviled. What is this you are doing, O sinner that I am in God's sight?"

But all this did not cause Don Quixote to turn back. Instead, he rode on, crying out at the top of his voice, "Ho, knights, those of you who follow and fight under the banners of the valiant Pentapolín of the Rolled-up Sleeve; follow me, all of you, and you shall see how easily I give you revenge on your enemy, Alifanfarón of Trapobana."

With these words he charged into the middle of the flock of sheep and began spearing at them with as much courage and boldness as if they had been his mortal enemies. The shepherds and herdsmen who were with the animals called to him to stop; but seeing it was no use, they unloosed their slings and saluted his ears with stones as big as your fist.

Don Quixote paid no attention to the missiles and, dashing about here and there, kept crying, "Where are you, haughty Alifanfarón? Come out to me; for here is a solitary knight who desires in single combat to test your strength and deprive you of your life, as a punishment for that which you have done to the valorous Pentapolín Garamanta."

At that instant a pebble from the brook struck him in the side and buried a couple of ribs in his body. Believing himself dead or badly wounded, and remembering his potion, he took out his vial, placed it to his mouth, and began to swallow the balm; but before he had had what he thought was enough, there came another almond, which struck him in the hand, crushing the tin vial and carrying away with it a couple of grinders from his mouth, as well as badly mashing two of his fingers. As a result of these blows the poor knight tumbled from his horse. Believing that they had killed him, the shepherds hastily collected their flock and, picking up the dead beasts, of which there were more than seven, they went off down the road without more ado.

Sancho all this time was standing on the slope observing the insane things that his master was doing; and as he plucked savagely at his beard he cursed the hour and minute when luck had brought them together. But when he saw him lying there on the ground and perceived that the shepherds were gone, he went down the hill and came up to him, finding him in very bad shape though not unconscious.

"Didn't I tell you, Señor Don Quixote," he said, "that you should come back, that those were not armies you were charging but flocks of sheep?"

"This," said Don Quixote, "is the work of that thieving magician,

my enemy, who thus counterfeits things and causes them to disappear. You must know, Sancho, that it is very easy for them to make us assume any appearance that they choose; and so it is that malign one who persecutes me, envious of the glory he saw me about to achieve in this battle, changed the squadrons of the foe into flocks of sheep. If you do not believe me, I beseech you on my life to do one thing for me, that you may be undeceived and discover for yourself that what I say is true. Mount your ass and follow them quietly, and when you have gone a short way from here, you will see them become their former selves once more; they will no longer be sheep but men exactly as I described them to you in the first place. But do not go now, for I need your kind assistance; come over here and have a look and tell me how many grinders are missing, for it feels as if I did not have a single one left."

["To Right Wrongs and Come to the Aid of the Wretched"]

CHAPTER 22

Of how Don Quixote freed many unfortunate ones who, much against their will, were being taken where they did not wish to go.

Cid Hamete Benengeli, the Arabic and Manchegan[6] author, in the course of this most grave, high-sounding, minute, delightful, and imaginative history, informs us that, following the remarks that were exchanged between Don Quixote de la Mancha and Sancho Panza, his squire, . . . the knight looked up and saw coming toward them down the road which they were following a dozen or so men on foot, strung together by their necks like beads on an iron chain and all of them wearing handcuffs. They were accompanied by two men on horseback and two on foot, the former carrying wheel-lock muskets while the other two were armed with swords and javelins.

"That," said Sancho as soon as he saw them, "is a chain of galley slaves, people on their way to the galleys where by order of the king they are forced to labor."

"What do you mean by 'forced'?" asked Don Quixote. "Is it possible that the king uses force on anyone?"

"I did not say that," replied Sancho. "What I did say was that these are folks who have been condemned for their crimes to forced labor in the galleys for his Majesty the King."

"The short of it is," said the knight, "whichever way you put it, these people are being taken there by force and not of their own free will."

"That is the way it is," said Sancho.

6. Of La Mancha.

"Well, in that case," said his master, "now is the time for me to fulfill the duties of my calling, which is to right wrongs and come to the aid of the wretched."

"But take note, your Grace," said Sancho, "that justice, that is to say, the king himself, is not using any force upon, or doing any wrong to, people like these, but is merely punishing them for the crimes they have committed."

The chain of galley slaves had come up to them by this time, whereupon Don Quixote very courteously requested the guards to inform him of the reason or reasons why they were conducting these people in such a manner as this. One of the men on horseback then replied that the men were prisoners who had been condemned by his Majesty to serve in the galleys, whither they were bound, and that was all there was to be said about it and all that he, Don Quixote, need know.

"Nevertheless," said the latter, "I should like to inquire of each one of them, individually, the cause of his misfortune." And he went on speaking so very politely in an effort to persuade them to tell him what he wanted to know that the other mounted guard finally said, "Although we have here the record and certificate of sentence of each one of these wretches, we have not the time to get them out and read them to you; and so your Grace may come over and ask the prisoners themselves, and they will tell you if they choose, and you may be sure that they will, for these fellows take a delight in their knavish exploits and in boasting of them afterward."

With this permission, even though he would have done so if it had not been granted him, Don Quixote went up to the chain of prisoners and asked the first whom he encountered what sins had brought him to so sorry a plight. The man replied that it was for being a lover that he found himself in that line.

"For that and nothing more?" said Don Quixote. "And do they, then, send lovers to the galleys? If so, I should have been rowing there long ago."

"But it was not the kind of love that your Grace has in mind," the prisoner went on. "I loved a wash basket full of white linen so well and hugged it so tightly that, if they had not taken it away from me by force, I would never of my own choice have let go of it to this very minute. I was caught in the act, there was no need to torture me, the case was soon disposed of, and they supplied me with a hundred lashes across the shoulders and, in addition, a three-year stretch in the *gurapas*, and that's all there is to tell."

"What are *gurapas*?" asked Don Quixote.

"*Gurapas* are the galleys," replied the prisoner. He was a lad of around twenty-four and stated that he was a native of Piedrahita.

The knight then put the same question to a second man, who

appeared to be very downcast and melancholy and did not have a word to say. The first man answered for him.

"This one, sir," he said, "is going as a canary—I mean, as a musician and singer."

"How is that?" Don Quixote wanted to know. "Do musicians and singers go to the galleys too?"

"Yes, sir; and there is nothing worse than singing when you're in trouble."

"On the contrary," said Don Quixote, "I have heard it said that he who sings frightens away his sorrows."

"It is just the opposite," said the prisoner; "for he who sings once weeps all his life long."

"I do not understand," said the knight.

One of the guards then explained. "Sir Knight, with this *non sancta*[7] tribe, to sing when you're in trouble means to confess under torture. This singer was put to the torture and confessed his crime, which was that of being a *cuatrero*, or cattle thief, and as a result of his confession he was condemned to six years in the galleys in addition to two hundred lashes which he took on his shoulders; and so it is he is always downcast and moody, for the other thieves, those back where he came from and the ones here, mistreat, snub, ridicule, and despise him for having confessed and for not having had the courage to deny his guilt. They are in the habit of saying that the word no has the same number of letters as the word *sí*, and that a culprit is in luck when his life or death depends on his own tongue and not that of witnesses or upon evidence; and, in my opinion, they are not very far wrong."

"And I," said Don Quixote, "feel the same way about it." He then went on to a third prisoner and repeated his question.

The fellow answered at once, quite unconcernedly. "I'm going to my ladies, the *gurapas*, for five years, for the lack of five ducats."

"I would gladly give twenty," said Don Quixote, "to get you out of this."

"That," said the prisoner, "reminds me of the man in the middle of the ocean who has money and is dying of hunger because there is no place to buy what he needs. I say this for the reason that if I had had, at the right time, those twenty ducats your Grace is now offering me, I'd have greased the notary's quill and freshened up the attorney's wit with them, and I'd now be living in the middle of Zocodover Square in Toledo instead of being here on this highway coupled like a greyhound. But God is great; patience, and that's enough of it."

Don Quixote went on to a fourth prisoner, a venerable-looking

7. Unholy.

old fellow with a white beard that fell over his bosom. When asked how he came to be there, this one began weeping and made no reply, but a fifth comrade spoke up in his behalf.

"This worthy man," he said, "is on his way to the galleys after having made the usual rounds clad in a robe of state and on horseback."[8]

"That means, I take it," said Sancho, "that he has been put to shame in public."

"That is it," said the prisoner, "and the offense for which he is being punished is that of having been an ear broker, or, better, a body broker. By that I mean to say, in short, that the gentleman is a pimp, and besides, he has his points as a sorcerer."

"If that point had not been thrown in," said Don Quixote, "he would not deserve, for merely being a pimp, to have to row in the galleys, but rather should be the general and give orders there. For the office of pimp is not an indifferent one; it is a function to be performed by persons of discretion and is most necessary in a well-ordered state; it is a profession that should be followed only by the wellborn, and there should, moreover, be a supervisor or examiner as in the case of other offices, and the number of practitioners should be fixed by law as is done with brokers on the exchange. In that way many evils would be averted that arise when this office is filled and this calling practiced by stupid folk and those with little sense, such as silly women and pages or mountebanks with few years and less experience to their credit, who, on the most pressing occasions, when it is necessary to use one's wits, let the crumbs freeze between their hand and their mouth and do not know which is their right hand and which is the left.

"I would go on and give reasons why it is fitting to choose carefully those who are to fulfill so necessary a state function, but this is not the place for it. One of these days I will speak of the matter to someone who is able to do something about it. I will say here only that the pain I felt at seeing those white hairs and this venerable countenance in such a plight, and all for his having been a pimp, has been offset for me by the additional information you have given me, to the effect that he is a sorcerer as well; for I am convinced that there are no sorcerers in the world who can move and compel the will, as some simple-minded persons think, but that our will is free and no herb or charm can force it.[9] All that certain foolish women and cunning tricksters do is to compound a few mixtures and poisons with which they deprive men of their senses while pretending that

8. After having been flogged in public, with all the ceremony that accompanied that punishment. 9. Here Don Quixote despises charms and love potions though often elsewhere, in his own vision of himself as a knight-errant, he accepts enchantments and spells as part of his world of fantasy.

they have the power to make them loved, although, as I have just said, one cannot affect another's will in that manner."

"That is so," said the worthy old man; "but the truth is, sir, I am not guilty on the sorcery charge. As for being a pimp, that is something I cannot deny. I never thought there was any harm in it, however, my only desire being that everyone should enjoy himself and live in peace and quiet, without any quarrels or troubles. But these good intentions on my part cannot prevent me from going where I do not want to go, to a place from which I do not expect to return; for my years are heavy upon me and an affection of the urine that I have will not give me a moment's rest."

With this, he began weeping once more, and Sancho was so touched by it that he took a four-real piece from his bosom and gave it to him as an act of charity.

Don Quixote then went on and asked another what his offense was. The fellow answered him, not with less, but with much more, briskness than the preceding one had shown.

"I am here," he said, "for the reason that I carried a joke too far with a couple of cousins-german of mine and a couple of others who were not mine, and I ended by jesting with all of them to such an extent that the devil himself would never be able to straighten out the relationship. They proved everything on me, there was no one to show me favor, I had no money, I came near swinging for it, they sentenced me to the galleys for six years, and I accepted the sentence as the punishment that was due me. I am young yet, and if I live long enough, everything will come out all right. If, Sir Knight, your Grace has anything with which to aid these poor creatures that you see before you, God will reward you in Heaven, and we here on earth will make it a point to ask God in our prayers to grant you long life and good health, as long and as good as your amiable presence deserves."

This man was dressed as a student, and one of the guards told Don Quixote that he was a great talker and a very fine Latinist.

Back of these came a man around thirty years of age and of very good appearance, except that when he looked at you his eyes were seen to be a little crossed. He was shackled in a different manner from the others, for he dragged behind a chain so huge that it was wrapped all around his body, with two rings at the throat, one of which was attached to the chain while the other was fastened to what is known as a keep-friend or friend's foot, from which two irons hung down to his waist, ending in handcuffs secured by a heavy padlock in such a manner that he could neither raise his hands to his mouth nor lower his head to reach his hands.

When Don Quixote asked why this man was so much more heavily chained than the others, the guard replied that it was because he

had more crimes against him than all the others put together, and he was so bold and cunning that, even though they had him chained like this, they were by no means sure of him but feared that he might escape from them.

"What crimes could he have committed," asked the knight, "if he has merited a punishment no greater than that of being sent to the galleys?"

"He is being sent there for ten years," replied the guard, "and that is equivalent to civil death. I need tell you no more than that this good man is the famous Ginés de Pasamonte, otherwise known as Ginesillo de Parapilla."

"Señor Commissary," spoke up the prisoner at this point, "go easy there and let us not be so free with names and surnames. My just name is Ginés and not Ginesillo; and Pasamonte, not Parapilla as you make it out to be, is my family name. Let each one mind his own affairs and he will have his hands full."

"Speak a little more respectfully, you big thief, you," said the commissary, "unless you want me to make you be quiet in a way you won't like."

"Man goes as God pleases, that is plain to be seen," replied the galley slave, "but someday someone will know whether my name is Ginesillo de Parapilla or not."

"But, you liar, isn't that what they call you?"

"Yes," said Ginés, "they do call me that; but I'll put a stop to it, or else I'll skin their you-know-what. And you, sir, if you have anything to give us, give it and may God go with you, for I am tired of all this prying into other people's lives. If you want to know anything about my life, know that I am Ginés de Pasamonte whose life story has been written down by these fingers that you see here."

"He speaks the truth," said the commissary, "for he has himself written his story, as big as you please, and has left the book in the prison, having pawned it for two hundred reales."

"And I mean to redeem it," said Ginés, "even if it costs me two hundred ducats."

"Is it as good as that?" inquired Don Quixote.

"It is so good," replied Ginés, "that it will cast into the shade *Lazarillo de Tormes*[1] and all others of that sort that have been or will be written. What I would tell you is that it deals with facts, and facts so interesting and amusing that no lies could equal them."

"And what is the title of the book?" asked Don Quixote.

"*The Life of Ginés de Pasamonte.*"

"Is it finished?"

"How could it be finished," said Ginés, "when my life is not fin-

1. A picaresque or rogue novel, published anonymously about the middle of the fifteenth century.

ished as yet? What I have written thus far is an account of what happened to me from the time I was born up to the last time that they sent me to the galleys."

"Then you have been there before?"

"In the service of God and the king I was there four years, and I know what the biscuit and the cowhide are like. I don't mind going very much, for there I will have a chance to finish my book. I still have many things to say, and in the Spanish galleys I shall have all the leisure that I need, though I don't need much, since I know by heart what it is I want to write."

"You seem to be a clever fellow," said Don Quixote.

"And an unfortunate one," said Ginés; "for misfortunes always pursue men of genius."

"They pursue rogues," said the commissary.

"I have told you to go easy, Señor Commissary," said Pasamonte, "for their Lordships did not give you that staff in order that you might mistreat us poor devils with it, but they intended that you should guide and conduct us in accordance with his Majesty's command. Otherwise, by the life of— But enough. It may be that someday the stains made in the inn will come out in the wash. Meanwhile, let everyone hold his tongue, behave well, and speak better, and let us be on our way. We've had enough of this foolishness."

At this point the commissary raised his staff as if to let Pasamonte have it in answer to his threats, but Don Quixote placed himself between them and begged the officer not to abuse the man; for it was not to be wondered at if one who had his hands so bound should be a trifle free with his tongue. With this, he turned and addressed them all.

"From all that you have told me, my dearest brothers," he said, "one thing stands out clearly for me, and that is the fact that, even though it is a punishment for offenses which you have committed, the penalty you are about to pay is not greatly to your liking and you are going to the galleys very much against your own will and desire. It may be that the lack of spirit which one of you displayed under torture, the lack of money on the part of another, the lack of influential friends, or, finally, warped judgment on the part of the magistrate, was the thing that led to your downfall; and, as a result, justice was not done you. All of which presents itself to my mind in such a fashion that I am at this moment engaged in trying to persuade and even force myself to show you what the purpose was for which Heaven sent me into this world, why it was it led me to adopt the calling of knighthood which I profess and take the knightly vow to favor the needy and aid those who are oppressed by the powerful.

"However, knowing as I do that it is not the part of prudence to do by foul means what can be accomplished by fair ones, I propose

to ask these gentlemen, your guards, and the commissary to be so good as to unshackle you and permit you to go in peace. There will be no dearth of others to serve his Majesty under more propitious circumstances; and it does not appear to me to be just to make slaves of those whom God created as free men. What is more, gentlemen of the guard, these poor fellows have committed no offense against you. Up there, each of us will have to answer for his own sins; for God in Heaven will not fail to punish the evil and reward the good; and it is not good for self-respecting men to be executioners of their fellow-men in something that does not concern them. And so, I ask this of you, gently and quietly, in order that, if you comply with my request, I shall have reason to thank you; and if you do not do so of your own accord, then this lance and this sword and the valor of my arm shall compel you to do it by force."

"A fine lot of foolishness!" exclaimed the commissary. "So he comes out at last with this nonsense! He would have us let the prisoners of the king go free, as if we had any authority to do so or he any right to command it! Be on your way, sir, at once; straighten that basin that you have on your head, and do not go looking for three feet on a cat."[2]

"You," replied Don Quixote, "are the cat and the rat and the rascal!" And, saying this, he charged the commissary so quickly that the latter had no chance to defend himself but fell to the ground badly wounded by the lance blow. The other guards were astounded by this unexpected occurrence; but, recovering their self-possession, those on horseback drew their swords, those on foot leveled their javelins, and all bore down on Don Quixote, who stood waiting for them very calmly. Things undoubtedly would have gone badly for him if the galley slaves, seeing an opportunity to gain their freedom, had not succeeded in breaking the chain that linked them together. Such was the confusion that the guards, now running to fall upon the prisoners and now attacking Don Quixote, who in turn was attacking them, accomplished nothing that was of any use.

Sancho for his part aided Ginés de Pasamonte to free himself, and that individual was the first to drop his chains and leap out onto the field, where, attacking the fallen commissary, he took away that officer's sword and musket; and as he stood there, aiming first at one and then at another, though without firing, the plain was soon cleared of guards, for they had taken to their heels, fleeing at once Pasamonte's weapon and the stones which the galley slaves, freed now, were hurling at them. Sancho, meanwhile, was very much disturbed over this unfortunate event, as he felt sure that the fugitives would report the matter to the Holy Brotherhood, which, to the ringing of

2. Looking for the impossible ("five feet" in the more usual form of the proverb).

the alarm bell, would come out to search for the guilty parties. He said as much to his master, telling him that they should leave at once and go into hiding in the near-by mountains.

"That is all very well," said Don Quixote, "but I know what had best be done now." He then summoned all the prisoners, who, running riot, had by this time despoiled the commissary of everything that he had, down to his skin, and as they gathered around to hear what he had to say, he addressed them as follows:

"It is fitting that those who are wellborn should give thanks for the benefits they have received, and one of the sins with which God is most offended is that of ingratitude. I say this, gentlemen, for the reason that you have seen and had manifest proof of what you owe to me; and now that you are free of the yoke which I have removed from about your necks, it is my will and desire that you should set out and proceed to the city of El Toboso and there present yourselves before the lady Dulcinea del Toboso and say to her that her champion, the Knight of the Mournful Countenance, has sent you; and then you will relate to her, point by point, the whole of this famous adventure which has won you your longed-for freedom. Having done that, you may go where you like, and may good luck go with you."

To this Ginés de Pasamonte replied in behalf of all of them, "It is absolutely impossible, your Grace, our liberator, for us to do what you have commanded. We cannot go down the highway all together but must separate and go singly, each in his own direction, endeavoring to hide ourselves in the bowels of the earth in order not to be found by the Holy Brotherhood, which undoubtedly will come out to search for us. What your Grace can do, and it is right that you should do so, is to change this service and toll that you require of us in connection with the lady Dulcinea del Toboso into a certain number of Credos and Hail Marys which we will say for your Grace's intention, as this is something that can be accomplished by day or night, fleeing or resting, in peace or in war. To imagine, on the other hand, that we are going to return to the fleshpots of Egypt, by which I mean, take up our chains again by setting out along the highway for El Toboso, is to believe that it is night now instead of ten o'clock in the morning and is to ask of us something that is the same as asking pears of the elm tree."

"Then by all that's holy!" exclaimed Don Quixote, whose wrath was now aroused, "you, Don Son of a Whore, Don Ginesillo de Parapilla, or whatever your name is, you shall go alone, your tail between your legs and the whole chain on your back."

Pasamonte, who was by no means a long-suffering individual, was by this time convinced that Don Quixote was not quite right in the head, seeing that he had been guilty of such a folly as that of desiring to free them; and so, when he heard himself insulted in this manner,

he merely gave the wink to his companions and, going off to one side, began raining so many stones upon the knight that the latter was wholly unable to protect himself with his buckler, while poor Rocinante paid no more attention to the spur than if he had been made of brass. As for Sancho, he took refuge behind his donkey as a protection against the cloud and shower of rocks that was falling on both of them, but Don Quixote was not able to shield himself so well, and there is no telling how many struck his body, with such force as to unhorse and bring him to the ground.

No sooner had he fallen than the student was upon him. Seizing the basin from the knight's head, he struck him three or four blows with it across the shoulders and banged it against the ground an equal number of times until it was fairly shattered to bits. They then stripped Don Quixote of the doublet which he wore over his armor, and would have taken his hose as well, if his greaves had not prevented them from doing so, and made off with Sancho's greatcoat, leaving him naked; after which, dividing the rest of the battle spoils amongst themselves, each of them went his own way, being a good deal more concerned with eluding the dreaded Holy Brotherhood than they were with burdening themselves with a chain or going to present themselves before the lady Dulcinea del Toboso.

They were left alone now—the ass and Rocinante, Sancho and Don Quixote: the ass, crestfallen and pensive, wagging its ears now and then, being under the impression that the hurricane of stones that had raged about them was not yet over; Rocinante, stretched alongside his master, for the hack also had been felled by a stone; Sancho, naked and fearful of the Holy Brotherhood; and Don Quixote, making wry faces at seeing himself so mishandled by those to whom he had done so much good.

["Set Free at Once that Lovely Lady . . ."]

CHAPTER 52[3]

Of the quarrel that Don Quixote had with the goatherd, together with the rare adventure of the penitents, which the knight by the sweat of his brow brought to a happy conclusion.

All those who had listened to it were greatly pleased with the goatherd's story, especially the canon,[4] who was more than usually

3. Last chapter of Part I. Through various devices, including the use of Don Quixote's own belief in enchantments and spells, the curate and the barber have persuaded the knight to let himself be taken home in an ox cart. 4. A canon from Toledo who has joined Don Quixote and his guardians on the way; conversing about chivalry with the knight, he has had cause to be "astonished at Don Quixote's well-reasoned nonsense." Eugenio, a very literate goatherd met on the way, has just told them the story of his unhappy love for Leandra: the girl, instead of choosing one of her local suitors, had eloped with a flashy and crooked soldier; robbed and abandoned by him, she had been put by her father in a convent.

interested in noting the manner in which it had been told. Far from being a mere rustic herdsman, the narrator seemed rather a cultured city dweller; and the canon accordingly remarked that the curate had been quite right in saying that the mountain groves bred men of learning. They all now offered their services to Eugenio, and Don Quixote was the most generous of any in this regard.

"Most assuredly, brother goatherd," he said, "if it were possible for me to undertake any adventure just now, I would set out at once to aid you and would take Leandra out of that convent, where she is undoubtedly being held against her will, in spite of the abbess and all the others who might try to prevent me, after which I would place her in your hands to do with as you liked, with due respect, however, for the laws of chivalry, which command that no violence be offered to any damsel. But I trust in God, Our Lord, that the power of one malicious enchanter is not so great that another magician may not prove still more powerful, and then I promise you my favor and my aid, as my calling obliges me to do, since it is none other than that of succoring the weak and those who are in distress."

The goatherd stared at him, observing in some astonishment the knight's unprepossessing appearance.

"Sir," he said, turning to the barber who sat beside him, "who is this man who looks so strange and talks in this way?"

"Who should it be," the barber replied, "if not the famous Don Quixote de la Mancha, righter of wrongs, avenger of injustices, protector of damsels, terror of giants, and champion of battles?"

"That," said the goatherd, "sounds to me like the sort of thing you read of in books of chivalry, where they do all those things that your Grace has mentioned in connection with this man. But if you ask me, either your Grace is joking or this worthy gentleman must have a number of rooms to let inside his head."

"You are the greatest villain that ever was!" cried Don Quixote when he heard this. "It is you who are the empty one; I am fuller than the bitch that bore you ever was." Saying this, he snatched up a loaf of bread that was lying beside him and hurled it straight in the goatherd's face with such force as to flatten the man's nose. Upon finding himself thus mistreated in earnest, Eugenio, who did not understand this kind of joke, forgot all about the carpet, the tablecloth, and the other diners and leaped upon Don Quixote. Seizing him by the throat with both hands, he would no doubt have strangled him if Sancho Panza, who now came running up, had not grasped him by the shoulders and flung him backward over the table, smashing plates and cups and spilling and scattering all the food and drink that was there. Thus freed of his assailant, Don Quixote then threw himself upon the shepherd, who, with bleeding face and very much battered by Sancho's feet, was creeping about on his hands

and knees in search of a table knife with which to exact a sanguinary vengeance, a purpose which the canon and the curate prevented him from carrying out. The barber, however, so contrived it that the goatherd came down on top of his opponent, upon whom he now showered so many blows that the poor knight's countenance was soon as bloody as his own.

As all this went on, the canon and the curate were laughing fit to burst, the troopers[5] were dancing with glee, and they all hissed on the pair as men do at a dog fight. Sancho Panza alone was in despair, being unable to free himself of one of the canon's servants who held him back from going to his master's aid. And then, just as they were all enjoying themselves hugely, with the exception of the two who were mauling each other, the note of a trumpet fell upon their ears, a sound so mournful that it caused them all to turn their heads in the direction from which it came. The one who was most excited by it was Don Quixote; who, very much against his will and more than a little bruised, was lying pinned beneath the goatherd.

"Brother Demon," he now said to the shepherd, "for you could not possibly be anything but a demon, seeing that you have shown a strength and valor greater than mine, I request you to call a truce for no more than an hour; for the doleful sound of that trumpet that we hear seems to me to be some new adventure that is calling me."

Tired of mauling and being mauled, the goatherd let him up at once. As he rose to his feet and turned his head in the direction of the sound, Don Quixote then saw, coming down the slope of a hill, a large number of persons clad in white after the fashion of penitents; for, as it happened, the clouds that year had denied their moisture to the earth, and in all the villages of that district processions for prayer and penance were being organized with the purpose of beseeching God to have mercy and send rain. With this object in view, the good folk from a near-by town were making a pilgrimage to a devout hermit who dwelt on these slopes. Upon beholding the strange costumes that the penitents wore, without pausing to think how many times he had seen them before, Don Quixote imagined that this must be some adventure or other, and that it was for him alone as a knight-errant to undertake it. He was strengthened in this belief by the sight of a covered image that they bore, as it seemed to him this must be some highborn lady whom these scoundrelly and discourteous brigands were forcibly carrying off; and no sooner did this idea occur to him than he made for Rocinante, who was grazing not far away.

Taking the bridle and his buckler from off the saddletree, he had

5. Law officers from the Holy Brotherhood. They had wanted to arrest Don Quixote on account of his having attempted the liberation of the galley slaves but had been persuaded not to do so, considering the knight's state of insanity.

the bridle adjusted in no time, and then, asking Sancho for his sword, he climbed into the saddle, braced his shield upon his arm, and cried out to those present, "And now, valorous company, you shall see how important it is to have in the world those who follow the profession of knight-errantry. You have but to watch how I shall set at liberty that worthy lady who there goes captive, and then you may tell me whether or not such knights are to be esteemed."

As he said this, he dug his legs into Rocinante's flanks, since he had no spurs, and at a fast trot (for nowhere in this veracious history are we ever told that the hack ran full speed) he bore down on the penitents in spite of all that the canon, the curate, and the barber could do to restrain him—their efforts were as vain as were the pleadings of his squire.

"Where are you bound for, Señor Don Quixote?" Sancho called after him. "What evil spirits in your bosom spur you on to go against our Catholic faith? Plague take me, can't you see that's a procession of penitents and that lady they're carrying on the litter is the most blessed image of the Immaculate Virgin? Look well what you're doing, my master, for this time it may be said that you really do not know."

His exertions were in vain, however, for his master was so bent upon having it out with the sheeted figures and freeing the lady clad in mourning that he did not hear a word, nor would he have turned back if he had, though the king himself might have commanded it. Having reached the procession, he reined in Rocinante, who by this time was wanting a little rest, and in a hoarse, excited voice he shouted, "You who go there with your faces covered, out of shame, it may be, listen well to what I have to say to you."

The first to come to a halt were those who carried the image; and then one of the four clerics who were intoning the litanies, upon beholding Don Quixote's weird figure, his bony nag, and other amusing appurtenances, spoke up in reply.

"Brother, if you have something to say to us, say it quickly, for these brethren are engaged in macerating their flesh, and we cannot stop to hear anything, nor is it fitting that we should, unless it is capable of being said in a couple of words."

"I will say it to you in one word," Don Quixote answered, "and that word is the following: 'Set free at once that lovely lady whose tears and mournful countenance show plainly that you are carrying her away against her will and that you have done her some shameful wrong. I will not consent to your going one step farther until you shall have given her the freedom that should be hers.' "

Hearing these words, they all thought that Don Quixote must be some madman or other and began laughing heartily; but their laughter proved to be gunpowder to his wrath, and without saying another word he drew his sword and fell upon the litter. One of those who

bore the image, leaving his share of the burden to his companions, then sallied forth to meet the knight, flourishing a forked stick that he used to support the Virgin while he was resting; and upon this stick he now received a mighty slash that Don Quixote dealt him, one that shattered it in two, but with the piece about a third long that remained in his hand he came down on the shoulder of his opponent's sword arm, left unprotected by the buckler, with so much force that the poor fellow sank to the ground sorely battered and bruised.

Sancho Panza, who was puffing along close behind his master, upon seeing him fall cried out to the attacker not to deal another blow, as this was an unfortunate knight who was under a magic spell but who had never in all the days of his life done any harm to anyone. But the thing that stopped the rustic was not Sancho's words; it was, rather, the sight of Don Quixote lying there without moving hand or foot. And so, thinking that he had killed him, he hastily girded up his tunic and took to his heels across the countryside like a deer.

By this time all of Don Quixote's companions had come running up to where he lay; and the penitents, when they observed this, and especially when they caught sight of the officers of the Brotherhood with their crossbows, at once rallied around the image, where they raised their hoods and grasped their whips as the priests raised their tapers aloft in expectations of an assault; for they were resolved to defend themselves and even, if possible, to take the offensive against their assailants, but, as luck would have it, things turned out better than they had hoped. Sancho, meanwhile, believing Don Quixote to be dead, had flung himself across his master's body and was weeping and wailing in the most lugubrious and, at the same time, the most laughable fashion that could be imagined; and the curate had discovered among those who marched in the procession another curate whom he knew, their recognition of each other serving to allay the fears of all parties concerned. The first curate then gave the second a very brief account of who Don Quixote was, whereupon all the penitents came up to see if the poor knight was dead. And as they did so, they heard Sancho Panza speaking with tears in his eyes.

"O flower of chivalry,"[6] he was saying, "the course of whose well-spent years has been brought to an end by a single blow of a club! O honor of your line, honor and glory of all La Mancha and of all the world, which, with you absent from it, will be full of evil-doers who will not fear being punished for their deeds! O master more generous than all the Alexanders, who after only eight months of service presented me with the best island that the sea washes and surrounds!

6. Note how Sancho has absorbed some of his master's speech mannerisms.

Humble with the proud, haughty with the humble, brave in facing dangers, long-suffering under outrages, in love without reason, imitator of the good, scourge of the wicked, enemy of the mean—in a word, a knight-errant, which is all there is to say."

At the sound of Sancho's cries and moans, Don Quixote revived, and the first thing he said was, "He who lives apart from thee, O fairest Dulcinea, is subject to greater woes than those I now endure. Friend Sancho, help me onto that enchanted cart, as I am in no condition to sit in Rocinante's saddle with this shoulder of mine knocked to pieces the way it is."

"That I will gladly do, my master," replied Sancho, "and we will go back to my village in the company of these gentlemen who are concerned for your welfare, and there we will arrange for another sally and one, let us hope, that will bring us more profit and fame than this one has."

"Well spoken, Sancho," said Don Quixote, "for it will be an act of great prudence to wait until the present evil influence of the stars has passed."

The canon, the curate, and the barber all assured him that he would be wise in doing this; and so, much amused by Sancho Panza's simplicity, they placed Don Quixote upon the cart as before, while the procession of penitents re-formed and continued on its way. The goatherd took leave of all of them, and the curate paid the troopers what was coming to them, since they did not wish to go any farther. The canon requested the priest to inform him of the outcome of Don Quixote's madness, as to whether it yielded to treatment or not; and with this he begged permission to resume his journey. In short, the party broke up and separated, leaving only the curate and the barber, Don Quixote and Panza, and the good Rocinante, who looked upon everything that he had seen with the same resignation as his master. Yoking his oxen, the carter made the knight comfortable upon a bale of hay, and then at his customary slow pace proceeded to follow the road that the curate directed him to take. At the end of the six days they reached Don Quixote's village, making their entrance at noon of a Sunday, when the square was filled with a crowd of people through which the cart had to pass.

They all came running to see who it was, and when they recognized their townsman, they were vastly astonished. One lad sped to bring the news to the knight's housekeeper and his niece, telling them that their master had returned lean and jaundiced and lying stretched out upon a bale of hay on an ox-cart. It was pitiful to hear the good ladies' screams, to behold the way in which they beat their breasts, and to listen to the curses which they once more heaped upon those damnable books of chivalry, and this demonstration increased as they saw Don Quixote coming through the doorway.

At news of the knight's return, Sancho Panza's wife had hurried to the scene, for she had some while since learned that her husband had accompanied him as his squire; and now, as soon as she laid eyes upon her man, the first question she asked was if all was well with the ass, to which Sancho replied that the beast was better off than his master.

"Thank God," she exclaimed, "for all his blessings! But tell me now, my dear, what have you brought me from all your squirings? A new cloak to wear? Or shoes for the young ones?"

"I've brought you nothing of the sort, good wife," said Sancho, "but other things of greater value and importance."

"I'm glad to hear that," she replied. "Show me those things of greater value and importance, my dear. I'd like a sight of them just to cheer this heart of mine which has been so sad and unhappy all the centuries that you've been gone."

"I will show them to you at home, wife," said Sancho. "For the present be satisfied that if, God willing, we set out on another journey in search of adventures, you will see me in no time a count or the governor of an island, and not one of those around here, but the best that is to be had."

"I hope to Heaven it's true, my husband, for we certainly need it. But tell me, what is all this about islands? I don't understand."

"Honey," replied Sancho, "is not for the mouth of an ass. You will find out in good time, woman; and you're going to be surprised to hear yourself called 'my Ladyship' by all your vassals."

"What's this you are saying, Sancho, about ladyships, islands, and vassals?" Juana Panza insisted on knowing—for such was the name of Sancho's wife, although they were not blood relatives, it being the custom in La Mancha for wives to take their husbands' surnames.

"Do not be in such a hurry to know all this, Juana," he said. "It is enough that I am telling you the truth. Sew up your mouth, then; for all I will say, in passing, is that there is nothing in the world that is more pleasant than being a respected man, squire to a knight-errant who goes in search of adventures. It is true that most of the adventures you meet with do not come out the way you'd like them to, for ninety-nine out of a hundred will prove to be all twisted and crosswise. I know that from experience, for I've come out of some of them blanketed and out of others beaten to a pulp. But, all the same, it's a fine thing to go along waiting for what will happen next, crossing mountains, making your way through woods, climbing over cliffs, visiting castles, and putting up at inns free of charge, and the devil take the maravedi that is to pay."

Such was the conversation that took place between Sancho Panza and Juana Panza, his wife, as Don Quixote's housekeeper and niece were taking him in, stripping him, and stretching him out on his

old-time bed. He gazed at them blankly, being unable to make out where he was. The curate charged the niece to take great care to see that her uncle was comfortable and to keep close watch over him so that he would not slip away from them another time. He then told them of what it had been necessary to do in order to get him home, at which they once more screamed to Heaven and began cursing the books of chivalry all over again, praying God to plunge the authors of such lying nonsense into the center of the bottomless pit. In short, they scarcely knew what to do, for they were very much afraid that their master and uncle would give them the slip once more, the moment he was a little better, and it turned out just the way they feared it might.

Don Quixote

Part II

["*Put into a Book*"]

CHAPTER 3

Of the laughable conversation that took place between Don Quixote, Sancho Panza, and the bachelor Sansón Carrasco.

Don Quixote remained in a thoughtful mood as he waited for the bachelor Carrasco,[7] from whom he hoped to hear the news as to how he had been put into a book, as Sancho had said. He could not bring himself to believe that any such history existed, since the blood of the enemies he had slain was not yet dry on the blade of his sword; and here they were trying to tell him that his high deeds of chivalry were already circulating in printed form. But, for that matter, he imagined that some sage, either friend or enemy, must have seen to the printing of them through the art of magic. If the chronicler was a friend, he must have undertaken the task in order to magnify and exalt Don Quixote's exploits above the most notable ones achieved by knights-errant of old. If an enemy, his purpose would have been to make them out as nothing at all, by debasing them below the meanest acts ever recorded of any mean squire. The only thing was, the knight reflected, the exploits of squires never were set down in writing. If it was true that such a history existed, being about a knight-errant, then it must be eloquent and lofty in tone, a splendid and distinguished piece of work and veracious in its details.

7. The bachelor of arts Sansón Carrasco, an important new character who appears at the beginning of Part II and will play a considerable role in the story with his attempts at "curing" Don Quixote (the first one a failure, the second one a success; see our following selections). Just now he has been telling Sancho about a book relating the adventures of Don Quixote and his squire, by which the two have been made famous; the book is, of course, *Don Quixote*, Part I.

This consoled him somewhat, although he was a bit put out at the thought that the author was a Moor, if the appellation "Cid" was to be taken as an indication,[8] and from the Moors you could never hope for any word of truth, seeing that they are all of them cheats, forgers, and schemers. He feared lest his love should not have been treated with becoming modesty but rather in a way that would reflect upon the virtue of his lady Dulcinea del Toboso. He hoped that his fidelity had been made clear, and the respect he had always shown her, and that something had been said as to how he had spurned queens, empresses, and damsels of every rank while keeping a rein upon those impulses that are natural to a man. He was still wrapped up in these and many other similar thoughts when Sancho returned with Carrasco.

Don Quixote received the bachelor very amiably. The latter, although his name was Sansón, or Samson, was not very big so far as bodily size went, but he was a great joker, with a sallow complexion and a ready wit. He was going on twenty-four and had a round face, a snub nose, and a large mouth, all of which showed him to be of a mischievous disposition and fond of jests and witticisms. This became apparent when, as soon as he saw Don Quixote, he fell upon his knees and addressed the knight as follows:

"O mighty Don Quixote de la Mancha, give me your hands; for by the habit of St. Peter that I wear[9]—though I have received but the first four orders—your Grace is one of the most famous knights-errant that ever have been or ever will be anywhere on this earth. Blessings upon Cid Hamete Benengeli who wrote down the history of your great achievements, and upon that curious-minded one who was at pains to have it translated from the Arabic into our Castilian vulgate for the universal entertainment of the people."

Don Quixote bade him rise. "Is it true, then," he asked, "that there is a book about me and that it was some Moorish sage who composed it?"

"By way of showing you how true it is," replied Sansón, "I may tell you that it is my belief that there are in existence today more than twelve thousand copies of that history. If you do not believe me, you have but to make inquiries in Portugal, Barcelona, and Valencia, where editions have been brought out, and there is even a report to the effect that one edition was printed at Antwerp. In short, I feel certain that there will soon not be a nation that does not know it or a language into which it has not been translated."

"One of the things," remarked Don Quixote, "that should give most satisfaction to a virtuous and eminent man is to see his good name spread abroad during his own lifetime, by means of the print-

8. The allusion is to Cid Hamete Benengeli; the word *cid*, "chief," is of Arabic derivation.
9. The dress of one of the minor clerical orders.

ing press, through translations into the languages of the various peoples. I have said 'good name,' for if he has any other kind, his fate is worse than death."

"If it is a matter of good name and good reputation," said the bachelor, "your Grace bears off the palm from all the knights-errant in the world; for the Moor in his tongue and the Christian in his have most vividly depicted your Grace's gallantry, your courage in facing dangers, your patience in adversity and suffering, whether the suffering be due to wounds or to misfortunes of another sort, and your virtue and continence in love, in connection with that platonic relationship that exists between your Grace and my lady Doña Dulcinea del Toboso."

At this point Sancho spoke up. "Never in my life," he said, "have I heard my lady Dulcinea called 'Doña,' but only 'la Señora Dulcinea del Toboso'; so on that point, already, the history is wrong."

"That is not important," said Carrasco.

"No, certainly not," Don Quixote agreed. "But tell me, Señor Bachelor, what adventures of mine as set down in this book have made the deepest impression?"

"As to that," the bachelor answered, "opinions differ, for it is a matter of individual taste. There are some who are very fond of the adventure of the windmills—those windmills which to your Grace appeared to be so many Briareuses and giants. Others like the episode at the fulling mill. One relishes the story of the two armies which took on the appearance of droves of sheep, while another fancies the tale of the dead man whom they were taking to Segovia for burial. One will assert that the freeing of the galley slaves is the best of all, and yet another will maintain that nothing can come up to the Benedictine giants and the encounter with the valiant Biscayan."

Again Sancho interrupted him. "Tell me, Señor Bachelor," he said, "does the book say anything about the adventure with the Yanguesans, that time our good Rocinante took it into his head to go looking for tidbits in the sea?"

"The sage," replied Sansón, "has left nothing in the inkwell. He has told everything and to the point, even to the capers which the worthy Sancho cut as they tossed him in the blanket."

"I cut no capers in the blanket," objected Sancho, "but I did in the air, and more than I liked."

"I imagine," said Don Quixote, "that there is no history in the world, dealing with humankind, that does not have its ups and downs, and this is particularly true of those that have to do with deeds of chivalry, for they can never be filled with happy incidents alone."

"Nevertheless," the bachelor went on, "there are some who have read the book who say that they would have been glad if the authors

had forgotten a few of the innumerable cudgelings which Señor Don Quixote received in the course of his various encounters."

"But that is where the truth of the story comes in," Sancho protested.

"For all of that," observed Don Quixote, "they might well have said nothing about them; for there is no need of recording those events that do not alter the veracity of the chronicle, when they tend only to lessen the reader's respect for the hero. You may be sure that Aeneas was not as pious as Vergil would have us believe, nor was Ulysses as wise as Homer depicts him."

"That is true enough," replied Sansón, "but it is one thing to write as a poet and another as a historian. The former may narrate or sing of things not as they were but as they should have been; the latter must describe them not as they should have been but as they were, without adding to or detracting from the truth in any degree whatsoever."

"Well," said Sancho, "if this Moorish gentleman is bent upon telling the truth, I have no doubt that among my master's thrashings my own will be found; for they never took the measure of his Grace's shoulders without measuring my whole body. But I don't wonder at that; for as my master himself says, when there's an ache in the head the members have to share it."

"You are a sly fox, Sancho," said Don Quixote. "My word, but you can remember things well enough when you choose to do so!"

"Even if I wanted to forget the whacks they gave me," Sancho answered him, "the welts on my ribs wouldn't let me, for they are still fresh."

"Be quiet, Sancho," his master admonished him, "and do not interrupt the bachelor. I beg him to go on and tell me what is said of me in this book."

"And what it says about me, too," put in Sancho, "for I have heard that I am one of the main presonages in it—"

"*Personages*, not *presonages*, Sancho my friend," said Sansón.

"So we have another one who catches you up on everything you say," was Sancho's retort. "If we go on at this rate, we'll never be through in a lifetime."

"May God put a curse on *my* life," the bachelor told him, "if you are not the second most important person in the story; and there are some who would rather listen to you talk than to anyone else in the book. It is true, there are those who say that you are too gullible in believing it to be the truth that you could become the governor of that island that was offered you by Señor Don Quixote, here present."

"There is still sun on the top of the wall," said Don Quixote, "and when Sancho is a little older, with the experience that the years

bring, he will be wiser and better fitted to be a governor than he is at the present time."

"By God, master," said Sancho, "the island that I couldn't govern right now I'd never be able to govern if I lived to be as old as Methuselah. The trouble is, I don't know where that island we are talking about is located; it is not due to any lack of noddle on my part."

"Leave it to God, Sancho," was Don Quixote's advice, "and everything will come out all right, perhaps even better than you think; for not a leaf on the tree stirs except by His will."

"Yes," said Sansón, "if it be God's will, Sancho will not lack a thousand islands to govern, not to speak of one island alone."

"I have seen governors around here," said Sancho, "that are not to be compared to the sole of my shoe, and yet they call them 'your Lordship' and serve them on silver plate."

"Those are not the same kind of governors," Sansón informed him. "Their task is a good deal easier. The ones that govern islands must at least know grammar."

"I could make out well enough with the *gram*," replied Sancho, "but with the *mar* I want nothing to do, for I don't understand it at all. But leaving this business of the governorship in God's hands—for He will send me wherever I can best serve Him—I will tell you, Señor Bachelor Sansón Carrasco, that I am very much pleased that the author of the history should have spoken of me in such a way as does not offend me; for, upon the word of a faithful squire, if he had said anything about me that was not becoming to an old Christian, the deaf would have heard of it."

"That would be to work miracles," said Sansón.

"Miracles or no miracles," was the answer, "let everyone take care as to what he says or writes about people and not be setting down the first thing that pops into his head."

"One of the faults that is found with the book," continued the bachelor, "is that the author has inserted in it a story entitled *The One Who Was Too Curious for His Own Good*. It is not that the story in itself is a bad one or badly written; it is simply that it is out of place there, having nothing to do with the story of his Grace, Señor Don Quixote."[1]

"I will bet you," said Sancho, "that the son of a dog has mixed the cabbages with the baskets."[2]

"And I will say right now," declared Don Quixote, "that the author of this book was not a sage but some ignorant prattler who at haphazard and without any method set about the writing of it, being

1. The story, a tragic tale about a jealousy-ridden husband, occupies several chapters of Part I. Here, as elsewhere in this chapter, Cervantes echoes criticism currently aimed at his book.
2. Has jumbled together things of different kinds.

content to let things turn out as they might. In the same manner, Orbaneja,[3] the painter of Ubeda, when asked what he was painting would reply, 'Whatever it turns out to be.' Sometimes it would be a cock, in which case he would have to write alongside it, in Gothic letters, 'This is a cock.' And so it must be with my story, which will need a commentary to make it understandable."

"No," replied Sansón, "that it will not; for it is so clearly written that none can fail to understand it. Little children leaf through it, young people read it, adults appreciate it, and the aged sing its praises. In short, it is so thumbed and read and so well known to persons of every walk in life that no sooner do folks see some skinny nag than they at once cry, 'There goes Rocinante!' Those that like it best of all are the pages; for there is no lord's antechamber where a *Don Quixote* is not to be found. If one lays it down, another will pick it up; one will pounce upon it, and another will beg for it. It affords the pleasantest and least harmful reading of any book that has been published up to now. In the whole of it there is not to be found an indecent word or a thought that is other than Catholic."

"To write in any other manner," observed Don Quixote, "would be to write lies and not the truth. Those historians who make use of falsehoods ought to be burned like the makers of counterfeit money. I do not know what could have led the author to introduce stories and episodes that are foreign to the subject matter when he had so much to write about in describing my adventures. He must, undoubtedly, have been inspired by the old saying, 'With straw or with hay . . .'[4] For, in truth, all he had to do was to record my thoughts, my sighs, my tears, my lofty purposes, and my undertakings, and he would have had a volume bigger or at least as big as that which the works of El Tostado[5] would make. To sum the matter up, Señor Bachelor, it is my opinion that, in composing histories or books of any sort, a great deal of judgment and ripe understanding is called for. To say and write witty and amusing things is the mark of great genius. The cleverest character in a comedy is the clown, since he who would make himself out to be a simpleton cannot be one. History is a near-sacred thing, for it must be true, and where the truth is, there is God. And yet there are those who compose books and toss them out into the world as if they were no more than fritters."

"There is no book so bad," opined the bachelor, "that there is not some good in it."

"Doubtless that is so," replied Don Quixote, "but it very often

3. This painter is known only through the present allusion in *Don Quixote*. 4. The proverb concludes either "the mattress is filled" or "I fill my belly." 5. Alonso de Madrigal, bishop of Avila, a prolific author of devotional works.

happens that those who have won in advance a great and well-deserved reputation for their writings, lose it in whole or in part when they give their works to the printer."

"The reason for it," said Sansón, "is that, printed works being read at leisure, their faults are the more readily apparent, and the greater the reputation of the author the more closely are they scrutinized. Men famous for their genius, great poets, illustrious historians, are almost always envied by those who take a special delight in criticizing the writings of others without having produced anything of their own."

"That is not to be wondered at," said Don Quixote, "for there are many theologians who are not good enough for the pulpit but who are very good indeed when it comes to detecting the faults or excesses of those who preach."

"All of this is very true, Señor Don Quixote," replied Carrasco, "but, all the same, I could wish that these self-appointed censors were a bit more forbearing and less hypercritical; I wish they would pay a little less attention to the spots on the bright sun of the work that occasions their fault-finding. For if *aliquando bonus dormitat Homerus,*[6] let them consider how much of his time he spent awake, shedding the light of his genius with a minimum of shade. It well may be that what to them seems a flaw is but one of those moles which sometimes add to the beauty of a face. In any event, I insist that he who has a book printed runs a very great risk, inasmuch as it is an utter impossibility to write it in such a manner that it will please all who read it."

"This book about me must have pleased very few," remarked Don Quixote.

"Quite the contrary," said Sansón, "for just as *stultorum infinitus est numerus,*[7] so the number of those who have enjoyed this history is likewise infinite. Some, to be sure, have complained of the author's forgetfulness, seeing that he neglected to make it plain who the thief was who stole Sancho's gray;[8] for it is not stated there, but merely implied, that the ass was stolen; and, a little further on, we find the knight mounted on the same beast, although it has not made its reappearance in the story. They also say that the author forgot to tell us what Sancho did with those hundred crowns that he found in the valise on the Sierra Morena, as nothing more is said of them and there are many who would like to know how he disposed of the money or how he spent it. This is one of the serious omissions to be found in the work."

To this Sancho replied, "I, Señor Sansón, do not feel like giving any account or accounting just now; for I feel a little weak in my

6. "Good Homer sometimes nods too." (Horace, *Art of Poetry*, l. 359.) 7. "Infinite is the number of fools." (Ecclesiasticus 1:15.) 8. In Part I, Chapter 23.

stomach, and if I don't do something about it by taking a few swigs of the old stuff, I'll be sitting on St. Lucy's thorn.[9] I have some of it at home, and my old woman is waiting for me. After I've had my dinner, I'll come back and answer any questions your Grace or anybody else wants to ask me, whether it's about the loss of the ass or the spending of the hundred crowns."

And without waiting for a reply or saying another word, he went on home. Don Quixote urged the bachelor to stay and take potluck with him, and Sansón accepted the invitation and remained. In addition to the knight's ordinary fare, they had a couple of pigeons, and at table their talk was of chivalry and feats of arms.

[A *Victorious Duel*]

CHAPTER 12

Of the strange adventure that befell the valiant Don Quixote with the fearless Knight of the Mirrors.[1]

The night following the encounter with Death was spent by Don Quixote and his squire beneath some tall and shady trees,[2] the knight having been persuaded to eat a little from the stock of provisions carried by the gray.

"Sir," said Sancho, in the course of their repast, "how foolish I'd have been if I had chosen the spoils from your Grace's first adventure rather than the foals from the three mares.[3] Truly, truly, a sparrow in the hand is worth more than a vulture on the wing."

"And yet, Sancho," replied Don Quixote, "if you had but let me attack them as I wished to do, you would at least have had as spoils the Empress's gold crown and Cupid's painted wings;[4] for I should have taken them whether or no and placed them in your hands."

"The crowns and scepters of stage emperors," remarked Sancho, "were never known to be of pure gold; they are always of tinsel or tinplate."

"That is the truth," said Don Quixote, "for it is only right that the accessories of a drama should be fictitious and not real, like the play itself. Speaking of that, Sancho, I would have you look kindly upon

9. I shall be weak and exhausted. 1. He will duly earn this title only in Chapter 15. In between, the author will be referring to him as the Knight of the Wood. 2. Don Quixote and his squire are now in the woody region around El Toboso, Dulcinea's town. Sancho has been sent to look for his knight's lady and has saved the day by pretending to see the beautiful damsel in a "village wench, and not a pretty one at that, for she was round-faced and snub-nosed." But by his imaginative lie he has succeeded, as he had planned, in setting in motion Don Quixote's belief in spells and enchantments: enemy magicians, envious of him, have hidden his lady's splendor only from his sight. While the knight was still under the shock of this experience, farther along their way he and his squire have met a group of itinerant players dressed in their proper costumes for a religious play, *The Parliament of Death*. 3. Don Quixote has promised them to Sancho as a reward for bringing news of Dulcinea. The following sentence is a proverb roughly corresponding to "a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush." 4. The Empress and Cupid were among the characters in *The Parliament of Death*.

the art of the theater and, as a consequence, upon those who write the pieces and perform in them, for they all render a service of great value to the State by holding up a mirror for us at each step that we take, wherein we may observe, vividly depicted, all the varied aspects of human life; and I may add that there is nothing that shows us more clearly, by similitude, what we are and what we ought to be than do plays and players.

"Tell me, have you not seen some comedy in which kings, emperors, pontiffs, knights, ladies, and numerous other characters are introduced? One plays the ruffian, another the cheat, this one a merchant and that one a soldier, while yet another is the fool who is not so foolish as he appears, and still another the one of whom love has made a fool. Yet when the play is over and they have taken off their players' garments, all the actors are once more equal."

"Yes," replied Sancho, "I have seen all that."

"Well," continued Don Quixote, "the same thing happens in the comedy that we call life, where some play the part of emperors, others that of pontiffs—in short, all the characters that a drama may have—but when it is all over, that is to say, when life is done, death takes from each the garb that differentiates him, and all at last are equal in the grave."

"It is a fine comparison," Sancho admitted, "though not so new but that I have heard it many times before. It reminds me of that other one, about the game of chess. So long as the game lasts, each piece has its special qualities, but when it is over they are all mixed and jumbled together and put into a bag, which is to the chess pieces what the grave is to life."

"Every day, Sancho," said Don Quixote, "you are becoming less stupid and more sensible."

"It must be that some of your Grace's good sense is sticking to me," was Sancho's answer. "I am like a piece of land that of itself is dry and barren, but if you scatter manure over it and cultivate it, it will bear good fruit. By this I mean to say that your Grace's conversation is the manure that has been cast upon the barren land of my dry wit; the time that I spend in your service, associating with you, does the cultivating; and as a result of it all, I hope to bring forth blessed fruits by not departing, slipping, or sliding, from those paths of good breeding which your Grace has marked out for me in my parched understanding."

Don Quixote had to laugh at this affected speech of Sancho's, but he could not help perceiving that what the squire had said about his improvement was true enough; for every now and then the servant would speak in a manner that astonished his master. It must be admitted, however, that most of the time when he tried to use fine

language, he would tumble from the mountain of his simple-mindedness into the abyss of his ignorance. It was when he was quoting old saws and sayings, whether or not they had anything to do with the subject under discussion, that he was at his best, displaying upon such occasions a prodigious memory, as will already have been seen and noted in the course of this history.

With such talk as this they spent a good part of the night. Then Sancho felt a desire to draw down the curtains of his eyes, as he was in the habit of saying when he wished to sleep, and, unsaddling his mount, he turned him loose to graze at will on the abundant grass. If he did not remove Rocinante's saddle, this was due to his master's express command; for when they had taken the field and were not sleeping under a roof, the hack was under no circumstances to be stripped. This was in accordance with an old and established custom which knights-errant faithfully observed: the bridle and saddlebow might be removed, but beware of touching the saddle itself! Guided by this precept, Sancho now gave Rocinante the same freedom that the ass enjoyed.

The close friendship that existed between the two animals was a most unusual one, so remarkable indeed that it has become a tradition handed down from father to son, and the author of this veracious chronicle even wrote a number of special chapters on the subject, although, in order to preserve the decency and decorum that are fitting in so heroic an account, he chose to omit them in the final version. But he forgets himself once in a while and goes on to tell us how the two beasts when they were together would hasten to scratch each other, and how, when they were tired and their bellies were full, Rocinante would lay his long neck over that of the ass—it extended more than a half a yard on the other side—and the pair would then stand there gazing pensively at the ground for as much as three whole days at a time, or at least until someone came for them or hunger compelled them to seek nourishment.

I may tell you that I have heard it said that the author of this history, in one of his writings, has compared the friendship of Rocinante and the gray to that of Nisus and Euryalus and that of Pylades and Orestes;[5] and if this be true, it shows for the edification of all what great friends these two peace-loving animals were, and should be enough to make men ashamed, who are so inept at preserving friendship with one another. For this reason it has been said:

> There is no friend for friend,
> Reeds to lances turn . . .[6]

5. Famous examples of friendship in Virgil's *Aeneid* and in Greek tradition and drama. 6. From a popular ballad.

And there was the other poet who sang:

Between friend and friend the bug . . .[7]

Let no one think that the author has gone out of his way in comparing the friendship of animals with that of men; for human beings have received valuable lessons from the beasts and have learned many important things from them. From the stork they have learned the use of clysters; the dog has taught them the salutary effects of vomiting as well as a lesson in gratitude; the cranes have taught them vigilance, the ants foresight, the elephants modesty, and the horse loyalty.[8]

Sancho had at last fallen asleep at the foot of a cork tree, while Don Quixote was slumbering beneath a sturdy oak. Very little time had passed when the knight was awakened by a noise behind him, and, starting up, he began looking about him and listening to see if he could make out where it came from. Then he caught sight of two men on horseback, one of whom, slipping down from the saddle, said to the other, "Dismount, my friend, and unbridle the horses; for there seems to be plenty of grass around here for them and sufficient silence and solitude for my amorous thoughts."

Saying this, he stretched himself out on the ground, and as he flung himself down the armor that he wore made such a noise that Don Quixote knew at once, for a certainty, that he must be a knight-errant. Going over to Sancho, who was still sleeping, he shook him by the arm and with no little effort managed to get him awake.

"Brother Sancho," he said to him in a low voice, "we have an adventure on our hands."

"God give us a good one," said Sancho. "And where, my master, may her Ladyship, Mistress Adventure, be?"

"Where, Sancho?" replied Don Quixote. "Turn your eyes and look, and you will see stretched out over there a knight-errant who, so far as I can make out, is not any too happy; for I saw him fling himself from his horse to the ground with a certain show of despondency, and as he fell his armor rattled."

"Well," said Sancho, "and how does your Grace make this out to be an adventure?"

"I would not say," the knight answered him, "that this is an adventure in itself, but rather the beginning of one, for that is the way they start. But listen; he seems to be tuning a lute or guitar, and from the way he is spitting and clearing his throat he must be getting ready to sing something."

"Faith, so he is," said Sancho. "He must be some lovesick knight."

7. The Spanish "a bug in the eye" implies keeping a watchful eye on somebody. 8. All folkloristic beliefs about the "virtues" of animals.

"There are no knights-errant that are not lovesick," Don Quixote informed him. "Let us listen to him, and the thread of his song will lead us to the yarn-ball of his thoughts; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."

Sancho would have liked to reply to his master, but the voice of the Knight of the Wood, which was neither very good nor very bad, kept him from it; and as the two of them listened attentively, they heard the following:

Sonnet

Show me, O lady, the pattern of thy will,
That mine may take that very form and shape;
For my will in thine own I fain would drape,
Each slightest wish of thine I would fulfill.
If thou wouldst have me silence this dead ill
Of which I'm dying now, prepare the crape!
Or if I must another manner ape,
Then let Love's self display his rhyming skill.
Of opposites I am made, that's manifest:
In part soft wax, in part hard-diamond fire;
Yet to Love's laws my heart I do adjust,
And, hard or soft, I offer thee this breast:
Print or engrave there what thou may'st desire,
And I'll preserve it in eternal trust.[9]

With an *Ay!* that appeared to be wrung from the very depths of his heart, the Knight of the Wood brought his song to a close, and then after a brief pause began speaking in a grief-stricken voice that was piteous to hear.

"O most beautiful and most ungrateful woman in all the world!" he cried, "how is it possible, O most serene Casildea de Vandalia,[1] for you to permit this captive knight of yours to waste away and perish in constant wanderings, amid rude toils and bitter hardships? Is it not enough that I have compelled all the knights of Navarre, all those of León, all the Tartessians and Castilians, and, finally, all those of La Mancha, to confess that there is no beauty anywhere that can rival yours?"

"That is not so!" cried Don Quixote at this point. "I am of La Mancha, and I have never confessed, I never could nor would confess a thing so prejudicial to the beauty of my lady. The knight whom you see there, Sancho, is raving; but let us listen and perhaps he will tell us more."

9. The poem intentionally follows affected conventions of the time. 1. The Knight of the Wood's counterpart to Don Quixote's Dulcinea del Toboso.

"That he will," replied Sancho, "for at the rate he is carrying on, he is good for a month at a stretch."

This did not prove to be the case, however; for when the Knight of the Wood heard voices near him, he cut short his lamentations and rose to his feet.

"Who goes there?" he called in a loud but courteous tone. "What kind of people are you? Are you, perchance, numbered among the happy or among the afflicted?"

"Among the afflicted," was Don Quixote's response.

"Then come to me," said the one of the Wood, "and, in doing so, know that you come to sorrow's self and the very essence of affliction."

Upon receiving so gentle and courteous an answer, Don Quixote and Sancho as well went over to him, whereupon the sorrowing one took the Manchegan's arm.

"Sit down here, Sir Knight," he continued, "for in order to know that you are one of those who follow the profession of knight-errantry, it is enough for me to have found you in this place where solitude and serenity keep you company, such a spot being the natural bed and proper dwelling of wandering men of arms."

"A knight I am," replied Don Quixote, "and of the profession that you mention; and though sorrows, troubles, and misfortunes have made my heart their abode, this does not mean that compassion for the woes of others has been banished from it. From your song a while ago I gather that your misfortunes are due to love—the love you bear that ungrateful fair one whom you named in your lamentations."

As they conversed in this manner, they sat together upon the hard earth, very peaceably and companionably, as if at daybreak they were not going to break each other's heads.

"Sir Knight," inquired the one of the Wood, "are you by any chance in love?"

"By mischance I am," said Don Quixote, "although the ills that come from well-placed affection should be looked upon as favors rather than as misfortunes."

"That is the truth," the Knight of the Wood agreed, "if it were not that the loved one's scorn disturbs our reason and understanding; for when it is excessive scorn appears as vengeance."

"I was never scorned by my lady," said Don Quixote.

"No, certainly not," said Sancho, who was standing near by, "for my lady is gentle as a ewe lamb and soft as butter."

"Is he your squire?" asked the one of the Wood.

"He is," replied Don Quixote.

"I never saw a squire," said the one of the Wood, "who dared to speak while his master was talking. At least, there is mine over there;

he is as big as your father, and it cannot be proved that he has ever opened his lips while I was conversing."

"Well, upon my word," said Sancho, "I have spoken, and I will speak in front of any other as good—but never mind; it only makes it worse to stir it."

The Knight of the Wood's squire now seized Sancho's arm. "Come along," he said, "let the two of us go where we can talk all we like, squire fashion, and leave these gentlemen our masters to come to lance blows as they tell each other the story of their loves; for you may rest assured, daybreak will find them still at it."

"Let us, by all means," said Sancho, "and I will tell your Grace who I am, so that you may be able to see for yourself whether or not I am to be numbered among the dozen most talkative squires."

With this, the pair went off to one side, and there then took place between them a conversation that was as droll as the one between their masters was solemn.

CHAPTER 13

In which is continued the adventure of the Knight of the Wood, together with the shrewd, highly original, and amicable conversation that took place between the two squires.

The knights and the squires had now separated, the latter to tell their life stories, the former to talk of their loves; but the history first relates the conversation of the servants and then goes on to report that of the masters. We are told that, after they had gone some little distance from where the others were, the one who served the Knight of the Wood began speaking to Sancho as follows:

"It is a hard life that we lead and live, *Señor mio*, those of us who are squires to knights-errant. It is certainly true that we eat our bread in the sweat of our faces, which is one of the curses that God put upon our first parents."[2]

"It might also be said," added Sancho, "that we eat it in the chill of our bodies, for who endures more heat and cold than we wretched ones who wait upon these wandering men of arms? It would not be so bad if we did eat once in a while, for troubles are less where there is bread; but as it is, we sometimes go for a day or two without breaking our fast, unless we feed on the wind that blows."

"But all this," said the other, "may very well be put up with, by reason of the hope we have of being rewarded; for if a knight is not too unlucky, his squire after a little while will find himself the governor of some fine island or prosperous earldom."

"I," replied Sancho, "have told my master that I would be satisfied

2. Cf. Genesis 3:19.

with the governorship of an island, and he is so noble and so generous that he has promised it to me on many different occasions."

"In return for my services," said the Squire of the Wood, "I'd be content with a canonry. My master has already appointed me to one—and what a canonry!"

"Then he must be a churchly knight," said Sancho, "and in a position to grant favors of that sort to his faithful squire; but mine is a layman, pure and simple, although, as I recall, certain shrewd and, as I see it, scheming persons did advise him to try to become an archbishop. However, he did not want to be anything but an emperor. And there I was, all the time trembling for fear he would take it into his head to enter the Church, since I was not educated enough to hold any benefices. For I may as well tell your Grace that, though I look like a man, I am no more than a beast where holy orders are concerned."

"That is where you are making a mistake," the Squire of the Wood assured him. "Not all island governments are desirable. Some of them are misshapen bits of land, some are poor, others are gloomy, and, in short, the best of them lays a heavy burden of care and trouble upon the shoulders of the unfortunate one to whose lot it falls. It would be far better if we who follow this cursed trade were to go back to our homes and there engage in pleasanter occupations, such as hunting or fishing, for example; for where is there in this world a squire so poor that he does not have a hack, a couple of greyhounds, and a fishing rod to provide him with sport in his own village?"

"I don't lack any of those," replied Sancho. "It is true, I have no hack, but I do have an ass that is worth twice as much as my master's horse. God send me a bad Easter, and let it be the next one that comes, if I would make a trade, even though he gave me four fanegas[3] of barley to boot. Your Grace will laugh at the price I put on my gray—for that is the color of the beast. As to greyhounds, I shan't want for them, as there are plenty and to spare in my village. And, anyway, there is more pleasure in hunting when someone else pays for it."

"Really and truly, Sir Squire," said the one of the Wood, "I have made up my mind and resolved to have no more to do with the mad whims of these knights; I intend to retire to my village and bring up my little ones—I have three of them, and they are like oriental pearls."

"I have two of them," said Sancho, "that might be presented to the Pope in person, especially one of my girls that I am bringing up to be a countess, God willing, in spite of what her mother says."

"And how old is this young lady that is destined to be a countess?"

3. About 1.6 bushels.

"Fifteen," replied Sancho, "or a couple of years more or less. But she is tall as a lance, fresh as an April morning, and strong as a porter."

"Those," remarked the one of the Wood, "are qualifications that fit her to be not merely a countess but a nymph of the verdant wildwood. O whore's daughter of a whore! What strength the she-rogue must have!"

Sancho was a bit put out by this. "She is not a whore," he said, "nor was her mother before her, nor will either of them ever be, please God, so long as I live. And you might speak more courteously. For one who has been brought up among knights-errant, who are the soul of courtesy, those words are not very becoming."

"Oh, how little your Grace knows about compliments, Sir Squire!" the one of the Wood exclaimed. "Are you not aware that when some knight gives a good lance thrust to the bull in the plaza, or when a person does anything remarkably well, it is the custom for the crowd to cry out, 'Well done, whoreson rascal!' and that what appears to be vituperation in such a case is in reality high praise? Sir, I would bid you disown those sons or daughters who do nothing to cause such praise to be bestowed upon their parents."

"I would indeed disown them if they didn't," replied Sancho, "and so your Grace may go ahead and call me, my children, and my wife all the whores in the world if you like, for everything that they say and do deserves the very highest praise. And in order that I may see them all again, I pray God to deliver me from mortal sin, or, what amounts to the same thing, from this dangerous calling of squire, seeing that I have fallen into it a second time, decoyed and deceived by a purse of a hundred ducats that I found one day in the heart of the Sierra Morena.[4] The devil is always holding up a bag full of doubloons in front of my eyes, here, there—no, not here, but there—everywhere, until it seems to me at every step I take that I am touching it with my hand, hugging it, carrying it off home with me, investing it, drawing an income from it, and living on it like a prince. And while I am thinking such thoughts, all the hardships I have to put up with serving this crackbrained master of mine, who is more of a madman than a knight, seem to me light and easy to bear."

"That," observed the Squire of the Wood, "is why it is they say that avarice bursts the bag. But, speaking of madmen, there is no greater one in all this world than my master; for he is one of those of whom it is said, 'The cares of others kill the ass.' Because another knight has lost his senses, he has to play mad too[5] and go hunting for that which, when he finds it, may fly up in his snout."

4. When Don Quixote retired there in Part I, Chapter 23. 5. In the Sierra Morena, Don Quixote had decided to imitate Amadis de Gaul and Ariosto's Roland "by playing the part of a desperate and raving madman" as a consequence of love (Part I, Chapter 25).

"Is he in love, maybe?"

"Yes, with a certain Casildea de Vandalia, the rawest[6] and best-roasted lady to be found anywhere on earth; but her rawness is not the foot he limps on, for he has other and greater schemes rumbling in his bowels, as you will hear tell before many hours have gone by."

"There is no road so smooth," said Sancho, "that it does not have some hole or rut to make you stumble. In other houses they cook horse beans, in mine they boil them by the kettleful.[7] Madness has more companions and attendants than good sense does. But if it is true what they say, that company in trouble brings relief, I may take comfort from your Grace, since you serve a master as foolish as my own."

"Foolish but brave," the one of the Wood corrected him, "and more of a rogue than anything else."

"That is not true of my master," replied Sancho. "I can assure you there is nothing of the rogue about him; he is as open and above-board as a wine pitcher and would not harm anyone but does good to all. There is no malice in his make-up, and a child could make him believe it was night at midday. For that very reason I love him with all my heart and cannot bring myself to leave him, no matter how many foolish things he does."

"But, nevertheless, good sir and brother," said the Squire of the Wood, "with the blind leading the blind, both are in danger of falling into the pit. It would be better for us to get out of all this as quickly as we can and return to our old haunts; for those that go seeking adventures do not always find good ones."

Sancho kept clearing his throat from time to time, and his saliva seemed rather viscous and dry; seeing which, the woodland squire said to him, "It looks to me as if we have been talking so much that our tongues are cleaving to our palates, but I have a loosener over there, hanging from the bow of my saddle, and a pretty good one it is." With this, he got up and went over to his horse and came back a moment later with a big flask of wine and a meat pie half a yard in diameter. This is no exaggeration, for the pasty in question was made of a hutch-rabbit of such a size that Sancho took it to be a goat, or at the very least a kid.

"And are you in the habit of carrying this with you, Señor?" he asked.

"What do you think?" replied the other. "Am I by any chance one of your wood-and-water[8] squires? I carry better rations on the flanks of my horse than a general does when he takes the field."

Sancho ate without any urging, gulping down mouthfuls that were like the knots on a tether, as they sat there in the dark.

6. The original has a pun on *crudo*, meaning both "raw" and "cruel." 7. Meaning that his misfortunes always come in large quantities. 8. Of low quality.

"You are a squire of the right sort," he said, "loyal and true, and you live in grand style as shown by this feast, which I would almost say was produced by magic. You are not like me, poor wretch, who have in my saddlebags only a morsel of cheese so hard you could crack a giant's skull with it, three or four dozen carob beans, and a few nuts. For this I have my master to thank, who believes in observing the rule that knights-errant should nourish and sustain themselves on nothing but dried fruits and the herbs of the field."

"Upon my word, brother," said the other squire, "my stomach was not made for thistles, wild pears, and woodland herbs. Let our masters observe those knightly laws and traditions and eat what their rules prescribe; I carry a hamper of food and a flask on my saddlebow, whether they like it or not. And speaking of that flask, how I love it! There is scarcely a minute in the day that I'm not hugging and kissing it, over and over again."

As he said this, he placed the wine bag in Sancho's hands, who put it to his mouth, threw his head back, and sat there gazing up at the stars for a quarter of an hour. Then, when he had finished drinking, he let his head loll on one side and heaved a deep sigh.

"The whoreson rascal!" he exclaimed, "that's a fine vintage for you!"

"There!" cried the Squire of the Wood, as he heard the epithet Sancho had used, "do you see how you have praised this wine by calling it 'whoreson'?"

"I grant you," replied Sancho, "that it is no insult to call anyone a son of a whore so long as you really do mean to praise him. But tell me, sir, in the name of what you love most, is this the wine of Ciudad Real?"[9]

"What a winetaster you are! It comes from nowhere else, and it's a few years old, at that."

"Leave it to me," said Sancho, "and never fear, I'll show you how much I know about it. Would you believe me, Sir Squire, I have such a great natural instinct in this matter of wines that I have but to smell a vintage and I will tell you the country where it was grown, from what kind of grapes, what it tastes like, and how good it is, and everything that has to do with it. There is nothing so unusual about this, however, seeing that on my father's side were two of the best winetasters La Mancha has known in many a year, in proof of which, listen to the story of what happened to them.

"The two were given a sample of wine from a certain vat and asked to state its condition and quality and determine whether it was good or bad. One of them tasted it with the tip of his tongue while the other merely brought it up to his nose. The first man said that it

9. The main town in La Mancha and the center of a wine region.

tasted of iron, the second that it smelled of Cordovan leather. The owner insisted that the vat was clean and that there could be nothing in the wine to give it a flavor of leather or of iron, but, nevertheless, the two famous winetasters stood their ground. Time went by, and when they came to clean out the vat they found in it a small key attached to a leather strap. And so your Grace may see for yourself whether or not one who comes of that kind of stock has a right to give his opinion in such cases."

"And for that very reason," said the Squire of the Wood, "I maintain that we ought to stop going about in search of adventures. Seeing that we have loaves, let us not go looking for cakes, but return to our cottages, for God will find us there if He so wills."

"I mean to stay with my master," Sancho replied, "until he reaches Saragossa, but after that we will come to an understanding."

The short of the matter is, the two worthy squires talked so much and drank so much that sleep had to tie their tongues and moderate their thirst, since to quench the latter was impossible. Clinging to the wine flask, which was almost empty by now, and with half-chewed morsels of food in their mouths, they both slept peacefully; and we shall leave them there as we go on to relate what took place between the Knight of the Wood and the Knight of the Mournful Countenance.

CHAPTER 14

Wherein is continued the adventure of the Knight of the Wood.

In the course of the long conversation that took place between Don Quixote and the Knight of the Wood, the history informs us that the latter addressed the following remarks to the Manchegan:

"In short, Sir Knight, I would have you know that my destiny, or, more properly speaking, my own free choice, has led me to fall in love with the peerless Casildea de Vandalia. I call her peerless for the reason that she has no equal as regards either her bodily proportions or her very great beauty. This Casildea, then, of whom I am telling you, repaid my worthy affections and honorable intentions by forcing me, as Hercules was forced by his stepmother, to incur many and diverse perils;[1] and each time as I overcame one of them she would promise me that with the next one I should have that which I desired; but instead my labors have continued, forming a chain whose links I am no longer able to count, nor can I say which will be the last one, that shall mark the beginning of the realization of my hopes.

"One time she sent me forth to challenge that famous giantess of

1. Son of Zeus and Alcmena, Hercules was persecuted by Zeus' wife Hera.

Seville, known as La Giralda,[2] who is as strong and brave as if made of brass, and who without moving from the spot where she stands is the most changeable and fickle woman in the world. I came, I saw, I conquered her, I made her stand still and point in one direction only, and for more than a week nothing but north winds blew. Then, there was that other time when Casildea sent me to lift those ancient stones, the mighty Bulls of Guisando,[3] an enterprise that had better have been entrusted to porters than to knights. On another occasion she commanded me to hurl myself down into the Cabra chasm[4]—an unheard-of and terribly dangerous undertaking—and bring her back a detailed account of what lay concealed in that deep and gloomy pit. I rendered La Giralda motionless, I lifted the Bulls of Guisando, and I threw myself into the abyss and brought to light what was hidden in its depths; yet my hopes are dead—how dead!—while her commands and her scorn are as lively as can be.

"Finally, she commanded me to ride through all the provinces of Spain and compel all the knights-errant whom I met with to confess that she is the most beautiful woman now living and that I am the most enamored man of arms that is to be found anywhere in the world. In fulfillment of this behest I have already traveled over the greater part of these realms and have vanquished many knights who have dared to contradict me. But the one whom I am proudest to have overcome in single combat is that famous gentleman, Don Quixote de la Mancha; for I made him confess that my Casildea is more beautiful than his Dulcinea, and by achieving such a conquest I reckon that I have conquered all the others on the face of the earth, seeing that this same Don Quixote had himself routed them. Accordingly, when I vanquished him, his fame, glory, and honor passed over and were transferred to my person.

> The brighter is the conquered one's lost crown,
> The greater is the conqueror's renown.[5]

Thus, the innumerable exploits of the said Don Quixote are now set down to my account and are indeed my own."

Don Quixote was astounded as he listened to the Knight of the Wood, and was about to tell him any number of times that he lied; the words were on the tip of his tongue, but he held them back as best he could, thinking that he would bring the other to confess with his own lips that what he had said was a lie. And so it was quite calmly that he now replied to him.

2. Actually a statue on the Moorish belfry of the cathedral at Seville. 3. Statues representing animals and supposedly marking a place where Caesar defeated Pompey. (Cf. the use of Caesar's famous words a few lines above.) 4. Possibly an ancient mine in the Sierra de Cabra near Cordova. 5. From the *Araucana*, a poem by Alonso de Ercilla y Zúñiga on the Spanish struggle against the Araucanian Indians of Chile.

"Sir Knight," he began, "as to the assertion that your Grace has conquered most of the knights-errant in Spain and even in all the world, I have nothing to say, but that you have vanquished Don Quixote de la Mancha, I am inclined to doubt. It may be that it was someone else who resembled him, although there are very few that do."

"What do you mean?" replied the one of the Wood. "I swear by the heavens above that I did fight with Don Quixote and that I overcame him and forced him to yield. He is a tall man, with a dried-up face, long, lean legs, graying hair, an eagle-like nose somewhat hooked, and a big, black, drooping mustache. He takes the field under the name of the Knight of the Mournful Countenance, he has for squire a peasant named Sancho Panza, and he rides a famous steed called Rocinante. Lastly, the lady of his heart is a certain Dulcinea del Toboso, once upon a time known as Aldonza Lorenzo, just as my own lady, whose name is Casildea and who is an Andalusian by birth, is called by me Casildea de Vandalia. If all this is not sufficient to show that I speak the truth, here is my sword which shall make incredulity itself believe."

"Calm yourself, Sir Knight," replied Don Quixote, "and listen to what I have to say to you. You must know that this Don Quixote of whom you speak is the best friend that I have in the world, so great a friend that I may say that I feel toward him as I do toward my own self; and from all that you have told me, the very definite and accurate details that you have given me, I cannot doubt that he is the one whom you have conquered. On the other hand, the sight of my eyes and the touch of my hands assure me that he could not possibly be the one, unless some enchanter who is his enemy—for he has many, and one in particular who delights in persecuting him—may have assumed the knight's form and then permitted himself to be routed, by way of defrauding Don Quixote of the fame which his high deeds of chivalry have earned for him throughout the known world. To show you how true this may be, I will inform you that not more than a couple of days ago those same enemy magicians transformed the figure and person of the beauteous Dulcinea del Toboso into a low and mean village lass, and it is possible that they have done something of the same sort to the knight who is her lover. And if all this does not suffice to convince you of the truth of what I say, here is Don Quixote himself who will maintain it by force of arms, on foot or on horseback, or in any way you like."

Saying this, he rose and laid hold of his sword, and waited to see what the Knight of the Wood's decision would be. That worthy now replied in a voice as calm as the one Don Quixote had used.

"Pledges," he said, "do not distress one who is sure of his ability to pay. He who was able to overcome you when you were transformed, Señor Don Quixote, may hope to bring you to your knees

when you are your own proper self. But inasmuch as it is not fitting that knights should perform their feats of arms in the darkness, like ruffians and highwaymen, let us wait until it is day in order that the sun may behold what we do. And the condition governing our encounter shall be that the one who is vanquished must submit to the will of his conqueror and perform all those things that are commanded of him, provided they are such as are in keeping with the state of knighthood."

"With that condition and understanding," said Don Quixote, "I shall be satisfied."

With this, they went off to where their squires were, only to find them snoring away as hard as when sleep had first overtaken them. Awakening the pair, they ordered them to look to the horses; for as soon as the sun was up the two knights meant to stage an arduous and bloody single-handed combat. At this news Sancho was astonished and terrified, since, as a result of what the other squire had told him of the Knight of the Wood's prowess, he was led to fear for his master's safety. Nevertheless, he and his friend now went to seek the mounts without saying a word, and they found the animals all together, for by this time the two horses and the ass had smelled one another out. On the way the Squire of the Wood turned to Sancho and addressed him as follows:

"I must inform you, brother, that it is the custom of the fighters of Andalusia, when they are godfathers in any combat, not to remain idly by, with folded hands, while their godsons fight it out. I tell you this by way of warning you that while our masters are settling matters, we, too, shall have to come to blows and hack each other to bits."

"The custom, Sir Squire," replied Sancho, "may be all very well among the fighters and ruffians that you mention, but with the squires of knights-errant it is not to be thought of. At least, I have never heard my master speak of any such custom, and he knows all the laws of chivalry by heart. But granting that it is true and that there is a law which states in so many words that squires must fight while their masters do, I have no intention of obeying it but rather will pay whatever penalty is laid on peaceable-minded ones like myself, for I am sure it cannot be more than a couple of pounds of wax,[6] and that would be less expensive than the lint which it would take to heal my head—I can already see it split in two. What's more, it's out of the question for me to fight since I have no sword nor did I ever in my life carry one."

"That," said the one of the Wood, "is something that is easily remedied. I have here two linen bags of the same size. You take one

6. In some confraternities, penalties were paid in wax, presumably to make church candles.

and I'll take the other and we will fight that way, on equal terms."

"So be it, by all means," said Sancho, "for that will simply knock the dust out of us without wounding us."

"But that's not the way it's to be," said the other squire. "Inside the bags, to keep the wind from blowing them away, we will put a half-dozen nice smooth pebbles of the same weight, and so we'll be able to give each other a good pounding without doing ourselves any real harm or damage."

"Body of my father!" cried Sancho, "just look, will you, at the marten and sable and wads of carded cotton that he's stuffing into those bags so that we won't get our heads cracked or our bones crushed to a pulp. But I am telling you, *Señor mio*, that even though you fill them with silken pellets, I don't mean to fight. Let our masters fight and make the best of it, but as for us, let us drink and live; for time will see to ending our lives without any help on our part by way of bringing them to a close before they have reached their proper season and fall from ripeness."

"Nevertheless," replied the Squire of the Wood, "fight we must, if only for half an hour."

"No," Sancho insisted, "that I will not do. I will not be so impolite or so ungrateful as to pick any quarrel however slight with one whose food and drink I've shared. And, moreover, who in the devil could bring himself to fight in cold blood, when he's not angry or vexed in any way?"

"I can take care of that, right enough," said the one of the Wood. "Before we begin, I will come up to your Grace as nicely as you please and give you three or four punches that will stretch you out at my feet; and that will surely be enough to awaken your anger, even though it's sleeping sounder than a dormouse."

"And I," said Sancho, "have another idea that's every bit as good as yours. I will take a big club, and before your Grace has had a chance to awaken my anger I will put yours to sleep with such mighty whacks that if it wakes at all it will be in the other world; for it is known there that I am not the man to let my face be mussed by anyone, and let each look out for the arrow.[7] But the best thing to do would be to leave one's anger to its slumbers, for no one knows the heart of any other, he who comes for wool may go back shorn, and God bless peace and curse all strife. If a hunted cat when surrounded and cornered turns into a lion, God knows what I who am a man might not become. And so from this time forth I am warning you, Sir Squire, that all the harm and damage that may result from our quarrel will be upon your head."

7. A proverbial expression from archery: let each one take care of his own arrow. Other obviously proverbial expressions follow, as is typical of Sancho's speech.

"Very well," the one of the Wood replied, "God will send the dawn and we shall make out somehow."

At that moment gay-colored birds of all sorts began warbling in the trees and with their merry and varied songs appeared to be greeting and welcoming the fresh-dawning day, which already at the gates and on the balconies of the east was revealing its beautiful face as it shook out from its hair an infinite number of liquid pearls. Bathed in this gentle moisture, the grass seemed to shed a pearly spray, the willows distilled a savory manna, the fountains laughed, the brooks murmured, the woods were glad, and the meadows put on their finest raiment. The first thing that Sancho Panza beheld, as soon as it was light enough to tell one object from another, was the Squire of the Wood's nose, which was so big as to cast into the shade all the rest of his body. In addition to being of enormous size, it is said to have been hooked in the middle and all covered with warts of a mulberry hue, like eggplant; it hung down for a couple of inches below his mouth, and the size, color, warts, and shape of this organ gave his face so ugly an appearance that Sancho began trembling hand and foot like a child with convulsions and made up his mind then and there that he would take a couple of hundred punches before he would let his anger be awakened to a point where he would fight with this monster.

Don Quixote in the meanwhile was surveying his opponent, who had already adjusted and closed his helmet so that it was impossible to make out what he looked like. It was apparent, however, that he was not very tall and was stockily built. Over his armor he wore a coat of some kind or other made of what appeared to be the finest cloth of gold, all bespangled with glittering mirrors that resembled little moons and that gave him a most gallant and festive air, while above his helmet were a large number of waving plumes, green, white, and yellow in color. His lance, which was leaning against a tree, was very long and stout and had a steel point of more than a palm in length. Don Quixote took all this in, and from what he observed concluded that his opponent must be of tremendous strength, but he was not for this reason filled with fear as Sancho Panza was. Rather, he proceeded to address the Knight of the Mirrors,[8] quite boldly and in a highbred manner.

"Sir Knight," he said, "if in your eagerness to fight you have not lost your courtesy, I would beg you to be so good as to raise your visor a little in order that I may see if your face is as handsome as your trappings."

"Whether you come out of this emprise the victor or the van-

8. See note 1, page 1277.

quished, Sir Knight," he of the Mirrors replied, "there will be ample time and opportunity for you to have a sight of me. If I do not now gratify your desire, it is because it seems to me that I should be doing a very great wrong to the beauteous Casildea de Vandalia by wasting the time it would take me to raise my visor before having forced you to confess that I am right in my contention, with which you are well acquainted."

"Well, then," said Don Quixote, "while we are mounting our steeds you might at least inform me if I am that knight of La Mancha whom you say you conquered."

"To that our[9] answer," said he of the Mirrors, "is that you are as like the knight I overcame as one egg is like another; but since you assert that you are persecuted by enchanters, I should not venture to state positively that you are the one in question."

"All of which," said Don Quixote, "is sufficient to convince me that you are laboring under a misapprehension; but in order to relieve you of it once and for all, let them bring our steeds, and in less time than you would spend in lifting your visor, if God, my lady, and my arm give me strength, I will see your face and you shall see that I am not the vanquished knight you take me to be."

With this, they cut short their conversation and mounted, and, turning Rocinante around, Don Quixote began measuring off the proper length of field for a run against his opponent as he of the Mirrors did the same. But the Knight of La Mancha had not gone twenty paces when he heard his adversary calling to him, whereupon each of them turned halfway and he of the Mirrors spoke.

"I must remind you, Sir Knight," he said, "of the condition under which we fight, which is that the vanquished, as I have said before, shall place himself wholly at the disposition of the victor."

"I am aware of that," replied Don Quixote, "not forgetting the provision that the behest laid upon the vanquished shall not exceed the bounds of chivalry."

"Agreed," said the Knight of the Mirrors.

At that moment Don Quixote caught sight of the other squire's weird nose and was as greatly astonished by it as Sancho had been. Indeed, he took the fellow for some monster, or some new kind of human being wholly unlike those that people this world. As he saw his master riding away down the field preparatory to the tilt, Sancho was alarmed; for he did not like to be left alone with the big-nosed individual, fearing that one powerful swipe of that protuberance against his own nose would end the battle so far as he was concerned and he would be lying stretched out on the ground, from fear if not from the force of the blow.

9. Note the dignified, "majestic" plural form.

He accordingly ran after the knight, clinging to one of Rocinante's stirrup straps, and when he thought it was time for Don Quixote to whirl about and bear down upon his opponent, he called to him and said, "*Señor mio*, I beg your Grace, before you turn for the charge, to help me up into that cork tree yonder where I can watch the encounter which your Grace is going to have with this knight better than I can from the ground and in a way that is much more to my liking."

"I rather think, Sancho," said Don Quixote, "that what you wish to do is to mount a platform where you can see the bulls without any danger to yourself."

"The truth of the matter is," Sancho admitted, "the monstrous nose on that squire has given me such a fright that I don't dare stay near him."

"It is indeed of such a sort," his master assured him, "that if I were not the person I am, I myself should be frightened. And so, come, I will help you up."

While Don Quixote tarried to see Sancho ensconced in the cork tree, the Knight of the Mirrors measured as much ground as seemed to him necessary and then, assuming that his adversary had done the same, without waiting for sound of trumpet or any other signal, he wheeled his horse, which was no swifter nor any more impressive-looking than Rocinante, and bore down upon his enemy at a mild trot; but when he saw that the Manchegan was busy helping his squire, he reined in his mount and came to a stop midway in his course, for which his horse was extremely grateful, being no longer able to stir a single step. To Don Quixote, on the other hand, it seemed as if his enemy was flying, and digging his spurs with all his might into Rocinante's lean flanks he caused that animal to run a bit for the first and only time, according to the history, for on all other occasions a simple trot had represented his utmost speed. And so it was that, with an unheard-of-fury, the Knight of the Mournful Countenance came down upon the Knight of the Mirrors as the latter sat there sinking his spurs all the way up to the buttons without being able to persuade his horse to budge a single inch from the spot where he had come to a sudden standstill.

It was at this fortunate moment, while his adversary was in such a predicament, that Don Quixote fell upon him, quite unmindful of the fact that the other knight was having trouble with his mount and either was unable or did not have time to put his lance at rest. The upshot of it was, he encountered him with such force that, much against his will, the Knight of the Mirrors went rolling over his horse's flanks and tumbled to the ground, where as a result of his terrific fall he lay as if dead, without moving hand or foot.

No sooner did Sancho perceive what had happened than he slipped

down from the cork tree and ran up as fast as he could to where his master was. Dismounting from Rocinante, Don Quixote now stood over the Knight of the Mirrors, and undoing the helmet straps to see if the man was dead, or to give him air in case he was alive, he beheld—who can say what he beheld without creating astonishment, wonder, and amazement in those who hear the tale? The history tells us that it was the very countenance, form, aspect, physiognomy, effigy, and image of the bachelor Sansón Carrasco!

"Come, Sancho," he cried in a loud voice, "and see what is to be seen but is not to be believed. Hasten, my son, and learn what magic can do and how great is the power of wizards and enchanters."

Sancho came, and the moment his eyes fell on the bachelor Carrasco's face he began crossing and blessing himself a countless number of times. Meanwhile, the overthrown knight gave no signs of life.

"If you ask me, master," said Sancho, "I would say that the best thing for your Grace to do is to run his sword down the mouth of this one who appears to be the bachelor Carrasco; maybe by so doing you would be killing one of your enemies, the enchanters."

"That is not a bad idea," replied Don Quixote, "for the fewer enemies the better." And, drawing his sword, he was about to act upon Sancho's advice and counsel when the Knight of the Mirrors' squire came up to them, now minus the nose which had made him so ugly.

"Look well what you are doing, Don Quixote!" he cried. "The one who lies there at your feet is your Grace's friend, the bachelor Sansón Carrasco, and I am his squire."

"And where is your nose?" inquired Sancho, who was surprised to see him without that deformity.

"Here in my pocket," was the reply. And, thrusting his hand into his coat, he drew out a nose of varnished pasteboard of the make that has been described. Studying him more and more closely, Sancho finally exclaimed, in a voice that was filled with amazement, "Holy Mary preserve me! And is this not my neighbor and crony, Tomé Cecial?"

"That is who I am!" replied the de-nosed squire, "your good friend Tomé Cecial, Sancho Panza. I will tell you presently of the means and snares and falsehoods that brought me here. But, for the present, I beg and entreat your master not to lay hands on, mistreat, wound, or slay the Knight of the Mirrors whom he now has at his feet; for without any doubt it is the rash and ill-advised bachelor Sansón Carrasco, our fellow villager."

The Knight of the Mirrors now recovered consciousness, and, seeing this, Don Quixote at once placed the naked point of his sword above the face of the vanquished one.

"Dead you are, knight," he said, "unless you confess that the peerless Dulcinea del Toboso is more beautiful than your Casildea de Vandalia. And what is more, you will have to promise that, should you survive this encounter and the fall you have had, you will go to the city of El Toboso and present yourself to her in my behalf, that she may do with you as she may see fit. And in case she leaves you free to follow your own will, you are to return to seek me out—the trail of my exploits will serve as a guide to bring you wherever I may be—and tell me all that has taken place between you and her. These conditions are in conformity with those that we arranged before our combat and they do not go beyond the bounds of knight-errantry."

"I confess," said the fallen knight, "that the tattered and filthy shoe of the lady Dulcinea del Toboso is of greater worth than the badly combed if clean beard of Casildea, and I promise to go to her presence and return to yours and to give you a complete and detailed account concerning anything you may wish to know."

"Another thing," added Don Quixote, "that you will have to confess and believe is that the knight you conquered was not and could not have been Don Quixote de la Mancha, but was some other that resembled him, just as I am convinced that you, though you appear to be the bachelor Sansón Carrasco, are another person in his form and likeness who has been put here by my enemies to induce me to restrain and moderate the impetuosity of my wrath and make a gentle use of my glorious victory."

"I confess, think, and feel as you feel, think, and believe," replied the lamed knight. "Permit me to rise, I beg of you, if the jolt I received in my fall will let me do so, for I am in very bad shape."

Don Quixote and Tomé Cecial the squire now helped him to his feet. As for Sancho, he could not take his eyes off Tomé but kept asking him one question after another, and although the answers he received afforded clear enough proof that the man was really his fellow townsman, the fear that had been aroused in him by his master's words—about the enchanters' having transformed the Knight of the Mirrors into the bachelor Sansón Carrasco—prevented him from believing the truth that was apparent to his eyes. The short of it is, both master and servant were left with this delusion as the other ill-errant knight and his squire, in no pleasant state of mind, took their departure with the object of looking for some village where they might be able to apply poultices and splints to the bachelor's battered ribs.

Don Quixote and Sancho then resumed their journey along the road to Saragossa, and here for the time being the history leaves them in order to give an account of who the Knight of the Mirrors and his long-nosed squire really were.

CHAPTER 15

Wherein is told and revealed who the Knight of the Mirrors and his squire were.

Don Quixote went off very happy, self-satisfied, and vainglorious at having achieved a victory over so valiant a knight as he imagined the one of the Mirrors to be, from whose knightly word he hoped to learn whether or not the spell which had been put upon his lady was still in effect; for, unless he chose to forfeit his honor, the vanquished contender must of necessity return and give an account of what had happened in the course of his interview with her. But Don Quixote was of one mind, the Knight of the Mirrors of another, for, as has been stated, the latter's only thought at the moment was to find some village where plasters were available.

The history goes on to state that when the bachelor Sansón Carrasco advised Don Quixote to resume his feats of chivalry, after having desisted from them for a while, this action was taken as the result of a conference which he had held with the curate and the barber as to the means to be adopted in persuading the knight to remain quietly at home and cease agitating himself over his unfortunate adventures. It had been Carrasco's suggestion, to which they had unanimously agreed, that they let Don Quixote sally forth, since it appeared to be impossible to prevent his doing so, and that Sansón should then take to the road as a knight-errant and pick a quarrel and do battle with him. There would be no difficulty about finding a pretext, and then the bachelor knight would overcome him (which was looked upon as easy of accomplishment), having first entered into a pact to the effect that the vanquished should remain at the mercy and bidding of his conqueror. The behest in this case was to be that the fallen one should return to his village and home and not leave it for the space of two years or until further orders were given him, it being a certainty that, once having been overcome, Don Quixote would fulfill the agreement, in order not to contravene or fail to obey the laws of chivalry. And it was possible that in the course of his seclusion he would forget his fancies, or they would at least have an opportunity to seek some suitable cure for his madness.

Sansón agreed to undertake this, and Tomé Cecial, Sancho's friend and neighbor, a merry but featherbrained chap, offered to go along as squire. Sansón then proceeded to arm himself in the manner that has been described, while Tomé disguised his nose with the aforementioned mask so that his crony would not recognize him when they met. Thus equipped, they followed the same route as Don Quixote and had almost caught up with him by the time he had the adventure with the Cart of Death. They finally overtook him in the wood, where those events occurred with which the attentive reader

is already familiar; and if it had not been for the knight's extraordinary fancies, which led him to believe that the bachelor was not the bachelor, the said bachelor might have been prevented from ever attaining his degree of licentiate, as a result of having found no nests where he thought to find birds.

Seeing how ill they had succeeded in their undertaking and what an end they had reached, Tomé Cecial now addressed his master.

"Surely, Señor Sansón Carrasco," he said, "we have had our deserts. It is easy enough to plan and embark upon an enterprise, but most of the time it's hard to get out of it. Don Quixote is a madman and we are sane, yet he goes away sound and laughing while your Grace is left here, battered and sorrowful. I wish you would tell me now who is the crazier: the one who is so because he cannot help it, or he who turns crazy of his own free will?"

"The difference between the two," replied Sansón, "lies in this: that the one who cannot help being crazy will be so always, whereas the one who is a madman by choice can leave off being one whenever he so desires."

"Well," said Tomé Cecial, "since that is the way it is, and since I chose to be crazy when I became your Grace's squire, by the same reasoning I now choose to stop being insane and to return to my home."

"That is your affair," said Sansón, "but to imagine that I am going back before I have given Don Quixote a good thrashing is senseless; and what will urge me on now is not any desire to see him recover his wits, but rather a thirst for vengeance; for with the terrible pain that I have in my ribs, you can't expect me to feel very charitable."

Conversing in this manner they kept on until they reached a village where it was their luck to find a bonesetter to take care of poor Sansón. Tomé Cecial then left him and returned home, while the bachelor meditated plans for revenge. The history has more to say of him in due time, but for the present it goes on to make merry with Don Quixote.

CHAPTER 16

Of what happened to Don Quixote upon his meeting with a prudent gentleman of La Mancha.

With that feeling of happiness and vainglorious self-satisfaction that has been mentioned, Don Quixote continued on his way, imagining himself to be, as a result of the victory he had just achieved, the most valiant knight-errant of the age. Whatever adventures might befall him from then on he regarded as already accomplished and brought to a fortunate conclusion. He thought little now of enchanters and enchantments and was unmindful of the innumerable beatings he

had received in the course of his knightly wanderings, of the volley of pebbles that had knocked out half his teeth, of the ungratefulness of the galley slaves and the audacity of the Yanguesans whose poles had fallen upon his body like rain. In short, he told himself, if he could but find the means, manner, or way of freeing his lady Dulcinea of the spell that had been put upon her, he would not envy the greatest good fortune that the most fortunate of knights-errant in ages past had ever by any possibility attained.

He was still wholly wrapped up in these thoughts when Sancho spoke to him.

"Isn't it strange, sir, that I can still see in front of my eyes the huge and monstrous nose of my old crony, Tomé Cecial?"

"And do you by any chance believe, Sancho, that the Knight of the Mirrors was the bachelor Sansón Carrasco and that his squire was your friend Tomé?"

"I don't know what to say to that," replied Sancho. "All I know is that the things he told me about my home, my wife and young ones, could not have come from anybody else; and the face, too, once you took the nose away, was the same as Tomé Cecial's, which I have seen many times in our village, right next door to my own house, and the tone of voice was the same also."

"Let us reason the matter out, Sancho," said Don Quixote. "Look at it this way: how can it be thought that the bachelor Sansón Carrasco would come as a knight-errant, equipped with offensive and defensive armor, to contend with me? Am I, perchance, his enemy? Have I given him any occasion to cherish a grudge against me? Am I a rival of his? Or can it be jealousy of the fame I have acquired that has led him to take up the profession of arms?"

"Well, then, sir," Sancho answered him, "how are we to explain the fact that the knight was so like the bachelor and his squire like my friend? And if this was a magic spell, as your Grace has said, was there no other pair in the world whose likeness they might have taken?"

"It is all a scheme and a plot," replied Don Quixote, "on the part of those wicked magicians who are persecuting me and who, foreseeing that I would be the victor in the combat, saw to it that the conquered knight should display the face of my friend the bachelor, so that the affection which I bear him would come between my fallen enemy and the edge of my sword and might of my arm, to temper the righteous indignation of my heart. In that way, he who had sought by falsehood and deceits to take my life, would be left to go on living. As proof of all this, Sancho, experience, which neither lies nor deceives, has already taught you how easy it is for enchanters to change one countenance into another, making the beautiful ugly and the ugly beautiful. It was not two days ago that you beheld the

peerless Dulcinea's beauty and elegance in its entirety and natural form, while I saw only the repulsive features of a low and ignorant peasant girl with cataracts over her eyes and a foul smell in her mouth. And if the perverse enchanter was bold enough to effect so vile a transformation as this, there is certainly no cause for wonderment at what he has done in the case of Sansón Carrasco and your friend, all by way of snatching my glorious victory out of my hands. But in spite of it all, I find consolation in the fact that, whatever the shape he may have chosen to assume, I have laid my enemy low."

"God knows what the truth of it all may be," was Sancho's comment. Knowing as he did that Dulcinea's transformation had been due to his own scheming and plotting, he was not taken in by his master's delusions. He was at a loss for a reply, however, lest he say something that would reveal his own trickery.

As they were carrying on this conversation, they were overtaken by a man who, following the same road, was coming along behind them. He was mounted on a handsome flea-bitten mare and wore a hooded greatcoat of fine green cloth trimmed in tawny velvet and a cap of the same material, while the trappings of his steed, which was accoutered for the field, were green and mulberry in hue, his saddle being of the *jineta* mode.[1] From his broad green and gold shoulder strap there dangled a Moorish cutlass, and his half-boots were of the same make as the baldric. His spurs were not gilded but were covered with highly polished green lacquer, so that harmonizing as they did with the rest of his apparel, they seemed more appropriate than if they had been of purest gold. As he came up, he greeted the pair courteously and, spurring his mare, was about to ride on past when Don Quixote called to him.

"Gallant sir," he said, "If your Grace is going our way and is not in a hurry, it would be a favor to us if we might travel together."

"The truth is," replied the stranger, "I should not have ridden past you if I had not been afraid that the company of my mare would excite your horse."

"In that case, sir," Sancho spoke up, "you may as well rein in, for this horse of ours is the most virtuous and well mannered of any that there is. Never on such an occasion has he done anything that was not right—the only time he did misbehave, my master and I suffered for it aplenty. And so, I say again, your Grace may slow up if you like; for even if you offered him your mare on a couple of platters, he'd never try to mount her."

With this, the other traveler drew rein, being greatly astonished at Don Quixote's face and figure. For the knight was now riding along without his helmet, which was carried by Sancho like a piece of

1. A saddle with a high pummel and short stirrups.

luggage on the back of his gray, in front of the packsaddle. If the green-clad gentleman stared hard at his new-found companion, the latter returned his gaze with an even greater intensity. He impressed Don Quixote as being a man of good judgment, around fifty years of age, with hair that was slightly graying and an aquiline nose, while the expression of his countenance was half humorous, half serious. In short, both his person and his accouterments indicated that he was an individual of some worth.

As for the man in green's impression of Don Quixote de la Mancha, he was thinking that he had never before seen any human being that resembled this one. He could not but marvel at the knight's long neck, his tall frame, and the leanness and the sallowness of his face, as well as his armor and his grave bearing, the whole constituting a sight such as had not been seen for many a day in those parts. Don Quixote in turn was quite conscious of the attentiveness with which the traveler was studying him and could tell from the man's astonished look how curious he was; and so, being very courteous and fond of pleasing everyone, he proceeded to anticipate any questions that might be asked him.

"I am aware," he said, "that my appearance must strike your Grace as being very strange and out of the ordinary, and for that reason I am not surprised at your wonderment. But your Grace will cease to wonder when I tell you, as I am telling you now, that I am a knight, one of those

> Of whom it is folks say,
> They to adventures go.

I have left my native heath, mortgaged my estate, given up my comfortable life, and cast myself into fortune's arms for her to do with me what she will. It has been my desire to revive a knight-errantry that is now dead, and for some time past, stumbling here and falling there, now throwing myself down headlong and then rising up once more, I have been able in good part to carry out my design by succoring widows, protecting damsels, and aiding the fallen, the orphans, and the young, all of which is the proper and natural duty of knights-errant. As a result, owing to my many valiant and Christian exploits, I have been deemed worthy of visiting in printed form nearly all the nations of the world. Thirty thousand copies of my history have been published, and, unless Heaven forbid, they will print thirty million of them.

"In short, to put it all into a few words, or even one, I will tell you that I am Don Quixote de la Mancha, otherwise known as the Knight of the Mournful Countenance. Granted that self-praise is degrading, there still are times when I must praise myself, that is to say, when

there is no one else present to speak in my behalf. And so, good sir, neither this steed nor this lance nor this buckler nor this squire of mine, nor all the armor that I wear and arms I carry, nor the sallowness of my complexion, nor my leanness and gauntness, should any longer astonish you, now that you know who I am and what the profession is that I follow."

Having thus spoken, Don Quixote fell silent, and the man in green was so slow in replying that it seemed as if he was at a loss for words. Finally, however, after a considerable while, he brought himself to the point of speaking.

"You were correct, Sir Knight," he said, "about my astonishment and my curiosity, but you have not succeeded in removing the wonderment that the sight of you has aroused in me. You say that, knowing who you are, I should not wonder any more, but such is not the case, for I am now more amazed than ever. How can it be that there are knights-errant in the world today and that histories of them are actually printed? I find it hard to convince myself that at the present time there is anyone on earth who goes about aiding widows, protecting damsels, defending the honor of wives, and succoring orphans, and I should never have believed it had I not beheld your Grace with my own eyes. Thank Heaven for that book that your Grace tells me has been published concerning your true and exalted deeds of chivalry, as it should cast into oblivion all the innumerable stories of fictitious knights-errant with which the world is filled, greatly to the detriment of good morals and the prejudice and discredit of legitimate histories."

"As to whether the stories of knights-errant are fictitious or not," observed Don Quixote, "there is much that remains to be said."

"Why," replied the gentleman in green, "is there anyone who can doubt that such tales are false?"

"I doubt it," was the knight's answer, "but let the matter rest there. If our journey lasts long enough, I trust with God's help to be able to show your Grace that you are wrong in going along with those who hold it to be a certainty that they are not true."

From this last remark the traveler was led to suspect that Don Quixote must be some kind of crackbrain, and he was waiting for him to confirm the impression by further observations of the same sort; but before they could get off on another subject, the knight, seeing that he had given an account of his own station in life, turned to the stranger and politely inquired who his companion might be.

"I, Sir Knight of the Mournful Countenance," replied the one in the green-colored greatcoat, "am a gentleman, and a native of the village where, please God, we are going to dine today. I am more than moderately rich, and my name is Don Diego de Miranda. I spend my life with my wife and children and with my friends. My

occupations are hunting and fishing, though I keep neither falcon nor hounds but only a tame partridge[2] and a bold ferret or two. I am the owner of about six dozen books, some of them in Spanish, others in Latin, including both histories and devotional works. As for books of chivalry, they have not as yet crossed the threshold of my door. My own preference is for profane rather than devotional writings, such as afford an innocent amusement, charming us by their style and arousing and holding our interest by their inventiveness, although I must say there are very few of that sort to be found in Spain.

"Sometimes," the man in green continued, "I dine with my friends and neighbors, and I often invite them to my house. My meals are wholesome and well prepared and there is always plenty to eat. I do not care for gossip, nor will I permit it in my presence. I am not lynx-eyed and do not pry into the lives and doings of others. I hear mass every day and share my substance with the poor, but make no parade of my good works lest hypocrisy and vainglory, those enemies that so imperceptibly take possession of the most modest heart, should find their way into mine. I try to make peace between those who are at strife. I am the devoted servant of Our Lady, and my trust is in the infinite mercy of God Our Savior."

Sancho had listened most attentively to the gentleman's account of his mode of life, and inasmuch as it seemed to him that this was a good and holy way to live and that the one who followed such a pattern ought to be able to work miracles, he now jumped down from his gray's back and, running over to seize the stranger's right stirrup, began kissing the feet of the man in green with a show of devotion that bordered on tears.

"Why are you doing that, brother?" the gentleman asked him. "What is the meaning of these kisses?"

"Let me kiss your feet," Sancho insisted, "for if I am not mistaken, your Grace is the first saint riding *jineta* fashion that I have seen in all the days of my life."

"I am not a saint," the gentleman assured him, "but a great sinner. It is you, brother, who are the saint; for you must be a good man, judging by the simplicity of heart that you show."

Sancho then went back to his packsaddle, having evoked a laugh from the depths of his master's melancholy and given Don Diego fresh cause for astonishment.

Don Quixote thereupon inquired of the newcomer how many children he had, remarking as he did so that the ancient philosophers, who were without a true knowledge of God, believed that mankind's greatest good lay in the gifts of nature, in those of fortune, and in having many friends and many and worthy sons.

2. Used as a decoy.

"I, Señor Don Quixote," replied the gentleman, "have a son without whom I should, perhaps, be happier than I am. It is not that he is bad, but rather that he is not as good as I should like him to be. He is eighteen years old, and for six of those years he has been at Salamanca studying the Greek and Latin languages. When I desired him to pass on to other branches of learning, I found him so immersed in the science of Poetry (if it can be called such) that it was not possible to interest him in the Law, which I wanted him to study, nor in Theology, the queen of them all. My wish was that he might be an honor to his family; for in this age in which we are living our monarchs are in the habit of highly rewarding those forms of learning that are good and virtuous, since learning without virtue is like pearls on a dunghill. But he spends the whole day trying to decide whether such and such a verse of Homer's *Iliad* is well conceived or not, whether or not Martial is immodest in a certain epigram, whether certain lines of Vergil are to be understood in this way or in that. In short, he spends all of his time with the books written by those poets whom I have mentioned and with those of Horace, Persius, Juvenal, and Tibullus. As for our own moderns, he sets little store by them, and yet, for all his disdain of Spanish poetry, he is at this moment racking his brains in an effort to compose a gloss on a quatrain that was sent him from Salamanca and which, I fancy, is for some literary tournament."

To all this Don Quixote made the following answer:

"Children, sir, are out of their parents' bowels and so are to be loved whether they be good or bad, just as we love those that gave us life. It is for parents to bring up their offspring, from the time they are infants, in the paths of virtue, good breeding, proper conduct, and Christian morality, in order that, when they are grown, they may be a staff to the old age of the ones that bore them and an honor to their own posterity. As to compelling them to study a particular branch of learning, I am not so sure as to that, though there may be no harm in trying to persuade them to do so. But where there is no need to study *pane lucrando*[3]—where Heaven has provided them with parents that can supply their daily bread—I should be in favor of permitting them to follow that course to which they are most inclined; and although poetry may be more pleasurable than useful, it is not one of those pursuits that bring dishonor upon those who engage in them.

"Poetry in my opinion, my dear sir," he went on, "is a young and tender maid of surpassing beauty, who has many other damsels (that is to say, the other disciplines) whose duty it is to bedeck, embellish, and adorn her. She may call upon all of them for service, and all of

3. Earning one's bread.

them in turn depend upon her nod. She is not one to be rudely handled, nor dragged through the streets, nor exposed at street corners, in the market place, or in the private nooks of palaces. She is fashioned through an alchemy of such power that he who knows how to make use of it will be able to convert her into the purest gold of inestimable price. Possessing her, he must keep her within bounds and not permit her to run wild in bawdy satires or soulless sonnets. She is not to be put up for sale in any manner, unless it be in the form of heroic poems, pity-inspiring tragedies, or pleasing and ingenious comedies. Let mountebanks keep hands off her, and the ignorant mob as well, which is incapable of recognizing or appreciating the treasures that are locked within her. And do not think, sir, that I apply that term 'mob' solely to plebeians and those of low estate; for anyone who is ignorant, whether he be lord or prince, may, and should, be included in the vulgar herd.

"But," Don Quixote continued, "he who possesses the gift of poetry and who makes the use of it that I have indicated, shall become famous and his name shall be honored among all the civilized nations of the world. You have stated, sir, that your son does not greatly care for poetry written in our Spanish tongue, and in that I am inclined to think he is somewhat mistaken. My reason for saying so is this: the great Homer did not write in Latin, for the reason that he was a Greek, and Vergil did not write in Greek since he was a Latin. In a word, all the poets of antiquity wrote in the language which they had imbibed with their mother's milk and did not go searching after foreign ones to express their loftiest conceptions. This being so, it would be well if the same custom were to be adopted by all nations, the German poet being no longer looked down upon because he writes in German, nor the Castilian or the Basque for employing his native speech.

"As for your son, I fancy, sir, that his quarrel is not so much with Spanish poetry as with those poets who have no other tongue or discipline at their command such as would help to awaken their natural gift; and yet, here, too, he may be wrong. There is an opinion, and a true one, to the effect that 'the poet is born,' that is to say, it is as a poet that he comes forth from his mother's womb, and with the propensity that has been bestowed upon him by Heaven, without study or artifice, he produces those compositions that attest the truth of the line: '*Est deus in nobis*,' etc.[4] I further maintain that the born poet who is aided by art will have a great advantage over the one who by art alone would become a poet, the reason being that art does not go beyond, but merely perfects, nature; and so it is

4. "There is a god in us." (Ovid, *Fasti*, VI, 5.)

that, by combining nature with art and art with nature, the finished poet is produced.

"In conclusion, then, my dear sir, my advice to you would be to let your son go where his star beckons him; for being a good student as he must be, and having already successfully mounted the first step on the stairway of learning, which is that of languages, he will be able to continue of his own accord to the very peak of humane letters, an accomplishment that is altogether becoming in a gentleman, one that adorns, honors, and distinguishes him as much as the miter does the bishop or his flowing robe the learned jurisconsult. Your Grace well may reprove your son, should he compose satires that reflect upon the honor of other persons; in that case, punish him and tear them up. But should he compose discourses in the manner of Horace, in which he reprehends vice in general as that poet so elegantly does, then praise him by all means; for it is permitted the poet to write verses in which he inveighs against envy and the other vices as well, and to lash out at the vicious without, however, designating any particular individual. On the other hand, there are poets who for the sake of uttering something malicious would run the risk of being banished to the shores of Pontus.[5]

"If the poet be chaste where his own manners are concerned, he would likewise be modest in his verses, for the pen is the tongue of the mind, and whatever thoughts are engendered there are bound to appear in his writings. When kings and princes behold the marvelous art of poetry as practiced by prudent, virtuous, and serious-minded subjects of their realm, they honor, esteem, and reward those persons and crown them with the leaves of the tree that is never struck by lightning[6]—as if to show that those who are crowned and adorned with such wreaths are not to be assailed by anyone."

The gentleman in the green-colored greatcoat was vastly astonished by this speech of Don Quixote's and was rapidly altering the opinion he had previously held, to the effect that his companion was but a crackbrain. In the middle of the long discourse, which was not greatly to his liking, Sancho had left the highway to go seek a little milk from some shepherds who were draining the udders of their ewes near by. Extremely well pleased with the knight's sound sense and excellent reasoning, the gentleman was about to resume the conversation when, raising his head, Don Quixote caught sight of a cart flying royal flags that was coming toward them down the road and, thinking it must be a fresh adventure, began calling to Sancho in a loud voice to bring him his helmet. Whereupon Sancho hastily left the shepherds and spurred his gray until he was once more along-

5. As Ovid was by Augustus in A.D. 8. 6. The laurel tree.

side his master, who was now about to encounter a dreadful and bewildering ordeal.

["*For I Well Know the Meaning of Valor*"]

CHAPTER 17

Wherein Don Quixote's unimaginable courage reaches its highest point, together with the adventure of the lions and its happy ending.

The history relates that, when Don Quixote called to Sancho to bring him his helmet, the squire was busy buying some curds from the shepherds and, flustered by his master's great haste, did not know what to do with them or how to carry them. Having already paid for the curds, he did not care to lose them, and so he decided to put them into the headpiece, and, acting upon this happy inspiration, he returned to see what was wanted of him.

"Give me that helmet," said the knight; "for either I know little about adventures or here is one where I am going to need my armor."

Upon hearing this, the gentleman in the green-colored greatcoat looked around in all directions but could see nothing except the cart that was approaching them, decked out with two or three flags which indicated that the vehicle in question must be conveying his Majesty's property. He remarked as much to Don Quixote, but the latter paid no attention, for he was always convinced that whatever happened to him meant adventures and more adventures.

"Forewarned is forearmed," he said. "I lose nothing by being prepared, knowing as I do that I have enemies both visible and invisible and cannot tell when or where or in what form they will attack me."

Turning to Sancho, he asked for his helmet again, and as there was no time to shake out the curds, the squire had to hand it to him as it was. Don Quixote took it and, without noticing what was in it, hastily clapped it on his head; and forthwith, as a result of the pressure on the curds, the whey began running down all over his face and beard, at which he was very much startled.

"What is this, Sancho?" he cried. "I think my head must be softening or my brains melting, or else I am sweating from head to foot. If sweat it be, I assure you it is not from fear, though I can well believe that the adventure which now awaits me is a terrible one indeed. Give me something with which to wipe my face, if you have anything, for this perspiration is so abundant that it blinds me."

Sancho said nothing but gave him a cloth and at the same time gave thanks to God that his master had not discovered what the trouble was. Don Quixote wiped his face and then took off his helmet to see what it was that made his head feel so cool. Catching sight

of that watery white mass, he lifted it to his nose and smelled it.

"By the life of my lady Dulcinea del Toboso!" he exclaimed. "Those are curds that you have put there, you treacherous, brazen, ill-mannered squire!"

To this Sancho replied, very calmly and with a straight face, "If they are curds, give them to me, your Grace, so that I can eat them. But no, let the devil eat them, for he must be the one who did it. Do you think I would be so bold as to soil your Grace's helmet? Upon my word, master, by the understanding that God has given me, I, too, must have enchanters who are persecuting me as your Grace's creature and one of his members, and they are the ones who put that filthy mess there to make you lose your patience and your temper and cause you to whack my ribs as you are in the habit of doing. Well, this time, I must say, they have missed the mark; for I trust my master's good sense to tell him that I have neither curds nor milk nor anything of the kind, and if I did have, I'd put it in my stomach and not in that helmet."

"That may very well be," said Don Quixote.

Don Diego was observing all this and was more astonished than ever, especially when, after he had wiped his head, face, beard, and helmet, Don Quixote once more donned the piece of armor and, settling himself in the stirrups, proceeded to adjust his sword and fix his lance.

"Come what may, here I stand, ready to take on Satan himself in person!" shouted the knight.

The cart with the flags had come up to them by this time, accompanied only by a driver riding one of the mules and a man seated up in front.

"Where are you going, brothers?" Don Quixote called out as he placed himself in the path of the cart. "What conveyance is this, what do you carry in it, and what is the meaning of those flags?"

"The cart is mine," replied the driver, "and in it are two fierce lions in cages which the governor of Oran is sending to court as a present for his Majesty. The flags are those of our lord the King, as a sign that his property goes here."

"And are the lions large?" inquired Don Quixote.

It was the man sitting at the door of the cage who answered him. "The largest," he said, "that ever were sent from Africa to Spain. I am the lionkeeper and I have brought back others, but never any like these. They are male and female. The male is in this first cage, the female in the one behind. They are hungry right now, for they have had nothing to eat today; and so we'd be obliged if your Grace would get out of the way, for we must hasten on to the place where we are to feed them."

"Lion whelps against me?" said Don Quixote with a slight smile.

"Lion whelps against me? And at such an hour? Then, by God, those gentlemen who sent them shall see whether I am the man to be frightened by lions. Get down, my good fellow, and since you are the lionkeeper, open the cages and turn those beasts out for me; and in the middle of this plain I will teach them who Don Quixote de la Mancha is, notwithstanding and in spite of the enchanters who are responsible for their being here."

"So," said the gentleman to himself as he heard this, "our worthy knight has revealed himself. It must indeed be true that the curds have softened his skull and mellowed his brains."

At this point Sancho approached him. "For God's sake, sir," he said, "do something to keep my master from fighting those lions. For if he does, they're going to tear us all to bits."

"Is your master, then, so insane," the gentleman asked, "that you fear and believe he means to tackle those fierce animals?"

"It is not that he is insane," replied Sancho, "but, rather, foolhardy."

"Very well," said the gentleman, "I will put a stop to it." And going up to Don Quixote, who was still urging the lionkeeper to open the cages, he said, "Sir Knight, knights-errant should undertake only those adventures that afford some hope of a successful outcome, not those that are utterly hopeless to begin with; for valor when it turns to temerity has in it more of madness than of bravery. Moreover, these lions have no thought of attacking your Grace but are a present to his Majesty, and it would not be well to detain them or interfere with their journey."

"My dear sir," answered Don Quixote, "you had best go mind your tame partridge and that bold ferret of yours and let each one attend to his own business. This is my affair, and I know whether these gentlemen, the lions, have come to attack me or not." He then turned to the lionkeeper. "I swear, Sir Rascal, if you do not open those cages at once, I'll pin you to the cart with this lance!"

Perceiving how determined the armed phantom was, the driver now spoke up. "Good sir," he said, "will your Grace please be so kind as to let me unhitch the mules and take them to a safe place before you turn those lions loose? For if they kill them for me, I am ruined for life, since the mules and cart are all the property I own."

"O man of little faith!" said Don Quixote. "Get down and unhitch your mules if you like, but you will soon see that it was quite unnecessary and that you might have spared yourself the trouble."

The driver did so, in great haste, as the lionkeeper began shouting, "I want you all to witness that I am being compelled against my will to open the cages and turn the lions out, and I further warn this gentleman that he will be responsible for all the harm and damage the beasts may do, plus my wages and my fees. You other gentlemen

take cover before I open the doors; I am sure they will not do any harm to me."

Once more Don Diego sought to persuade his companion not to commit such an act of madness, as it was tempting God to undertake anything so foolish as that; but Don Quixote's only answer was that he knew what he was doing. And when the gentleman in green insisted that he was sure the knight was laboring under a delusion and ought to consider the matter well, the latter cut him short.

"Well, then, sir," he said, "if your Grace does not care to be a spectator at what you believe is going to turn out to be a tragedy, all you have to do is to spur your flea-bitten mare and seek safety."

Hearing this, Sancho with tears in his eyes again begged him to give up the undertaking, in comparison with which the adventure of the windmills and the dreadful one at the fulling mills—indeed, all the exploits his master had ever in the course of his life undertaken—were but bread and cakes.

"Look, sir," Sancho went on, "there is no enchantment here nor anything of the sort. Through the bars and chinks of that cage I have seen a real lion's claw, and judging by the size of it, the lion that it belongs to is bigger than a mountain."

"Fear, at any rate," said Don Quixote, "will make him look bigger to you than half the world. Retire, Sancho, and leave me, and if I die here, you know our ancient pact: you are to repair to Dulcinea—I say no more."

To this he added other remarks that took away any hope they had that he might not go through with his insane plan. The gentleman in the green-colored greatcoat was of a mind to resist him but saw that he was no match for the knight in the matter of arms. Then, too, it did not seem to him the part of wisdom to fight it out with a madman; for Don Quixote now impressed him as being quite mad in every way. Accordingly, while the knight was repeating his threats to the lionkeeper, Don Diego spurred his mare, Sancho his gray, and the driver his mules, all of them seeking to put as great a distance as possible between themselves and the cart before the lions broke loose.

Sancho already was bewailing his master's death, which he was convinced was bound to come from the lions' claws, and at the same time he cursed his fate and called it an unlucky hour in which he had taken it into his head to serve such a one. But despite his tears and lamentations, he did not leave off thrashing his gray in an effort to leave the cart behind them. When the lionkeeper saw that those who had fled were a good distance away, he once more entreated and warned Don Quixote as he had warned and entreated him before, but the answer he received was that he might save his breath as it would do him no good and he had best hurry and obey. In the space

of time that it took the keeper to open the first cage, Don Quixote considered the question as to whether it would be well to give battle on foot or on horseback. He finally decided that he would do better on foot, as he feared that Rocinante would become frightened at sight of the lions; and so, leaping down from his horse, he fixed his lance, braced his buckler, and drew his sword, and then advanced with marvelous daring and great resoluteness until he stood directly in front of the cart, meanwhile commending himself to God with all his heart and then to his lady Dulcinea.

Upon reaching this point, the reader should know, the author of our veracious history indulges in the following exclamatory passage:

"O great-souled Don Quixote de la Mancha, thou whose courage is beyond all praise, mirror wherein all the valiant of the world may behold themselves, a new and second Don Manuel de León,[7] once the glory and the honor of Spanish knighthood! With what words shall I relate thy terrifying exploit, how render it credible to the ages that are to come? What eulogies do not belong to thee of right, even though they consist of hyperbole piled upon hyperbole? On foot and singlehanded, intrepid and with greathearted valor, armed but with a sword, and not one of the keen-edged Little Dog[8] make, and with a shield that was not of gleaming and polished steel, thou didst stand and wait for the two fiercest lions that ever the African forests bred! Thy deeds shall be thy praise, O valorous Manchegan; I leave them to speak for thee, since words fail me with which to extol them."

Here the author leaves off his exclamations and resumes the thread of the story.

Seeing Don Quixote posed there before him and perceiving that, unless he wished to incur the bold knight's indignation there was nothing for him to do but release the male lion, the keeper now opened the first cage, and it could be seen at once how extraordinarily big and horribly ugly the beast was. The first thing the recumbent animal did was to turn round, put out a claw, and stretch himself all over. Then he opened his mouth and yawned very slowly, after which he put out a tongue that was nearly two palms in length and with it licked the dust out of his eyes and washed his face. Having done this, he stuck his head outside the cage and gazed about him in all directions. His eyes were now like live coals and his appearance and demeanor were such as to strike terror in temerity itself. But Don Quixote merely stared at him attentively, waiting for him to descend from the cart so that they could come to grips, for the knight was determined to hack the brute to pieces, such was the extent of his unheard-of madness.

The lion, however, proved to be courteous rather than arrogant

7. Don Manuel Ponce de León, a paragon of gallantry and courtesy, belonging to the time of Ferdinand and Isabella. 8. The trademark of a famous armorer of Toledo and Saragossa.

and was in no mood for childish bravado. After having gazed first in one direction and then in another, as has been said, he turned his back and presented his hind parts to Don Quixote and then very calmly and peaceably lay down and stretched himself out once more in his cage. At this, Don Quixote ordered the keeper to stir him up with a stick in order to irritate him and drive him out.

"That I will not do," the keeper replied, "for if I stir him, I will be the first one he will tear to bits. Be satisfied with what you have already accomplished, Sir Knight, which leaves nothing more to be said on the score of valor, and do not go tempting your fortune a second time. The door was open and the lion could have gone out if he had chosen; since he has not done so up to now, that means he will stay where he is all day long. Your Grace's stoutheartedness has been well established; for no brave fighter, as I see it, is obliged to do more than challenge his enemy and wait for him in the field; his adversary, if he does not come, is the one who is disgraced and the one who awaits him gains the crown of victory."

"That is the truth," said Don Quixote. "Shut the door, my friend, and bear me witness as best you can with regard to what you have seen me do here. I would have you certify: that you opened the door for the lion, that I waited for him and he did not come out, that I continued to wait and still he stayed there, and finally went back and lay down. I am under no further obligation. Away with enchantments, and God uphold the right, the truth, and true chivalry! So close the door, as I have told you, while I signal to the fugitives in order that they who were not present may hear of this exploit from your lips."

The keeper did as he was commanded, and Don Quixote, taking the cloth with which he had dried his face after the rain of curds, fastened it to the point of his lance and began summoning the runaways, who, all in a body with the gentleman in green bringing up the rear, were still fleeing and turning around to look back at every step. Sancho was the first to see the white cloth.

"May they slay me," he said, "if my master hasn't conquered those fierce beasts, for he's calling to us."

They all stopped and made sure that the one who was doing the signaling was indeed Don Quixote, and then, losing some of their fear, they little by little made their way back to a point where they could distinctly hear what the knight was saying. At last they returned to the cart, and as they drew near Don Quixote spoke to the driver.

"You may come back, brother, hitch your mules, and continue your journey. And you, Sancho, may give each of them two gold crowns to recompense them for the delay they have suffered on my account."

"That I will, right enough," said Sancho. "But what has become

of the lions? Are they dead or alive?"

The keeper thereupon, in leisurely fashion and in full detail, proceeded to tell them how the encounter had ended, taking pains to stress to the best of his ability the valor displayed by Don Quixote, at sight of whom the lion had been so cowed that he was unwilling to leave his cage, though the door had been left open quite a while. The fellow went on to state that the knight had wanted him to stir the lion up and force him out, but had finally been convinced that this would be tempting God and so, much to his displeasure and against his will, had permitted the door to be closed.

"What do you think of that, Sancho?" asked Don Quixote. "Are there any spells that can withstand true gallantry? The enchanters may take my luck away, but to deprive me of my strength and courage is an impossibility."

Sancho then bestowed the crowns, the driver hitched his mules, and the lionkeeper kissed Don Quixote's hands for the favor received, promising that, when he reached the court, he would relate this brave exploit to the king himself.

"In that case," replied Don Quixote, "if his Majesty by any chance should inquire who it was that performed it, you are to say that it was the Knight of the Lions; for that is the name by which I wish to be known from now on, thus changing, exchanging, altering, and converting the one I have previously borne, that of Knight of the Mournful Countenance; in which respect I am but following the old custom of knights-errant, who changed their names whenever they liked or found it convenient to do so."

With this, the cart continued on its way, and Don Quixote, Sancho, and the gentleman in the green-colored greatcoat likewise resumed their journey. During all this time Don Diego de Miranda had not uttered a word but was wholly taken up with observing what Don Quixote did and listening to what he had to say. The knight impressed him as being a crazy sane man and an insane one on the verge of sanity. The gentleman did not happen to be familiar with the first part of our history, but if he had read it he would have ceased to wonder at such talk and conduct, for he would then have known what kind of madness this was. Remaining as he did in ignorance of his companion's malady, he took him now for a sensible individual and now for a madman, since what Don Quixote said was coherent, elegantly phrased, and to the point, whereas his actions were nonsensical, foolhardy, and downright silly. What greater madness could there be, Don Diego asked himself, than to don a helmet filled with curds and then persuade oneself that enchanters were softening one's cranium? What could be more rashly absurd than to wish to fight lions by sheer strength alone? He was roused from these thoughts, this inward soliloquy, by the sound of Don Quixote's voice.

"Undoubtedly, Señor Don Diego de Miranda, your Grace must take me for a fool and a madman, am I not right? And it would be small wonder if such were the case, seeing that my deeds give evidence of nothing else. But, nevertheless, I would advise your Grace that I am neither so mad nor so lacking in wit as I must appear to you to be. A gaily caparisoned knight giving a fortunate lance thrust to a fierce bull in the middle of a great square makes a pleasing appearance in the eyes of his king. The same is true of a knight clad in shining armor as he paces the lists in front of the ladies in some joyous tournament. It is true of all those knights who, by means of military exercises or what appear to be such, divert and entertain and, if one may say so, honor the courts of princes. But the best showing of all is made by a knight-errant who, traversing deserts and solitudes, crossroads, forests, and mountains, goes seeking dangerous adventures with the intention of bringing them to a happy and successful conclusion, and solely for the purpose of winning a glorious and enduring renown.

"More impressive, I repeat, is the knight-errant succoring a widow in some unpopulated place than a courtly man of arms making love to a damsel in the city. All knights have their special callings: let the courtier wait upon the ladies and lend luster by his liveries to his sovereign's palace; let him nourish impoverished gentlemen with the splendid fare of his table; let him give tourneys and show himself truly great, generous, and magnificent and a good Christian above all, thus fulfilling his particular obligations. But the knight-errant's case is different.

"Let the latter seek out the nooks and corners of the world; let him enter into the most intricate of labyrinths; let him attempt the impossible at every step; let him endure on desolate highlands the burning rays of the midsummer sun and in winter the harsh inclemencies of wind and frost; let no lions inspire him with fear, no monsters frighten him, no dragons terrify him, for to seek them out, attack them, and conquer them all is his chief and legitimate occupation. Accordingly, I whose lot it is to be numbered among the knights-errant cannot fail to attempt anything that appears to me to fall within the scope of my duties, just as I attacked those lions a while ago even though I knew it to be an exceedingly rash thing to do, for that was a matter that directly concerned me.

"For I well know the meaning of valor: namely, a virtue that lies between the two extremes of cowardice on the one hand and temerity on the other. It is, nonetheless, better for the brave man to carry his bravery to the point of rashness than for him to sink into cowardice. Even as it is easier for the prodigal to become a generous man than it is for the miser, so is it easier for the foolhardy to become truly brave than it is for the coward to attain valor. And in this matter

of adventures, you may believe me, Señor Don Diego, it is better to lose by a card too many than a card too few, and 'Such and such a knight is temerarious and overbold' sounds better to the ear than 'That knight is timid and a coward.' "

"I must assure you, Señor Don Quixote," replied Don Diego, "that everything your Grace has said and done will stand the test of reason; and it is my opinion that if the laws and ordinances of knight-errantry were to be lost, they would be found again in your Grace's bosom, which is their depository and storehouse. But it is growing late; let us hasten to my village and my home, where your Grace shall rest from your recent exertions; for if the body is not tired the spirit may be, and that sometimes results in bodily fatigue."

"I accept your offer as a great favor and an honor, Señor Don Diego," was the knight's reply. And, by spurring their mounts more than they had up to then, they arrived at the village around two in the afternoon and came to the house that was occupied by Don Diego, whom Don Quixote had dubbed the Knight of the Green-colored Greatcoat.

[*Last Duel*]

CHAPTER 64

Which treats of the adventure that caused Don Quixote the most sorrow of all those that have thus far befallen him.

. . . One morning, as Don Quixote went for a ride along the beach,[9] clad in full armor—for, as he was fond of saying, that was his only ornament, his only rest the fight, and, accordingly, he was never without it for a moment—he saw approaching him a horseman similarly arrayed from head to foot and with a brightly shining moon blazoned upon his shield.

As soon as he had come within earshot the stranger cried out to Don Quixote in a loud voice. "O illustrious knight, the never to be sufficiently praised Don Quixote de la Mancha, I am the Knight of the White Moon whose incomparable exploits you will perhaps recall. I come to contend with you and try the might of my arm, with the purpose of having you acknowledge and confess that my lady, whoever she may be, is beyond comparison more beautiful than your own Dulcinea del Toboso. If you will admit the truth of this fully and freely, you will escape death and I shall be spared the trouble of

9. Don Quixote and Sancho, after numberless encounters and experiences (of which the most prominent have been Don Quixote's descent into the cave of Montesinos, and the residence at the castle of the playful ducal couple who give Sancho the "governorship of an island" for ten days), are now in Barcelona. Famous as they are, they meet the viceroy and the nobles; their host is Don Antonio Moreno, "a gentleman of wealth and discernment who was fond of amusing himself in an innocent and kindly way."

inflicting it upon you. On the other hand, if you choose to fight and I should overcome you, I ask no other satisfaction than that, laying down your arms and seeking no further adventures, you retire to your own village for the space of a year, during which time you are not to lay hand to sword but are to dwell peacefully and tranquilly, enjoying a beneficial rest that shall redound to the betterment of your worldly fortunes and the salvation of your soul. But if you are the victor, then my head shall be at your disposal, my arms and steed shall be the spoils, and the fame of my exploits shall go to increase your own renown. Consider well which is the better course and let me have your answer at once, for today is all the time I have for the dispatching of this business."

Don Quixote was amazed at the knight's arrogance as well as at the nature of the challenge, but it was with a calm and stern demeanor that he replied to him.

"Knight of the White Moon," he said, "of whose exploits up to now I have never heard, I will venture to take an oath that you have not once laid eyes upon the illustrious Dulcinea; for I am quite certain that if you had beheld her you would not be staking your all upon such an issue, since the sight of her would have convinced you that there never has been, and never can be, any beauty to compare with hers. I do not say that you lie, I simply say that you are mistaken; and so I accept your challenge with the conditions you have laid down, and at once, before this day you have fixed upon shall have ended. The only exception I make is with regard to the fame of your deeds being added to my renown, since I do not know what the character of your exploits has been and am quite content with my own, such as they are. Take, then, whichever side of the field you like, and I will take up my position, and may St. Peter bless what God may give."

Now, as it happened, the Knight of the White Moon was seen by some of the townspeople, who informed the viceroy that he was there, talking to Don Quixote de la Mancha. Believing this to be a new adventure arranged by Don Antonio Moreno or some other gentleman of the place, the viceroy at once hastened down to the beach, accompanied by a large retinue, including Don Antonio, and they arrived just as Don Quixote was wheeling Rocinante to measure off the necessary stretch of field. When the viceroy perceived that they were about to engage in combat, he at once interposed and inquired of them what it was that impelled them thus to do battle all of a sudden.

The Knight of the White Moon replied that it was a matter of beauty and precedence and briefly repeated what he had said to Don Quixote, explaining the terms to which both parties had agreed. The viceroy then went up to Don Antonio and asked him if he knew any

such knight as this or if it was some joke that they were playing, but the answer that he received left him more puzzled than ever; for Don Antonio did not know who the knight was, nor could he say as to whether this was a real encounter or not. The viceroy, accordingly, was doubtful about letting them proceed, but inasmuch as he could not bring himself to believe that it was anything more than a jest, he withdrew to one side, saying, "Sir Knights, if there is nothing for it but to confess or die, and if Señor Don Quixote's mind is made up and your Grace, the Knight of the White Moon, is even more firmly resolved, then fall to it in the name of God and may He bestow the victory."

The Knight of the White Moon thanked the viceroy most courteously and in well-chosen words for the permission which had been granted them, and Don Quixote did the same, whereupon the latter, commending himself with all his heart to Heaven and to his lady Dulcinea, as was his custom at the beginning of a fray, fell back a little farther down the field as he saw his adversary doing the same. And then, without blare of trumpet or other warlike instrument to give them the signal for the attack, both at the same instant wheeled their steeds about and returned for the charge. Being mounted upon the swifter horse, the Knight of the White Moon met Don Quixote two-thirds of the way and with such tremendous force that, without touching his opponent with his lance (which, it seemed, he deliberately held aloft) he brought both Rocinante and his rider to the ground in an exceedingly perilous fall. At once the victor leaped down and placed his lance at Don Quixote's visor.

"You are vanquished, O knight! Nay, more, you are dead unless you make confession in accordance with the conditions governing our encounter."

Stunned and battered, Don Quixote did not so much as raise his visor but in a faint, wan voice, as if speaking from the grave, he said, "Dulcinea del Toboso is the most beautiful woman in the world and I the most unhappy knight upon the face of this earth. It is not right that my weakness should serve to defraud the truth. Drive home your lance, O knight, and take my life since you already have deprived me of my honor."

"That I most certainly shall not do," said the one of the White Moon. "Let the fame of my lady Dulcinea del Toboso's beauty live on undiminished. As for me, I shall be content if the great Don Quixote will retire to his village for a year or until such a time as I may specify, as was agreed upon between us before joining battle."

The viceroy, Don Antonio, and all the many others who were present heard this, and they also heard Don Quixote's response, which was to the effect that, seeing nothing was asked of him that was prejudicial to Dulcinea, he would fulfill all the other conditions like

a true and punctilious knight. The one of the White Moon thereupon turned and with a bow to the viceroy rode back to the city at a mild canter. The viceroy promptly dispatched Don Antonio to follow him and make every effort to find out who he was; and, in the meanwhile, they lifted Don Quixote up and uncovered his face, which held no sign of color and was bathed in perspiration. Rocinante, however, was in so sorry a state that he was unable to stir for the present.

Brokenhearted over the turn that events had taken, Sancho did not know what to say or do. It seemed to him that all this was something that was happening in a dream and that everything was the result of magic. He saw his master surrender, heard him consent not to take up arms again for a year to come as the light of his glorious exploits faded into darkness. At the same time his own hopes, based upon the fresh promises that had been made him, were whirled away like smoke before the wind. He feared that Rocinante was maimed for life, his master's bones permanently dislocated—it would have been a bit of luck if his madness also had been jolted out of him.[1]

Finally, in a hand litter which the viceroy had them bring, they bore the knight back to town. The viceroy himself then returned, for he was very anxious to ascertain who the Knight of the White Moon was who had left Don Quixote in so lamentable a condition.

CHAPTER 65

Wherein is revealed who the Knight of the White Moon was.

The Knight of the White Moon was followed not only by Don Antonio Moreno, but by a throng of small boys as well, who kept after him until the doors of one of the city's hostelries had closed behind him. A squire came out to meet him and remove his armor, for which purpose the victor proceeded to shut himself up in a lower room, in the company of Don Antonio, who had also entered the inn and whose bread would not bake until he had learned the knight's identity. Perceiving that the gentleman had no intention of leaving him, he of the White Moon then spoke.

"Sir," he said, "I am well aware that you have come to find out who I am; and, seeing that there is no denying you the information that you seek, while my servant here is removing my armor I will tell you the exact truth of the matter. I would have you know, sir, that I am the bachelor Sansón Carrasco from the same village as Don Quixote de la Mancha, whose madness and absurdities inspire pity in all of us who know him and in none more than me. And so, being convinced that his salvation lay in his returning home for a

1. The original has an untranslatable pun on *deslocado*, which means "out of joint" ("dislocated") and also "cured of madness" (from *loco*, "mad").

period of rest in his own house, I formed a plan for bringing him back.

"It was three months ago that I took to the road as a knight-errant, calling myself the Knight of the Mirrors, with the object of fighting and overcoming him without doing him any harm, intending first to lay down the condition that the vanquished was to yield to the victor's will. What I meant to ask of him—for I looked upon him as conquered from the start—was that he should return to his village and not leave it for a whole year, in the course of which time he might be cured. Fate, however, ordained things otherwise; for he was the one who conquered me and overthrew me from my horse, and thus my plan came to naught. He continued on his wanderings, and I went home, defeated, humiliated, and bruised from my fall, which was quite a dangerous one. But I did not for this reason give up the idea of hunting him up once more and vanquishing him as you have seen me do today.

"Since he is the soul of honor when it comes to observing the ordinances of knight-errantry, there is not the slightest doubt that he will keep the promise he has given me and fulfill his obligations. And that, sir, is all that I need to tell you concerning what has happened. I beg you not to disclose my secret or reveal my identity to Don Quixote, in order that my well-intentioned scheme may be carried out and a man of excellent judgment be brought back to his senses—for a sensible man he would be, once rid of the follies of chivalry."

"My dear sir," exclaimed Don Antonio, "may God forgive you for the wrong you have done the world by seeking to deprive it of its most charming madman! Do you not see that the benefit accomplished by restoring Don Quixote to his senses can never equal the pleasure which others derive from his vagaries? But it is my opinion that all the trouble to which the Señor Bachelor has put himself will not suffice to cure a man who is so hopelessly insane; and if it were not uncharitable, I would say let Don Quixote never be cured, since with his return to health we lose not only his own drolleries but also those of his squire, Sancho Panza, for either of the two is capable of turning melancholy itself into joy and merriment. Nevertheless, I will keep silent and tell him nothing, that I may see whether or not I am right in my suspicion that Señor Carrasco's efforts will prove to have been of no avail."

The bachelor replied that, all in all, things looked very favorable and he hoped for a fortunate outcome. With this, he took his leave of Don Antonio, after offering to render him any service that he could; and, having had his armor tied up and placed upon a mule's back, he rode out of the city that same day on the same horse on which he had gone into battle, returning to his native province with-

out anything happening to him that is worthy of being set down in this veracious chronicle.

[*Homecoming and Death*]

CHAPTER 73

Of the omens that Don Quixote encountered upon entering his village, with other incidents that embellish and lend credence to this great history.

As they entered the village, Cid Hamete informs us, Don Quixote caught sight of two lads on the communal threshing floor who were engaged in a dispute.

"Don't let it worry you, Periquillo," one of them was saying to the other; "you'll never lay eyes on it again as long as you live."

Hearing this, Don Quixote turned to Sancho. "Did you mark what that boy said, my friend?" he asked. " 'You'll never lay eyes on it[2] again . . .' "

"Well," replied Sancho, "what difference does it make what he said?"

"What difference?" said Don Quixote. "Don't you see that, applied to the one I love, it means I shall never again see Dulcinea."

Sancho was about to answer him when his attention was distracted by a hare that came flying across the fields pursued by a large number of hunters with their greyhounds. The frightened animal took refuge by huddling down beneath the donkey, whereupon Sancho reached out his hand and caught it and presented it to his master.

"*Malum signum, malum signum*,"[3] the knight was muttering to himself. "A hare flees, the hounds pursue it, Dulcinea appears not."

"It is very strange to hear your Grace talk like that," said Sancho. "Let us suppose that this hare *is* Dulcinea del Toboso and the hounds pursuing it are those wicked enchanters that transformed her into a peasant lass; she flees, I catch her and turn her over to your Grace, you hold her in your arms and caress her. Is that a bad sign? What ill omen can you find in it?"

The two lads who had been quarreling now came up to have a look at the hare, and Sancho asked them what their dispute was about. To this the one who had uttered the words "You'll never lay eyes on it again as long as you live," replied that he had taken a cricket cage from the other boy and had no intention of returning it ever. Sancho then brought out from his pocket four cuartos and gave

2. The same as "her" in the original, since the reference is to a cricket cage, denoted in Spanish by a feminine noun; hence Don Quixote's inference concerning Dulcinea. 3. A bad sign. Meeting a hare is considered an ill omen.

them to the lad in exchange for the cage, which he placed in Don Quixote's hands.

"There, master," he said, "these omens are broken and destroyed, and to my way of thinking, even though I may be a dunce, they have no more to do with what is going to happen to us than the clouds of yesteryear. If I am not mistaken, I have heard our curate say that sensible persons of the Christian faith should pay no heed to such foolish things, and you yourself in the past have given me to understand that all those Christians who are guided by omens are fools. But there is no need to waste a lot of words on the subject; come, let us go on and enter our village."

The hunters at this point came up and asked for the hare, and Don Quixote gave it to them. Continuing on their way, the returning pair encountered the curate and the bachelor Carrrasco, who were strolling in a small meadow on the outskirts of the town as they read their breviaries. And here it should be mentioned that Sancho Panza, by way of sumpter cloth, had thrown over his gray and the bundle of armor it bore the flame-covered buckram robe in which they had dressed the squire at the duke's castle, on the night that witnessed Altisidora's[4] resurrection; and he had also fitted the miter over the donkey's head, the result being the weirdest transformation and the most bizarrely appareled ass that ever were seen in this world. The curate and the bachelor recognized the pair at once and came forward to receive them with open arms. Don Quixote dismounted and gave them both a warm embrace; meanwhile, the small boys (boys are like lynxes in that nothing escapes them), having spied the ass's miter, ran up for a closer view.

"Come, lads," they cried, "and see Sancho Panza's ass trigged out finer than Mingo,[5] and Don Quixote's beast is skinnier than ever!"

Finally, surrounded by the urchins and accompanied by the curate and the bachelor, they entered the village and made their way to Don Quixote's house, where they found the housekeeper and the niece standing in the doorway, for the news of their return had preceded them. Teresa Panza, Sancho's wife, had also heard of it, and, half naked and disheveled, dragging her daughter Sanchica by the hand, she hastened to greet her husband and was disappointed when she saw him, for he did not look to her as well fitted out as a governor ought to be.

"How does it come, my husband," she said, "that you return like this, tramping and footsore? You look more like a vagabond than you do like a governor."

"Be quiet, Teresa," Sancho admonished her, "for very often there

4. Altisidora was a girl in the duke's castle where Quixote and Sancho were guests for a time; she dramatically pretended to be in love with Don Quixote

5. The allusion is to the opening lines of a fifteenth-century satire, *Mingo Revulgo*.

are stakes where there is no bacon. Come on home with me and you will hear marvels. I am bringing money with me, which is the thing that matters, money earned by my own efforts and without harm to anyone."

"You just bring along the money, my good husband," said Teresa, "and whether you got it here or there, or by whatever means, you will not be introducing any new custom into the world."

Sanchica then embraced her father and asked him if he had brought her anything, for she had been looking forward to his coming as to the showers in May. And so, with his wife holding him by the hand while his daughter kept one arm about his waist and at the same time led the gray, Sancho went home, leaving Don Quixote under his own roof in the company of niece and housekeeper, the curate and the barber.

Without regard to time or season, the knight at once drew his guests to one side and in a few words informed them of how he had been overcome in battle and had given his promise not to leave his village for a year, a promise that he meant to observe most scrupulously, without violating it in the slightest degree, as every knight-errant was obliged to do by the laws of chivalry. He accordingly meant to spend that year as a shepherd,[6] he said, amid the solitude of the fields, where he might give free rein to his amorous fancies as he practiced the virtues of the pastoral life; and he further begged them, if they were not too greatly occupied and more urgent matters did not prevent their doing so, to consent to be his companions. He would purchase a flock sufficiently large to justify their calling themselves shepherds; and, moreover, he would have them know, the most important thing of all had been taken care of, for he had hit upon names that would suit them marvelously well. When the curate asked him what these names were, Don Quixote replied that he himself would be known as "the shepherd Quixotiz," the bachelor as "the shepherd Carrascón," the curate as "the shepherd Curiambro," and Sancho Panza as "the shepherd Pancino."

Both his listeners were dismayed at the new form which his madness had assumed. However, in order that he might not go faring forth from the village on another of his expeditions (for they hoped that in the course of the year he would be cured), they decided to fall in with his new plan and approve it as being a wise one, and they even agreed to be his companions in the calling he proposed to adopt.

"What's more," remarked Sansón Carrasco, "I am a very famous poet, as everyone knows, and at every turn I will be composing pas-

6. Since the knight-errant's life has been forbidden him by his defeat, Don Quixote for a time plans to live according to another and no less "literary" code, that of the pastoral. In the following paragraphs the author, especially through the bachelor Carrasco, refers humorously to some of the conventions of pastoral literature.

toral or courtly verses or whatever may come to mind, by way of a diversion for us as we wander in those lonely places; but what is most necessary of all, my dear sirs, is that each one of us should choose the name of the shepherd lass to whom he means to dedicate his songs, so that we may not leave a tree, however hard its bark may be, where their names are not inscribed and engraved as is the custom with lovelorn shepherds."

"That is exactly what we should do," replied Don Quixote, "although, for my part, I am relieved of the necessity of looking for an imaginary shepherdess, seeing that I have the peerless Dulcinea del Toboso, glory of these brookside regions, adornment of these meadows, beauty's mainstay, cream of the Graces—in short, one to whom all praise is well becoming however hyperbolical it may be."

"That is right," said the curate, "but we will seek out some shepherd maids that are easily handled, who if they do not square with us will fit in the corners."

"And," added Sansón Carrasco, "if we run out of names we will give them those that we find printed in books the world over: such as Fílida, Amarilis, Diana, Flérida, Galatea, and Belisarda; for since these are for sale in the market place, we can buy them and make them our own. If my lady, or, rather, my shepherdess, should be chance be called Ana, I will celebrate her charms under the name of Anarda; if she is Francisca, she will become Francenia; if Lucía, Luscinda; for it all amounts to the same thing. And Sancho Panza, if he enters this confraternity, may compose verses to his wife, Teresa Panza, under the name of Teresaina."

Don Quixote had to laugh at this, and the curate then went on to heap extravagant praise upon him for his noble resolution which did him so much credit, and once again he offered to keep the knight company whenever he could spare the time from the duties of his office. With this, they took their leave of him, advising and beseeching him to take care of his health and to eat plentifully of the proper food.

As fate would have it, the niece and the housekeeper had overheard the conversation of the three men, and as soon as the visitors had left they both descended upon Don Quixote.

"What is the meaning of this, my uncle? Here we were thinking your Grace had come home to lead a quiet and respectable life, and do you mean to tell us you are going to get yourself involved in fresh complications—

> Young shepherd, thou who comest here,
> Young shepherd, thou who goest there . . .[7]

7. From a ballad.

For, to tell the truth, the barley is too hard now to make shepherds' pipes of it."[8]

"And how," said the housekeeper, "is your Grace going to stand the midday heat in summer, the winter cold, the howling of the wolves out there in the fields? You certainly cannot endure it. That is an occupation for robust men, cut out and bred for such a calling almost from their swaddling clothes. Setting one evil over against another, it is better to be a knight-errant than a shepherd. Look, sir, take my advice, for I am not stuffed with bread and wine when I give it to you but am fasting and am going on fifty years of age: stay at home, attend to your affairs, go often to confession, be charitable to the poor, and let it be upon my soul if any harm comes to you as a result of it."

"Be quiet, daughters," said Don Quixote. "I know very well what I must do. Take me up to bed, for I do not feel very well; and you may be sure of one thing: whether I am a knight-errant now or a shepherd to be, I never will fail to look after your needs as you will see when the time comes."

And good daughters that they unquestionably were, the housekeeper and the niece helped him up to bed, where they gave him something to eat and made him as comfortable as they could.

CHAPTER 74

Of how Don Quixote fell sick, of the will that he made, and of the manner of his death.

Inasmuch as nothing that is human is eternal but is ever declining from its beginning to its close, this being especially true of the lives of men, and since Don Quixote was not endowed by Heaven with the privilege of staying the downward course of things, his own end came when he was least expecting it. Whether it was owing to melancholy occasioned by the defeat he had suffered, or was, simply, the will of Heaven which had so ordained it, he was taken with a fever that kept him in bed for a week, during which time his friends, the curate, the bachelor, and the barber, visited him frequently, while Sancho Panza, his faithful squire, never left his bedside.

Believing that the knight's condition was due to sorrow over his downfall and disappointment at not having been able to accomplish the disenchantment and liberation of Dulcinea, Sancho and the others endeavored to cheer him up in every possible way. The bachelor urged him to take heart and get up from bed that he might begin his pastoral life, adding that he himself had already composed an eclogue that would cast in the shade all that Sannazaro[9] had ever writ-

8. A proverb. 9. The Italian poet Jacopo Sannazaro (1456?–1530), whose *Arcadia* is one of the milestones in the pastoral tradition.

ten, and had purchased with his own money from a herdsman of Quintanar two fine dogs to guard the flock, one of them named Barcino and the other Butrón. All this, however, did not serve to relieve Don Quixote's sadness; whereupon his friends called in the doctor, who took his pulse and was not very well satisfied with it. In any case, the physician told them, they should attend to the health of his soul as that of his body was in grave danger.

Don Quixote received this news calmly enough, but not so his housekeeper, niece, and squire, who began weeping bitterly, as if he were already lying dead in front of them. It was the doctor's opinion that melancholy and depression were putting an end to his patient's life. The knight then requested them to leave him alone as he wished to sleep a little, and they complied. He slept for more than six hours at a stretch, as the saying is, and so soundly that the housekeeper and niece thought he would never wake.

At last he did, however, and at once cried out in a loud voice, "Blessed be Almighty God who has given me so many blessings! Truly His mercy is boundless and is not limited or restrained by the sins of men."

The niece listened carefully to what her uncle said, and it seemed to her that he was speaking more rationally than was his wont, at least during his illness.

"Sir," she said to him, "what does your Grace mean? Has something occurred that we know nothing about? What is this talk of mercy and sins?"

"The mercy that I speak of," replied Don Quixote, "is that which God is showing me at this moment—in spite of my sins, as I have said. My mind now is clear, unencumbered by those misty shadows of ignorance that were cast over it by my bitter and continual reading of those hateful books of chivalry. I see through all the nonsense and fraud contained in them, and my only regret is that my disillusionment has come so late, leaving me no time to make any sort of amends by reading those that are the light of the soul. I find myself, niece, at the point of death, and I would die in such a way as not to leave the impression of a life so bad that I shall be remembered as a madman; for even though I have been one, I do not wish to confirm it on my deathbed. And so, my dear, call in my good friends: the curate, the bachelor Sansón Carrasco, and Master Nicholas the barber; for I want to confess my sins and make my last will and testament."

The niece, however, was relieved of this errand, for the three of them came in just then.

"I have good news for you, kind sirs," said Don Quixote the moment he saw them. "I am no longer Don Quixote de la Mancha but Alonso Quijano, whose mode of life won for him the name of 'Good.' I am

the enemy of Amadis of Gaul and all his innumerable progeny; for those profane stories dealing with knight-errantry are odious to me, and I realize how foolish I was and the danger I courted in reading them; but I am in my right senses now and I abominate them."

Hearing this, they all three were convinced that some new kind of madness must have laid hold of him.

"Why, Señor Don Quixote!" exclaimed Sansón. "What makes you talk like that, just when we have received news that my lady Dulcinea is disenchanted? And just when we are on the verge of becoming shepherds so that we may spend the rest of our lives in singing like a lot of princes, why does your Grace choose to turn hermit? Say no more, in Heaven's name, but be sensible and forget these idle tales."

"Tales of that kind," said Don Quixote, "have been the truth for me in the past, and to my detriment, but with Heaven's aid I trust to turn them to my profit now that I am dying. For I feel, gentlemen, that death is very near; so, leave all jesting aside and bring me a confessor for my sins and a notary to draw up my will. In such straits as these a man cannot trifle with his soul. Accordingly, while the Señor Curate is hearing my confession, let the notary be summoned."

Amazed at his words, they gazed at one another in some perplexity, yet they could not but believe him. One of the signs that led them to think he was dying was this quick return from madness to sanity and all the additional things he had to say, so well reasoned and well put and so becoming in a Christian that none of them could any longer doubt that he was in full possession of his faculties. Sending the others out of the room, the curate stayed behind to confess him, and before long the bachelor returned with the notary and Sancho Panza, who had been informed of his master's condition, and who, finding the housekeeper and the niece in tears, began weeping with them. When the confession was over, the curate came out.

"It is true enough," he said, "that Alonso Quijano the Good is dying, and it is also true that he is a sane man. It would be well for us to go in now while he makes his will."

At this news the housekeeper, niece, and the good squire Sancho Panza were so overcome with emotion that the tears burst forth from their eyes and their bosoms heaved with sobs; for, as has been stated more than once, whether Don Quixote was plain Alonso Quijano the Good or Don Quixote de la Mancha, he was always of a kindly and pleasant disposition and for this reason was beloved not only by the members of his household but by all who knew him.

The notary had entered along with the others, and as soon as the preamble had been attended to and the dying man had commended his soul to his Maker with all those Christian formalities that are

called for in such a case, they came to the matter of bequests, with Don Quixote dictating as follows:

"ITEM. With regard to Sancho Panza, whom, in my madness, I appointed to be my squire, and who has in his possession a certain sum of money belonging to me: inasmuch as there has been a standing account between us, of debits and credits, it is my will that he shall not be asked to give any accounting whatsoever of this sum, but if any be left over after he has had payment for what I owe him, the balance, which will amount to very little, shall be his, and much good may it do him. If when I was mad I was responsible for his being given the governorship of an island, now that I am of sound mind I would present him with a kingdom if it were in my power, for his simplicity of mind and loyal conduct merit no less."

At this point he turned to Sancho. "Forgive me, my friend," he said, "for having caused you to appear as mad as I by leading you to fall into the same error, that of believing that there are still knights-errant in the world."

"Ah, master," cried Sancho through his tears, "don't die, your Grace, but take my advice and go on living for many years to come; for the greatest madness that a man can be guilty of in this life is to die without good reason, without anyone's killing him, slain only by the hands of melancholy. Look you, don't be lazy but get up from this bed and let us go out into the fields clad as shepherds as we agreed to do. Who knows but behind some bush we may come upon the lady Dulcinea, as disenchanted as you could wish. If it is because of worry over your defeat that you are dying, put the blame on me by saying that the reason for your being overthrown was that I had not properly fastened Rocinante's girth. For the matter of that, your Grace knows from reading your books of chivalry that it is a common thing for certain knights to overthrow others, and he who is vanquished today will be the victor tomorrow."

"That is right," said Sansón, "the worthy Sancho speaks the truth."

"Not so fast, gentlemen," said Don Quixote. "In last year's nests there are no birds this year. I was mad and now I am sane; I was Don Quixote de la Mancha, and now I am, as I have said, Alonso Quijano the Good. May my repentance and the truth I now speak restore to me the place I once held in your esteem. And now, let the notary proceed:

"ITEM. I bequeath my entire estate, without reservation, to my niece Antonia Quijana, here present, after the necessary deductions shall have been made from the most available portion of it to satisfy the bequests that I have stipulated. The first payment shall be to my housekeeper for the wages due her, with twenty ducats over to buy her a dress. And I hereby appoint the Señor Curate and the Señor

Bachelor Sansón Carrasco to be my executors.

"ITEM. It is my will that if my niece Antonia Quijana should see fit to marry, it shall be to a man who does not know what books of chivalry are; and if it shall be established that he is acquainted with such books and my niece still insists on marrying him, then she shall lose all that I have bequeathed her and my executors shall apply her portion to works of charity as they may see fit.

"ITEM. I entreat the aforementioned gentlemen, my executors, if by good fortune they should come to know the author who is said to have composed a history now going the rounds under the title of *Second Part of the Exploits of Don Quixote de la Mancha*, to beg his forgiveness in my behalf, as earnestly as they can, since it was I who unthinkingly led him to set down so many and such great absurdities as are to be found in it; for I leave this life with a feeling of remorse at having provided him with the occasion for putting them into writing."

The will ended here, and Don Quixote, stretching himself at length in the bed, fainted away. They all were alarmed at this and hastened to aid him. The same thing happened very frequently in the course of the three days of life that remained to him after he had made his will. The household was in a state of excitement, but with it all the niece continued to eat her meals, the housekeeper had her drink, and Sancho Panza was in good spirits; for this business of inheriting property effaces or mitigates the sorrow which the heir ought to feel and causes him to forget.

Death came at last for Don Quixote, after he had received all the sacraments and once more, with many forceful arguments, had expressed his abomination of books of chivalry. The notary who was present remarked that in none of those books had he read of any knight-errant dying in his own bed so peacefully and in so Christian a manner. And thus, amid the tears and lamentations of those present, he gave up the ghost; that is to say, he died. Perceiving that their friend was no more, the curate asked the notary to be a witness to the fact that Alonso Quijano the Good, commonly known as Don Quixote, was truly dead, this being necessary in order that some author other than Cid Hamete Benengeli might not have the opportunity of falsely resurrecting him and writing endless histories of his exploits.

Such was the end of the Ingenious Gentleman of La Mancha, whose birthplace Cid Hamete was unwilling to designate exactly in order that all the towns and villages of La Mancha might contend among themselves for the right to adopt him and claim him as their own, just as the seven cities of Greece did in the case of Homer. The lamentations of Sancho and those of Don Quixote's niece and his

housekeeper, as well as the original epitaphs that were composed for his tomb, will not be recorded here, but mention may be made of the verses by Sansón Carrasco:

Here lies a gentleman bold
Who was so very brave
He went to lengths untold,
And on the brink of the grave
Death had on him no hold.
By the world he set small store—
He frightened it to the core—
Yet somehow, by Fate's plan,
Though he'd lived a crazy man,
When he died he was sane once more.

PEDRO CALDERÓN DE LA BARCA

1600–1681

By virture of his talents and of a longevity quite exceptional for his time, Pedro Calderón de la Barca had a varied career, primarily as a playwright and also as a courtier, soldier, and man of the cloth.

Born in Madrid on January 17, 1600, Calderón spent his early childhood at Valladolid, where the king and his court had then moved, his father being a secretary to the Council of the Treasury. It has been argued that the severity with which Calderón's father exercised his authority may be related to the themes of some of his son's plays, including his masterpiece, *Life Is a Dream*. Calderón studied from 1609 to 1614 at a Jesuit college, and later at the universities of Alcalá de Henares and Salamanca. His earliest known work was a result of his participation in 1620 in a poetic competition to celebrate the canonization of Saint Isidore; Lope de Vega, then the leading Spanish dramatist, was the principal judge. In the following year, Calderón and one of his brothers were accused of having killed a servant in the household of the Duke of Frias and both were fined. Calderón's first play, *Love, Honor, and Power*, was performed at the royal palace in 1623. Between 1623 and 1625 he may have served in the army in Italy or in Flanders. In 1626 he was again in Madrid. King Philip IV had assembled around the court a small number of playwrights, and Calderón soon became the most prominent among them. His plays were widely performed not only at court, but also in the public theaters. In 1635, when Lope de Vega died, Calderón became the leading dramatist in Spain. In 1636 King Philip knighted him. At the outbreak of the Catalonian rebellion in 1640, Calderón enrolled in one of the troops of knights supplied by the military orders and served at various battlefields and in different capacities until 1642. From 1644 to 1649 his theatrical production practically ceased, as the theaters were closed from the queen's death until the king's remarriage. In 1645 Calderón entered the

service of the duke of Alba. In 1648 or 1649, Calderón's mistress (whose identity is unknown) died, possibly in bearing his son, whom he recognized and raised in his own house until his early death in 1657. Calderón's sorrow at his mistress's death may have contributed to his decision to enter the priesthood. He was appointed to a Toledo parish, but could not serve because his superior objected to his being a playwright. For several years he was chaplain to the Brotherhood of the Refugio at Toledo, an order dedicated to charity work among the sick. Throughout this period and to the end of his life, Calderón wrote *autos sacramentales* (theological one-act allegories) for the court. In 1663 he was appointed honorary chaplain to the king. Thereafter he lived a retired life of writing, study, and meditation in Madrid, gathering in his house a rare collection of religious works of art and devotional objects. He died on May 25, 1681.

Calderón's theatrical output was immense and varied. The major subdivision is between secular and religious plays. Among the secular plays, there are dramas of honor and jealousy like *The Physician of His Own Honor* and *Secret Offense*; of cloak-and-dagger intrigue like *A House with Two Doors Is Hard to Guard* and *The Phantom Lady*; and on classical and mythological themes like *The Daughter of the Air*, and on historical and legendary themes like *The Mayor of Zalamea*. Calderón's deep preoccupation with religious themes shows itself in such complex melodramas as *The Devotion of the Cross* and such strictly religious plays as the seventy *autos sacramentales*, the most famous of which is *The Great Theater of the World*. One of the *autos sacramentales* has the same title, though hardly the same content and meaning, as the selection here, *Life Is a Dream*.

Considered by many to be the most important play of the Spanish theater, *Life Is a Dream* was written as a comedy, yet it has tragic overtones and its leading characters meditate on such serious questions as moral behavior, destiny, and the nature and purpose of human life in general. The play presents, albeit in new and extreme versions, some of the motifs which we have encountered in previous selections. Here the notion that the world is a stage and life an apparition, a dream, is not simply a poetic image or metaphor; it is presented as a basic norm, a design for living. Even if one should occasionally suspect that life is real and substantial, one must still think of it as a dream so that one may live it properly and achieve moral salvation.

The place of the action is a kingdom which, without even the remotest trace of historical justification, is called Poland. Its king, Basil, is a sage, but his sagacity is peculiar and somewhat sinister: he regulates his life by astrology. He has confined his son and heir apparent, Segismund, to a remote tower dungeon because before and during his birth the stars and heavens showed awful portents:

> The whole earth overflowed with conflagrations
> So that it seemed the final paroxysm
> Of existence. The skies grew dark. Buildings shook.
> The clouds rained stones. The rivers ran with blood.

But King Basil is sufficiently reasonable and orthodox to pay at least lip service to the notion of man's free will. He knows that

Violent inclination, the most impious
Planet—all can but influence, not force,
The free will which man holds direct from God.

Consequently he decides to "test" Segismund, allowing him to be brought to the palace in a trance and there to be given courtly homage and royal powers. His conduct will show whether he is of royal timber or a dangerous monster, as the stars have predicted.

The experiment fails: Segismund behaves like an unruly tyrant; the beast prevails. For example, after a brief exchange with a servant of the household concerning what amounts to a point of courtly etiquette (the impropriety of wooing a lady as boldly as Segismund woos Stella), he throws the man out of a window into "the sea" to prove that it is he who decides what is "just." Basil does not consider that his confinement of the prince may have contributed something to the prince's misbehavior; he simply considers the experiment a failure and a confirmation of his dire forecast. Nevertheless, he plants in Segismund's mind the first seeds of his redemption by warning him that *all* royal splendor and power may be a dream. Clotaldo, the hero's guardian-mentor, draws the moral of the lesson more precisely: "even in dreams, I warn you / Nothing is lost by trying to do good." This prompts Segismund's most celebrated speech at the end of act 2, and anticipates his full enlightenment in the last act.

The subplot, which interlocks with the main plot from the very first scene, is filled with the typical coincidences and implausibilities of a comedy of intrigue. The main character of the subplot is Rosaura, who has come to "Poland" disguised as a man to search for her seducer, Astolfo. There she finds not only her faithless lover—he has already taken up with his cousin, Stella, a possible heir to Basil's throne—but her father as well, and *he* turns out to have been the seducer of her mother. The subplot proceeds with the help of crude devices and props (the sword and the portrait) and elaborate debates on points of honor, very typical of Spanish plays of the period. What, for example, is the honorable behavior for Clotaldo, when he is caught on the horns of the dilemma that Astolfo saved his life during Segismund's tyrannical phase, but that the same Astolfo is the seducer of Clotaldo's daughter?

The dénouement is, of course, happy; Astolfo will marry Rosaura and Segismund will marry Stella. The only casualty, oddly enough, is the talkative clown, Clarion. The central issue as the final knots are tied is Segismund's moral development; the happy ending of the subplot parallels, at the higher level, Segismund's successful passing of the second "test." This test of Segismund's royal fitness is brought about by the action of insurgents against King Basil. They liberate Segismund from his renewed confinement and recognize him as their leader. He discourses upon his predicament at some length (it is not altogether unlike Clotaldo's) and then decides to act, equipped as he now is with new wisdom. For Segismund now accepts not only the principle that life is a dream—and an incomprehensible one at that, as he has suggested in the closing speech of act 2—but also the idea, expressed earlier by Clotaldo and now paraphrased by the hero, that "good actions, / Even in a dream, are not entirely lost." Segismund promises to lead the

rebels "bravely and skillfully," even though he knows that life is an illusion. The implication is that in spite of the purposelessness of life, or perhaps *because* of it, life should be lived with dignity, courage, and a sense of purpose.

It would be easy to superimpose a strictly orthodox interpretation of Calderón's theme: life is an illusion and a test and is followed by revelation and a just reward. But the language and impact of the play hardly warrant it. After all, Calderón wrote this as a comedy, not as an *auto sacramental* (the type of religious allegory of which he was to become a master later in life). This play is about human conduct and carries a twofold "message": life is a dream, yet it must not be lived irresponsibly. Each of us must discover his or her own idea of virtue and honor and practice it, as it were, gratuitously. This interpretation has a lingering flavor of Quixotism and at the same time a haunting suggestion of modernity.

Even so, the "meanings" of *Life Is a Dream* are difficult to summarize. Its tone, yet more difficult, mixes elements of fairy tale with a tragic awareness of reality. There are cloak-and-dagger routines and debates on points of honor which, for all their conventions, suddenly seem authentic and strangely relevant to real life. The plot is that of a routine comedy, full of disguises and surprise recognitions; yet it is carried on by characters whose main purpose seems to be to meditate on human destiny and to contemplate death, while their speech, at once formal and exuberant, full of rich imagery, expresses their vitality and earthly attachment. The general truth that no commentary can ever replace or even approach the effect of direct immersion in a literary text applies to this play with particular force. *Life Is a Dream* is its own haunting "meaning," and thus confirms in a splendid manner the nature of literary art.

Gerald Brenan, *The Literature of the Spanish People* (1951), includes an excellent chapter on "Calderón and the Late Drama." A good general introduction is Everett W. Hesse, *Calderón de la Barca* (1967). Bruce W. Wardropper, ed., *Critical Essays on the Theater of Calerón* (1965), devotes the entire Part II to *La Vida Es Sueño*, with four essays, including A. E. Sloman, "The Structure of Calderón's *La Vida Es Sueño*," and Everett W. Hesse, "Calderón's Concept of the Perfect Prince in *La Vida Es Sueño*."

Life Is a Dream[1]

Dramatis Personae

BASIL, *King of Poland*
SEGISMUND, *Prince*
ASTOLFO, *Duke of Muscovy*
CLOTALDO, *old man*
CLARION, *a comical servant*
ROSAURA, *a lady*
STELLA, *a princess*
Soldiers, guards, musicians, servants, retinues, women

1. English version by Roy Campbell.

The scene is laid in the court of Poland, a nearby fortress, and the open country.

Act I

On one side a craggy mountain: on the other side a rude tower whose base serves as a prison for SEGISMUND. *The door facing the spectators is open. The action begins at nightfall.*

[ROSAURA, *dressed as a man, appears on the rocks climbing down to the plain: behind her comes* CLARION.]

ROSAURA. You headlong hippogriff[2] who match the gale
In rushing to and fro, you lightning-flicker
Who give no light, you scaleless fish, you bird
Who have no coloured plumes, you animal
Who have no natural instinct, tell me whither
You lead me stumbling through this labyrinth
Of naked crags! Stay here upon this peak
And be a Phaëthon[3] to the brute-creation!
For I, pathless save only for the track
The laws of destiny dictate for me,
Shall, blind and desperate, descend this height
Whose furrowed brows are frowning at the sun.
How rudely, Poland, you receive a stranger
(Hardly arrived, but to be treated hardly)
And write her entry down in blood with thorns.
My plight attests this well, but after all,
Where did the wretchèd ever pity find?

CLARION. Say *two* so wretchèd. Don't you leave me out
When you complain! If we two sallied out
From our own country, questing high adventure,
And after so much madness and misfortune
Are still two here, and were two when we fell
Down those rough crags—shall I not be offended
To share the trouble[4] yet forego the credit?

ROSAURA. I did not give you shares in my complaint
So as not to rob you of the right to sorrow
Upon your own account. There's such relief
In venting grief that a philosopher
Once said that sorrows should not be bemoaned

2. A fantastic creature (a winged horse with an eagle's head and a lion's forelegs) invented by Italian Renaissance poets. Its most famous use was for Astolfo's flight to the moon in Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*. 3. In Greek mythology, the driver of the chariot of his father, the Sun; he came too close to earth and nearly burned it up. 4. Plays on words are not infrequent in Calderón, or, for that matter, in Shakespeare. Here, for example, the untranslatable pun is on the double meaning of *pesar* ("trouble" and "to weigh").

But sought for pleasure.

CLARION. Philosopher?
I call him a long-bearded, drunken sot
And would they'd cudgelled him a thousand blows
To give him something worth his while lamenting!
But, madam, what should we do, by ourselves,
On foot and lost at this late hour of day,
Here on this desert mountain far away—
The sun departing after fresh horizons?

ROSAURA. Clarion, how can I answer, being both
The partner of your plight and your dilemma?

CLARION. Would anyone believe such strange events?

ROSAURA. If there my sight is not deceived by fancy,
In the last timid light that yet remains
I seem to see a building.

CLARION. Either my hopes
Are lying or I see the signs myself.

ROSAURA. Between the towering crags, there stands so small
A royal palace that the lynx-eyed sun
Could scare perceive it at midday, so rude
In architecture that it seems but one
Rock more down-toppled from the sun-kissed crags
That form the jaggèd crest.

CLARION. Let's go closer,
For we have stared enough: it would be better
To let the inmates make us welcome.

ROSAURA. See:
The door, or, rather, that funereal gap,
Is yawning wide—whence night itself seems born,
Flowing out from its black, rugged centre.
[*A sound of chains is heard.*]

CLARION. Heavens! What's that I hear?

ROSAURA. I have become
A block immovable of ice and fire.

CLARION. Was that a little chain? Why, I'll be hanged
If that is not the clanking ghost of some
Past galley-slave—my terror proves it is!

SEGISMUND. Oh, miserable me! Unhappy me!

ROSAURA. How sad a cry that is! I fear new trials
And torments.

CLARION. It's a fearful sound.

ROSAURA. Oh, come,
My Clarion, let us fly from suffering!

CLARION. I'm in such sorry trim, I've not the spirit
Even to run away.

ROSAURA. And if you had,
You'd not have seen that door, not known of it.
When one's in doubt, the common saying goes
One walks between two lights.
CLARION. I'm the reverse.
It's not that way with me.
ROSAURA. What then disturbs you?
CLARION. I walk in doubt between two darknesses.
ROSAURA. Is not that feeble exhalation there
A light? That pallid star whose fainting tremors,
Pulsing a doubtful warmth of glimmering rays,
Make even darker with its spectral glow
That gloomy habitation? Yes! because
By its reflection (though so far away)
I recognise a prison, grim and sombre,
The sepulchre of some poor living carcase.
And, more to wonder at, a man lies there
Clothed in the hides of savage beasts, with limbs
Loaded with fetters and a single lamp
For company. So, since we cannot flee,
Let us stay here and listen to his plaint
And what his sorrows are.
SEGISMUND. Unhappy me!
Oh, miserable me! You heavens above,
I try to think what crime I've done against you
By being born. Although to have been born,
I know, is an offence, and with just cause
I bear the rigours of your punishment:
Since to be born is man's worst crime. But yet
I long to know (to clarify my doubts)
What greater crime, apart from being born,
Can thus have earned my greater chastisement.
Aren't others born like me? And yet they seem
To boast a freedom that I've never known.
The bird is born, and in the hues of beauty
Clothed with its plumes, yet scarce has it become
A feathered posy—or a flower with wings—
When through ethereal halls it cuts its way,
Refusing the kind shelter of its nest.
And I, who have more soul than any bird,
Must have less liberty?
The beast is born, and with its hide bright-painted,
In lovely tints, has scarce become a spangled
And starry constellation (thanks to the skilful
Brush of the Painter) than its earthly needs

Teach it the cruelty to prowl and kill,
The monster of its labyrinth of flowers.[5]
Yet I, with better instincts than a beast,
Must have less liberty?
The fish is born, the birth of spawn and slime,
That does not even live by breathing air.
No sooner does it feel itself a skiff
Of silver scales upon the wave than swiftly
It roves about in all directions taking
The measure of immensity as far
As its cold blood's capacity allows.
Yet I, with greater freedom of the will,
Must have less liberty?
The brook is born, and like a snake unwinds
Among the flowers. No sooner, silver serpent,
Does it break through the blooms than it regales
And thanks them with its music for their kindness,
Which opens to its course the majesty
Of the wide plain. Yet I, with far more life,
Must have less liberty?
This fills me with such passion, I become
Like the volcano Etna,[6] and could tear
Pieces of my own heart out of my breast!
What law, justice, or reason can decree
That man alone should never know the joys
And be alone excepted from the rights
God grants a fish, a bird, a beast, a brook?

ROSAURA. His words have filled me full of fear and pity.

SEGISMUND. Who is it overheard my speech? Clotaldo?

CLARION. Say "yes!"

ROSAURA. It's only a poor wretch, alas,
Who in these cold ravines has overheard
Your sorrows.

SEGISMUND. Then I'll kill you [*Seizes her.*]
So as to leave no witness of my frailty.
I'll tear you into bits with these strong arms!

CLARION. I'm deaf. I wasn't able to hear that.

ROSAURA. If you were human born, it is enough
That I should kneel to you for you to spare me.

SEGISMUND. Your voice has softened me, your presence halted me,
And now, confusingly, I feel respect
For you. Who are you? Though here I have learned
So little of the world, since this grim tower

5. An allusion to the Minotaur, kept by King Minos in the Cretan Labyrinth. 6. The highest active volcano in Europe, on the island of Sicily.

Has been my cradle and my sepulchre;
And though since I was born (if you can say
I really have been born) I've only seen
This rustic desert where in misery
I dwell alone, a living skeleton,
An animated corpse; and though till now,
I never spoke, save to one man who hears
My griefs and through whose converse I have heard
News of the earth and of the sky; and though,
To astound you more, and make you call me
A human monster, I dwell here, and am
A man of the wild animals, a beast
Among the race of men; and though in such
Misfortune, I have studied human laws,
Instructed by the birds, and learned to measure
The circles of the gentle stars, you only
Have curbed my furious rage, amazed my vision,
And filled with wonderment my sense of hearing.
Each time I look at you, I feel new wonder!
The more I see of you, the more I long
To go on seeing more of you. I think
My eyes are dropsical, to go on drinking
What it is death for them to drink, because
They go on drinking that which I am dying
To see and that which, seen, will deal me death.
Yet let me gaze on you and die, since I
Am so bewitched I can no longer think
What not seeing you would do to me—the sight
Itself being fatal! that would be more hard
Than dying, madness, rage, and fiercest grief:
It would be life—worst fate of all because
The gift of life to such a wretchèd man
Would be the gift of death to happiness![7]

ROSAURA. Astonished as I look, amazed to hear,
I know not what to say nor what to ask.
All I can say is that heaven guided me
Here to be comforted, if it is comfort
To see another sadder than oneself.
They say a sage philosopher of old,
Being so poor and miserable that he
Lived on the few plain herbs he could collect,
One day exclaimed: "Could any man be poorer

7. The gift of life, to a wretched man like himself, is like giving death to a happy one.

Or sadder than myself?"—when, turning round,
He saw the very answer to his words.
For there another sage philosopher
Was picking up the scraps he'd thrown away.
I lived cursing my fortune in this world
And asked within me: "Is there any other
Suffers so hard a fate?" Now out of pity
You've given me the answer. For within me
I find upon reflection that my griefs
Would be as joys to you and you'd receive them
To give you pleasure. So if they perchance
In any measure may afford relief.
Listen attentively to my misfortune
And take what is left over for yourself.
I am . . .

CLOTALDO. [*Within*] Guards of the tower! You sluggards
Or cowards, you have let two people pass
Into the prison bounds . . .

ROSAURA. Here's more confusion!

SEGISMUND. That is Clotaldo, keeper of my prison.
Are my misfortunes still not at an end?

CLOTALDO. Come. Be alert, and either seize or slay them
Before they can resist!

VOICES. [*Within*] Treason! Betrayal!

CLARION. Guards of the tower, who let us pass unhindered,
Since there's a choice, to seize us would be simpler.

[*Enter* CLOTALDO *with soldiers. He holds a pistol and they all wear masks.*]

CLOTALDO. [*Aside to the soldiers*] Cover your faces, all! It's a precaution
Imperative that nobody should know us
While we are here.

CLARION. What's this? A masquerade?

CLOTALDO. O you, who ignorantly passed the bounds
And limits of this region, banned to all—
Against the king's decree which has forbidden
That any should find out the prodigy
Hidden in these ravines—yield up your weapons
Or else this pistol, like a snake of metal,
Will spit the piercing venom of two shots
With scandalous assault upon the air.

SEGISMUND. Tyranic master, ere you harm these people
Let my life be the spoil of these sad bonds
In which (I swear it by Almighty God)

I'll sooner rend myself with hands and teeth
Amid these rocks than see them harmed and mourn
Their suffering.
CLOTALDO. Since you know, Segismund,
That your misfortunes are so huge that, even
Before your birth, you died by heaven's decree,
And since you know these walls and binding chains
Are but the brakes and curbs to your proud frenzies,
What use is it to bluster?
[*To the guards*] Shut the door
Of this close prison! Hide him in its depths!
SEGISMUND. Ah, heavens, how justly you denied me freedom!
For like a Titan[8] I would rise against you,
Pile jasper mountains high on stone foundations
And climb to burst the windows of the sun!
CLOTALDO. Perhaps you suffer so much pain today
Just to forestall that feat.
ROSAURA. Now that I see
How angry pride offends you, I'd be foolish
Not to plead humbly at your feet for life.
Be moved by me to pity. It would be
Notoriously harsh that neither pride
Nor humbleness found favour in your eyes!
CLARION. And if neither Humility nor Pride
Impress you (characters of note who act
And motivate a thousand mystery plays)
Let me, here, who am neither proud nor humble,
But merely something halfway in between,
Plead to you both for shelter and for aid.
CLOTALDO. Ho, there!
SOLDIER. Sir?
CLOTALDO. Take their weapons. Bind their eyes
So that they cannot see the way they're led.
ROSAURA. This is my sword. To nobody but you
I yield it, since you're, after all, the chief.
I cannot yield to one of meaner rank.
CLARION. My sword is such that I will freely give it
To the most mean and wretched.
[*To one soldier*] Take it, you!
ROSAURA. And if I have to die, I'll leave it to you
In witness of your mercy. It's a pledge
Of great worth and may justly be esteemed
For someone's sake who wore it long ago.

8. The Titans were primeval gods of Greek myth.

CLOTALDO. [*Apart*] Each moment seems to bring me new misfortune!
ROSAURA. Because of that, I ask you to preserve
This sword with care. Since if inconstant Fate
Consents to the remission of my sentence,
It has to win me honour. Though I know not
The secret that it carries, I do know
It has got one—unless I trick myself—
And prize it just as the sole legacy
My father left me.
CLOTALDO. Who then was your father?
ROSAURA. I never knew.
CLOTALDO. And why have you come here?
ROSAURA. I came to Poland to avenge a wrong.
CLOTALDO. [*Apart*] Sacred heavens!
[*On taking the sword he becomes very perturbed.*]
What's this? Still worse and worse.
I am perplexed and troubled with more fears.
[*Aloud*] Tell me: who gave that sword to you?
ROSAURA. A woman.
CLOTALDO. Her name?
ROSAURA. A secret I am forced to keep.
CLOTALDO. What makes you think this sword contains a secret?
ROSAURA. That she who gave it to me said: "Depart
To Poland. There with subtlety and art
Display it so that all the leading people
And noblemen can see you wearing it,
And I know well that there's a lord among them
Who will both shelter you and grant you favour."
But, lest he should be dead, she did not name him.
CLOTALDO. [*Aside*] Protect me, heavens! What is this I hear?
I cannot say if real or imagined
But here's the sword I gave fair Violante
In token that, whoever in the future
Should come from her to me wearing this sword,
Would find in me a tender father's love.
Alas, what can I do in such a pass,
When he who brings the sword to win my favour
Brings it to find his own red death instead
Arriving at my feet condemned already?
What strange perplexity! How hard a fate!
What an inconstant fortune to be plagued with!
This is my son[9] not only by all signs

9. Rosaura, of course, is disguised as a man.

But also by the promptings of my heart,
Since, seeing him, my heart seems to cry out
To him, and beat its wings, and, though unable
To break the locks, behaves as one shut in,
Who, hearing noises in the street outside,
Cranes from the window-ledge. Just so, not knowing
What's really happening, but hearing sounds,
My heart runs to my eyes which are its windows
And out of them flows into bitter tears.
Protect me, heaven! What am I to do?
To take him to the king is certain death.
To hide him is to break my sacred oath
And the strong law of homage. From one side
Love of one's own, and from the other loyalty—
Call me to yield. Loyalty to my king
(Why do I doubt?) comes before life and honour.
Then live my loyalty, and let him die!
When I remember, furthermore, he came
To avenge an injury—a man insulted
And unavenged is in disgrace. My son
Therefore he is not, nor of noble blood.
But if some danger has mischanced, from which
No one escapes, since honour is so fragile
That any act can smash it, and it takes
A stain from any breath of air, what more
Could any nobleman have done than he,
Who, at the cost of so much risk and danger,
Comes to avenge his honour? Since he's so brave
He is my son, and my blood's in his veins.
And so betwixt the one doubt and the other,
The most important mean between extremes
Is to go to the king and tell the truth—
That he's my son, to kill, if so he wishes.
Perhaps my loyalty thus will move his mercy
And if I thus can merit a live son,
I'll help him to avenge his injury.
But if the king prove constant in his rigour
And deal him death, he'll die in ignorance
That I'm his father.

[*Aloud to* ROSAURA *and* CLARION.]

Come then, strangers, come!
And do not fear that you have no companions
In your misfortunes, since, in equal doubt,
Tossed between life and death, I cannot guess
Which is the greater evil or the less.

A hall at the royal palace, in court

[*Enter* ASTOLFO *and soldiers at one side: from the other side* PRINCESS STELLA *and ladies. Military music and salvos.*]

ASTOLFO. To greet your excellent bright beams
As brilliant as a comet's rays,
The drums and brasses mix their praise
With those of fountains, birds, and streams.
With sounds alike, in like amaze,
Your heavenly face each voice salutes,
Which puts them in such lively fettle,
The trumpets sound like birds of metal,
The songbirds play like feathered flutes.
And thus they greet you, fair señora—
The salvos, as their queen, the brasses,
As to Minerva[1] when she passes,
The songbirds to the bright Aurora,[2]
And all the flowers and leaves and grasses
As doing homage unto Flora,[3]
Because you come to cheat the day
Which now the night has covered o'er—
Aurora in your spruce array,
Flora in peace, Pallas in war,
But in my heart the queen of May.

STELLA. If human voice could match with acts
You would have been unwise to say
Hyperboles that a few facts
May well refute some other day
Confounding all this martial fuss
With which I struggle daringly,
Since flatteries you proffer thus
Do not accord with what I see.
Take heed that it's an evil thing
And worthy of a brute accursed,
Loud praises with your mouth to sing
When in your heart you wish the worst.

ASTOLFO. Stella, you have been badly misinformed
If you doubt my good faith. Here let me beg you
To listen to my plea and hear me out.
The third Eugtorgius died, the King of Poland.
Basil, his heir, had two fair sisters who
Bore you, my cousin, and myself. I would not
Tire you with all that happened here. You know
Clorilene was your mother who enjoys,

1. The Roman Pallas Athena. 2. The Roman goddess of Dawn. 3. The Roman goddess of flowers and fruitfulness.

Under a better reign,[4] her starry throne.
She was the elder. Lovely Recisunda
(Whom may God cherish for a thousand years!)
The younger one, my mother and your aunt,
Was wed in Muscovy.[5] Now to return:
Basil has yielded to the feebleness
Of age, loves learnèd study more than women,
Has lost his wife, is childless, will not marry.
And so it comes that you and I both claim
The heirdom of the realm. You claim that you
Were daughter to the elder daughter. I
Say that my being born a man, although
Son of the younger daughter, gives me title
To be preferred. We've told the king, our uncle,
Of both of our intentions. And he answered
That he would judge between our rival claims,
For which the time and place appointed was
Today and here. For that same reason I
Have left my native Muscovy. With that
Intent I come—not seeking to wage war
But so that you might thus wage war on me!
May Love, wise god, make true what people say
(Your "people" is a wise astrologer)
By settling this through your being chosen queen—
Queen and my consort, sovereign of my will;
My uncle crowning you, for greater honour;
Your courage conquering, as it deserves;
My love applauding you, its emperor!

STELLA. To such chivalrous gallantry, my breast
Cannot hold out. The imperial monarchy
I wish were mine only to make it yours—
Although my love is not quite satisfied
That you are to be trusted since your speech
Is somewhat contradicted by that portrait[6]
You carry in the locket round your neck.

ASTOLFO. I'll give you satisfaction as to that.
[*Drums*] But these loud instruments will not permit it
That sound the arrival of the king and council.

[*Enter* KING BASIL *with his following.*]

STELLA. Wise Thales[7] . . .

ASTOLFO. Learned Euclid . . .

STELLA. Among the signs . . .

4. Heaven. 5. The grand duchy of Moscow. 6. A picture of Rosaura. 7. An early Greek philosopher. *Euclid:* the great Alexandrian geometer. The speech that follows is a long flattering salutation to the king, shared by Stella and Astolfo.

ASTOLFO. Among the stars . . .
STELLA. Where you preside in power . . .
ASTOLFO. Where you reside . . .
STELLA. And plot their paths . . .
ASTOLFO. And trace their fiery trails . . .
STELLA. Describing . . .
ASTOLFO. . . . Measuring and judging them . . .
STELLA. Please read my stars that I, in humble bonds . . .
ASTOLFO. Please read them, so that I in soft embraces . . .
STELLA. May twine as ivy to this tree!
ASTOLFO. May find
Myself upon my knees before these feet!
BASIL. Come and embrace me, niece and nephew. Trust me,
Since you're both loyal to my loving precepts,
And come here so affectionately both—
In nothing shall I leave you cause to cavil,
And both of you as equals will be treated.
The gravity of what I have to tell
Oppresses me, and all I ask of you
Is silence: the event itself will claim
Your wonderment. So be attentive now,
Belovèd niece and nephew, illustrious courtiers,
Relatives, friends, and subjects! You all know
That for my learning I have merited
The surname of The Learnèd, since the brush
Of great Timanthes, and Lisippus' marbles—
Stemming oblivion (consequence of time)—
Proclaimed me to mankind Basil the Great.
You know the science that I most affect
And most esteem is subtle mathematics
(By which I forestall time, cheat fame itself)
Whose office is to show things gradually.
For when I look my tables up and see,
Present before me, all the news and actions
Of centuries to come, I gain on Time—
Since Time recounts whatever I have said
After I say it. Those snowflaking haloes,
Those canopies of crystal spread on high,
Lit by the sun, cut by the circling moon,
Those diamond orbs, those globes of radiant crystal
Which the bright stars adorn, on which the signs
Parade in blazing excellence, have been
My chiefest study all through my long years.

8. Greek painter of the fourth century B.C. *Lisippus:* a Greek sculptor of the same period. The names are used symbolically to mean great artists in general.

They are the volumes on whose adamantine
Pages, bound up in sapphire, heaven writes,
In lines of burnished gold and vivid letters,
All that is due to happen, whether adverse
Or else benign. I read them in a flash,
So quickly that my spirit tracks their movements—
Whatever road they take, whatever goal
They aim at. Would to heaven that before
My genius had been the commentary
Writ in their margins, or the index to
Their pages, that my life had been the rubble,
The ruin, and destruction of their wrath,
And that my tragedy in them had ended,
Because, to the unlucky, even their merit
Is like a hostile knife, and he whom knowledge
Injures is but a murderer to himself.
And this I say myself, though my misfortunes
Say it far better, which, to marvel at,
I beg once more for silence from you all.
With my late wife, the queen, I had a son,
Unhappy son, to greet whose birth the heavens
Wore themselves out in prodigies and portents.
Ere the sun's light brought him live burial
Out of the womb (for birth resembles death)
His mother many times, in the delirium
And fancies of her sleep, saw a fierce monster
Bursting her entrails in a human form,
Born spattered with her lifeblood, dealing death,
The human viper[9] of this century!
The day came for his birth, and every presage
Was then fulfilled, for tardily or never
Do the more cruel ones prove false. At birth
His horoscope was such that the bright sun,
Stained in its blood, entered ferociously
Into duel with the moon above,
The whole earth seemed a rampart for the strife
Of heaven's two lights, who—though not hand-to-hand—
Fought light-to-light to gain the mastery!
The worst eclipse the sun has ever suffered
Since Christ's own death horrified earth and sky.
The whole earth overflowed with conflagrations
So that it seemed the final paroxysm
Of existence. The skies grew dark. Buildings shook.

9. Reputedly the viper is killed and devoured by its offspring.

The clouds rained stones. The rivers ran with blood.
In this delirious frenzy of the sun,
Thus, Segismund was born into the world,
Giving a foretaste of his character
By killing his own mother, seeming to speak thus
By his ferocity: "I am a man,
Because I have begun now to repay
All kindnesses with evil." To my studies
I went forthwith, and saw in all I studied
That Segismund would be the most outrageous
Of all men, the most cruel of all princes,
And impious of all monarchs, by whose acts
The kingdom would be torn up and divided
So as to be a school of treachery
And an academy of vices. He,
Risen in fury, amidst crimes and horrors,
Was born to trample me (with shame I say it)
And make of my grey hairs his very carpet.
Who is there but believes an evil Fate?
And more if he discovers it himself,
For self-love lends its credit to our studies.
So I, believing in the Fates, and in
The havoc that their prophecies predestined,
Determined to cage up this newborn tiger
To see if on the stars we sages have
Some power. I gave out that the prince had died
Stillborn, and well-forewarned, I built a tower
Amidst the cliffs and boulders of yon mountains
Over whose tops the light scarce finds its way,
So stubbornly their obelisks and crags
Defend the entry to them. The strict laws
And edicts that I published then (declaring
That nobody might enter the forbidden
Part of the range) were passed on that account.
There Segismund lives to this day, a captive,
Poor and in misery, where, save Clotaldo,
His guardian, none have seen or talked to him.
The latter has instructed him in all
Branches of knowledge and in the Catholic faith,
Alone the witness of his misery.
There are three things to be considered now:
Firstly Poland, that I love you greatly,
So much that I would free you from the oppression
And servitude of such a tyrant king.
He would not be a kindly ruler who

Would put his realm and homeland in such danger.
The second fact that I must bear in mind
Is this: that to deny my flesh and blood
The rights which law, both human and divine,
Concedes, would not accord with Christian charity,
For no law says that, to prevent another
Being a tyrant, I may be one myself,
And if my son's a tyrant, to prevent him
From doing outrage, I myself should do it.
Now here's the third and last point I would speak of,
Namely, how great an error it has been
To give too much belief to things predicted,
Because, even if his inclination should
Dictate some headlong, rash precipitancies,
They may perhaps not conquer him entirely,
For the most accursèd destiny, the most
Violent inclination, the most impious
Planet—all can but influence, not force,
The free will which man holds direct from God.
And so, between one motive and another
Vacillating discursively, I hit
On a solution that will stun you all.
I shall tomorrow, but without his knowing
He is my son—your king—place Segismund
(For that's the name with which he was baptised)
Here on my throne, beneath my canopy,
Yes, in my very place, that he may govern you
And take command. And you must all be here
To swear him fealty as his loyal subjects.
Three things may follow from this test, and these
I'll set against the three which I proposed.
The first is that should the prince prove prudent,
Stable, and benign—thus giving the lie
To all that prophecy reports of him—
Then you'll enjoy in him your rightful ruler
Who was so long a courtier of the mountains
And neighbour to the beasts. Here is the second:
If he prove proud, rash, cruel, and outrageous,
And with a loosened rein gallop unheeding
Across the plains of vice, I shall have done
My duty, and fulfilled my obligation
Of mercy. If I then re-imprison him,
That's incontestably a kingly deed—
Not cruelty but merited chastisement.
The third thing's this: that if the prince should be

As I've described him, then—by the love I feel
For you, my vassals—I shall give you worthier
Rulers to wear the sceptre and the crown;
Because your king and queen will be my nephew
And niece, each with an equal right to rule,
Each gaining the inheritance he merits,
And joined in faith of holy matrimony.
This I command you as a king, I ask you
As a kind father, as a sage I pray you,
As an experienced old man I tell you,
And (if it's true, as Spanish Seneca[1]
Says, that the king is slave unto his nation)
This, as a humble slave, I beg of you.
ASTOLFO. If it behooves me to reply (being
The person most involved in this affair)
Then in the name of all, let Segismund
Appear! It is enough that he's your son!
ALL. Give us our prince: we want him for our king!
BASIL. Subjects, I thank you for your kindly favour.
Accompany these, my two Atlases,[2]
Back to their rooms. Tomorrow you shall see him.
ALL. Long live the great King Basil! Long live Basil!
[*Exeunt all, accompanying* STELLA *and* ASTOLFO. *The* KING *remains. Enter* CLOTALDO *with* ROSAURA *and* CLARION.]
CLOTALDO. May I have leave to speak, sire?
BASIL. Oh, Clotaldo!
You're very welcome.
CLOTALDO. Thus to kneel before you
Is always welcome, sire—yet not today
When sad and evil Fate destroys the joy
Your presence normally concedes.
BASIL. What's wrong?
CLOTALDO. A great misfortune, sire, has come upon me
Just when I should have met it with rejoicing.
BASIL. Continue.
CLOTALDO. Sire, this beautiful young man
Who inadvertently and daringly
Came to the tower, wherein he saw the prince,
Is my . . .
BASIL. Do not afflict yourself, Clotaldo.
Had it not been just now, I should have minded,
I must confess. But I've revealed the secret,

1. The Roman dramatist and philosopher (4 B.C.?–A.D. 65) was born at Córdoba in Spain. The thought mentioned here is in his book *De clementia*, I, 19. 2. Astolfo and Stella, supporting him as the mythological Atlas supports the earth.

And now it does not matter if he knows it.
Attend me afterwards. I've many things
To tell you. You in turn have many things
To do for me. You'll be my minister,
I warn you, in the most momentous action
The world has ever seen. These prisoners, lest you
Should think I blame your oversight, I'll pardon.
[*Exit.*]

CLOTALDO. Long may you live, great sire! A thousand years!
[*Aside*] Heaven improves our fates. I shall not tell him
Now that he is my son, since it's not needed
Till he's avenged.
[*Aloud.*] Strangers, you may go free.

ROSAURA. Humbly I kiss your feet.

CLARION. Whilst I'll just *miss* them—
Old friends will hardly quibble at one letter.

ROSAURA. You've granted me my life, sir. I remain
Your servant and eternally your debtor.

CLOTALDO. No! It was not your life I gave you. No!
Since any wellborn man who, unavenged,
Nurses an insult does not live at all.
And seeing you have told me that you came
For that sole reason, it was not life I spared—
Life in disgrace is not a life at all.
[*Aside*] I see this spurs him.

ROSAURA. Freely I confess it—
Although you spared my life, it was no life.
But I will wipe my honour's stain so spotless
That after I have vanquished all my dangers
Life well may seem a shining gift from you.

CLOTALDO. Take here your burnished steel: 'twill be enough,
Bathed in your enemies' red blood, to right you.
For steel that once was mine (I mean of course
Just for the time I've had it in my keeping)
Should know how to avenge you.

ROSAURA. Now, in your name I gird it on once more
And on it I will swear to take revenge
Although my foe were even mightier.

CLOTALDO. Is he so powerful?

ROSAURA. So much so that . . .
Although I have no doubt in your discretion . . .
I say no more because I'd not estrange
Your clemency.

CLOTALDO. You would have won me had you told me, since
That would prevent me helping him.

[*Aside*] If only I could discover who he is!
ROSAURA. So that you'll not think that I value lightly
Such confidence, know that my adversary
Is no less than Astolfo, Duke of Muscovy.
CLOTALDO. [*Aside*] (I hardly can withstand the grief it gives me
For it is worse than aught I could imagine!
Let us inquire of him some further facts.)
[*Aloud*] If you were born a Muscovite, your ruler
Could never have affronted you. Go back
Home to your country. Leave this headstrong valour.
It will destroy you.
ROSAURA. Though he's been my prince,
I know that he has done me an affront.
CLOTALDO. Even though he slapped your face, that's no affront.
[*Aside*] O heavens!
ROSAURA. My insult was far deeper.
CLOTALDO. Tell it:
Since nothing I imagine could be deeper.
ROSAURA. Yes. I will tell it, yet, I know not why,
With such respect I look upon your face,
I venerate you with such true affection,
With such high estimation do I weigh you,
That I scarce dare to tell you—these men's clothes
Are an enigma, not what they appear.
So now you know. Judge if it's no affront
That here Astolfo comes to wed with Stella
Although betrothed to me. I've said enough.
[*Exeunt* ROSAURA *and* CLARION.]
CLOTALDO. Here! Listen! Wait! What mazed confusion!
It is a labyrinth wherein the reason
Can find no clue. My family's honour's injured.
The enemy's all powerful. I'm a vassal
And she's a woman. Heavens! Show a path
Although I don't believe there is a way!
There's nought but evil bodings in the sky.
The whole world is a prodigy, say I.

Act II

A Hall in the Royal Palace

[*Enter* BASIL *and* CLOTALDO.]
CLOTALDO. All has been done according to your orders.
BASIL. Tell me, Clotaldo, how it went.
CLOTALDO. Why, thus:
I took to Segismund a calming drug

Wherein are mixed herbs of especial virtue,
Tyrannous in their overpowering strength,
Which seize and steal and alienate man's gift
Of reasoning, thus making a live corpse
Of him. His violence evaporated
With all his faculties and senses too.
There is no need to prove it's possible
Because experience teaches us that medicine
Is full of natural secrets, that there is no
Animal, plant, or stone that has not got
Appointed properties. If human malice
Explores a thousand poisons which deal death,
Who then can doubt, that being so, that other
Poisons less violent, cause only sleep?
But (leaving that doubt aside as proven false
By every evidence) hear then the sequel:
I went down into Segismund's close prison
Bearing the drink wherein, with opium,
Henbane and poppies had been mixed. With him
I talked a little while of the humanities,
In which dumb Nature has instructed him,
The mountains and the heavens and the stars,
In whose divine academies he learned
Rhetoric from the birds and the wild creatures.
To lift his spirit to the enterprise
Which you require of him I chose for subject
The swiftness of a stalwart eagle, who,
Deriding the base region of the wind,
Rises into the sphere reserved for fire,
A feathered lightning, an untethered comet.
Then I extolled such lofty flight and said:
"After all, he's the king of birds, and so
Takes precedence, by right, over the rest."
No more was needful for, in taking up
Majesty for his subject, he discoursed
With pride and high ambition, as his blood
Naturally moves, incites, and spurs him on
To grand and lofty things, and so he said
That in the restless kingdom of the birds
There should be those who swear obedience, too!
"In this, my miseries console me greatly,
Because if I'm a vassal here, it's only
By force, and not by choice. Of my own will
I would not yield in rank to any man."
Seeing that he grew furious—since this touched

The theme of his own griefs—I gave the potion
And scarcely had it passed from cup to breast
Before he yielded all his strength to slumber.
A chill sweat ran through all his limbs and veins.
Had I not known that this was mere feigned death
I would have thought him dead. Then came the men
To whom you've trusted this experiment,
Who placed him in a coach and brought him here
To your own rooms, where all things were prepared
In royalty and grandeur as befitting
His person. In your own bed they have laid him
Where, when the torpor wanes, they'll do him service
As if he were Your Majesty himself.
All has been done as you have ordered it,
And if I have obeyed you well, my lord,
I'd beg a favour (pardon me this freedom)—
To know what your intention is in thus
Transporting Segismund here to the palace.

BASIL. Your curiosity is just, Clotaldo,
And yours alone I'll satisfy. The star
Which governs Segismund, my son, in life,
Threatens a thousand tragedies and woes.
And now I wish to see whether the stars
(Which never lie—and having shown to us
So many cruel signs seem yet more certain)
May yet be brought to moderate their sentence,
Whether by prudence charmed or valour won,
For man does have the power to rule his stars.
I would examine this, bringing him here
Where he may know he is my son, and make
Trial of his talent. If magnanimously
He conquers and controls himself, he'll reign,
But if he proves a tyrant and is cruel,
Back to his chains he'll go. Now, you will ask,
Why did we bring him sleeping in this manner
For the experiment? I'll satisfy you,
Down to the smallest detail, with my answer.
If he knows that he is my son today,
And if tomorrow he should find himself
Once more reduced to prison, to misery,
He would despair entirely, knowing truly
Who, and whose son, he is. What consolation
Could he derive, then, from his lot? So I
Contrive to leave an exit for such grief,
By making him believe it was a dream.

By these means we may learn two things at once:
First, his character—for he will really be
Awake in all he thinks and all his actions;
Second, his consolation—which would be
(If he should wake in prison on the morrow,
Although he saw himself obeyed today)
That he might understand he had been dreaming,
And he will not be wrong, for in this world,
Clotaldo, all who live are only dreaming.

CLOTALDO. I've proofs enough to doubt of your success,
But now it is too late to remedy it.
From what I can make out, I think he's wakened
And that he's coming this way, by the sound.

BASIL. I shall withdraw. You, as his tutor, go
And guide him through his new bewilderments
By answering his queries with the truth.

CLOTALDO. You give me leave to tell the truth of it?

BASIL. Yes, because knowing all things, he may find
Known perils are the easiest to conquer.
[*Exit* BASIL. *Enter* CLARION.]

CLARION. It cost me four whacks to get here so quickly.
I caught them from a red-haired halberdier
Sprouting a ginger beard over his livery,
And I've come to see what's going on.
No windows give a better view than those
A man brings with him in his head, not asking
For tickets of admission or paid seats,
Since at all functions, festivals, or feasts
He looks out with the same nice self-composure.

CLOTALDO. [*Aside*] Here's Clarion who's the servant of that person—
That trader in woes, importer from Poland
Of my disgrace.
[*Aloud*] Come, Clarion what news?

CLARION. Item the first: encouraged by the fact
Your clemency's disposed to venge her insult,
Rosaura has resumed her proper clothing.

CLOTALDO. That's right: it's less indecorous and bold.

CLARION. Item: she's changed her name, and given out
That she's your niece. And now they've made so much
Of her that she's been raised to maid of honour
To the unique and only princess, Stella.

CLOTALDO. That's right: her honour stands to my account.

CLARION. Indeed she merely bides the time till you
Will settle all accounts about her honour.

CLOTALDO. Biding the time is wise, for in the end

It's Time that's going to settle all accounts!
CLARION. Item: that she's attended like a queen,
Because they take her for your niece. Item:
That I, who trudged along with her, am dying
Of hunger. Nobody remembers me,
Nor yet remembers that I'm like my name
And (should I sound my Clarion) could tell
All to the king and Stella and Astolfo.
For I am both a Clarion and a servant—
Two things which ill-accord with secrecy.
If silence should, by chance, let slip my hand,
Then there's a chorus which would fit me well:
"Dawn-breaking Clarion plays no better tune!"
CLOTALDO. You're reason for complaint. I'll satisfy it
If you'll but serve me . . .
CLARION. Hush, here's Segismund!
[*Enter musicians, singing, and servants arraying* SEGISMUND, *who seems amazed.*]
SEGISMUND. Heavens above! What's this that I am seeing?
I wonder at it all, with naught of fear!
But with a mighty doubt, I disbelieve it!
I?—in a sumptuous palace? I—encircled
With rich brocades and silks? I—overwhelmed
With servants in such brilliant liveries?
I—to awake in such a gorgeous bed?
I—in the middle of so many footmen
Who clothe me in rich garments? I'm awake:
It would be false to take this for a dream.
Am I not Segismund? Heavens! disabuse me
If I'm mistaken. Say, what could have happened
In my imagination while I slept—
That I should find myself in such a place?
But why should I worry, whatever it was?
I'll let myself be served and entertained—
Befall what may.
FIRST SERVANT. [*Aside to* SECOND SERVANT *and* CLARION]
He's very melancholy!
SECOND SERVANT. Who would not be, considering all that's happened
To him?
CLARION. I would not be!
SECOND SERVANT. You, speak to him.
FIRST SERVANT. Shall they begin to sing again?
SEGISMUND. Why, no,
I would not have them sing.

SECOND SERVANT. You're so distraught,
I wish you entertained.
SEGISMUND. My griefs are such
That no mere voices can amuse me now—
Only the martial music pleased my mind.
CLOTALDO. Your Highness, mighty prince, give me your hand
To kiss. I'm glad to be the first to offer
Obedience at your feet.
SEGISMUND. [*Aside*] This is Clotaldo.
How is it he, that tyrannised my thralldom,
Should now be treating me with such respect?
[*Aloud*] Tell me what's happening all round me here.
CLOTALDO. With the perplexities of your new state,
Your reason will encounter many doubts,
But I shall try to free you from them all
(If that may be) because you now much know
You are hereditary Prince of Poland.
If you have been withdrawn from public sight
Under restraint, it was in strict obedience
To Fate's inclemency, which will permit
A thousand woes to fall upon this empire
The moment that you wear the sovereign's crown.
But trusting that you'll prudently defeat
Your own malignant stars (since they can be
Controlled by magnanimity) you've been
Brought to this palace from the tower you knew
Even while your soul was yielded up to sleep.
My lord the king, your father, will be coming
To see you, and from him you'll learn the rest.
SEGISMUND. Then, vile, infamous traitor, what have I
To know more than this fact of who I am,
To show my pride and power from this day onward?
How have you played your country such a treason
As to deny me, against law and right,
The rank which is my own?
CLOTALDO. Unhappy me!
SEGISMUND. You were a traitor to the law, a flattering liar
To your own king, and cruel to myself.
And so the king, the law, and I condemn you,
After such fierce misfortunes as I've borne,
To die here by my hands.
SECOND SERVANT. My lord!
SEGISMUND. Let none
Get in the way. It is in vain. By God!
If you intrude, I'll throw you through the window.

SECOND SERVANT. Clotaldo, fly!
CLOTALDO. Alas, poor Segismund!
That you should show such pride, all unaware
That you are dreaming this.
[*Exit.*]
SECOND SERVANT. Take care! Take care!
SEGISMUND. Get out!
SECOND SERVANT. He was obeying the king's orders.
SEGISMUND. In an injustice, no one should obey
The king, and I'm his prince.
SECOND SERVANT. He had no right
To look into the rights and wrongs of it.
SEGISMUND. You must be mad to answer back at me.
CLARION. The prince is right. It's you who're in the wrong!
SECOND SERVANT. Who gave you right to speak?
CLARION. I simply took it.
SEGISMUND. And who are you?
CLARION. I am the go-between,
And in this art I think I am a master—
Since I'm the greatest jackanapes alive.
SEGISMUND. [*To* CLARION] In all this new world, you're the only one
Of the whole crowd who pleases me.
CLARION. Why, my lord,
I am the best pleaser of Segismunds[3]
That ever was: ask anybody here!
[*Enter* ASTOLFO.]
ASTOLFO. Blessèd the day, a thousand times, my prince,
On which you landed here on Polish soil
To fill with so much splendour and delight
Our wide horizons, like the break of day!
For you arise as does the rising sun
Out of the rugged mountains, far away.
Shine forth then! And although so tardily
You bind the glittering laurels on your brows,
The longer may they last you still unwithered.
SEGISMUND. God save you.
ASTOLFO. That you do not know me, sir,
Is some excuse for greeting me without
The honour due to me. I am Astolfo.
The Duke of Muscovy. You are my cousin.
We are of equal rank.
SEGISMUND. Then if I say,
"God save you," do I not display good feeling?

3. There had been three kings of Poland by that name between the early sixteenth century and the time of this play.

But since you take such note of who you are,
The next time that I see you, I shall say
"God save you *not,*" if you would like that better.
SECOND SERVANT. [*To* ASTOLFO] Your Highness, make allowance for his breeding
Amongst the mountains. So he deals with all.
[*To* SEGISMUND] Astolfo does take precedence, Your Highness—
SEGISMUND. I have no patience with the way he came
To make his solemn speech, then put his hat on!
SECOND SERVANT. He's a grandee![4]
SEGISMUND. I'm grander than grandees!
SECOND SERVANT. For all that, there should be respect between you,
More than among the rest.
SEGISMUND. And who told you
To mix in my affairs?
[*Enter* STELLA.]
STELLA. Many times welcome to Your Royal Highness,
Now come to grace the dais that receives him
With gratitude and love. Long may you live
August and eminent, despite all snares,
And count your life by centuries, not years!
SEGISMUND. [*Aside to* CLARION] Now tell me, who's this sovereign deity
At whose divinest feet Heaven lays down
The fleece of its aurora in the east?
CLARION. Sir, it's your cousin Stella.
SEGISMUND. She were better
Named "sun" than "star"![5]
[*To* STELLA] Though your speech was fair,
Just to have seen you and been conquered by you
Suffices for a welcome in itself.
To find myself so blessed beyond my merit
What can I do but thank you, lovely Stella,
For you could add more brilliance and delight
To the most blazing star? When you get up
What work is left the sun to do? O give me
Your hand to kiss, from out whose cup of snow
The solar horses drink the fires of day!
STELLA. Be a more gentle courtier.
ASTOLFO. I am lost.
SECOND SERVANT. I know Astolfo's hurt. I must divert him.
[*To* SEGISMUND] Sir, you should know that thus to woo so boldly
Is most improper. And, besides, Astolfo . . .

4. Etiquette allowed a grandee to keep his hat on in the king's presence. 5. Stella is Latin for star.

SEGISMUND. Did I not tell you not to meddle with me?
SECOND SERVANT. I only say what's just.
SEGISMUND. All this annoys me.
Nothing seems just to me but what I want.
SECOND SERVANT. Why, sir, I heard you say that no obedience
Or service should be lent to what's unjust.
SEGISMUND. You also heard me say that I would throw
Anyone who annoys me from that balcony.
SECOND SERVANT. With men like me you cannot do such things.
SEGISMUND. No? Well, by God, I'll have to prove it then!
[*He takes him in his arms and rushes out, followed by many, to return soon after.*]
ASTOLFO. What on earth have I seen? Can it be true?
STELLA. Go, all, and stop him!
SEGISMUND. [*Returning*] From the balcony
He's fallen in the sea. How strange it seems!
ASTOLFO. Measure your acts of violence, my lord:
From crags to palaces, the distance is
As great as that between man and the beasts.
SEGISMUND. Well, since you are for speaking out so boldly,
Perhaps one day you'll find that on your shoulders
You have no head to place your hat upon.
[*Exit* ASTOLFO. *Enter* BASIL.]
BASIL. What's happened here?
SEGISMUND. Nothing at all. A man
Wearied me, so I threw him in the sea.
CLARION. [*To* SEGISMUND] Be warned. That is the king.
BASIL. On the first day,
So soon, your coming here has cost a life?
SEGISMUND. He said I couldn't: so I won the bet.
BASIL. It grieves me, Prince, that, when I hoped to see you
Forewarned, and overriding Fate, in triumph
Over your stars, the first thing I should see
Should be such rigour—that your first deed here
Should be a grievous homicide. Alas!
With what love, now, can I offer my arms,
Knowing your own have learned to kill already?
Who sees a dirk, red from a mortal wound,
But does not feat it? Who can see the place
Soaking in blood, where late a man was murdered,
But even the strongest must respond to nature?
So in your arms seeing the instrument
Of death, and looking on a blood-soaked place,
I must withdraw myself from your embrace,
And though I thought in loving bonds to bind

Your neck, yet fear withholds me from your arms.
SEGISMUND. Without your loving arms I can sustain
Myself as usual. That such a loving father
Could treat me with such cruelty, could thrust me
From his side ungratefully, could rear me
As a wild beast, could hold me for a monster,
And pray that I were dead, that such a father
Withholds his arms from winding round my neck,
Seems unimportant, seeing that he deprives
Me of my very being as a man.
BASIL. Would to heaven I had never granted it,
For then I never would have heard your voice,
Nor seen your outrages.
SEGISMUND. Had you denied
Me being, then I would not have complained,
But that you took it from me when you gave it—
That is my quarrel with you. Though to give
Is the most singular and noble action,
It is the basest action if one gives
Only to take away.
BASIL. How well you thank me
For being raised from pauper to a prince!
SEGISMUND. In this what is there I should thank you for?
You tyrant of my will! If you are old
And feeble, and you die, what can you give me
More than what is my own by right of birth?
You are my father and my king, therefore
This grandeur comes to me by natural law.
Therefore, despite my present state, I'm not
Indebted to you, rather can I claim
Account of all those years in which you robbed me
Of life and being, liberty, and honour.
You ought to thank me that I press no claim
Since you're my debtor, even to bankruptcy.
BASIL. Barbarous and outrageous brute! The heavens
Have now fulfilled their prophecy: I call
Them to bear witness to your pride. Although
You know now, disillusioned, who you are,
And see yourself where you take precedence,
Take heed of this I say: be kind and humble
Since it may be that you are only dreaming,
Although it seems to you you're wide-awake. [*Exit.*]
SEGISMUND. Can I perhaps be dreaming, though I seem
So wide-awake? No: I am not asleep.
Since I can touch, and realise what I

Have been before, and what I am today.
And if you even now relented, Father,
There'd be no cure since I know who I am
And you cannot, for all your sighs and groans,
Cheat me of my hereditary crown.
And if I was submissive in my chains
Before, then I was ignorant of what I am,
Which I now know (and likewise know that I
Am partly man but partly beast as well).
[*Enter* ROSAURA *in woman's clothing.*]

ROSAURA. [*Aside*] I came in Stella's train. I am afraid
Of meeting with Astolfo, since Clotaldo
Says he must not know who I am, not see me,
Because (he says) it touches on my honour.
And well I trust Clotaldo since I owe him
The safety of my life and honour both.

CLARION. What pleases you, and what do you admire
Most, of the things you've seen here in the world?

SEGISMUND. Why, nothing that I could not have foreseen—
Except the loveliness of women! Once,
I read among the books I had out there
That who owes God most grateful contemplation
Is Man: who is himself a tiny world.
But I think who owes God more grateful study
Is Woman—since she is a tiny heaven,
Having as much more beauty than a man
As heaven than earth. And even more, I say,
If she's the one that I am looking at.

ROSAURA. [*Aside*] That is the prince. I'll go.

SEGISMUND. Stop! Woman! Wait!
Don't join the sunset with the breaking day
By fading out so fast. If east and west
Should clash like that, the day would surely suffer
A syncope. But what is this I see?

ROSAURA. What I am looking at I doubt, and yet
Believe.

SEGISMUND. [*Aside*] This beauty I have seen before.

ROSAURA. [*Aside*] This pomp and grandeur I have seen before
Cooped in a narrow dungeon.

SEGISMUND. [*Aside*] I have found
My life at last.
[*Aloud*] Woman (for that sole word
Outsoars all wooing flattery of speech
From one that is a man), woman, who are you?
If even long before I ever saw you

You owed me adoration as your prince,
How much the more should you be conquered by me
Now I recall I've seen you once before!
Who are you, beauteous woman?
ROSAURA. [*Aside*] I'll pretend.
[*Aloud*] In Stella's train, I am a luckless lady.
SEGISMUND. Say no such thing. You are the sun from which
The minor star that's Stella draws its life,
Since she receives the splendour of your rays.
I've seen how in the kingdom of sweet odours,
Commander of the squadrons of the flowers,
The rose's diety presides, and is
Their empress by divine right of her beauty.
Among the precious stones which can be listed
In the academy of mines, I've seen
The diamond much preferred above the rest,
And crowned their emperor, for shining brightest.
In the revolving empire of the stars
The morning star takes pride among the others.
In their perfected spheres, when the sun calls
The planets to his council, he presides
And is the very oracle of day.
Then if among stars, gems, planet, and flowers
The fairest are exalted, why do you
Wait on a lesser beauty than yourself
Who are, in greater excellence and beauty,
The sun, the morning star, the diamond, and the rose!
[*Enter* CLOTALDO, *who remains by the stage-curtain.*]
CLOTALDO. [*Aside*] I wish to curb him, since I brought him up.
But, what is this?
ROSAURA. I reverence your favour,
And yet reply, rhetorical, with silence,
For when one's mind is clumsy and untaught,
He answers best who does not speak at all.
SEGISMUND. Stay! Do not go! How can you wish to go
And leave me darkened by my doubts?
ROSAURA. Your Highness,
I beg your leave to go.
SEGISMUND. To go so rudely
Is not to beg my leave but just to take it.
ROSAURA. But if you will not grant it, I must take it.
SEGISMUND. That were to change my courtesy to rudeness.
Resistance is like venom to my patience.
ROSAURA. But even if this deadly, raging venom
Should overcome your patience, yet you dare not

And could not treat me with dishonour, sir.
SEGISMUND. Why, just to see then if I can, and dare to—
You'll make me lose the fear I bear your beauty,
Since the impossible is always tempting
To me. Why, only now I threw a man
Over this balcony who said I couldn't:
And so to find out if I can or not
I'll throw your honour through the window too.
CLOTALDO. [*Aside*] He seems determined in this course. Oh, heavens!
What's to be done that for a second time
My honour's threatened by a mad desire?
ROSAURA. Then with good reason it was prophesied
Your tyranny would wreak this kingdom
Outrageous scandals, treasons, crimes, and deaths.
But what can such a creature do as you
Who are not even a man, save in the name—
Inhuman, barbarous, cruel, and unbending
As the wild beasts amongst whom you were nursed?
SEGISMUND. That you should not insult me in this way
I spoke to you most courteously, and thought
I'd thereby get my way; but if you curse me thus
Even when I am speaking gently, why,
By the living God, I'll really give you cause.
Ho there! Clear out, the lot of you, at once!
Leave her to me! Close all the doors upon us.
Let no one enter! [*Exeunt* CLARION *and other attendants.*]
ROSAURA. I am lost . . . I warn you . . .
SEGISMUND. I am a tyrant and you plead in vain.
CLOTALDO. [*Aside*] Oh, what a monstrous thing! I must restrain him
Even if I die for it.
[*Aloud*] Sir! Wait! Look here!
SEGISMUND. A second time you have provoked my anger,
You feeble, mad old man! Do you prize lightly
My wrath and rigour that you've gone so far?
CLOTALDO. Brought by the accents of her voice, I came
To tell you you must be more peaceful
If still you hope to reign, and warn you that
You should not be so cruel, though you rule—
Since this, perhaps, is nothing but a dream.
SEGISMUND. When you refer to disillusionment
You rouse me near to madness. Now you'll see,
Here as I kill you, if it's truth or dreaming!
[*As he tries to pull out his dagger,* CLOTALDO *restrains him and throws himself on his knees before him.*]

CLOTALDO. It's thus I'd save my life: and hope to do so—
SEGISMUND. Take your presumptuous hand from off this steel.
CLOTALDO. Till people come to hold your rage and fury
I shall not let you go.
ROSAURA. O heavens!
SEGISMUND. Loose it,
[*They struggle.*] I say, or else—you interfering fool—
I'll crush you to your death in my strong arms!
ROSAURA. Come quickly! Here's Clotaldo being killed! [*Exit.*]
[ASTOLFO *appears as* CLOTALDO *falls on the floor, and the former stands between* SEGISMUND *and* CLOTALDO.]
ASTOLFO. Why, what is this, most valiant prince? What? Staining
Your doughty steel in such old, frozen blood?
For shame! For shame! Sheathe your illustrious weapon!
SEGISMUND. When it is stained in his infamous blood!
ASTOLFO. At my feet here he has found sanctuary
And there he's safe, for it will serve him well.
SEGISMUND. Then serve me well by dying, for like this
I will avenge myself for your behaviour
In trying to annoy me first of all.
ASTOLFO. To draw in self-defense offends no king,
Though in his palace. [ASTOLFO *draws his sword and they fight.*]
CLOTALDO. [*To* ASTOLFO] Do not anger him!
[*Enter* BASIL, STELLA, *and attendants.*]
BASIL. Hold! Hold! What's this? Fighting with naked swords?
STELLA. [*Aside*] It is Astolfo! How my heart misgives me!
BASIL. Why, what has happened here?
ASTOLFO. Nothing, my lord,
Since you've arrived.
[*Both sheathe their swords.*]
SEGISMUND. Much, though you *have* arrived.
I tried to kill the old man.
BASIL. Had you no
Respect for those white hairs?
CLOTALDO. Sire, since they're only
Mine, as you well can see, it does not matter!
SEGISMUND. It is in vain you'd have me hold white hairs
In such respect, since one day you may find
Your own white locks prostrated at my feet
For still I have not taken vengeance on you
For the foul way in which you had me reared. [*Exit.*]
BASIL. Before that happens you will sleep once more
Where you were reared, and where what's happened may
Seem just a dream (being mere earthly glory).
[*All save* ASTOLFO *and* STELLA *leave.*]

ASTOLFO. How seldom does prediction fail, when evil!
How oft, foretelling good! Exact in harm,
Doubtful in benefit! Oh, what a great
Astrologer would be one who foretold
Nothing but harms, since there's no doubt al all
That they are always due! In Segismund
And me the case is illustrated clearly.
In him, crimes, cruelties, deaths, and disasters
Were well predicted, since they all came true.
But in my own case, to predict for me
(As I foresaw beholding rays which cast
The sun into the shade and outface heaven)
Triumphs and trophies, happiness and praise,
Was false—and yet was true: it's only just
That when predictions start with promised favours
They should end in disdain.
STELLA. I do not doubt
Your protestations are most heartfelt; only
They're not for me, but for another lady
Whose portrait you were wearing round your neck
Slung in a locket when you first arrived.
Since it is so, she only can deserve
These wooing flatteries. Let her repay you
For in affairs of love, flatteries and vows
Made for another are mere forged credentials.
[ROSAURA *enters but waits by the curtain.*]
ROSAURA. [*Aside*] Thanks be to God, my troubles are near ended!
To judge from what I see, I've naught to fear.
ASTOLFO. I will expel that portrait from my breast
To make room for the image of your beauty
And keep it there. For there where Stella is
Can be no room for shade, and where the sun is
No place for any star. I'll fetch the portrait.
[*Aside*] Forgive me, beautiful Rosaura, that,
When absent, men and women seldom keep
More faith than this. [*Exit.*]
[ROSAURA *comes forward.*]
ROSAURA. [*Aside*] I could not hear a word. I was afraid
That they would see me.
STELLA. Oh, Astrea![6]
ROSAURA. My lady!
STELLA. I am delighted that you came. Because
To you alone would I confide a secret.

6. The name assumed by Rosaura.

ROSAURA. Thereby you greatly honour me, your servant.
STELLA. Astrea, in the brief time I have known you
I've given you the latchkey of my will.
For that, and being who you are, I'll tell you
A secret which I've very often hidden
Even from myself.
ROSAURA. I am your slave.
STELLA. Then, briefly:
Astolfo, who's my cousin (the word cousin
Suffices, since some things are plainly said
Even by thinking them), is to wed me
If Fortune thus can wipe so many cares
Away with one great joy. But I am troubled
In that, the day he first came here, he carried
A portrait of a lady round his neck.
I spoke to him about it courteously.
He was most amiable, he loves me well,
And now he's gone for it. I am embarrassed
That he should give it me himself. Wait here,
And tell him to deliver it to you.
Do not say more. Since you're discreet and fair:
You'll surely know just what love is. [*Exit.*]
ROSAURA. Great heavens!
How I wish that I did not! For who could be
So prudent or so skilful as would know
What to advise herself in such a case?
Lives there a person on this earth today
Who's more beset by the inclement stars,
Who has more cares besieging him, or fights
So many dire calamities at once?
What can I do in such bewilderment
Wherein it seems impossible to find
Relief or comfort? Since my first misfortune
No other thing has chanced or happened to me
But was a new misfortune. In succession
Inheritors and heirs of their own selves
(Just like the Phoenix,[7] his own son and father)
Misfortunes reproduce themselves, are born,
And live by dying. In their sepulchre
The ashes they consume are not forever.
A sage once said misfortunes must be cowards
Because they never dare to walk alone
But come in crowds. I say they are most valiant

7. The mythical bird which every 500 years is consumed by fire and then rises from its own ashes.

Because they always charge so bravely on
And never turn their backs. Who charges with them
May dare all things because there is no fear
That they'll ever desert him; and I say it
Because in all my life I never once
Knew them to leave me, nor will they grow tired
Of me till, wounded and shot through and through
By Fate, I fall into the arms of death.
Alas, what can I do in this dilemma?
If I reveal myself, then old Clotaldo,
To whom I owe my life, may take offence,
Because he told me to await the cure
And mending of my honour in concealment.
If I don't tell Astolfo who I am
And he detects me, how can I dissimulate?
Since even if I say I am not I,
The voice, the language, and the eyes will falter,
Because the soul will tell them that they lie.
What shall I do? It is in vain to study
What I should do, when I know very well
That, whatsoever way I choose to act,
When the time comes I'll do as sorrow bids,
For no one has control over his sorrows.
Then since my soul dares not decide its actions
Let sorrow fill my cup and let my grief
Reach its extremity and, out of doubts
And vain appearances, once and for all
Come out into the light—and Heaven shield me!

[*Enter* ASTOLFO.]

ASTOLFO. Here, lady, is the portrait . . . but . . . great God!
ROSAURA. Why does Your Highness halt, and stare astonished?
ASTOLFO. Rosaura! Why, to see you here!
ROSAURA. Rosaura?
Sir, you mistake me for some other lady.
I am Astrea, and my humble station
Deserves no perturbation such as yours.
ASTOLFO. Enough of this pretence, Rosaura, since
The soul can never lie. Though as Astrea
I see you now, I love you as Rosaura.
ROSAURA. Not having understood Your Highness' meaning
I can make no reply except to say
That Stella (who might be the star of Venus)
Told me to wait here and to tell you from here
To give to me the portrait you were fetching
(Which seems a very logical request)

And I myself will take it to my lady.
Thus Stella bids: even the slightest things
Which do me harm are governed by some star.
ASTOLFO. Even if you could make a greater effort
How poorly you dissimulate, Rosaura!
Tell your poor eyes they do not harmonise
With your own voice, because they needs must jangle
When the whole instrument is out of tune.
You cannot match the falshood of your words
With the sincerity of what you're feeling.
ROSAURA. All I can say is—that I want the portrait.
ASTOLFO. As you require a fiction, with a fiction
I shall reply. Go and tell Stella this:
That I esteem her so, it seems unworthy
Only to send the counterfeit to her
And that I'm sending her the original.
And you, take the original along with you,
Taking yourself to her.
ROSAURA. When a man starts
Forth on a definite task, resolved and valiant,
Though he be offered a far greater prize
Than what he seeks, yet he returns with failure
If he returns without his task performed.
I came to get that portrait. Though I bear
The original with me, of greater value,
I would return in failure and contempt
Without the copy. Give it me, Your Highness,
Since I cannot return without it.
ASTOLFO. But
If I don't give it you, how can you do so?
ROSAURA. Like this, ungrateful man! I'll take it from you.
[*She tries to wrest it from him.*]
ASTOLFO. It is in vain.
ROSAURA. By God, it shall not come
Into another woman's hands!
ASTOLFO. You're terrifying!
ROSAURA. And you're perfidious!
ASTOLFO. Enough, my dear
Rosaura!
ROSAURA. I, your dear? You lie, you villain!
[*They are both clutching the portrait. Enter* STELLA.]
STELLA. Astrea and Astolfo, what does this mean?
ASTOLFO. [*Aside*] Here's Stella.
ROSAURA. [*Aside*] Love, grant me the strength to win
My portrait.

[*To* STELLA] If you want to know, my lady,
What this is all about, I will explain.
ASTOLFO. [*To* ROSAURA, *aside*] What do you mean?
ROSAURA. You told me to await
Astolfo here and ask him for a portrait
On your behalf. I waited here alone
And as one thought suggests another thought,
Thinking of portraits, I recalled my own
Was here inside my sleeve. When one's alone,
One is diverted by a foolish trifle
And so I took it out to look at it.
It slipped and fell, just as Astolfo here,
Bringing the portrait of the other lady,
Came to deliver it to you as promised.
He picked my portrait up, and so unwilling
Is he to give away the one you asked for,
Instead of doing so, he seized upon
The other portrait which is mine alone
And will not give it back though I entreated
And begged him to return it. I was angry
And tried to snatch it back. That's it he's holding,
And you can see yourself if it's not mine.
STELLA. Let go the portrait. [*She snatches it from him.*]
ASTOLFO. Madam!
STELLA. The draughtsman
Was not unkind to truth.
ROSAURA. Is it not mine?
STELLA. Why, who could doubt it?
ROSAURA. Ask him for the other.
STELLA. Here, take your own, Astrea. You may leave us.
ROSAURA. [*Aside*] Now I have got my portrait, come what will.
[*Exit.*]
STELLA. Now give me up the portrait that I asked for
Although I'll see and speak to you no more.
I do not wish to leave it in your power
Having been once so foolish as to beg it.
ASTOLFO. [*Aside*] Now how can I get out of this foul trap?
[*To* STELLA] Beautiful Stella, though I would obey you,
And serve you in all ways, I cannot give you
The portrait, since . . .
STELLA. You are a crude, coarse villian
And ruffian of a wooer. For the portrait—
I do not want it now, since, if I had it,
It would remind me I had asked you for it. [*Exit.*]
ASTOLFO. Listen! Look! Wait! Let me explain!

[*Aside*] Oh, damn
Rosaura! How the devil did she get
To Poland for my ruin and her own?

The prison of Segismund in the tower

[SEGISMUND *lying on the ground loaded with fetters and clothed in skins as before.* CLOTALDO, *two attendants, and* CLARION.]

CLOTALDO. Here you must leave him—since his reckless pride
Ends here today where it began.
ATTENDANT. His chain
I'll rivet as it used to be before.
CLARION. O Prince, you'd better not awake too soon
To find how lost you are, how changed your fate,
And that your fancied glory of an hour
Was but a shade of life, a flame of death!
CLOTALDO. For one who knows so well to wield his tongue
It's fit as worthy place should be provided
With lots of room and lots of time to argue.
This is the fellow that you have to seize
[*To the attendants*] And that's the room in which you are to lock him. [*Points to the nearest cell.*]
CLARION. Why me?
CLOTALDO. Because a Clarion who knows
Too many secrets must be kept in gaol—
A place where even clarions are silent.
CLARION. Have I, by chance, wanted to kill my father
Or thrown an Icarus[8] from a balcony?
Am I asleep or dreaming? To what end
Do you imprison me?
CLOTALDO. You're Clarion.
CLARION. Well, say I swear to be a cornet now,
A silent one, a wretched instrument . . . ?

[*They hustle him off.* CLOTALDO *remains. Enter* BASIL, *wearing a mask.*]

BASIL. Clotaldo.
CLOTALDO. Sire . . . and is it thus alone
Your Majesty has come?
BASIL. Vain curiosity
To see what happens here to Segismund.
CLOTALDO. See where he lies, reduced to misery!
BASIL. Unhappy prince! Born at a fatal moment!
Come waken him, now he has lost his strength

8. Mythological figure who, in attempting to fly, came so close to the sun that his wax wings melted and he fell into the sea.

With all the opium he's drunk.
CLOTALDO. He's stirring
And talking to himself.
BASIL. What is he dreaming?
Let's listen now.
SEGISMUND. He who chastises tyrants
Is a most pious prince . . . Now let Clotaldo
Die by my hand . . . my father kiss my feet . . .
CLOTALDO. He threatens me with death!
BASIL And me with insult
And cruelty.
CLOTALDO. He'd take my life away.
BASIL. And he'd humiliate me at his feet.
SEGISMUND. [*Still in a dream*]
Throughout the expanse of this world's theatre
I'll show my peerless valour, let my vengeance
Be wreaked, and the Prince Segismund be seen
To triumph—over his father . . . but, alas!
[*Awakening*] Where am I?
BASIL. [*To* CLOTALDO] Since he must not see me here,
I'll listen further off. You know your cue. [*Retires to one side.*]
SEGISMUND. Can this be I? Am I the same who, chained
And long imprisoned, rose to such a state?
Are you not still my sepulchre and grave,
You dismal tower? God! What things I have dreamed!
CLOTALDO. [*Aside*] Now I must go to him to disenchant him.
[*Aloud*] Awake already?
SEGISMUND. Yes: it was high time.
CLOTALDO. What? Do you have to spend all day asleep?
Since I was following the eagle's flight
With tardy discourse,[9] have you still lain here
Without awaking?
SEGISMUND. No. Nor even now
Am I awake. It seems I've always slept,
Since, if I've dreamed what I've just seen and heard
Palpably and for certain, then I am dreaming
What I see now—nor is it strange I'm tired,
Since what I, sleeping, see, tells me that I
Was dreaming when I thought I was awake.
CLOTALDO. Tell me your dream.
SEGISMUND. That's if it *was* a dream!
No, I'll not tell you what I dreamed; but what
I lived and saw, Clotaldo, I *will* tell you.
I woke up in a bed that might have been

9. See lines 28ff. at the opening of this act.

The cradle of the flowers, woven by Spring.
A thousand nobles, bowing, called me Prince,
Attiring me in jewels, pomp, and splendour.
My equanimity you turned to rapture
Telling me that I was the Prince of Poland.
CLOTALDO. I must have got a fine reward!
SEGISMUND. Not so:
For as a traitor, twice, with rage and fury,
I tried to kill you.
CLOTALDO. Such cruelty to me?
SEGISMUND. I was the lord of all, on all I took revenge,
Except I loved one woman . . . I believe
That *that* was true, though all the rest has faded. [*Exit* BASIL.]
CLOTALDO. [*Aside*] I see the king was moved, to hear him speak.
[*Aloud*] Talking of eagles made you dream of empires,
But even in your dreams it's good to honour
Those who have cared for you and brought you up.
For Segismund, even in dreams, I warn you
Nothing is lost by trying to do good. [*Exit.*]
SEGISMUND. That's true, and therefore let us subjugate
The bestial side, this fury and ambition,
Against the time when we may dream once more,
As certainly we shall, for this strange world
Is such that but to live here is to dream.
And now experience shows me that each man
Dreams what he is until he is awakened.
The king dreams he's a king and in this fiction
Lives, rules, administers with royal pomp.
Yet all the borrowed praises that he earns
Are written in the wind, and he is changed
(How sad a fate!) by death to dust and ashes.
What man is there alive who'd seek to reign
Since he must wake into the dream that's death.
The rich man dreams his wealth which is his care
And woe. The poor man dreams his sufferings.
He dreams who thrives and prospers in this life.
He dreams who toils and strives. He dreams who injures,
Offends, and insults. So that in this world
Everyone dreams the thing he is, though no one
Can understand it. I dream I am here,
Chained in these fetters. Yet I dreamed just now
I was in a more flattering, lofty station.
What is this life? A frenzy, an illusion,
A shadow, a delirium, a fiction.

The greatest good's but little, and this life
Is but a dream, and dreams are only dreams.

Act III

The tower

[*Enter* CLARION.]

CLARION. I'm held in an enchanted tower, because
Of all I know. What would they do to me
For all I don't know, since—for all I know—
They're killing me by starving me to death.
O that a man so hungry as myself
Should live to die of hunger while alive!
I am so sorry for myself that others
May well say "I can well believe it," since
This silence ill accords with my name "Clarion,"
And I just can't shut up. My fellows here?
Spiders and rats—fine feathered songsters those!
My head's still ringing with a dream of fifes
And trumpets and a lot of noise humbug
And long processions as of penitents
With crosses, winding up and down, while some
Faint at the sight of blood besmirching others.
But now to tell the truth, I am in prison.
For knowing secrets, I am kept shut in,
Strictly observed as if I were a Sunday,
And feeling sadder than a Tuesday, where
I neither eat nor drink. They say a secret
Is sacred and should be as strictly kept
As any saint's day on the calendar.
Saint Secret's Day for me's a working day
Because I'm never idle then. The penance
I suffer here is merited, I say:
Because being a lackey, I was silent,
Which, in a servant, is a sacrilege.

[*A noise of drums and trumpets*]

FIRST SOLDIER. [*Within*] Here is the tower in which he is imprisoned.
Smash in the door and enter, everybody!

CLARION. Great God! They've come to seek me. That is certain
Because they say I'm here. What can they want?

[*Enter several soldiers.*]

FIRST SOLDIER. Go in.

SECOND SOLDIER. He's here!

CLARION. No, he's not here!

ALL THE SOLDIERS. Our lord!
CLARION. What, are they drunk?
FIRST SOLDIER. You are our rightful prince.
We do not want and never shall allow
A stranger to supplant our trueborn prince.
Give us your feet to kiss!
ALL THE SOLDIERS. Long live the prince!
CLARION. Bless me, if it's not real! In this strange kingdom
It seems the custom, everyday, to take
Some fellow and to make him prince and then
Shut him back in this tower. That *must* be it!
So I must play my role.
ALL THE SOLDIERS. Give us your feet.
CLARION. I can't. They're necessary. After all
What sort of use would be a footless prince?
SECOND SOLDIER. All of us told your father, as one man,
We want no prince of Muscovy but you!
CLARION. You weren't respectful to my father? Shame!
FIRST SOLDIER. It was our loyalty that made us tell him.
CLARION. If it was loyalty, you have my pardon.
SECOND SOLDIER. Restore your empire. Long live Segismund!
CLARION. [*Aside*] That is the name they seem to give to all
These counterfeited princes.
[*Enter* SEGISMUND.]
SEGISMUND. Who called Segismund?
CLARION. [*Aside*] I seem to be a hollow sort of prince.
FIRST SOLDIER. Which of you's Segismund?
SEGISMUND. I am.
SECOND SOLDIER. [*To* CLARION] Then, why,
Rash fool, did you impersonate the prince
Segismund?
CLARION. What? I, Segismund? Yourselves
Be-Segismunded me without request.
All yours was both the rashness and the folly.
FIRST SOLDIER. Prince Segismund, whom we acclaim our lord,
Your father, great King Basil, in his fear
That heaven would fulfill a prophecy
That one day he would kneel before your feet
Wishes now to deprive you of the throne
And give it to the Duke of Muscovy.
For this he called a council, but the people
Discovered his design and knowing, now,
They have a native king, will have no stranger.
So scorning the fierce threats of destiny,
We've come to seek you in your very prison,

That aided by the arms of the whole people,
We may restore you to the crown and sceptre,
Taking them from the tyrant's grasp. Come, then:
Assembling here, in this wide desert region,
Hosts of plebeians, bandits, and freebooters,
Acclaim you king. Your liberty awaits you!
Hark to its voice!
[*Shouts within*] Long life to Segismund!

SEGISMUND. Once more, you heavens will that I should dream
Of grandeur, once again, 'twixt doubts and shades,
Behold the majesty of pomp and power
Vanish into the wind, once more you wish
That I should taste the disillusion and
The risk by which all human power is humbled,
Of which all human power should live aware.
It must not be. I'll not be once again
Put through my paces by my fortune's stars.
And since I know this life is all a dream,
Depart, vain shades, who feign, to my dead senses,
That you have voice and body, having neither!
I want no more feigned majesty, fantastic
Display, nor void illusions, that one gust
Can scatter like the almond tree in flower,
Whose rosy buds, without advice or warning,
Dawn in the air too soon and then, as one,
Are all extinguished, fade, and fall, and wither
In the first gust of wind that comes along!
I know you well. I know you well by now.
I know that all that happens in yourselves
Happens as in a sleeping man. For me
There are no more delusions and deceptions
Since I well know this life is all a dream.

SECOND SOLDIER. If you think we are cheating, just sweep
Your gaze along these towering peaks, and see
The hosts that wait to welcome and obey you.

SEGISMUND. Already once before I've seen such crowds
Distinctly, quite as vividly as these:
And yet it was a dream.

SECOND SOLDIER. No great event
Can come without forerunners to announce it
And this is the real meaning of your dream.

SEGISMUND. Yes, you say well. It was the fore-announcement
And just in case it was correct, my soul,
(Since life's so short) let's dream the dream anew!
But it must be attentively, aware

That we'll awake from pleasure in the end.
Forewarned of that, the shock's not so abrupt,
The disillusion's less. Evils anticipated
Lose half their sting. And armed with this precaution—
That power, even when we're sure of it, is borrowed
And must be given back to its true owner—
We can risk anything and dare the worst.
Subjects, I thank you for your loyalty.
In me you have a leader who will free you,
Bravely and skillfully, from foreign rule.
Sound now to arms, you'll soon behold my valour.
Against my father I must march and bring
Truth from the stars.[1] Yes: he must kneel to me.
[*Aside*] But yet, since I may wake before he kneels,
Perhaps I'd better not proclaim what may not happen.

ALL. Long live Segismund!

[*Enter* CLOTALDO.]

CLOTALDO. Gracious heavens! What is
This riot here?

SEGISMUND. Clotaldo!

CLOTALDO. Sir!
[*Aside*] He'll prove
His cruelty on me.

CLARION. I bet he throws him
Over the mountain.

CLOTALDO. At your royal feet
I kneel, knowing my penalty is death.

SEGISMUND. Rise, rise, my foster father, from the ground,
For you must be the compass and the guide
In which I trust. You brought me up, and I
Know what I owe your loyalty. Embrace me!

CLOTALDO. What's that you say?

SEGISMUND. I know I'm in a dream,
But I would like to act well, since good actions,
Even in a dream, are not entirely lost.

CLOTALDO. Since doing good is now to be your glory,
You will not be offended that I too
Should do what's right. You march against your father!
I cannot give you help against my king.
Here at your feet, my lord, I plead for death.

SEGISMUND. [*Aloud*] Villain!
[*Aside*] But let us suffer this annoyance.
Though my rage would slay him, yet he's loyal.

1. Proof that their predictions were truthful.

A man does not deserve to die for that.
How many angry passions does this leash
Restrain in me, this curb of knowing well
That I must wake and find myself alone!
SECOND SOLDIER. All this fine talk, Clotaldo, is a cruel
Spurn of the public welfare. We are loyal
Who wish our own prince to reign over us.
CLOTALDO. Such loyalty, after the king were dead,
Would honour you. But while the king is living
He is our absolute, unquestioned lord.
There's no excuse for subjects who oppose
His sovereignty in arms.
FIRST SOLDIER. We'll soon see well
Enough, Clotaldo, what this loyalty
Is worth.
CLOTALDO. You would be better if you had some.
It is the greatest prize.
SEGISMUND. Peace, peace, I pray you.
CLOTALDO. My lord!
SEGISMUND Clotaldo, if your feelings
Are truly thus, go you, and serve the king;
That's prudence, loyalty, and common sense.
But do not argue here with anyone
Whether it's right or wrong, for every man
Has his own honour.
CLOTALDO. Humbly I take my leave. [*Exit.*]
SEGISMUND. Now sound the drums and march in rank and order
Straight to the palace.
ALL. Long live Segismund!
SEGISMUND. Fortune, we go to reign! Do not awake me
If I am dreaming! Do not let me fall
Asleep if it is true! To act with virtue
Is what matters, since if this proves true,
That truth's sufficient reason in itself;
If not, we win us friends against the time
When we at last awake.

A room in the royal palace

[*Enter* BASIL *and* ASTOLFO.]

BASIL. Whose prudence can rein in a bolting horse?
Who can restrain a river's pride, in spate?
Whose valour can withstand a crag dislodged
And hurtling downwards from a mountain peak?
All these are easier by far than to hold back
A crowd's proud fury, once it has been roused.

It has two voices, both proclaiming war,
And you can hear them echoing through the mountains,
Some shouting "Segismund," others "Astolfo."
The scene I set for swearing all allegiance
Lends but an added horror to this strife:
It has become the back cloth to a stage
Where Fortune plays out tragedies in blood.
ASTOLFO. My lord, forget the happiness and wealth
You promised me from your most blessèd hand.
If Poland, which I hope to rule, refuses
Obedience to my right, grudging me honour,
It is because I've got to earn it first.
Give me a horse, that I with angry pride
May match the thunder in my voice and ride
To strike, like lightning, terror far and wide. [*Exit.*]
BASIL. No remedy for what's infallible!
What is foreseen is perilous indeed!
If something has to be, there's no way out;
In trying to evade it, you but court it.
This law is pitiless and horrible.
Thinking one can evade the risk, one meets it:
My own precautions have been my undoing,
And I myself have quite destroyed my kingdom.
[*Enter* STELLA.]
STELLA. If you, my lord, in person do not try
To curb the vast commotion that has started
In all the streets between the rival factions,
You'll see your kingdom, swamped in waves of crimson,
Swimming in its own blood, with nothing left
But havoc, dire calamity, and woe.
So frightful is the damage to your empire
That, seen, it strikes amazement; heard, despair.
The sun's obscured, the very winds are hindered.
Each stone is a memorial to the dead.
Each flower springs from a grave while every building
Appears a mausoleum, and each soldier
A premature and walking skeleton.
[*Enter* CLOTALDO.]
CLOTALDO. Praise be to God, I reach your feet alive!
BASIL. Clotaldo! What's the news of Segismund?
CLOTALDO. The crowd, a headstrong monster blind with rage,
Entered his dungeon tower and set him free.
He, now exalted for the second time,
Conducts himself with valour, boasting how
He will bring down the truth out of the stars.

BASIL. Give me a horse, that I myself, in person,
May vanquish such a base, ungrateful son!
For I, in the defence of my own crown,
Shall do by steel what science failed to do. [*Exit.*]
STELLA. I'll be Bellona[2] to your Sun, and try
To write my name next yours in history.
I'll ride as though I flew on outstretched wings
That I may vie with Pallas. [*Exit*]
[*Enter* ROSAURA, *holding back* CLOTALDO.]
ROSAURA. I know that all is war, Clotaldo, yet
Although your valour calls you to the front,
First hear me out. You know quite well that I
Arrived in Poland poor and miserable,
Where, shielded by your valour, I found mercy.
You told me to conceal myself, and stay
Here in the palace, hiding from Astolfo.
He saw me in the end, and so insulted
My honour that (although he saw me clearly)
He nightly speaks with Stella in the garden.
I have the key to it and I will show you
How you can enter there and end my cares.
Thus bold, resolved, and strong, you can recover
My honour, since you're ready to avenge me
By killing him.
CLOTALDO. It's true that I intended,
Since first I saw you (having heard your tale)
With my own life to rectify your wrongs.
The first step that I took was bid you dress
According to your sex, for fear Astolfo
Might see you as you were, and deem you wanton.
I was devising how we could recover
Your honour (so much did it weigh on me)
Even though we had to kill him. (A wild plan—
Though since he's not my king, I would not flinch
From killing him.) But then, when suddenly
Segismund tried to kill me, it was he
Who saved my life with his surpassing valour.
Consider: how can I requite Astolfo
With death for giving me my life so bravely,
And when my soul is full of gratitude?
So torn between the two of you I stand—
Rosaura, whose life I saved, and Astolfo,
Who saved my life. What's to be done? Which side

2. The Roman war goddess.

To take, and whom to help, I cannot judge.
What I owe you in that I gave you life
I owe to him in that he gave me life.
And so there is no course that I can take
To satisfy my love. I am a person
Who has to act, yet suffer either way.
ROSAURA. I should not have to tell so brave a man
That if it is nobility to give,
It's baseness to receive. That being so
You owe no gratitude to him, admitting
That it was he who gave you life, and you
Who gave me life, since he forced you to take
A meaner role, and through me you assumed
A generous role. So you should side with me:
My cause is so far worthier than his own
As giving is than taking.
CLOTALDO. Though nobility
Is with the giver, it is gratitude
That dwells with the receiver. As a giver
I have the name of being generous:
Then grant me that of being grateful too
And let me earn the title and be grateful,
As I am liberal, giving or receiving.
ROSAURA. You granted me my life, at the same time
Telling me it was worthless, since dishonored,
And therefore was no life. Therefore from you
I have received no life at all. And since
You should be liberal first and grateful after
(Since so you said yourself) I now entreat you
Give me the life, the life you never gave me!
As giving magnifies the most, give first
And then be grateful after, if you will!
CLOTALDO. Won by your argument, I will be liberal.
Rosaura, I shall give you my estate
And you shall seek a convent, there to live.
This measure is a happy thought, for, see,
Fleeing a crime, you find a sanctuary.
For when the empire's threatened, with disasters
And is divided thus, I, born a noble,
Am not the man who would augment its woes.
So with this remedy which I have chosen
I remain loyal to the kingdom, generous
To you, and also grateful to Astolfo.
And thus I choose the course that suits you best.
Were I your father, what could I do more?
ROSAURA. Were you my father, then I would accept

The insult. Since you are not, I refuse.
CLOTALDO. What do you hope to do then?
ROSAURA. Kill the duke!
CLOTALDO. A girl who never even knew her father
Armed with such courage?
ROSAURA. Yes.
CLOTALDO. What spurs you on?
ROSAURA. My good name.
CLOTALDO. In Astolfo you will find . . .
ROSAURA. My honour rides on him and strikes him down!
CLOTALDO. Your king, too, Stella's husband!
ROSAURA. Never, never
Shall that be, by almighty God, I swear!
CLOTALDO. Why, this is madness!
ROSAURA. Yes it is!
CLOTALDO. Restrain it.
ROSAURA . That I cannot.
CLOTALDO. Then you are lost forever!
ROSAURA. I know it!
CLOTALDO. Life and honour both together!
ROSAURA. I well believe it!
CLOTALDO. What do you intend?
ROSAURA. My death.
CLOTALDO. This is despair and desperation.
ROSAURA. It's honour.
CLOTALDO. It is nonsense.
ROSAURA. It is valour.
CLOTALDO. It's frenzy.
ROSAURA. Yes, it's anger! Yes, it's fury!
CLOTALDO. In short you cannot moderate your passion?
ROSAURA. No.
CLOTALDO. Who is there to help you?
ROSAURA. I, myself.
CLOTALDO. There is no cure?
ROSAURA. There is no cure!
CLOTALDO. Think well
If there's not some way out . . .
ROSAURA. Some other way
To do away with me . . . [*Exit.*]
CLOTALDO. If you are lost,
My daughter, let us both be lost together!

In the country

[*Enter* SEGISMUND *clothed in skins. Soldiers marching.* CLARION. *Drums beating.*]

SEGISMUND. If Rome, today, could see me here, renewing

Her olden triumphs, she might laugh to see
A wild beast in command of mighty armies,
A wild beast, to whose fiery aspirations
The firmament were all too slight a conquest!
But stoop your flight, my spirit. Do not thus
Be puffed to pride by these uncertain plaudits
Which, when I wake, will turn to bitterness
In that I won them only to be lost.
The less I value them, the less I'll miss them.
[*A trumpet sounds.*]

CLARION.[3] Upon a rapid courser (pray excuse me,
Since if it comes to mind I must describe it)
In which it seems an atlas was designed
Since if its body is earth, its soul is fire
Within its breast, its foam appears the sea,
The wind its breath, and chaos its condition,
Since in its soul, its foam, its breath and flesh,
It seems a monster of fire, earth, sea, and wind,
Upon the horse, all of a patchwork colour,
Dappled, and rushing forward at the will
Of one who plies the spur, so that it flies
Rather than runs—see how a woman rides
Boldly into your presence.

SEGISMUND. Her light blinds me.

CLARION. Good God! Why, here's Rosaura!

SEGISMUND. It is heaven
That has restored her to my sight once more.

[*Enter* ROSAURA *with sword and dagger in riding costume.*]

ROSAURA. Generous Segismund, whose majesty
Heroically rises in the lustre
Of his great deeds out of his night of shadows,
And as the greatest planet,[4] in the arms
Of his aurora, lustrously returns
To plants and roses, over hills and seas.
When, crowned with gold, he looks abroad, dispersing
Radiance, flashing his rays, bathing the summits,
And broidering the fringes of the foam.
So may you dawn upon the world, bright sun
Of Poland, that a poor unhappy woman
May fall before your feet and beg protection
Both as a woman and unfortunate—
Two things that must oblige you, sire, as one
Who prize yourself as valiant, each of them

3. Clarion's speech is a parody of exaggerated style—including Calderón's. [Translator's note]
4. The sun.

More than suffices for your chivalry.
Three times you have beheld me now, three times
Been ignorant of who I am, because
Three times you saw me in a different clothing
The first time you mistook me for a man,
Within that rigorous prison, where your hardships
Made mine seem pleasure. Next time, as a woman,
You saw me, when your pomp and majesty
Were as a dream, a phantasm, a shade.
The third time is today when, as a monster
Of both the sexes, in a woman's costume
I bear a soldier's arms. But to dispose you
The better to compassion, hear my story.
My mother was a noble in the court
Of Moscow, who, since most unfortunate,
Must have been beautiful. Then came a traitor
And cast his eyes on her (I do not name him,
Not knowing who he is). Yet I deduce
That he was valiant too from my own valour,
Since he gave form to me—and I could wish
I had been born in pagan times, that I might
Persuade myself he was some god of those
Who rain in showers of gold, turn into swans
Or bulls, for Danaës, Ledas, or Europas.[5]
That's strange: I thought I was just rambling on
By telling old perfidious myths, yet find
I've told you how my mother was cajoled.
Oh, she was beautiful as no one else
Has been, but was unfortunate like all.
He swore to wed her (that's an old excuse)
And this trick reached so nearly to her heart
That thought must weep, recalling it today.
The tyrant left her only with his sword
As Aeneas left Troy.[6] I sheathed its blade here
Upon my thigh, and I will bare it too
Before the ending of this history.
Out of this union, this poor link which neither
Could bind the marriage nor handcuff the crime,
Myself was born, her image and her portrait,
Not in her beauty, but in her misfortune,
For mine's the same. That's all I need to say.
The most that I can tell you of myself

5. To seduce them, Zeus assumed the shapes, respectively, of a gold shower, a swan, and a bull. 6. Probably Calderón was thinking of Carthage rather than Troy. Aeneas departed from Carthage in haste, leaving behind the sword which queen Dido would use for her suicide.

Is that the man who robbed me of the spoils
And trophies of my honour is Astolfo.
Alas! to name him my heart rages so
(As hearts will do when men name enemies).
Astolfo was my faithless and ungrateful
Lord, who (quite forgetful of our happiness,
Since of a past love even the memory fades)
Came here to claim the throne and marry Stella
For she's the star who rises as I set.
It's hard to credit that a star should sunder
Lovers the stars had made conformable!
So hurt was I, so villainously cheated,
That I became mad, brokenhearted, sick,
Half wild with grief, and like to die, with all
Hell's own confusion ciphered on my mind
Like Babel's incoherence. Mutely I told
My griefs (since woes and griefs declare themselves
Better than can the mouth, by their effects),
When, with my mother (we were by ourselves),
She broke the prison of my pent-up sorrows
And from my breast they all rushed forth in troops.
I felt no shyness, for in knowing surely
That one to whom one's errors are recounted
Has also been an ally in her own,
One finds relief and rest, since bad example
Can sometimes serve for a good purpose too.
She heard my plaint with pity, and she tried
To palliate my sorrows with her own.
How easily do judges pardon error
When they've offended too! An example,
A warning, in herself, she did not trust
To idleness, or the slow cure of time,
Nor try to find a remedy for her honour
In my misfortunes, but, with better counsel,
She bade me follow him to Poland here
And with prodigious gallantry persuade him
To pay the debt to honour that he owes me.
So that it would be easier to travel,
She bade me don male clothing, and took down
This ancient sword which I am wearing now.
Now it is time that I unsheathe the blade
As I was bid, for, trusting in its sign,
She said: "Depart to Poland, show this sword
That all the nobles may behold it well,
And it may be that one of them will take

Pity on you, and counsel you, and shield you."
I came to Poland and, you will remember,
Entered your cave. You looked at me in wonder.
Clotaldo passionately took my part
To plead for mercy to the king, who spared me,
Then, when he heard my story, bade me change
Into my own clothes and attend on Stella,
There to disturb Astolfo's love and stop
Their marriage. Again you saw me in woman's dress
And were confused by the discrepancy.
But let's pass to what's new: Clotaldo, now
Persuaded that Astolfo must, with Stella,
Come to the throne, dissuades me from my purpose,
Against the interests of my name and honour.
But seeing you, O valiant Segismund,
Are claiming your revenge, now that the heavens
Have burst the prison of your rustic tower,
(Wherein you were the tiger of your sorrows,
The rock of sufferings and direful pains)
And sent you forth against your sire and country,
I come to aid you, mingling Dian's silks
With the hard steel of Pallas. Now, strong Captain,
It well behoves us both to stop this marriage—
Me, lest my promised husband should be wed.
You, lest, when their estates are joined, they weigh
More powerfully against your victory.
I come, as a mere woman, to persuade you
To right my shame; but, as a man, I come
To help you battle for your crown. As woman,
To melt your heart, here at your feet I fall;
But, as a man, I come to serve you bravely
Both with my person and my steel, and thus,
If you today should woo me as a woman,
Then I should have to kill you as a man would
In honourable service of my honour;
Since I must be three things today at once—
Passionate, to persuade you: womanly,
To ply you with my woes: manly, to gain
Honour in battle.

SEGISMUND. Heavens! If it is true I'm dreaming,
Suspend my memory, for in a dream
So many things could not occur. Great heavens!
If I could only come free of them all!
Or ever think of any! Who ever felt
Such grievous doubts? If I but dreamed that triumph

In which I found myself, how can this woman
Refer me to such sure and certain facts?
Then all of it was true and not a dream.
But if it be the truth, why does my past life
Call it a dream? This breeds the same confusion.
Are dreams and glories so alike, that fictions
Are held for truths, realities for lies?
Is there so little difference in them both
That one should question whether what one sees
And tastes is true or false? What? Is the copy
So near to the original that doubt
Exists between them? Then if that is so,
And grandeur, power, majesty, and pomp,
Must all evaporate like shades at morning,
Let's profit by it, this time, to enjoy
That which we only can enjoy in dreams.
Rosaura's in my power: my soul adores her beauty.
Let's take the chance. Let love break every law
On which she has relied in coming here
And kneeling, trustful, prostrate at my feet.
This is a dream. If so, dream pleasures now
Since they must turn to sorrows in the end!
But with my own opinions, I begin
Once again to convince myself. Let's think.
If it is but vainglory and a dream,
Who for mere human vainglory would lose
True glory? What past blessing is not merely
A dream? Who has known heroic glories,
That deep within himself, as he recalls them,
Has never doubted that they might be dreams?
But if this all should end in disenchantment,
Seeing that pleasure is a lovely flame
That's soon converted into dust and ashes
By any wind that blows, then let us seek
That which endures in thrifty, lasting fame
In which no pleasures sleep, nor grandeurs dream.
Rosaura's without honour. In a prince
It's worthier to restore it than to steal it.
I shall restore it, by the living God,
Before I win my throne! Let's shun the danger
And fly from the temptation which is strong!
Then sound to arms!
[*To a soldier*] Today I must give battle before darkness
Buries the rays of gold in green-black waves!

ROSAURA. My lord! Alas, you stand apart, and offer

No word of pity for my plight. How is it
You neither hear nor see me nor even yet
Have turned your face on me?
SEGISMUND. Rosaura, for your honour's sake
I must be cruel to you, to be kind.
My voice must not reply to you because
My honour must reply to you. I am silent
Because my deeds must speak to you alone.
I do not look at you since, in such straits,
Having to see your honour is requited,
I must not see your beauty.
[*Exit with soldiers.*]
ROSAURA. What strange enigma's this? After such trouble
Still to be treated with more doubtful riddles!
[*Enter* CLARION.]
CLARION. Madam, may you be visited just now?
ROSAURA. Why, Clarion, where have you been all this time?
CLARION. Shut in the tower, consulting cards
About my death: "to be or not to be."
And it was a near thing.
ROSAURA. Why?
CLARION. Because I know
The secret who you are: in fact, Clotaldo . . .
[*Drums.*] But hush what noise is that?
ROSAURA. What can it be?
CLARION. From the beleaguered palace a whole squadron
Is charging forth to harry and defeat
That of fierce Segismund.
ROSAURA. Why, what a coward
Am I, not to be at his side, the terror
And scandal of the world, while such fierce strife
Presses all round in lawless anarchy. [*Exit.*]
VOICES OF SOME. Long live our king!
VOICES OF OTHERS. Long live our liberty!
CLARION. Long live both king and liberty. Yes, live!
And welcome to them both! I do not worry
In all this pother, I behave like Nero[7]
Who never grieved at what was going on.
If I had anything to grieve about
It would be me, myself. Well hidden here,
Now, I can watch the sport that's going on.
This place is safe and hidden between crags,
And since death cannot find me here, two figs for death!

7. Roman emperor from A.D. 54 to A.D. 68 who was blamed by some for a destructive fire that burned half of Rome in A.D. 64.

[*He hides. Drums and the clash of arms are heard. Enter* BASIL, CLOTALDO, *and* ASTOLFO, *fleeing.*]

BASIL. Was ever king so hapless as myself
Or, father more ill used?
CLOTALDO. Your beaten army
Rush down, in all directions, in disorder.
ASTOLFO. The traitors win!
BASIL In battles such as these
Those on the winning side are ever "loyal,"
And traitors the defeated. Come, Clotaldo,
Let's flee from the inhuman cruelty
Of my fierce son!
[*Shots are fired within.* CLARION *falls wounded.*]
CLARION. Heavens, save me!
ASTOLFO. Who is this
Unhappy soldier bleeding at our feet?
CLARION. I am a most unlucky man who, wishing
To guard myself from death, have sought it out
By fleeing from it. Shunning it, I found it,
Because, to death, no hiding-place is secret.
So you can argue that whoever shuns it
Most carefully runs into it the quickest.
Turn, then, once more into the thick of battle:
There is more safety there amidst the fire
And clash of arms than here on this secluded
Mountain, because no hidden path is safe
From the inclemency of Fate; and so,
Although you flee from death, yet you may find it
Quicker than you expect, if God so wills. [*He falls dead.*]
BASIL. "If God so wills" . . . With what strange eloquence
This corpse persuades our ignorance and error
To better knowledge, speaking from the mouth
Of its fell wound, where the red liquid flowing
Seems like a bloody tongue which teaches us
That the activities of man are vain
When they are pitted against higher powers.
For I, who wished to liberate my country
From murder and sedition, gave it up
To the same ills from which I would have saved it.
CLOTALDO. Though Fate, my lord, knows every path, and finds
Him whom it seeks even in the midst of crags
And thickets, it is not a Christian judgment
To say there is no refuge from its fury.
A prudent man can conquer Fate itself.
Though you are not exempted from misfortune,

Take action to escape it while you can!
ASTOLFO. Clotaldo speaks as one mature in prudence,
And I as one in valour's youthful prime.
Among the thickets of this mount is hidden
A horse, the very birth of the swift wind.
Flee on him, and I'll guard you in the rear.
BASIL. If it is God's will I should die, or if
Death waits here for my coming, I will seek
Him out today, and meet him face to face.
[*Enter* SEGISMUND, STELLA, ROSAURA, *soldiers, and their train.*]
A SOLDIER. Amongst the thickets of this mountain
The king is hiding.
SEGISMUND. Seek him out at once!
Leave no foot of the summit unexplored
But search from stem to stem and branch to branch!
CLOTALDO. Fly, sir!
BASIL. What for?
ASTOLFO. What do you mean to do?
BASIL. Astolfo, stand aside!
CLOTALDO. What is your wish?
BASIL. To take a cure I've needed for sometime.
[*To* SEGISMUND] If you have come to seek me, here I am.
[*Kneeling*] Your father, prince, kneels humbly at your feet.
The white snow of my hair is now your carpet.
Tread on my neck and trample on my crown!
Lay low and drag my dignity in dust!
Take vengeance on my honour! Make a slave
Of me and, after all I've done to thwart them,
Let Fate fulfil its edict and claim homage
And Heaven fulfil its oracles at last!
SEGISMUND. Illustrious court of Poland, who have been
The witness of such unwonted wonders,
Attend to me, and hear your prince speak out.
What Heaven decrees and God writes with this finger
(Whose prints and ciphers are the azure leaves
Adorned with golden lettering of the stars)
Never deceives nor lies. They only lie
Who seek to penetrate the mystery
And, having reached it, use it to ill purpose.
My father, who is here to evade the fury
Of my proud nature, made me a wild beast:
So, when I, by my birth of gallant stock,
My generous blood, and inbred grace and valour,
Might well have proved both gentle and forbearing,
The very mode of life to which he forced me,

The sort of bringing up I had to bear
Sufficed to make me savage in my passions.
What a strange method of restraining them!
If one were to tell any man: "One day
You will be killed by an inhuman monster,"
Would it be the best method he could choose
To wake that monster when it was asleep?
Or if they told him: "That sword which you're wearing
Will be your death," what sort of cure were it
To draw it forth and aim it at his breast?
Of if they told him: "Deep blue gulfs of water
Will one day be your sepulchre and grave
Beneath a silver monument of foam,"
He would be mad to hurl himself in headlong
When the sea highest heaved its showy mountains
And crystalline sierras plumed with spray.
The same has happened to the king as to him
Who wakes a beast which threatens death, to him
Who draws a naked sword because he fears it,
To him who dives into the stormy breakers.
Though my ferocious nature (hear me now)
Was like a sleeping beast, my inborn rage
A sheathèd sword, my wrath a quiet ripple,
Fate should not be coerced by man's injustice—
This rouses more resentment. So it is
That he who seeks to tame his fortune must
Resort to moderation and to measure.
He who foresees an evil cannot conquer it
Thus in advance, for though humility
Can overcome it, this it can do only
When the occasion's there, for there's no way
To dodge one's fate and thus evade the issue.
Let this strange spectacle serve as example—
This prodigy, this horror, and this wonder,
Because it is no less than one, to see,
After such measures and precautions taken
To thwart it, that a father thus should kneel
At his son's feet, a kingdom thus be shattered.
This was the sentence of the heavens above,
Which he could not evade, much though he tried.
Can I, younger in age, less brave, and less
In science than the king, conquer that fate?
[*To the* KING] Sire, rise, give me your hand, now that the heavens
Have shown you that you erred as to the method
To vanquish them. Humbly I kneel before you

And offer you my neck to tread upon.
BASIL. Son, such a great and noble act restores you
Straight to my heart. Oh, true and worthy prince!
You have won both the laurel and the palm.
Crown yourself with your deeds! For you *have* conquered!
ALL. Long live Segismund! Long live Segismund!
SEGISMUND. Since I have other victories to win,
The greatest of them all awaits me now:
To conquer my own self. Astolfo, give
Your hand here to Rosaura, for you know
It is a debt of honour and must be paid.
ASTOLFO. Although, it's true, I owe some obligations—
She does not know her name or who she is,
It would be base to wed a woman who . . .
CLOTALDO. Hold! Wait! Rosaura's of as noble stock
As yours, Astolfo. In the open field
I'll prove it with my sword. She is my daughter,
And that should be enough.
ASTOLFO. What do you say?
CLOTALDO. Until I saw her married, righted, honoured,
I did not wish for it to be discovered.
It's a long story but she is my daughter.
ASTOLFO. That being so, I'm glad to keep my word.
SEGISMUND. And now, so that the princess Stella here
Will not remain disconsolate to lose
A prince of so much valour, here I offer
My hand to her, no less in birth and rank.
Give me your hand.
STELLA. I gain by meriting
So great a happiness.
SEGISMUND. And now, Clotaldo,
So long so loyal to my father come
To my arms. Ask me anything you wish.
FIRST SOLDIER. If thus you treat a man who never served you,
What about me who led the revolution
And brought you from your dungeon in the tower?
What will you give me?
SEGISMUND. That same tower and dungeon
From which you never shall emerge till death.
No traitor is of use after his treason.
BASIL. All wonder at your wisdom!
ASTOLFO. What a change
Of character!
ROSAURA. How wise and prudent!
SEGISMUND. Why

Do you wonder? Why do you marvel, since
It was a dream that taught me and I still
Fear to wake up once more in my close dungeon?
Though that may never happen, it's enough
To dream it might, for thus I came to learn
That all our human happiness must pass
Away like any dream, and I would here
Enjoy it fully ere it glide away,
Asking (for noble hearts are prone to pardon)
Pardon for faults in the actors or the play.[8]

8. This form of close, addressed to the audience and begging for its favor, is a well-established Renaissance convention.

Masterpieces of the Enlightenment

"I wonder if it is not better to try to correct and moderate men's passions than to try to suppress them altogether." The sentence, from Jean-Baptiste Molière's 1669 preface to his biting comedy about religious hypocrisy, *Tartuffe*, captures something of the anxiety and the optimism of a period for which subsequent generations have found no adequate single designation. "The Neo-Classic Period," "The Age of Reason," "The Enlightenment": such labels suggest, accurately enough, that thinkers between (roughly) 1660 and 1770 emphasized the powers of the mind and turned to the Roman past for models. But these terms do not convey the awareness of limitation expressed in Molière's sentence, an awareness as typical of the historical period to which the sentence belongs as is the expressed aspiration toward correctness and moderation. The effort to correct and moderate the passions might prove less foolhardy than the effort to suppress them, but both endeavors would involve human nature's struggle with itself, a struggle necessarily perpetual. "On life's vast ocean diversely we sail, / Reason the card, but Passion is the gale," Alexander Pope's *Essay on Man* (1733) pointed out. One could hope to steer with reason as guide only by remembering the omnipresence of passion as impetus. Eighteenth-century thinkers analyzed, and eighteenth-century imaginative writers dramatized, intricate interchanges and conflicts between these aspects of our selves.

The drama of reason and passion played itself out in society, the system of association human beings had devised partly to control passion and institutionalize reason. Structured on the basis of a rigid class system, the traditional social order began to face incipient challenges as new commerce generated new wealth, whose possessors felt entitled to claim their own share of social power. The threat to established hierarchies extended even to kings. Monarchs still presided over European nations in the eighteenth century, but with less security than before. The English had executed one ruler in 1649 and driven out another in 1688; the French would perform a further royal decapitation before the end of the eighteenth century. The mortality of kings had become a political fact, a fact implying the conceivable instability of the social order over which kings presided.

A sense of the contingencies of the human condition impinged on many minds in a world where men and women no longer automatically assumed God's benign supervision of human affairs or the primacy of their own Christian obligations. The fierce strife between Protestants and Catholics

lapsed into relative quiescence by the end of the seventeenth century, but the Protestant English deposed their king in 1688 because of his marriage to a Catholic princess and their fear of a Catholic dynasty; and in France Louis XIV in 1685 revoked the Edict of Nantes, which had granted religious toleration to Protestants. The eighteenth century ended in the French revolution. Throughout the century, wars had erupted over succession to European thrones and over nationalistic claims, although no fighting took place on such a scale as that of the devastating Thirty Years' War (1618–1648). On the whole, divisions within nations assumed greater importance than those between nations.

Philosophers now turned their attention to defining the possibilities and limitations of the human position in the material universe. "I think, therefore I am," René Descartes pronounced, declaring the mind the source of individual being. But this idea proved less reassuring than it initially seemed. Subsequent philosophers, exploring the concept's implications, realized the possibility of the mind's isolation in its own constructions. Perhaps, Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibnitz suggested, no real communication can take place between one consciousness and another. Possibly, according to David Hume, the idea of individual identity itself derives from the mind's efforts to manufacture continuity out of discontinuous memories. Philosophers pointed out the impossibility of knowing for sure even the reality of the external world: the only certainty is that we think it exists. If contemplating the nature of human reason thus led philosophic skeptics to restrict severely the area of what we can know with certainty, other contemplations induced other thinkers to insist on the existence, beyond men, of an entirely rational physical and moral universe. The fullness and complexity of the perceived physical world testified, as many wrote, to the sublime rationality of a divine plan. The Planner, however, did not necessarily supervise the day-to-day operations of His arrangements; He might rather, as a popular analogy had it, resemble the watchmaker who winds the watch and leaves it running.

Deism, evoking a depersonalized deity, insisted on the logicality of the universe and encouraged the separation of ethics from religion. Ethics, too, could be understood as a matter of reason and not as a system of conduct ordained and supervised by God. The God of the deists was not an object for prayer, not a source of forgiveness, but He authorized the discoveries of the new science. In the third quarter of the eighteenth century, the French *Encyclopedia* (1751–1776), edited by Diderot, disseminated the new doctrines, assuming the kind of authority previously held by such theological tracts as St. Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologica*. Yet awareness of the passions continued to haunt thinkers yearning for rationality: the vision of a flawlessly conceived universe could not solve the problems of actual human experience, the confusion of conflicting impulses that men and women have always felt.

In the Spanish colonies of Latin America, where the Catholic church retained enormous power over the lives of individuals, the interest in deism might assume particularly complicated forms. For intellectual and literary models, New World writers looked to Europe, aware of philosophic and stylistic developments on the Continent, yet dominated by the authority of the Church. Women as well as men emerged as writers in the colonies. A

particularly compelling figure was Sister Juana Inés de la Cruz, a nun. Although she wrote secular verse—even love poetry—and drama, much of her poetry lends itself to allegorical interpretation as an account of her passionate involvement in the life of the intellect and her effort to sustain that involvement in the face of opposition from her religious associates and superiors.

In spite of the fact that Sister Juana writes as a member of a religious community, she demonstrates in her theological prose the same intellectual inclinations manifest across the sea. "I studied all the things that God had wrought," she reports, "reading in them, as in writing and in books, all the workings of the universe. I looked on nothing without reflexion; I heard nothing without meditation." These sentences, moving in their assertion of a coherent and comprehensible universe and in their implicit longing for total comprehension, occur in the context of a brilliant defense of women's right to focus their attention on intellectual matters: one of the most remarkable documents of the period.

Neither Sister Juana nor any of the other important writers of the era assumed that their hopeful faith in reason solved all problems. Like most great writers, they raise more questions than they answer. Although the social, economic, religious, and political organizations in which these thinkers participated hardly resemble our own, their questions about the human condition have plagued the Western mind ever since. We no longer locate the solution to all problems in an unattainable ideal of "reason," but we too struggle to find the limits of certainty, have problems of identity and isolation, and recognize the impossibility of altogether controlling internal forces now identified as "the unconscious" rather than "the passions." But we confront such issues largely from the position of isolated individuals. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, in England and on the Continent, the sense of obligation to society had far more power than it possesses today. Society provided the standards and the instruments that might help to counter the tumult of individual impulse.

SOCIETY

"Society," in this period, designates both a powerful idea and an omnipresent fact of experience. Prerevolutionary French society, like English society in the same period, depended upon clear hierarchical structures. The literature of both countries issued from a small cultural elite, writing for others of their kind and assuming the rightness of their own knowledge of how people should feel and behave.

For the upper classes in the period of the Enlightenment, as for the ancient Romans they admired, public life mattered more than private. At one level, the "public" designated the realms of government and diplomacy: occupations allowing and encouraging oratory, frequent travel, negotiation, the exercise of political and economic power. In this sense, the public world belonged entirely to men, who determined the course of government, defined the limits of the important, enforced their sense of the fitness of things. By another definition, "public" might refer to the life of formal social intercourse. In France, such social life took place often in "salons," gatherings to engage in intellectual as well as frivolous conversation. Women typically

presided over these salons, thus declaring both their intellectual authority and their capacity to combine high thought with high style. Until rather late in the eighteenth century, on the other hand, England allowed women no such commanding position; there, men controlled intellectual as well as political discourse. The male voice, accordingly, dominated English literature until the development of the novel provided new opportunities for women writers and for the articulation of domestic values.

Both the larger and the more limited "public" spheres depended on well-defined codes of behavior. The discrepancy between the forms of self-presentation dictated by these codes and the operations such forms might disguise—a specific form of the reason-passion conflict—provides an insistent literary theme in the century beginning around 1660: Molière, examining religious sham; Voltaire sending a naive fictional protagonist to encounter the world's inconsistencies of profession and practice. Such writers call attention to the deceptiveness and the possible misuses of social norms, as well as to their necessity. Neither suggests that the codes themselves are at fault. If people lived up to what they profess, the world would be a better place; ideally, they would modify not their standards of behavior but their tendency to hide behind them.

We in the twentieth century have become accustomed to the notion of the sacredness of the individual, encouraged to believe in the high value of expressiveness, originality, specialness. Eighteenth-century writers, on the other hand, assumed the superior importance of the social group and of shared opinion. "Expressiveness," in their view, should provide an instrument for articulating the will of the community, not the eccentric desires of individuals. Society implies subordination: not only class hierarchy, but individual submission to the good of the group, as in orchestras, team sports, and corporations today.

French writers of imaginative literature often used domestic situations as ways to examine larger problems. Marriage, an institution at once social and personal, provides a useful image for human relationship as social and emotional fact. The developing eighteenth-century novel would assume marriage as the normal goal for men and women; Molière and Racine, writing before the turn of the century, examine economic, psychological, moral, and social implications of specific imagined marriages. The sexual alliances of rulers, Racine's subject in *Phaedra*, have literal consequences far beyond the individuals involved. Molière in *Tartuffe* evokes a private family to suggest how professed sentiment can obscure the operations of ambition. Both understand marriage as social microcosm, a society in miniature, not merely as a structure for fulfillment of personal desire.

NATURE

Society establishes one locus of reality for eighteenth-century thinkers, although they understand it as a human construct. Nature comprises another assumed measure of the real. The meanings of the word *nature* vary greatly in eighteenth-century usage, but two large senses are most relevant to the works here included: nature as the inherent order of things, including the physical universe, hence evidence of the deity's plan; and nature meaning specifically *human* nature.

Despite their pervasive awareness of natural contingency (vividly dramatized by Voltaire among others, in his account of the disastrous Lisbon earthquake), writers of this period locate their sense of permanence particularly in the idea of nature. The notion of a permanent, divinely ordained natural order offers comfort to those aware of flaws in actual social arrangements. It embodies an ideal of harmony, of order in variety, which, although it cannot be fully grasped by human intelligence, can yet provide a model for social complexities. It posits a *system*, a structure of relationships that at some theoretical level necessarily makes sense; thus it provides an assumed substructure of rationality for all experience of irrationality. It supplies a means of valuing all appearances of the natural world: every flower, every minnow, has meaning beyond itself, as part of the great pattern. The ardency with which the period's thinkers cling to belief in such a pattern suggests once more a pervasive anxiety about what human reason could not do. Human beings create a vision of something at once sublimely reasonable and beyond reason's grasp to reassure themselves that the limits of the rational need not coincide with the limits of the human.

The permanence of the conceptual natural order corresponds to that of human nature, as conceived in the eighteenth century. Human nature, it was generally believed, remains in all times and places the same. Thus Racine could re-present a fable from Greek tragedy, using classical setting and characters, with complete assurance that his imagining of Phaedra's conflict and suffering would speak to his contemporaries without falsifying the classical original. Despite social divergencies, fundamental aspects of personality do in fact remain consistant: all people hope and fear, feel envy and lust, possess the capacity to reason. All suffer loss, all face death. Thinkers of the Enlightenment emphasized these common aspects of humanity far more than they considered cultural divergencies. Readers and writers alike could draw on this conviction about universality. It provided a test of excellence: if an author's imagining of character failed to conform to what eighteenth-century readers understood as human nature, a work might be securely judged inadequate. Conversely, the idea of a constant human nature held out the hope of longevity for writers who successfully evoked it. Moral philosophers could define human obligation and possibility in the conviction that they too wrote for all time; ethical standards would never change. Like the vision of order in the physical universe, the notion of constancy in human nature provided bedrock for an increasingly secularized society.

CONVENTION AND AUTHORITY

Eighteenth-century society, like all societies, operated, and its literary figures wrote, on the basis of established conventions. Manners are social conventions: agreed upon systems of behavior declared appropriate for specific situations. Guides to manners proliferated in the eighteenth century, expressing a widespread sense that commitment to decorum helped to preserve society's important standards. Literary conventions—agreed upon systems of verbal behavior—served comparable purposes in another sphere. Like established codes of manners, such conventions declare continuity between present and past.

The literary conventions of the past, like outmoded manners or styles of

dress, may strike the twentieth-century reader as antiquated and artificial. A woman who curtseyed in a modern living room, a man who appeared in a wig, would seem to us ridiculous, even insane; but of course a young woman in blue jeans would affect our predecessors as equally perverse. The plaintive lyrics of current country music, say, are governed by highly restrictive conventions which affect their hearers as "natural" only because they are so familiar. Eighteenth-century writers had at their disposal an established set of conventions for every traditional literary genre. As the repetitive rhythms of the country ballad tell listeners what to expect, these literary conventions provided readers with clues about the kind of experience they could anticipate in a given poem or play.

Underlying all specific conventions was the classical assumption that literature existed to delight and to instruct its readers. The various genres represented in this volume embody such belief in literature's dual function. Stage comedy and tragedy, satire in prose and verse, didactic prose, the philosophic tale: each form developed its own set of devices for involving audiences and readers in situations requiring moral choice, as well as for creating pleasure. The insistence in drama on unity of time and place (stage action occupying no more time than its representation, with no change of scene) exemplifies one such set, intended to facilitate in audiences the kind of belief encouraging maximum emotional and moral effect. The two-dimensional characters of Voltaire's tales likewise provide signals about authorial intention and about anticipated reader response.

One dominant convention of twentieth-century poetry and prose is something we call "realism." In fiction, verse, and drama, writers often attempt to convey the literal feel of experience, the shape in which events actually occur in the world, the way people really talk. Racine and Voltaire pursued no such goal. Despite their concern with permanent patterns of thought and feeling, they employed deliberate and obvious forms of artifice as modes of emphasis and of indirection. The sonorous verse in which Racine's characters reflect on their passions ("I hate my life, abominate my lust; / Longing by death to rescue my good name / And hide my black love from the light of day") embodies a form of stylization. Artistic transformation of life, the period's writers believed, involves the imposition of formal order on the endless flux of event and feeling. The formalities of this literature constitute part of its meaning: its statement that what experience shows as unstable, art makes stable.

Reliance on convention as a mode of control expressed an aspect of the period's constant effort toward elusive stability. The classical past, for many, provided an emblem of that stability, a standard of permanence. But some felt a problem inherent in the high valuing of the past, a problem dramatized by the so-called quarrel of Ancients and Moderns in England and in France. At stake in this controversy was the value of permanence as against the value of change. Proponents of the Ancients believed that the giants of Greece and Rome had not only established standards applicable to all subsequent accomplishment but provided models of achievement never to be excelled. Homer wrote the first great epics; subsequent endeavors in the same genre could only imitate him. Innovation came when it came by making the old new. Moderns who valued originality for its own sake, who multiplied

worthless publications, who claimed significance for what time had not tested thereby testified to their own inadequacies and their foolish pride.

Those proud to be Moderns, on the other hand, held that men (possibly even women) standing on the shoulders of the Ancients could see farther than their predecessors. The new conceivably exceeded in value the old; one might discover flaws even in revered figures of the classic past. Not everything had yet been accomplished; fresh possibilities remained always potential. This view, of course, corresponds to one widely current since the eighteenth century, but it did not triumph easily: many powerful thinkers of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century adhered to the more conservative position.

Also at issue in this debate was the question of authority. What position should one assume who hoped to write and be read? Did authority reside only in tradition? If so, one must write in classical forms, rely on classical allusions. Until late in the eighteenth century, virtually all important writers attempted to ally themselves with the authority of tradition, declaring themselves part of a community extending through time as well as space. The problems of authority became particularly important in connection with satire, a popular Enlightenment form. Satire involves criticism of vice and folly; Molière and Voltaire at least on occasion wrote in the satiric mode. To establish the right to criticize fellow men and women, the satirist must establish a rhetorical ascendancy such as the pulpit gives the priest—an ascendancy most readily obtained by at least implicit alliance with literary and moral tradition. The satirist, like the moral philosopher, cannot afford to seem idiosyncratic when prescribing and condemning the behavior of others. The fact that satire flourished so richly in this period suggests another version of the central conflict between reason and passion, the forces of stability and of instability. In its heightened description of the world (a man of self-proclaimed devoutness interested only in gratifying his lust, an admiral shot to death "in order to encourage the others"), satire calls attention to the powerful presence of the irrational, opposing to that presence the clarity of the satirist's own claim to reason and tradition. As it chastises human beings for their eruptions of passion, urging resistance and control, satire reminds its readers of the universality of the irrational as well as of opposition to it. The effort "to correct and moderate men's [and women's] passions," that great theme of the Enlightenment, can equally generate hope or despair: opposed moods richly expressed throughout this period.

FURTHER READING

Useful books on the enlightenment include for the intellectual and social situation in France, L. Crocker, *An Age of Crisis: Man and World in Eighteenth-Century French Thought* (1959), and L. Gossman, *French Society and Culture: Background for Eighteenth-Century Literature* (1972). Also see Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation*, 2 vols., (1966–69) and Isidor Schneider, ed., *The Enlightenment: The Culture of the Eighteenth Century* (1965).

JEAN-BAPTISTE POQUELIN MOLIÈRE
1622–1673

Son of a prosperous Paris merchant, Molière (originally named Poquelin) devoted his entire adult life to the creation of stage illusion, as playwright and as actor. At about the age of twenty-five, he joined a company of traveling players established by the Béjart family; with them he toured the provinces for about twelve years. In 1658 the company was ordered to perform for Louis XIV in Paris; a year later, Molière's first great success, *The High-Brow Ladies (Les Précieuses ridicules)*, was produced. The theatrical company to which he belonged, patronized by the king, became increasingly successful, developing finally (1680) into the Comédie Française. In 1662, Molière married Armande Béjart. He died a few hours after performing in the lead role of his own play, *The Imaginary Invalid*.

Molière wrote both broad farce and comedies of character, in which he caricatured some form of vice or folly by embodying it in a single figure. His targets included the miser, the aspiring but vulgar middle class, female wouldbe intellectuals, the hypochondriac, and, in *Tartuffe*, the religious hypocrite.

In *Tartuffe* (1664), as in his other plays, Molière employs classic comic devices of plot and character—here, a foolish, stubborn father blocking the course of young love; an impudent servant commenting on her superiors' actions; a happy ending involving a marriage facilitated by implausible means. He uses such devices, however, often to comment on his own immediate social scene, imagining how universal patterns play themselves out in a specific historical context. *Tartuffe* had contemporary relevance so transparent that the Catholic Church forced the king to ban it, although Molière managed to have it published and produced once more by 1669.

The play's emotional energy derives not from the simple discrepancy of man and mask in Tartuffe ("Is not a face quite different from a mask?" inquires the normative character Cléante, who has no trouble making such distinctions) but from the struggle for erotic, psychic, and economic power in which people employ their masks. One can readily imagine modern equivalents for the stresses and strains within Orgon's family. Orgon, an aging man with grown children, seeks ways to preserve control. His mother, Mme. Pernelle, encourages his efforts, thus fostering her illusion that *she* still runs things. Orgon identifies his own interests with those of the hypocritical Tartuffe, toward whom he plays a benevolent role. Because Tartuffe fulsomely hails him as benefactor, Orgon feels utterly powerful in relation to his fawning dependent. When he orders his passive daughter Mariane to marry Tartuffe, he reveals his vision of complete domestic autocracy. Tartuffe's lust, one of those passions forever eluding human mastery, disturbs Orgon's arrangements; in the end, the will of the offstage king orders everything, as though a benevolent god had intervened.

To make Tartuffe a specifically religious hypocrite is an act of inventive daring. Orgon, like his mother, conceals from himself his will to power by verbally subordinating himself to that divinity which Tartuffe too invokes.

Although one may readily accept Molière's defense of his intentions (not to mock faith but to attack its misuse), it is not hard to see why the play might trouble religious authorities. Molière suggests how readily religious faith lends itself to misuse, how high-sounding pieties allow men and women to evade self-examination and immediate responsibilities. Tartuffe deceives others by his grandiosities of mortification ("Hang up my hair shirt") and charity; he encourages his victims in their own grandiosities. Orgon can indulge a fantasy of self-subordination (remarking of Tartuffe, "He guides our lives") at the same time that he furthers his more hidden desire for power. Religion offers ready justification for a course manifestly destructive as well as self-seeking.

Cléante, before he meets Tartuffe, claims (accurately) to understand him by his effects on others. Throughout the play, Cléante speaks in the voice of wisdom, counseling moderation, common sense, and self-control, calling attention to folly. More important, he emphasizes how the issues Molière examines in this comedy relate to dominant late seventeenth-century themes.

> Ah, Brother, man's a strangely fashioned creature
> Who seldom is content to follow Nature,
> But recklessly pursues his inclination
> Beyond the narrow bounds of moderation,
> And often, by transgressing Reason's laws,
> Perverts a lofty aim or noble cause.

To follow Nature means to act appropriately to the human situation in the created universe. Humankind occupies a middle position, between beasts and angels; such aspirations as Orgon's desire to control his daughter completely, or his apparent wish to submit himself absolutely to Tartuffe's claim of heavenly wisdom, imply a hope to surpass limitations inherent in the human condition. As Cléante's observations suggest, "to follow Nature," given the rationality of the universe, implies adherence to "Reason's laws." All transgression involves failure to submit to reason's dictates. Molière, with his stylized comic plot, makes that point as insistently as does Racine, who depicts grand passions and cataclysmic effects from them.

Although Cléante understands and can enunciate the principles of proper conduct, his wisdom has no direct effect on the play's action. In spite of the fact that the comedy suggests a social world in which women exist in utter subordination to fathers and husbands, in the plot two women bring about the clarifications that unmask the villain. The virtuous wife Elmire, object of Tartuffe's lust, and the articulate servant girl Dorine confront the immediate situation with pragmatic inventiveness. Dorine goads others to response; Elmire encourages Tartuffe to play out his sexual fantasies before a hidden audience. Both women have a clear sense of right and wrong, although they express it in less resounding terms than does Cléante. Their concrete insistence on facing what's really going on, cutting through all obfuscation, rescues the men from entanglement in their own abstract formulations.

The women's clarifications, however, do not resolve the comedy's dilemmas. Suddenly the context shifts: economic terms replace erotic ones. It is as though Tartuffe were only playing in his attempt to seduce Elmire; now

we get to what really matters: money. For all his claims of disinterestedness, Tartuffe has managed to get control of his dupe's property. Control of property, the action gradually reveals, amounts to power over life itself: prison threatens Orgon, and the prospect of expulsion from their home menaces him and his family alike. Only the convenient and ostentatious artifice of royal intervention rescues the victims and punishes their betrayer.

Comedies conventionally end in the restoration of order, declaring that good inevitably triumphs; rationality renews itself despite the temporary deviations of the foolish and the vicious. At the end of *Tartuffe*, Orgon and his mother have been chastened by revelation of their favorite's depravity; Mariane has been allowed to marry her lover; Tartuffe has been judged; the king's power and justice have reasserted themselves and been acknowledged. In the organization of family and nation (metaphorically a larger family), order reassumes dominion. Yet the arbitrary intervention of the king leaves a disturbing emotional residue. The play has demonstrated that Tartuffe's corrupt will to power (as opposed to Orgon's merely foolish will) can ruthlessly aggrandize itself. Money speaks, in Orgon's society as in ours; possession of wealth implies total control over others. Only a kind of miracle can save Orgon. The miracle occurs, given the benign world of comedy, but the play reminds its readers of the extreme precariousness with which reason finally triumphs, even given the presence of such reasonable people as Cléante and Elmire. Tartuffe's monstrous lust, for women, money, power, genuinely endangers the social structure. *Tartuffe* enforces recognition of the constant threats to rationality, of how much we have at stake in trying to use reason as principle of action.

K. Mantzius, *Molière* (1908), provides a good biographical introduction to Molière. Useful critical studies include J. D. Hubert, *Molière and the Comedy of Intellect* (1962), and L. Gossman, *Men and Masks: A Study of Molière* (1963).

Tartuffe[1]

Preface

Here is a comedy that has excited a good deal of discussion and that has been under attack for a long time; and the persons who are mocked by it have made it plain that they are more powerful in France than all whom my plays have satirized up to this time. Noblemen, ladies of fashion, cuckolds, and doctors all kindly consented to their presentation, which they themselves seemed to enjoy along with everyone else; but hypocrites do not understand banter: they became angry at once, and found it strange that I was bold enough to represent their actions and to care to describe a profession shared by so many good men. This is a crime for which they cannot forgive me, and they have taken up arms against my comedy in a terrible rage. They were careful not to attack it at the point that had wounded them: they are too crafty for that and too clever to reveal their true character. In

1. Translated by 1169, Molière added his three petitions to Louis XIV; they follow the preface.

keeping with their lofty custom, they have used the cause of God to mask their private interests; and *Tartuffe*, they say, is a play that offends piety: it is filled with abominations from beginning to end, and nowhere is there a line that does not deserve to be burned. Every syllable is wicked, the very gestures are criminal, and the slightest glance, turn of the head, or step from right to left conceals mysteries that they are able to explain to my disadvantage. In vain did I submit the play to the criticism of my friends and the scrutiny of the public: all the corrections I could make, the judgment of the king and queen who saw the play,[2] the approval of great princes and ministers of state who honored it with their presence, the opinion of good men who found it worthwhile, all this did not help. They will not let go of their prey, and every day of the week they have pious zealots abusing me in public and damning me out of charity.

I would care very little about all they might say except that their devices make enemies of men whom I respect and gain the support of genuinely good men, whose faith they know and who, because of the warmth of their piety, readily accept the impressions that others present to them. And it is this which forces me to defend myself. Especially to the truly devout do I wish to vindicate my play, and I beg of them with all my heart not to condemn it before seeing it, to rid themselves of preconceptions, and not aid the cause of men dishonored by their actions.

If one takes the trouble to examine my comedy in good faith, he will surely see that my intentions are innocent throughout, and tend in no way to make fun of what men revere; that I have presented the subject with all the precautions that its delicacy imposes; and that I have used all the art and skill that I could to distinguish clearly the character of the hypocrite from that of the truly devout man. For that purpose I used two whole acts to prepare the appearance of my scoundrel. Never is there a moment's doubt about his character; he is known at once from the qualities I have given him; and from one end of the play to the other, he does not say a word, he does not perform an action which does not depict to the audience the character of a wicked man, and which does not bring out in sharp relief the character of the truly good man which I oppose to it.

I know full well that by way of reply, these gentlemen try to insinuate that it is not the role of the theater to speak of these matters; but with their permission, I ask them on what do they base this fine doctrine. It is a proposition they advance as no more than a supposition, for which they offer not a shred of proof; and surely it would not be difficult to show them that comedy, for the ancients, had its origin in religion and constituted a part of its ceremonies; that our neighbors, the Spaniards, have hardly a single holiday celebration in which a comedy is not a part; and that even here in France, it owes its birth to the efforts of a religious brotherhood who still own the Hôtel de Bourgogne, where the most important mystery plays of our faith were presented;[3] that you can still find comedies printed in gothic letters under the name of a learned doctor of the Sorbonne;[4] and without

2. Louis XIV was married to Marie Thérèse of Austria. 3. A reference to the *Confrérie de la Passion et Résurrection de Notre-Seigneur* (the Fraternity of the Passion and Resurrection of Our Saviour), founded in 1402. The Hôtel de Bourgogne was a rival theater of Molière. 4. Probably Maitre Jehán Michel, a medical doctor who wrote mystery plays.

going so far, in our own day the religious dramas of Pierre Corneille[5] have been performed to the admiration of all France.

If the function of comedy is to correct men's vices, I do not see why any should be exempt. Such a condition in our society would be much more dangerous than the thing itself; and we have seen that the theater is admirably suited to provide correction. The most forceful lines of a serious moral statement are usually less powerful than those of satire; and nothing will reform most men better than the depiction of their faults. It is a vigorous blow to vices to expose them to public laughter. Criticism is taken lightly, but men will not tolerate satire. They are quite willing to be mean, but they never like to be ridiculed.

I have been attacked for having placed words of piety in the mouth of my impostor. Could I avoid doing so in order to represent properly the character of a hypocrite? It seemed to me sufficient to reveal the criminal motives which make him speak as he does, and I have eliminated all ceremonial phrases, which nonetheless he would not have been found using incorrectly. Yet some say that in the fourth act he sets forth a vicious morality; but is not this a morality which everyone has heard again and again? Does my comedy say anything new here? And is there any fear that ideas so thoroughly detested by everyone can make an impression on men's minds; that I make them dangerous by presenting them in the theater; that they acquire authority from the lips of a scoundrel? There is not the slightest suggestion of any of this; and one must either approve the comedy of *Tartuffe* or condemn all comedies in general.

This has indeed been done in a furious way for some time now, and never was the theater so much abused.[6] I cannot deny that there were Church Fathers who condemned comedy; but neither will it be denied me that there were some who looked on it somewhat more favorably. Thus authority, on which censure is supposed to depend, is destroyed by this disagreement; and the only conclusion that can be drawn from this difference of opinion among men enlightened by the same wisdom is that they viewed comedy in different ways, and that some considered it in its purity, while others regarded it in its corruption and confused it with all those wretched performances which have been rightly called performances of filth.

And in fact, since we should talk about things rather than words, and since most misunderstanding comes from including contrary notions in the same word, we need only to remove the veil of ambiguity and look at comedy in itself to see if it warrants condemnation. It will surely be recognized that as it is nothing more than a clever poem which corrects men's faults by means of agreeable lessons, it cannot be condemned without injustice. And if we listened to the voice of ancient times on this matter, it would tell us that its most famous philosophers have praised comedy—they who professed so austere a wisdom and who ceaselessly denounced the vices of their times. It would tell us that Aristotle spent his evenings at the theater[7] and took the trouble to reduce the art of making comedies to rules. It would tell us that

5. Pierre Corneille (1606–1684) and Racine were France's two greatest writers of classic tragedy. The two dramas Molière doubtlessly had in mind were *Polyeucte* (1643) and *Théodore, vierge et martyre* (1645). 6. Molière had in mind Nicole's two attacks on the theater: *Visionnaries* (1666) and *Traité de Comédie*, the Prince de Conti's *Traité de Comédie* (1666). 7. A reference to Aristole's *Poetics* (composed between 335 and 322 B.C., the year of his death).

some of its greatest and most honored men took pride in writing comedies themselves;[8] and that others did not disdain to recite them in public; that Greece expressed its admiration for this art by means of handsome prizes and magnificent theaters to honor it; and finally, that in Rome this same art also received extraordinary honors; I do not speak of Rome run riot under the license of the emperors, but of disciplined Rome, governed by the wisdom of the consuls, and in the age of the full vigor of Roman dignity.

I admit that there have been times when comedy became corrupt. And what do men not corrupt every day? There is nothing so innocent that men cannot turn it to crime; nothing so beneficial that its values cannot be reversed; nothing so good in itself that it cannot be put to bad uses. Medical knowledge benefits mankind and is revered as one of our most wonderful possessions; and yet there was a time when it fell into discredit, and was often used to poison men. Philosophy is a gift of Heaven; it has been given to us to bring us to the knowledge of a God by contemplating the wonders of nature; and yet we know that often it has been turned away from its function and has been used openly in support of impiety. Even the holiest of things are not immune from human corruption, and every day we see scoundrels who use and abuse piety, and wickedly make it serve the greatest of crimes. But this does not prevent one from making the necessary distinctions. We do not confuse in the same false inference the goodness of things that are corrupted with the wickedness of the corrupt. The function of an art is always distinguished from its misuse; and as medicine is not forbidden because it was banned in Rome,[9] nor philosophy because it was publicly condemned in Athens,[1] we should not suppress comedy simply because it has been condemned at certain times. This censure was justified then for reasons which no longer apply today; it was limited to what was then seen; and we should not seize on these limits, apply them more rigidly than is necessary, and include in our condemnation the innocent along with the guilty. The comedy that this censure attacked is in no way the comedy that we want to defend. We must be careful not to confuse the one with the other. There may be two persons whose morals may be completely different. They may have no resemblance to one another except in their names, and it would be a terrible injustice to want to condemn Olympia, who is a good woman, because there is also an Olympia who is lewd. Such procedures would make for great confusion everywhere. Everything under the sun would be condemned; now since this rigor is not applied to the countless instances of abuse we see every day, the same should hold for comedy, and those plays should be approved in which instruction and virtue reign supreme.

I know there are some so delicate that they cannot tolerate a comedy, who say that the most decent are the most dangerous, that the passions they present are all the more moving because they are virtuous, and that men's feelings are stirred by these presentations. I do not see what great crime it is to be affected by the sight of a generous passion; and this utter insensitivity to which they would lead us is indeed a high degree of virtue! I wonder if so

8. The Roman consul and general responsible for the final destruction of Carthage in 146 B.C., Scipio Africanus Minor (*ca.* 185–129 B.C.), collaborated with the writer of comedies, Terence (Publius Terentius Afer, *ca.* 195 or 185 -*ca.* 159 B.C.). 9. Pliny the Elder says that the Romans expelled their doctors at the same time that the Greeks did theirs. 1. An allusion to Socrates' condemnation to death.

great a perfection resides within the strength of human nature, and I wonder if it is not better to try to correct and moderate men's passions than to try to suppress them altogether. I grant that there are places better to visit than the theater; and if we want to condemn every single thing that does not bear directly on God and our salvation, it is right that comedy be included, and I should willingly grant that it be condemned along with everything else. But if we admit, as is in fact true, that the exercise of piety will permit interruptions, and that men need amusement, I maintain that there is none more innocent than comedy. I have dwelled too long on this matter. Let me finish with the words of a great prince on the comedy, *Tartuffe*.[2]

Eight days after it had been banned, a play called *Scaramouche the Hermit*[3] was performed before the court; and the king, on his way out, said to this great prince: "I should really like to know why the persons who make so much noise about Molière's comedy do not say a word about *Scaramouche*." To which the prince replied, "It is because the comedy of *Scaramouche* makes fun of Heaven and religion, which these gentlemen do not care about at all, but that of Molière makes fun of *them*, and that is what they cannot bear."

THE AUTHOR

First Petition[4]

(PRESENTED TO THE KING ON THE COMEDY OF TARTUFFE)

Sire,

As the duty of comedy is to correct men by amusing them, I believed that in my occupation I could do nothing better than attack the vices of my age by making them ridiculous; and as hypocrisy is undoubtedly one of the most common, most improper, and most dangerous, I thought, Sire, that I would perform a service for all good men of your kingdom if I wrote a comedy which denounced hypocrites and placed in proper view all of the contrived poses of these incredibly virtuous men, all of the concealed villainies of these counterfeit believers who would trap others with a fraudulent piety and a pretended virtue.

I have written this comedy, Sire, with all the care and caution that the delicacy of the subject demands; and so as to maintain all the more properly the admiration and respect due to truly devout men, I have delineated my character as sharply as I could; I have left no room for doubt; I have removed all that might confuse good with

2. One of Molière's benefactors who liked the play was the Prince de Condé; de Condé had *Tartuffe* read to him and also privately performed for him. 3. A troupe of Italian comedians had just performed the licentious farce, where a hermit dressed as a monk makes love to a married woman, announcing that *questo e per mortificar la carne* ("this is to mortify the flesh"). 4. The first of the three *petitions* or *placets* to Louis XIV concerning the play. On May 12, 1664, *Tartuffe*—or at least the first three acts roughly as they now stand—was performed at Versailles. A cabal unfavorable to Molière, including the Archbishop of Paris, Hardouin de Péréfixe, Queen-Mother Anne of Austria, certain influential courtiers, and the Brotherhood or Company of the Holy Sacrament (formed in 1627 to enforce morality), arranged that the play be banned and Molière censured.

evil, and have used for this painting only the specific colors and essential lines that make one instantly recognize a true and brazen hypocrite.

Nevertheless, all my precautions have been to no avail. Others have taken advantage of the delicacy of your feelings on religious matters, and they have been able to deceive you on the only side of your character which lies open to deception: your respect for holy things. By underhanded means, the Tartuffes have skillfully gained Your Majesty's favor, and the models have succeeded in eliminating the copy, no matter how innocent it may have been and no matter what resemblance was found between them.

Although the suppression of this work was a serious blow for me, my misfortune was nonetheless softened by the way in which Your Majesty explained his attitude on the matter; and I believed, Sire, that Your Majesty removed any cause I had for complaint, as you were kind enough to declare that you found nothing in this comedy that you would forbid me to present in public.

Yet, despite this glorious declaration of the greatest and most enlightened king in the world, despite the approval of the Papal Legate[5] and of most of our churchmen, all of whom, at private readings of my work, agreed with the views of Your Majesty, despite all this, a book has appeared by a certain priest[6] which boldly contradicts all of these noble judgments. Your Majesty expressed himself in vain, and the Papal Legate and churchmen gave their opinion to no avail: sight unseen, my comedy is diabolical, and so is my brain; I am a devil garbed in flesh and disguised as a man,[7] a libertine, a disbeliever who deserves a punishment that will set an example. It is not enough that fire expiate my crime in public, for that would be letting me off too easily: the generous piety of this good man will not stop there; he will not allow me to find any mercy in the sight of God; he demands that I be damned, and that will settle the matter.

This book, Sire, was presented to Your Majesty; and I am sure that you see for yourself how unpleasant it is for me to be exposed daily to the insults of these gentlemen, what harm these abuses will do my reputation if they must be tolerated, and finally, how important it is for me to clear myself of these false charges and let the public know that my comedy is nothing more than what they want it to be. I will not ask, Sire, for what I need for the sake of my reputation and the innocence of my work: enlightened kings such as you do not need to be told what is wished of them; like God, they see what we need and know better than we what they should give us.

5. Cardinal Legate Chigi, nephew to Pope Alexander VII, heard a reading of *Tartuffe* at Fontainebleau on August 4, 1664. 6. Pierre Roullé, the curate of St. Barthélémy, who wrote a scathing attack on the play and sent his book to the king. 7. Molière took some of these phrases from Roullé.

It is enough for me to place my interests in Your Majesty's hands, and I respectfully await whatever you may care to command.

(August, 1664)

Second Petition[8]

(PRESENTED TO THE KING IN HIS CAMP BEFORE THE CITY OF LILLE, IN FLANDERS)

Sire,

It is bold indeed for me to ask a favor of a great monarch in the midst of his glorious victories; but in my present situation, Sire, where will I find protection anywhere but where I seek it, and to whom can I appeal against the authority of the power that crushes me,[9] if not to the source of power and authority, the just dispenser of absolute law, the sovereign judge and master of all?

My comedy, Sire, has not enjoyed the kindnesses of Your Majesty. All to no avail, I produced it under the title of *The Hypocrite* and disguised the principal character as a man of the world; in vain I gave him a little hat, long hair, a wide collar, a sword, and lace clothing,[1] softened the action and carefully eliminated all that I thought might provide even the shadow of grounds for discontent on the part of the famous models of the portrait I wished to present; nothing did any good. The conspiracy of opposition revived even at mere conjecture of what the play would be like. They found a way of persuading those who in all other matters plainly insist that they are not to be deceived. No sooner did my comedy appear than it was struck down by the very power which should impose respect; and all that I could do to save myself from the fury of this tempest was to say that Your Majesty had given me permission to present the play and I did not think it was necessary to ask this permission of others, since only Your Majesty could have refused it.

I have no doubt, Sire, that the men whom I depict in my comedy will employ every means possible to influence Your Majesty, and will use, as they have used already, those truly good men who are all the more easily deceived because they judge of others by themselves.[2] They know how to display all of their aims in the most favorable light; yet, no matter how pious they may seem, it is surely not

8. On August 5, 1667, *Tartuffe* was performed at the Palais-Royal. The opposition—headed by the First President of Parliament—brought in the police, and the play was stopped. Since Louis was campaigning in Flanders, friends of Molière brought the second *placet* to Lille. Louis had always been favorable toward the playwright; in August, 1665, Molière's company, the *Troupe de Monsieur* (nominally sponsored by Louis's brother Philippe, Duc d'Orléans) had become the *Troupe du Roi*. 9. President de Lanvignon, in charge of the Paris police. 1. There is evidence that in 1664 Tartuffe played his role dressed in a cassock, thus allying him more directly to the clergy. 2. Molière apparently did not know that de Lanvignon had been affiliated with the Company of the Holy Sacrament for the previous ten years.

the interests of God which stir them; they have proven this often enough in the comedies they have allowed to be performed hundreds of times without making the least objection. Those plays attacked only piety and religion, for which they care very little; but this play attacks and makes fun of them, and that is what they cannot bear. They will never forgive me for unmasking their hypocrisy in the eyes of everyone. And I am sure that they will not neglect to tell Your Majesty that people are shocked by my comedy. But the simple truth, Sire, is that all Paris is shocked only by its ban, that the most scrupulous persons have found its presentation worthwhile, and men are astounded that individuals of such known integrity should show so great a deference to people whom everyone should abominate and who are so clearly opposed to the true piety which they profess.

I respectfully await the judgment that Your Majesty will deign to pronounce: but it's certain, Sire, that I need not think of writing comedies if the Tartuffes are triumphant, if they thereby seize the right to persecute me more than ever, and find fault with even the most innocent lines that flow from my pen.

Let your goodness, Sire, give me protection against their envenomed rage, and allow me, at your return from so glorious a campaign, to relieve Your Majesty from the fatigue of his conquests, give him innocent pleasures after such noble accomplishments, and make the monarch laugh who makes all Europe tremble!

(August, 1667)

Third Petition

(PRESENTED TO THE KING)

Sire,

A very honest doctor[3] whose patient I have the honor to be, promises and will legally contract to make me live another thirty years if I can obtain a favor for him from Your Majesty. I told him of his promise that I do not deserve so much, and that I should be glad to help him if he will merely agree not to kill me. This favor, Sire, is a post of canon at your royal chapel of Vincennes, made vacant by death.

May I dare to ask for this favor from Your Majesty on the very day of the glorious resurrection of *Tartuffe*, brought back to life by your goodness? By this first favor I have been reconciled with the devout, and the second will reconcile me with the doctors.[4] Undoubtedly this would be too much grace for me at one time, but perhaps it

3. A physician friend, M. de Mauvillain, who helped Molière with some of the medical details of *Le Malade imaginaire*. 4. Doctors are ridiculed to varying degrees in earlier plays of Molière: *Dom Juan*, *L'Amour médecin*, and *Le Médecin malgré lui*.

would not be too much for Your Majesty, and I await your answer to my petition with respectful hope.

(February, 1669)

Characters[5]

MADAME PERNELLE, *Orgon's mother*
ORGON, *Elmire's husband*
ELMIRE, *Orgon's wife*
DAMIS, *Orgon's son, Elmire's stepson*
MARIANE, *Orgon's daughter, Elmire's stepdaughter, in love with Valère*
VALERE, *in love with Mariane*
CLEANTE, *Orgon's brother-in-law*
TARTUFFE, *a hypocrite*
DORINE, *Mariane's lady's-maid*
M. LOYAL, *a bailiff*
A POLICE OFFICER
FLIPOTE, *Mme Pernelle's maid*
The SCENE *throughout: Orgon's house in Paris*

Act I

SCENE 1. *Madame Pernelle and Flipote, her maid, Elmire, Mariane, Dorine, Damis, Cléante*

MADAME PERNELLE. Come, come, Flipote; it's time I left this place.
ELMIRE. I can't keep up, you walk at such a pace.
MADAME PERNELLE. Don't trouble, child; no need to show me out.
It's not your manners I'm concerned about.
ELMIRE. We merely pay you the respect we owe.
But, Mother, why this hurry? Must you go?
MADAME PERNELLE. I must. This house appals me. No one in it
Will pay attention for a single minute.
I offer good advice, but you won't hear it.
Children, I take my leave much vexed in spirit.
You all break in and chatter on and on.
It's like a madhouse[6] with the keeper gone.
DORINE. If . . .
MADAME PERNELLE. Girl, you talk too much, and I'm afraid
You're far too saucy for a lady's-maid.

5. The name Tartuffe has been traced back to an older word associated with liar or charlatan: *truffer*, "to deceive" or "to cheat." Then there was also the Italian actor, Tartufo, physically deformed and truffle-shaped. Most of the other names are typical of this genre of court-comedy and possess rather elegant connotations of pastoral and *bergerie*. Dorine would be a *demoiselle de compagne* and not a mere maid; that is, a female companion to Mariane of roughly the same social status. This in part accounts for the liberties she takes in conversation with Orgon, Madame Pernelle, and others. Her name is short for Théodorine. 6. In the original, *la cour du roi Pétaud*, the Court of King Pétaud where all are masters; a house of misrule.

You push in everywhere and have your say.
DAMIS. But . . .
MADAME PERNELLE. You, boy, grow more foolish every day.
To think my grandson should be such a dunce!
I've said a hundred times, if I've said it once,
That if you keep the course on which you've started,
You'll leave your worthy father broken-hearted.
MARIANE. I think . . .
MADAME PERNELLE. And you, his sister, seem so pure,
So shy, so innocent, and so demure.
But you know what they say about still waters.
I pity parents with secretive daughters.
ELMIRE. Now, Mother . . .
MADAME PERNELLE. And as for you, child, let me add
That your behavior is extremely bad,
And a poor example for these children, too.
Their dear, dead mother did far better than you.
You're much too free with money, and I'm distressed
To see you so elaborately dressed.
When it's one's husband that one aims to please,
One has no need of costly fripperies.
CLEANTE. Oh, Madam, really . . .
MADAME PERNELLE. You are her brother, Sir,
And I respect and love you; yet if I were
My son, this lady's good and pious spouse,
I wouldn't make you welcome in my house.
You're full of worldly counsels which, I fear,
Aren't suitable for decent folk to hear.
I've spoken bluntly, Sir; but it behooves us
Not to mince words when righteous fervor moves us.
DAMIS. Your man Tartuffe is full of holy speeches . . .
MADAME PERNELLE. And practises precisely what he preaches.
He's a fine man, and should be listened to.
I will not hear him mocked by fools like you.
DAMIS. Good God! Do you expect me to submit
To the tyranny of that carping hypocrite?
Must we forgo all joys and satisfactions
Because that bigot censures all our actions?
DORINE. To hear him talk—and he talks all the time—
There's nothing one can do that's not a crime.
He rails at everything, your dear Tartuffe.
MADAME PERNELLE. Whatever he reproves deserves reproof.
He's out to save your souls, and all of you
Must love him, as my son would have you do.
DAMIS. Ah no, Grandmother, I could never take

To such a rascal, even for my father's sake.
That's how I feel, and I shall not dissemble.
His every action makes me seethe and tremble,
With helpless anger, and I have no doubt
That he and I will shortly have it out.

DORINE. Surely it is a shame and a disgrace
To see this man usurp the master's place—
To see this beggar who, when first he came,
Had not a shoe or shoestring to his name
So far forget himself that he behaves
As if the house were his, and we his slaves.

MADAME PERNELLE. Well, mark my words, your souls would fare far better
If you obeyed his precepts to the letter.

DORINE. You see him as a saint. I'm far less awed;
In fact, I see right through him. He's a fraud.

MADAME PERNELLE. Nonsense!

DORINE. His man Laurent's the same, or worse;
I'd not trust either with a penny purse.

MADAME PERNELLE. I can't say what his servant's morals may be;
His own great goodness I can guarantee.
You all regard him with distaste and fear
Because he tells you what you're loath to hear,
Condemns your sins, points out your moral flaws,
And humbly strives to further Heaven's cause.

DORINE. If sin is all that bothers him, why is it
He's so upset when folk drop in to visit?
Is Heaven so outraged by a social call
That he must prophesy against us all?
I'll tell you what I think: if you ask me,
He's jealous of my mistress' company.

MADAME PERNELLE. Rubbish! [*To* ELMIRE] He's not alone, child, in complaining
Of all of your promiscuous entertaining.
Why, the whole neighborhood's upset, I know,
By all these carriages that come and go,
With crowds of guests parading in and out
And noisy servants loitering about.
In all of this, I'm sure there's nothing vicious;
But why give people cause to be suspicious?

CLEANTE. They need no cause; they'll talk in any case.
Madam, this world would be a joyless place
If, fearing what malicious tongues might say,
We locked our doors and turned our friends away.

And even if one did so dreary a thing,
D' you think those tongues would cease their chattering?
One can't fight slander; it's a losing battle;
Let us instead ignore their tittle-tattle.
Let's strive to live by conscience' clear decrees,
And let the gossips gossip as they please.

DORINE. If there is talk against us, I know the source:
It's Daphne and her little husband, of course.
Those who have greatest cause for guilt and shame
Are quickest to besmirch a neighbor's name.
When there's a chance for libel, they never miss it;
When something can be made to seem illicit
They're off at once to spread the joyous news,
Adding to fact what fantasies they choose.
By talking up their neighbor's indiscretions
They seek to camouflage their own transgressions,
Hoping that others' innocent affairs
Will lend a hue of innocence to theirs,
Or that their own black guilt will come to seem
Part of a general shady color-scheme.

MADAME PERNELLE. All this is quite irrelevant. I doubt
That anyone's more virtuous and devout
Than dear Orante; and I'm informed that she
Condemns your mode of life most vehemently.

DORINE. Oh, yes, she's strict, devout, and has no taint
Of worldliness; in short, she seems a saint.
But it was time which taught her that disguise;
She's thus because she can't be otherwise.
So long as her attractions could enthrall,
She flounced and flirted and enjoyed it all,
But now that they're no longer what they were
She quits a world which fast is quitting her,
And wears a veil of virtue to conceal
Her bankrupt beauty and her lost appeal.
That's what becomes of old coquettes today:
Distressed when all their lovers fall away,
They see no recourse but to play the prude,
And so confer a style on solitude.
Thereafter, they're severe with everyone,
Condemning all our actions, pardoning none,
And claiming to be pure, austere, and zealous
When, if the truth were known, they're merely jealous,
And cannot bear to see another know
The pleasures time has forced them to forgo.

MADAME PERNELLE. [*Initially to* ELMIRE] That sort of talk[7] is what you like to hear;
Therefore you'd have us all keep still, my dear,
While Madam rattles on the livelong day.
Nevertheless, I mean to have my say.
I tell you that you're blest to have Tartuffe
Dwelling, as my son's guest, beneath this roof;
That Heaven has sent him to forestall its wrath
By leading you, once more, to the true path;
That all he reprehends is reprehensible,
And that you'd better heed him, and be sensible.
These visits, balls, and parties in which you revel
Are nothing but inventions of the Devil.
One never hears a word that's edifying:
Nothing but chaff and foolishness and lying,
As well as vicious gossip in which one's neighbor
Is cut to bits with épée, foil, and saber.
People of sense are driven half-insane
At such affairs, where noise and folly reign
And reputations perish thick and fast.
As a wise preacher said on Sunday last,
Parties are Towers of Babylon,[8] because
The guests all babble on with never a pause;
And then he told a story which, I think . . .
[*To* CLEANTE] I heard that laugh, Sir, and I saw that wink!
Go find your silly friends and laugh some more!
Enough; I'm going; don't show me to the door.
I leave this household much dismayed and vexed;
I cannot say when I shall see you next.
[*Slapping* FLIPOTE] Wake up, don't stand there gaping into space!
I'll slap some sense into that stupid face.
Move, move, you slut.

SCENE 2. *Cléante, Dorine*

CLEANTE. I think I'll stay behind;
I want no further pieces of her mind.
How that old lady . . .
DORINE. Oh, what wouldn't she say
If she could hear you speak of her that way!
She'd thank you for the *lady,* but I'm sure
She'd find the *old* a little premature.
CLEANTE. My, what a scene she made, and what a din!

7. In the original, a reference to a collection of novels about chivalry found in *La Bibliothèque bleue (The Blue Library)*, written for children. 8. I.e., Tower of Babel. Mme. Pernelle's malapropism is the cause of Cléante's laughter.

And how this man Tartuffe has taken her in!
DORINE. Yes, but her son is even worse deceived;
His folly must be seen to be believed.
In the late troubles,[9] he played an able part
And served his king with wise and loyal heart,
But he's quite lost his senses since he fell
Beneath Tartuffe's infatuating spell.
He calls him brother, and loves him as his life,
Preferring him to mother, child, or wife.
In him and him alone will he confide;
He's made him his confessor and his guide;
He pets and pampers him with love more tender
Than any pretty maiden could engender,
Gives him the place of honor when they dine,
Delights to see him gorging like a swine,
Stuffs him with dainties till his guts distend,
And when he belches, cries "God bless you, friend!"
In short, he's mad; he worships him; he dotes;
His deeds he marvels at, his words, he quotes,
Thinking each act a miracle, each word
Oracular as those that Moses heard.
Tartuffe, much pleased to find so easy a victim,
Has in a hundred ways beguiled and tricked him,
Milked him of money, and with his permission
Established here a sort of Inquisition.
Even Laurent, his lackey, dares to give
Us arrogant advice on how to live;
He sermonizes us in thundering tones
And confiscates our ribbons and colognes.
Last week he tore a kerchief into pieces
Because he found it pressed in a *Life of Jesus:*
He said it was a sin to juxtapose
Unholy vanities and holy prose.

SCENE 3. *Elmire, Mariane, Damis, Cléante, Dorine*

ELMIRE. [*To* CLEANTE] You did well not to follow; she stood in the door
And said *verbatim* all she'd said before.
I saw my husband coming. I think I'd best
Go upstairs now, and take a little rest.
CLEANTE. I'll wait and greet him here; then I must go.
I've really only time to say hello.

9. A series of political disturbances during the minority of Louis XIV. Specifically these consisted of the *Fronde* ("opposition") of the Parlement (1648–1649) and the *Fronde* of the Princes (1650–1653). Orgon is depicted as supporting Louis XIV in these outbreaks and their resolution.

DAMIS. Sound him about my sister's wedding, please.
I think Tartuffe's against it, and that he's
Been urging Father to withdraw his blessing.
As you well know, I'd find that most distressing.
Unless my sister and Valère can marry,
My hopes to wed *his* sister will miscarry.
And I'm determined . . .
DORINE. He's coming.

SCENE 4. *Orgon, Cléante, Dorine*

ORGON. Ah, Brother, good-day.
CLEANTE. Well, welcome back, I'm sorry I can't stay.
How was the country? Blooming, I trust, and green?
ORGON. Excuse me, Brother; just one moment.
[*To* DORINE] Dorine . . .
[*To* CLEANTE] To put my mind at rest, I always learn
The household news the moment I return.
[*To* DORINE] Has all been well, these two days I've been gone?
How are the family? What's been going on?
DORINE. Your wife, two days ago, had a bad fever,
And a fierce headache which refused to leave her.
ORGON. Ah. And Tartuffe?
DORINE. Tartuffe? Why, he's round and red.
Bursting with health, and excellently fed.
ORGON. Poor fellow!
DORINE. That night, the mistress was unable
To take a single bite at the dinner-table.
Her headache-pains, she said, were simply hellish.
ORGON. Ah. And Tartuffe?
DORINE. He ate his meal with relish,
And zealously devoured in her presence
A leg of mutton and a brace of pheasants.
ORGON. Poor fellow!
DORINE. Well, the pains continued strong,
And so she tossed and tossed the whole night long,
Now icy-cold, now burning like a flame.
We sat beside her bed till morning came.
ORGON. Ah. And Tartuffe?
DORINE. Why, having eaten, he rose
And sought his room, already in a doze,
Got into his warm bed, and snored away
In perfect peace until the break of day.
ORGON. Poor fellow!
DORINE. After much ado, we talked her
Into dispatching someone for the doctor.

He bled her, and the fever quickly fell.
ORGON. Ah. And Tartuffe?
DORINE. He bore it very well.
To keep his cheerfulness at any cost,
And make up for the blood Madame had lost,
He drank, at lunch, four beakers full of port.
ORGON. Poor fellow.
DORINE. Both are doing well, in short.
I'll go and tell Madame that you've expressed
Keen sympathy and anxious interest.

SCENE 5. *Orgon, Cléante*

CLEANTE. That girl was laughing in your face, and though
I've no wish to offend you, even so
I'm bound to say that she had some excuse.
How can you possibly be such a goose?
Are you so dazed by this man's hocus-pocus
That all the world, save him, is out of focus?
You've given him clothing, shelter, food, and care;
Why must you also . . .
ORGON. Brother, stop right there.
You do not know the man of whom you speak.
CLEANTE. I grant you that. But my judgment's not so weak
That I can't tell, by his effect on others . . .
ORGON. Ah, when you meet him, you two will be like brothers!
There's been no loftier soul since time began.
He is a man who . . . a man who . . . an excellent man.
To keep his precepts is to be reborn,
And view this dunghill of a world with scorn.
Yes, thanks to him I'm a changed man indeed.
Under his tutelage my soul's been freed
From earthly loves, and every human tie:
My mother, children, brother, and wife could die,
And I'd not feel a single moment's pain.
CLEANTE. That's a fine sentiment, Brother; most humane.
ORGON. Oh, had you seen Tartuffe as I first knew him,
Your heart, like mine, would have surrendered to him.
He used to come into our church each day
And humbly kneel nearby, and start to pray.
He'd draw the eyes of everybody there
By the deep fervor of his heartfelt prayer;
He'd sigh and weep, and sometimes with a sound
Of rapture he would bend and kiss the ground;
And when I rose to go, he'd run before
To offer me holy-water at the door.

His serving-man, no less devout than he,
Informed me of his master's poverty;
I gave him gifts, but in his humbleness
He'd beg me every time to give him less.
"Oh, that's too much," he'd cry, "too much by twice!
I don't deserve it. The half, Sir, would suffice."
And when I wouldn't take it back, he'd share
Half of it with the poor, right then and there.
At length, Heaven prompted me to take him in
To dwell with us, and free our souls from sin.
He guides our lives, and to protect my honor
Stays by my wife, and keeps an eye upon her;
He tells me whom she sees, and all she does,
And seems more jealous than I ever was!
And how austere he is! Why, he can detect
A moral sin where you would least suspect;
In smallest trifles, he's extremely strict.
Last week, his conscience was severely pricked
Because, while praying, he had caught a flea
And killed it, so he felt, too wrathfully.[1]

CLEANTE. Good God, man! Have you lost your common sense—
Or is this all some joke at my expense?
How can you stand there and in all sobriety . . .

ORGON. Brother, your language savors of impiety.
Too much free-thinking's made your faith unsteady,
And as I've warned you many times already,
'Twill get you into trouble before you're through.

CLEANTE. So I've been told before by dupes like you:
Being blind, you'd have all others blind as well;
The clear-eyed man you call an infidel,
And he who sees through humbug and pretense
Is charged, by you, with want of reverence.
Spare me your warnings, Brother; I have no fear
Of speaking out, for you and Heaven to hear,
Against affected zeal and pious knavery.
There's true and false in piety, as in bravery,
And just as those whose courage shines the most
In battle, are the least inclined to boast,
So those whose hearts are truly pure and lowly
Don't make a flashy show of being holy.
There's a vast difference, so it seems to me,
Between true piety and hypocrisy:

1. In the *Golden Legend* (*Legenda santorum*), a popular collection of the lives of the saints written in the thirteenth century, it is said of St. Marcarius the Elder (d. 390) that he dwelt naked in the desert for six months, a penance he felt appropriate for having killed a flea.

How do you fail to see it, may I ask?
Is not a face quite different from a mask?
Cannot sincerity and cunning art,
Reality and semblance, be told apart?
Are scarecrows just like men, and do you hold
That a false coin is just as good as gold?
Ah, Brother, man's a strangely fashioned creature
Who seldom is content to follow Nature,
But recklessly pursues his inclination
Beyond the narrow bounds of moderation,
And often, by transgressing Reason's laws,
Perverts a lofty aim or noble cause.
A passing observation, but it applies.

ORGON. I see, dear Brother, that you're profoundly wise;
You harbor all the insight of the age.
You are our one clear mind, our only sage,
The era's oracle, its Cato[2] too,
And all mankind are fools compared to you.

CLEANTE. Brother, I don't pretend to be a sage,
Nor have I all the wisdom of the age.
There's just one insight I would dare to claim:
I know that true and false are not the same;
And just as there is nothing I more revere
Than a soul whose faith is steadfast and sincere,
Nothing that I more cherish and admire
Than honest zeal and true religious fire,
So there is nothing that I find more base
Than specious piety's dishonest face—
Than these bold mountebanks, these histrios
Whose impious mummeries and hollow shows
Exploit our love of Heaven, and make a jest
Of all that men think holiest and best;
These calculating souls who offer prayers
Not to their Maker, but as public wares,
And seek to buy respect and reputation
With lifted eyes and sighs of exaltation;
These charlatans, I say, whose pilgrim souls
Proceed, by way of Heaven, toward earthly goals,
Who weep and pray and swindle and extort,
Who preach the monkish life, but haunt the court,
Who make their zeal the partner of their vice—
Such men are vengeful, sly, and cold as ice,
And when there is an enemy to defame

2. Roman statesman (95 B.C.–46 B.C.) with an enduring reputation for honesty and incorruptibility.

They cloak their spite in fair religion's name,
Their private spleen and malice being made
To seem a high and virtuous crusade,
Until, to mankind's reverent applause,
They crucify their foe in Heaven's cause.
Such knaves are all too common; yet, for the wise,
True piety isn't hard to recognize,
And, happily, these present times provide us
With bright examples to instruct and guide us.
Consider Ariston and Périandre;
Look at Oronte, Alcidamas, Clitandre;[3]
Their virtue is acknowledged; who could doubt it?
But you won't hear them beat the drum about it.
They're never ostentatious, never vain,
And their religion's moderate and humane;
It's not their way to criticize and chide:
They think censoriousness a mark of pride,
And therefore, letting others preach and rave,
They show, by deeds, how Christians should behave.
They think no evil of their fellow man,
But judge of him as kindly as they can.
They don't intrigue and wangle and conspire;
To lead a good life is their one desire;
The sinner wakes no rancorous hate in them;
It is the sin alone which they condemn;
Nor do they try to show a fiercer zeal
For Heaven's cause than Heaven itself could feel.
These men I honor, these men I advocate
As models for us all to emulate.
Your man is not their sort at all, I fear:
And, while your praise of him is quite sincere,
I think that you've been dreadfully deluded.

ORGON. Now then, dear Brother, is your speech concluded?

CLEANTE. Why, yes.

ORGON. Your servant, Sir. [*He turns to go.*]

CLEANTE. No, Brother; wait.
There's one more matter. You agreed of late
That young Valère might have your daughter's hand.

ORGON. I did.

CLEANTE. And set the date, I understand.

ORGON. Quite so.

CLEANTE. You've now postponed it; is that true?

ORGON. No doubt.

3. Vaguely Greek and Roman names derived from the elegant literature of the day; not names of actual persons.

CLEANTE. The match no longer pleases you?
ORGON. Who knows?
CLEANTE. D'you mean to go back on your word?
ORGON. I won't say that.
CLEANTE. Has anything occurred
Which might entitle you to break your pledge?
ORGON. Perhaps.
CLEANTE. Why must you hem, and haw, and hedge?
The boy asked me to sound you in this affair . . .
ORGON. It's been a pleasure.
CLEANTE. But what shall I tell Valère?
ORGON. Whatever you like.
CLEANTE. But what have you decided?
What are your plans?
ORGON. I plan, Sir, to be guided
By Heaven's will.
CLEANTE. Come, Brother, don't talk rot.
You've given Valère your word; will you keep it, or not?
ORGON. Good day.
CLEANTE. This looks like poor Valère's undoing;
I'll go and warn him that there's trouble brewing.

Act II

SCENE 1. *Orgon, Mariane*

ORGON. Mariane.
MARIANE. Yes, Father?
ORGON. A word with you; come here.
MARIANE. What are you looking for?
ORGON. [*Peering into a small closet*] Eavesdroppers, dear.
I'm making sure we shan't be overheard.
Someone in there could catch our every word.
Ah, good, we're safe. Now, Mariane, my child,
You're a sweet girl who's tractable and mild,
Whom I hold dear, and think most highly of.
MARIANE. I'm deeply grateful, Father, for your love.
ORGON. That's well said, Daughter; and you can repay me
If, in all things, you'll cheerfully obey me.
MARIANE. To please you, Sir, is what delights me best.
ORGON. Good, good. Now, what d'you think of Tartuffe, our guest?
MARIANE. I, Sir?
ORGON. Yes. Weigh your answer; think it through.
MARIANE. Oh, dear. I'll say whatever you wish me to.
ORGON. That's wisely said, my Daughter. Say of him, then,

That he's the very worthiest of men,
And that you're fond of him, and would rejoice
In being his wife, if that should be my choice.
Well?

MARIANE. What?

ORGON. What's that?

MARIANE. I . . .

ORGON. Well?

MARIANE. Forgive me, pray.

ORGON. Did you not hear me?

MARIANE. Of *whom,* Sir, must I say
That I am fond of him, and would rejoice
In being his wife, if that should be your choice?

ORGON. Why, of Tartuffe.

MARIANE. But, Father, that's false, you know.
Why would you have me say what isn't so?

ORGON. Because I am resolved it shall be true.
That it's my wish should be enough for you.

MARIANE. You can't mean, Father . . .

ORGON. Yes, Tartuffe shall be
Allied by marriage[4] to this family,
And he's to be your husband, is that clear?
It's a father's privilege . . .

SCENE 2. *Dorine, Orgon, Mariane*

ORGON. [*To* DORINE] What are you doing in here?
Is curiosity so fierce a passion
With you, that you must eavesdrop in this fashion?

DORINE. There's lately been a rumor going about—
Based on some hunch or chance remark, no doubt—
That you mean Mariane to wed Tartuffe.
I've laughed it off, of course, as just a spoof.

ORGON. You find it so incredible?

DORINE. Yes, I do.
I won't accept that story, even from you.

ORGON. Well, you'll believe it when the thing is done.

DORINE. Yes, yes, of course. Go on and have your fun.

ORGON. I've never been more serious in my life.

DORINE. Ha!

ORGON. Daughter, I mean it; you're to be his wife.

DORINE. No, don't believe your father; it's all a hoax.

4. This assertion is important and more than a mere device in the plot of the play. The second *placet* or petition insists that Tartuffe be costumed as a layman, and Orgon's plan for him to marry again asserts Tartuffe's position in the laity. In the 1664 version of the play Tartuffe had been dressed in a cassock suggestive of the priesthood, and Molière was now anxious to avoid any suggestion of this kind.

ORGON. See here, young woman . . .
DORINE. Come, Sir, no more jokes;
You can't fool us.
ORGON. How dare you talk that way?
DORINE. All right, then: we believe you, sad to say.
But how a man like you, who looks so wise
And wears a moustache of such splendid size,
Can be so foolish as to . . .
ORGON. Silence, please!
My girl, you take too many liberties.
I'm master here, as you must not forget.
DORINE. Do let's discuss this calmly; don't be upset.
You can't be serious, Sir, about this plan.
What should that bigot want with Mariane?
Praying and fasting ought to keep him busy.
And then, in terms of wealth and rank, what is he?
Why should a man of property like you
Pick out a beggar son-in-law?
ORGON. That will do.
Speak of his poverty with reverence.
His is a pure and saintly indigence
Which far transcends all worldly pride and pelf.
He lost his fortune, as he says himself,
Because he cared for Heaven alone, and so
Was careless of his interests here below.
I mean to get him out of his present straits
And help him to recover his estates—
Which, in his part of the world, have no small fame.
Poor though he is, he's a gentleman just the same.
DORINE. Yes, so he tells us; and, Sir, it seems to me
Such pride goes very ill with piety.
A man whose spirit spurns this dungy earth
Ought not to brag of lands and noble birth;
Such worldly arrogance will hardly square
With meek devotion and the life of prayer.
. . . But this approach, I see, has drawn a blank;
Let's speak, then, of his person, not his rank.
Doesn't it seem to you a trifle grim
To give a girl like her to a man like him?
When two are so ill-suited, can't you see
What the sad consequence is bound to be?
A young girl's virtue is imperilled, Sir,
When such a marriage is imposed on her;
For if one's bridegroom isn't to one's taste,
It's hardly an inducement to be chaste,

And many a man with horns upon his brow
Has made his wife the thing that she is now.
It's hard to be a faithful wife, in short,
To certain husbands of a certain sort,
And he who gives his daughter to a man she hates
Must answer for her sins at Heaven's gates.
Think, Sir, before you play so risky a role.

ORGON. This servant-girl presumes to save my soul!

DORINE. You would do well to ponder what I've said.

ORGON. Daughter, we'll disregard this dunderhead.
Just trust your father's judgment. Oh, I'm aware
That I once promised you to young Valère;
But now I hear he gambles, which greatly shocks me;
What's more, I've doubts about his orthodoxy.
His visits to church, I note, are very few.

DORINE. Would you have him go at the same hours as you,
And kneel nearby, to be sure of being seen?

ORGON. I can dispense with such remarks, Dorine.
[*To* MARIANE] Tartuffe, however, is sure of Heaven's blessing.
And that's the only treasure worth possessing.
This match will bring you joys beyond all measure;
Your cup will overflow with every pleasure;
You two will interchange your faithful loves
Like two sweet cherubs, or two turtle-doves.
No harsh word shall be heard, no frown be seen,
And he shall make you happy as a queen.

DORINE. And she'll make him a cuckold, just wait and see.

ORGON. What language!

DORINE. Oh, he's a man of destiny;
He's *made* for horns, and what the stars demand
Your daughter's virtue surely can't withstand.

ORGON. Don't interrupt me further. Why can't you learn
That certain things are none of your concern?

DORINE. It's for your own sake that I interfere.

[*She repeatedly interrupts* ORGON *just as he is turning to speak to his daughter.*]

ORGON. Most kind of you. Now, hold your tongue, d'you hear?

DORINE. If I didn't love you . . .

ORGON. Spare me your affection.

DORINE. I'll love you, Sir, in spite of your objection.

ORGON. Blast!

DORINE. I can't bear, Sir, for your honor's sake,
To let you make this ludicrous mistake.

ORGON. You mean to go on talking?

DORINE. If I didn't protest

This sinful marriage, my conscience couldn't rest.
ORGON. If you don't hold your tongue, you little shrew . . .
DORINE. What, lost your temper? A pious man like you?
ORGON. Yes! Yes! You talk and talk. I'm maddened by it.
Once and for all, I tell you to be quiet.
DORINE. Well, I'll be quiet. But I'll be thinking hard.
ORGON. Think all you like, but you had better guard
That saucy tongue of yours, or I'll . . .
[*Turning back to* MARIANE] Now, child,
I've weighed this matter fully.
DORINE. [*Aside*] It drives me wild
That I can't speak.
[ORGON *turns his head, and she is silent.*]
ORGON. Tartuffe is no young dandy,
But, still, his person . . .
DORINE. [*Aside*] Is as sweet as candy.
ORGON. Is such that, even if you shouldn't care
For his other merits . . .
[*He turns and stands facing* DORINE, *arms crossed.*]
DORINE. [*Aside*] They'll make a lovely pair.
If I were she, no man would marry me
Against my inclination, and go scot-free.
He'd learn, before the wedding-day was over,
How readily a wife can find a lover.
ORGON. [*To* DORINE] It seems you treat my orders as a joke.
DORINE. Why, what's the matter? 'Twas not to you I spoke.
ORGON. What *were* you doing?
DORINE. Talking to myself, that's all.
ORGON. Ah! [*Aside*] One more bit of impudence and gall,
And I shall give her a good slap in the face.
[*He puts himself in position to slap her;* DORINE, *whenever he glances at her, stands immobile and silent.*]
Daughter, you shall accept, and with good grace,
The husband I've selected . . . Your wedding-day . . .
[*To* DORINE] Why don't you talk to yourself?
DORINE. I've nothing to say.
ORGON. Come, just one word.
DORINE. No thank you, Sir. I pass.
ORGON. Come, speak; I'm waiting.
DORINE. I'd not be such an ass.
ORGON. [*Turning to* MARIANE] In short, dear Daughter, I mean to be obeyed,
And you must bow to the sound choice I've made.
DORINE. [*moving away*] I'd not wed such a monster, even in jest.
[ORGON *attempts to slap her, but misses.*]

ORGON. Daughter, that maid of yours is a thorough pest;
She makes me sinfully annoyed and nettled.
I can't speak further; my nerves are too unsettled.
She's so upset me by her insolent talk,
I'll calm myself by going for a walk.

SCENE 3. *Dorine, Mariane*

DORINE. [*Returning*] Well, have you lost your tongue, girl? Must I play
Your part, and say the lines you ought to say?
Faced with a fate so hideous and absurd,
Can you not utter one dissenting word?
MARIANE. What good would it do? A father's power is great.
DORINE. Resist him now, or it will be too late.
MARIANE. But . . .
DORINE. Tell him one cannot love at a father's whim;
That you shall marry for yourself, not him;
That since it's you who are to be the bride,
It's you, not he, who must be satisfied;
And that if his Tartuffe is so sublime,
He's free to marry him at any time.
MARIANE. I've bowed so long to Father's strict control,
I couldn't oppose him now, to save my soul.
DORINE. Come, come, Mariane. Do listen to reason, won't you?
Valère has asked your hand. Do you love him, or don't you?
MARIANE. Oh, how unjust of you! What can you mean
By asking such a question, dear Dorine?
You know the depth of my affection for him;
I've told you a hundred times how I adore him.
DORINE. I don't believe in everything I hear;
Who knows if your professions were sincere?
MARIANE. They were, Dorine, and you do me wrong to doubt it;
Heaven knows that I've been all too frank about it.
DORINE. You love him, then?
MARIANE. Oh, more than I can express.
DORINE. And he, I take it, cares for you no less?
MARIANE. I think so.
DORINE. And you both, with equal fire,
Burn to be married?
MARIANE. That is our one desire.
DORINE. What of Tartuffe, then? What of your father's plan?
MARIANE. I'll kill myself, if I'm forced to wed that man.
DORINE. I hadn't thought of that recourse. How splendid!
Just die, and all your troubles will be ended!

A fine solution. Oh, it maddens me
To hear you talk in that self-pitying key.
MARIANE. Dorine, how harsh you are! It's most unfair.
You have no sympathy for my despair.
DORINE. I've none at all for people who talk drivel
And, faced with difficulties, whine and snivel.
MARIANE. No doubt I'm timid, but it would be wrong . . .
DORINE. True love requires a heart that's firm and strong.
MARIANE. I'm strong in my affection for Valère,
But coping with my father is his affair.
DORINE. But if your father's brain has grown so cracked
Over his dear Tartuffe that he can retract
His blessing, though your wedding-day was named,
It's surely not Valère who's to be blamed.
MARIANE. If I defied my father, as you suggest,
Would it not seem unmaidenly, at best?
Shall I defend my love at the expense
Of brazenness and disobedience?
Shall I parade my heart's desires, and flaunt . . .
DORINE. No, I ask nothing of you. Clearly you want
To be Madame Tartuffe, and I feel bound
Not to oppose a wish so very sound.
What right have I to criticize the match?
Indeed, my dear, the man's a brilliant catch.
Monsieur Tartuffe! Now, there's a man of weight!
Yes, yes, Monsieur Tartuffe, I'm bound to state,
Is quite a person; that's not to be denied;
'Twill be no little thing to be his bride.
The world already rings with his renown;
He's a great noble—in his native town;
His ears are red, he has a pink complexion,
And all in all, he'll suit you to perfection.
MARIANE. Dear God!
DORINE. Oh, how triumphant you will feel
At having caught a husband so ideal!
MARIANE. Oh, do stop teasing, and use your cleverness
To get me out of this appalling mess.
Advise me, and I'll do whatever you say.
DORINE. Ah, no, a dutiful daughter must obey
Her father, even if he weds her to an ape.
You've a bright future; why struggle to escape?
Tartuffe will take you back where his family lives,
To a small town aswarm with relatives—
Uncles and cousins whom you'll be charmed to meet.

You'll be received at once by the elite,
Calling upon the bailiff's wife,[5] no less—
Even, perhaps, upon the mayoress,[6]
Who'll sit you down in the *best* kitchen chair.[7]
Then, once a year, you'll dance at the village fair
To the drone of bagpipes—two of them, in fact—
And see a puppet-show, or an animal act.[8]
Your husband . . .

MARIANE. Oh, you turn my blood to ice!
Stop torturing me, and give me your advice.

DORINE. [*Threatening to go*] Your servant, Madam.

MARIANE. Dorine, I beg
of you . . .

DORINE. No, you deserve it; this marriage must go through.

MARIANE. Dorine!

DORINE. No.

MARIANE. Not Tartuffe! You know I think him . . .

DORINE. Tartuffe's your cup of tea, and you shall drink him.

MARIANE. I've always told you everything, and relied . . .

DORINE. No. You deserve to be tartuffified.

MARIANE. Well, since you mock me and refuse to care,
I'll henceforth seek my solace in despair:
Despair shall be my counsellor and friend,
And help me bring my sorrows to an end. [*She starts to leave.*]

DORINE. There now, come back; my anger has subsided.
You do deserve some pity, I've decided.

MARIANE. Dorine, if Father makes me undergo
This dreadful martyrdom, I'll die, I know.

DORINE. Don't fret; it won't be difficult to discover
Some plan of action . . . But here's Valère, your lover.

SCENE 4. *Valère, Mariane, Dorine*

VALERE. Madam, I've just received some wondrous news
Regarding which I'd like to hear your views.

MARIANE. What news?

VALERE. You're marrying Tartuffe.

MARIANE. I find
That Father does have such a match in mind.

VALERE. Your father, Madam . . .

MARIANE. . . . has just this minute said

5. A high-ranking official in the judiciary, not simply a sheriff's deputy as today. 6. The wife of a tax collector (*élu*), an important official controlling imports, elected by the Estates General. 7. In elegant society of Molière's day, there was a hierarchy of seats and the use of each was determined by rank. The seats descended from *fauteuils*, *chaises*, *perroquets*, *tabourets*, to *pliants*. Thus Mariane would get the lowest seat in the room. 8. In the original, *fagotin*, literally a monkey dressed up in a man's clothing.

That it's Tartuffe he wishes me to wed.
VALERE. Can he be serious?
MARIANE. Oh, indeed he can;
He's clearly set his heart upon the plan.
VALERE. And what position do you propose to take,
Madam?
MARIANE. Why—I don't know.
VALERE. For heaven's sake—
You don't know?
MARIANE. No.
VALERE. Well, well!
MARIANE. Advise me, do.
VALERE. Marry the man. That's my advice to you.
MARIANE. That's your advice?
VALERE. Yes.
MARIANE. Truly?
VALERE. Oh, absolutely.
You couldn't choose more wisely, more astutely.
MARIANE. Thanks for this counsel; I'll follow it, of course.
VALERE. Do, do; I'm sure 'twill cost you no remorse.
MARIANE. To give it didn't cause your heart to break.
VALERE. I gave it, Madam, only for your sake.
MARIANE. And it's for your sake that I take it, Sir.
DORINE. [*Withdrawing to the rear of the stage*]
Let's see which fool will prove the stubborner.
VALERE. So! I am nothing to you, and it was flat
Deception when you . . .
MARIANE. Please, enough of that.
You've told me plainly that I should agree
To wed the man my father's chosen for me,
And since you've deigned to counsel me so wisely,
I promise, Sir, to do as you advise me.
VALERE. Ah, no, 'twas not by me that you were swayed.
No, your decision was already made;
Though now, to save appearances, you protest
That you're betraying me at my behest.
MARIANE. Just as you say.
VALERE. Quite so. And I now see
That you were never truly in love with me.
MARIANE. Alas, you're free to think so if you choose.
VALERE. I choose to think so, and here's a bit of news:
You've spurned my hand, but I know where to turn
For kinder treatment, as you shall quickly learn.
MARIANE. I'm sure you do. Your noble qualities
Inspire affection . . .

VALERE. Forget my qualities, please.
They don't inspire you overmuch, I find.
But there's another lady I have in mind
Whose sweet and generous nature will not scorn
To compensate me for the loss I've borne.
MARIANE. I'm no great loss, and I'm sure that you'll transfer
Your heart quite painlessly from me to her.
VALERE. I'll do my best to take it in my stride.
The pain I feel at being cast aside
Time and forgetfulness may put an end to.
Or if I can't forget, I shall pretend to.
No self-respecting person is expected
To go on loving once he's been rejected.
MARIANE. Now, that's a fine, high-minded sentiment.
VALERE. One to which any sane man would assent.
Would you prefer it if I pined away
In hopeless passion till my dying day?
Am I to yield you to a rival's arms
And not console myself with other charms?
MARIANE. Go then; console yourself; don't hesitate.
I wish you to; indeed, I cannot wait.
VALERE. You wish me to?
MARIANE. Yes.
VALERE. That's the final straw.
Madam, farewell. Your wish shall be my law.
[*He starts to leave, and then returns: this repeatedly.*]
MARIANE. Splendid.
VALERE. [*Coming back again*] This breach, remember, is of your making;
It's you who've driven me to the step I'm taking.
MARIANE. Of course.
VALERE. [*Coming back again*] Remember, too, that I am merely
Following your example.
MARIANE. I see that clearly.
VALERE. Enough. I'll go and do your bidding, then.
MARIANE. Good.
VALERE. [*Coming back again*] You shall never see my face again.
MARIANE. Excellent.
VALERE. [*Walking to the door, then turning about*]
Yes?
MARIANE. What?
VALERE. What's that? What did you say?
MARIANE. Nothing. You're dreaming.
VALERE. Ah. Well, I'm on my way.
Farewell, Madame. [*He moves slowly away.*]

MARIANE. Farewell.
DORINE. [*To* MARIANE] If you ask me,
Both of you are as mad as mad can be.
Do stop this nonsense, now. I've only let you
Squabble so long to see where it would get you.
Whoa there, Monsieur Valère!
[*She goes and seizes* VALERE *by the arm; he makes a great show of resistance.*]
VALERE. What's this, Dorine?
DORINE. Come here.
VALERE. No, no, my heart's too full of spleen.
Don't hold me back; her wish must be obeyed.
DORINE. Stop!
VALERE. It's too late now; my decision's made.
DORINE. Oh, pooh!
MARIANE. [*Aside*] He hates the sight of me, that's plain.
I'll go, and so deliver him from pain.
DORINE. [*Leaving* VALERE, *running after* MARIANE]
And now *you* run away! Come back.
MARIANE. No, no
Nothing you say will keep me here. Let go!
VALERE. [*Aside*] She cannot bear my presence, I perceive.
To spare her further torment, I shall leave.
DORINE. [*Leaving* MARIANE, *running after* VALERE]
Again! You'll not escape, Sir; don't you try it.
Come here, you two. Stop fussing and be quiet.
[*She takes* VALERE *by the hand, then* MARIANE, *and draws them together.*]
VALERE. [*To* DORINE] What do you want of me?
MARIANE. [*To* DORINE] What is the point of this?
DORINE. We're going to have a little armistice.
[*To* VALERE] Now, weren't you silly to get so overheated?
VALERE. Didn't you see how badly I was treated?
DORINE. [*To* MARIANE] Aren't you a simpleton, to have lost your head?
MARIANE. Didn't you hear the hateful things he said?
DORINE. [*To* VALERE] You're both great fools. Her sole desire, Valère,
Is to be yours in marriage. To that I'll swear.
[*To* MARIANE] He loves you only, and he wants no wife
But you, Mariane. On that I'll stake my life.
MARIANE. [*To* VALERE] Then why you advised me so, I cannot see.
VALERE. [*To* MARIANE] On such a question, why ask advice of *me?*
DORINE. Oh, you're impossible. Give me your hands, you two.
[*To* VALERE] Yours first.

VALERE. [*Giving* DORINE *his hand*] But why?
DORINE. [*To* MARIANE] And now a hand from you.
MARIANE. [*Also giving* DORINE *her hand*]
What are you doing?
DORINE. There: a perfect fit.
You suit each other better than you'll admit.
[VALERE *and* MARIANE *hold hands for some time without looking at each other.*]
VALERE. [*Turning toward* MARIANE]
Ah, come, don't be so haughty. Give a man
A look of kindness, won't you, Mariane?
[MARIANE *turns toward* VALERE *and smiles.*]
DORINE. I tell you, lovers are completely mad!
VALERE. [*To* MARIANE] Now come, confess that you were very bad
To hurt my feelings as you did just now.
I have a just complaint, you must allow.
MARIANE. *You* must allow that you were most unpleasant . . .
DORINE. Let's table that discussion for the present;
Your father has a plan which must be stopped.
MARIANE. Advise us, then; what means must we adopt?
DORINE. We'll use all manner of means, and all at once.
[*To* MARIANE] Your father's addled; he's acting like a dunce.
Therefore you'd better humor the old fossil.
Pretend to yield to him, be sweet and docile,
And then postpone, as often as necessary,
The day on which you have agreed to marry.
You'll thus gain time, and time will turn the trick.
Sometimes, for instance, you'll be taken sick,
And that will seem good reason for delay;
Or some bad omen will make you change the day—
You'll dream of muddy water, or you'll pass
A dead man's hearse, or break a looking-glass.
If all else fails, no man can marry you
Unless you take his ring and say "I do."
But now, let's separate. If they should find
Us talking here, our plot might be divined.
[*To* VALERE] Go to your friends, and tell them what's occurred,
And have them urge her father to keep his word.
Meanwhile, we'll stir her brother into action,
And get Elmire,[9] as well, to join our faction.
Good-bye.

9. Orgon's second wife.

VALERE. [*To* MARIANE] Though each of us will do his best,
It's your true heart on which my hopes shall rest.
MARIANE. [*To* VALERE] Regardless of what Father may decide,
None but Valère shall claim me as his bride.
VALERE. Oh, how those words content me! Come what will . . .
DORINE. Oh, lovers, lovers! Their tongues are never still.
Be off, now.
VALERE. [*Turning to go, then turning back.*]
One last word . . .
DORINE. No time to chat:
You leave by this door; and *you* leave by that.
[DORINE *pushes them, by the shoulders, toward opposing doors.*]

Act III

SCENE 1. *Damis, Dorine*

DAMIS. May lightning strike me even as I speak,
May all men call me cowardly and weak,
If any fear or scruple holds me back
From settling things, at once, with that great quack!
DORINE. Now, don't give way to violent emotion.
Your father's merely talked about this notion,
And words and deeds are far from being one.
Much that is talked about is never done.
DAMIS. No, I must stop that scoundrel's machinations;
I'll go and tell him off; I'm out of patience.
DORINE. Do calm down and be practical. I had rather
My mistress dealt with him—and with your father.
She has some influence with Tartuffe, I've noted.
He hangs upon her words, seems most devoted,
And may, indeed, be smitten by her charm.
Pray Heaven it's true! 'Twould do our cause no harm.
She sent for him, just now, to sound him out
On this affair you're so incensed about;
She'll find out where he stands, and tell him, too,
What dreadful strife and trouble will ensue
If he lends countenance to your father's plan.
I couldn't get in to see him, but his man
Says that he's almost finished with his prayers.
Go, now. I'll catch him when he comes downstairs.
DAMIS. I want to hear this conference, and I will.
DORINE. No, they must be alone.
DAMIS. Oh, I'll keep still.

DORINE. Not you. I know your temper. You'd start a brawl,
And shout and stamp your foot and spoil it all.
Go on.
DAMIS. I won't; I have a perfect right . . .
DORINE. Lord, you're a nuisance! He's coming; get out of sight.
[DAMIS *conceals himself in a closet at the rear of the stage.*]

SCENE 2. *Tartuffe, Dorine*

TARTUFFE. [*Observing* DORINE, *and calling to his manservant off-stage*] Hang up my hair-shirt, put my scourge in place,
And pray, Laurent, for Heaven's perpetual grace.
I'm going to the prison now, to share
My last few coins with the poor wretches there.
DORINE. [*Aside*] Dear God, what affectation! What a fake!
TARTUFFE. You wished to see me?
DORINE. Yes . . .
TARTUFFE. [*Taking a handkerchief from his pocket*]
For mercy's sake,
Please take this handkerchief, before you speak.
DORINE. What?
TARTUFFE. Cover that bosom,[1] girl. The flesh is weak.
And unclean thoughts are difficult to control.
Such sights as that can undermine the soul.
DORINE. Your soul, it seems, has very poor defenses,
And flesh makes quite an impact on your senses.
It's strange that you're so easily excited;
My own desires are not so soon ignited,
And if I saw you naked as a beast,
Not all your hide would tempt me in the least.
TARTUFFE. Girl, speak more modestly; unless you do,
I shall be forced to take my leave of you.
DORINE. Oh, no, it's I who must be on my way;
I've just one little message to convey.
Madame is coming down, and begs you, Sir,
To wait and have a word or two with her.
TARTUFFE. Gladly.
DORINE. [*Aside*] *That* had a softening effect!
I think my guess about him was correct.
TARTUFFE. Will she be long?
DORINE. No: that's her step I hear.
Ah, here she is, and I shall disappear.

1. The Brotherhood of the Holy Sacrament practiced almsgiving to prisoners and kept a careful, censorious check on female wearing apparel if they deemed it lascivious. Thus, Molière's audience would have identified Tartuffe as sympathetic—hypocritically—to the aims of the organization.

SCENE 3. *Elmire, Tartuffe*

TARTUFFE. May Heaven, whose infinite goodness we adore,
Preserve your body and soul forevermore,
And bless your days, and answer thus the plea
Of one who is its humblest votary.
ELMIRE. I thank you for that pious wish. But please,
Do take a chair and let's be more at ease.
[*They sit down.*]
TARTUFFE. I trust that you are once more well and strong?
ELMIRE. Oh, yes: the fever didn't last for long.
TARTUFFE. My prayers are too unworthy, I am sure,
To have gained from Heaven this most gracious cure;
But lately, Madam, my every supplication
Has had for object your recuperation.
ELMIRE. You shouldn't have troubled so. I don't deserve it.
TARTUFFE. Your health is priceless, Madam, and to preserve it
I'd gladly give my own, in all sincerity.
ELMIRE. Sir, you outdo us all in Christian charity.
You've been most kind. I count myself your debtor.
TARTUFFE. 'Twas nothing, Madam. I long to serve you better.
ELMIRE. There's a private matter I'm anxious to discuss.
I'm glad there's no one here to hinder us.
TARTUFFE. I too am glad; it floods my heart with bliss
To find myself alone with you like this.
For just this chance I've prayed with all my power—
But prayed in vain, until this happy hour.
ELMIRE. This won't take long, Sir, and I hope you'll be
Entirely frank and unconstrained with me.
TARTUFFE. Indeed, there's nothing I had rather do
Than bare my inmost heart and soul to you.
First, let me say that what remarks I've made
About the constant visits you are paid
Were prompted not by any mean emotion,
But rather by a pure and deep devotion,
A fervent zeal . . .
ELMIRE. No need for explanation.
Your sole concern, I'm sure, was my salvation.
TARTUFFE. [*Taking* ELMIRE'S *hand and pressing her fingertips*]
Quite so; and such great fervor do I feel . . .
ELMIRE. Ooh! Please! You're pinching!
TARTUFFE. 'Twas from excess of zeal.
I never meant to cause you pain, I swear.
I'd rather . . . [*He places his hand on* ELMIRE'S *knee.*]
ELMIRE. What can your hand be doing there?

TARTUFFE. Feeling your gown: what soft, fine-woven stuff!
ELMIRE. Please, I'm extremely ticklish. That's enough.
[*She draws her chair away;* TARTUFFE *pulls his after her.*]
TARTUFFE. [*Fondling the lace collar of her gown*]
My, my, what lovely lacework on your dress!
The workmanship's miraculous, no less.
I've not seen anything to equal it.
ELMIRE. Yes, quite. But let's talk business for a bit.
They say my husband means to break his word
And give his daughter to you, Sir. Had you heard?
TARTUFFE. He did once mention it. But I confess
I dream of quite a different happiness.
It's elsewhere, Madam, that my eyes discern
The promise of that bliss for which I yearn.
ELMIRE. I see: you care for nothing here below.
TARTUFFE. Ah, well—my heart's not made of stone, you know.
ELMIRE. All your desires mount heavenward, I'm sure,
In scorn of all that's earthly and impure.
TARTUFFE. A love of heavenly beauty does not preclude
A proper love for earthly pulchritude;
Our senses are quite rightly captivated
By perfect works our Maker has created.
Some glory clings to all that Heaven has made;
In you, all Heaven's marvels are displayed.
On that fair face, such beauties have been lavished,
The eyes are dazzled and the heart is ravished;
How could I look on you, O flawless creature,
And not adore the Author of all Nature,
Feeling a love both passionate and pure
For you, his triumph of self-portraiture?
At first, I trembled lest that love should be
A subtle snare that Hell had laid for me;
I vowed to flee the sight of you, eschewing
A rapture that might prove my soul's undoing;
But soon, fair being, I became aware
That my deep passion could be made to square
With rectitude, and with my bounden duty,
I thereupon surrendered to your beauty.
It is, I know, presumptuous on my part
To bring you this poor offering of my heart,
And it is not my merit, Heaven knows,
But your compassion on which my hopes repose.
You are my peace, my solace, my salvation;
On you depends my bliss—or desolation;
I bide your judgment and, as you think best,

I shall be either miserable or blest.
ELMIRE. Your declaration is most gallant, Sir,
But don't you think it's out of character?
You'd have done better to restrain your passion
And think before you spoke in such a fashion.
It ill becomes a pious man like you . . .
TARTUFFE. I may be pious, but I'm human too:
With your celestial charms before his eyes,
A man has not the power to be wise.
I know such words sound strangely, coming from me,
But I'm no angel, nor was meant to be,
And if you blame my passion, you must needs
Reproach as well the charms on which it feeds.
Your loveliness I had no sooner seen
Than you became my soul's unrivalled queen;
Before your seraph glance, divinely sweet,
My heart's defenses crumbled in defeat,
And nothing fasting, prayer, or tears might do
Could stay my spirit from adoring you.
My eyes, my sighs have told you in the past
What now my lips make bold to say at last,
And if, in your great goodness, you will deign
To look upon your slave, and ease his pain,—
If, in compassion for my soul's distress,
You'll stoop to comfort my unworthiness,
I'll raise to you, in thanks for that sweet manna,
An endless hymn, an infinite hosanna.
With me, of course, there need be no anxiety,
No fear of scandal or of notoriety.
These young court gallants, whom all the ladies fancy,
Are vain in speech, in action rash and chancy;
When they succeed in love, the world soon knows it;
No favor's granted them but they disclose it
And by the looseness of their tongues profane
The very altar where their hearts have lain.
Men of my sort, however, love discreetly,
And one may trust our reticence completely.
My keen concern for my good name insures
The absolute security of yours;
In short, I offer you, my dear Elmire,
Love without scandal, pleasure without fear.
ELMIRE. I've heard your well-turned speeches to the end,
And what you urge I clearly apprehend.
Aren't you afraid that I may take a notion
To tell my husband of your warm devotion,

And that, supposing he were duly told,
His feelings toward you might grow rather cold?
TARTUFFE. I know, dear lady, that your exceeding charity
Will lead your heart to pardon my temerity;
That you'll excuse my violent affection
As human weakness, human imperfection;
And that—O fairest!— you will bear in mind
That I'm but flesh and blood, and am not blind.
ELMIRE. Some women might do otherwise, perhaps,
But I shall be discreet about your lapse;
I'll tell my husband nothing of what's occurred
If, in return, you'll give your solemn word
To advocate as forcefully as you can
The marriage of Valère and Mariane,
Renouncing all desire to dispossess
Another of his rightful happiness,
And . . .

SCENE 4. *Damis, Elmire, Tartuffe*

DAMIS. [*Emerging from the closet where he has been hiding*]
No! We'll not hush up this vile affair;
I heard it all inside that closet there,
Where Heaven, in order to confound the pride
Of this great rascal, prompted me to hide.
Ah, now I have my long-awaited chance
To punish his deceit and arrogance,
And give my father clear and shocking proof
Of the black character of his dear Tartuffe.
ELMIRE. Ah no, Damis; I'll be content if he
Will study to deserve my leniency.
I've promised silence—don't make me break my word;
To make a scandal would be too absurd.
Good wives laugh off such trifles, and forget them;
Why should they tell their husbands, and upset them?
DAMIS. You have your reasons for taking such a course,
And I have reasons, too, of equal force.
To spare him now would be insanely wrong.
I've swallowed my just wrath for far too long
And watched this insolent bigot bringing strife
And bitterness into our family life.
Too long he's meddled in my father's affairs,
Thwarting my marriage-hopes, and poor Valère's.
It's high time that my father was undeceived,
And now I've proof that can't be disbelieved—
Proof that was furnished me by Heaven above.

It's too good not to take advantage of.
This is my chance, and I deserve to lose it
If, for one moment, I hesitate to use it.

ELMIRE. Damis . . .

DAMIS. No, I must do what I think right.
Madam, my heart is bursting with delight,
And, say whatever you will, I'll not consent
To lose the sweet revenge on which I'm bent.
I'll settle matters without more ado;
And here, most opportunely, is my cue.[2]

SCENE 5. *Orgon, Damis, Tartuffe, Elmire*

DAMIS. Father, I'm glad you've joined us. Let us advise you
Of some fresh news which doubtless will surprise you.
You've just now been repaid with interest
For all your loving-kindness to our guest.
He's proved his warm and grateful feelings toward you;
It's with a pair of horns he would reward you.
Yes, I surprised him with your wife, and heard
His whole adulterous offer, every word.
She, with her all too gentle disposition,
Would not have told you of his proposition;
But I shall not make terms with brazen lechery,
And feel that not to tell you would be treachery.

ELMIRE. And I hold that one's husband's peace of mind
Should not be spoilt by tattle of this kind.
One's honor doesn't require it: to be proficient
In keeping men at bay is quite sufficient.
These are my sentiments, and I wish, Damis,
That you had heeded me and held your peace.

SCENE 6. *Orgon, Damis, Tartuffe*

ORGON. Can it be true, this dreadful thing I hear?

TARTUFFE. Yes, Brother, I'm a wicked man, I fear:
A wretched sinner, all depraved and twisted,
The greatest villain that has ever existed.
My life's one heap of crimes, which grows each minute;
There's naught but foulness and corruption in it;
And I perceive that Heaven, outraged by me,
Has chosen this occasion to mortify me.
Charge me with any deed you wish to name;
I'll not defend myself, but take the blame.

2. In the original stage directions, Tartuffe now reads silently from his breviary—in the Roman Catholic Church, the book containing the Divine Office for each day, which those in holy orders are required to recite.

Believe what you are told, and drive Tartuffe
Like some base criminal from beneath your roof;
Yes, drive me hence, and with a parting curse:
I shan't protest, for I deserve far worse.
ORGON. [*To* DAMIS] Ah, you deceitful boy, how dare you try
To stain his purity with so foul a lie?
DAMIS. What! Are you taken in by such a fluff?
Did you not hear . . . ?
ORGON. Enough, you rogue, enough!
TARTUFFE. Ah, Brother, let him speak: you're being unjust.
Believe his story; the boy deserves your trust.
Why, after all, should you have faith in me?
How can you know what I might do, or be?
Is it on my good actions that you base
Your favor? Do you trust my pious face?
Ah, no, don't be deceived by hollow shows;
I'm far, alas, from being what men suppose;
Though the world takes me for a man of worth,
I'm truly the most worthless man on earth.
[*To* DAMIS]
Yes, my dear son, speak out now: call me the chief
Of sinners, a wretch, a murderer, a thief;
Load me with all the names men most abhor;
I'll not complain; I've earned them all, and more;
I'll kneel here while you pour them on my head
As a just punishment for the life I've led.
ORGON. [*To* TARTUFFE] This is too much, dear Brother.
[*To* DAMIS] Have you no heart?
DAMIS. Are you so hoodwinked by this rascal's art . . . ?
ORGON. Be still, you monster.
[*To* TARTUFFE] Brother, I pray you, rise.
[*To* DAMIS] Villain!
DAMIS. But . . .
ORGON. Silence!
DAMIS. Can't you realize . . . ?
ORGON. Just one word more, and I'll tear you limb from limb.
TARTUFFE. In God's name, Brother, don't be harsh with him.
I'd rather far be tortured at the stake
Than see him bear one scratch for my poor sake.
ORGON. [*To* DAMIS] Ingrate!
TARTUFFE. If I must beg you, on bended knee,
To pardon him . . .
ORGON. [*Falling to his knees, addressing* TARTUFFE]
Such goodness cannot be!
[*To* DAMIS] Now, *there's* true charity!

DAMIS. What, you . . . ?
ORGON. Villain, be still!
I know your motives; I know you wish him ill:
Yes, all of you—wife, children, servants, all—
Conspire against him and desire his fall,
Employing every shameful trick you can
To alienate me from this saintly man.
Ah, but the more you seek to drive him away,
The more I'll do to keep him. Without delay,
I'll spite this household and confound its pride
By giving him my daughter as his bride.
DAMIS. You're going to force her to accept his hand?
ORGON. Yes, and this very night, d'you understand?
I shall defy you all, and make it clear
That I'm the one who gives the orders here.
Come, wretch, kneel down and clasp his blessed feet,
And ask his pardon for your black deceit.
DAMIS. I ask that swindler's pardon? Why, I'd rather . . .
ORGON. So! You insult him, and defy your father!
A stick! A stick! [*To* TARTUFFE.] No, no—release me, do.
[*To* DAMIS.] Out of my house this minute! Be off with you,
And never dare set foot in it again.
DAMIS. Well, I shall go, but . . .
ORGON. Well, go quickly, then.
I disinherit you; an empty purse
Is all you'll get from me—except my curse!

SCENE 7. *Orgon, Tartuffe*

ORGON. How he blasphemed your goodness! What a son!
TARTUFFE. Forgive him, Lord, as I've already done.
[*To* ORGON] You can't know how it hurts when someone tries
To blacken me in my dear brother's eyes.
ORGON. Ahh!
TARTUFFE. The mere thought of such ingratitude
Plunges my soul into so dark a mood . . .
Such horror grips my heart . . . I gasp for breath,
And cannot speak, and feel myself near death.
ORGON. [*He runs, in tears, to the door through which he has just driven his son.*]
You blackguard! Why did I spare you? Why did I not
Break you in little pieces on the spot?
Compose yourself, and don't be hurt, dear friend.
TARTUFFE. These scenes, these dreadful quarrels, have got to end.
I've much upset your household, and I perceive
That the best thing will be for me to leave.

ORGON. What are you saying!
TARTUFFE. They're all against me here;
They'd have you think me false and insincere.
ORGON. Ah, what of that? Have I ceased believing in you?
TARTUFFE. Their adverse talk will certainly continue,
And charges which you now repudiate
You may find credible at a later date.
ORGON. No, Brother, never.
TARTUFFE. Brother, a wife can sway
Her husband's mind in many a subtle way.
ORGON. No, no.
TARTUFFE. To leave at once is the solution;
Thus only can I end their persecution.
ORGON. No, no, I'll not allow it; you shall remain.
TARTUFFE. Ah, well; 'twill mean much martyrdom and pain,
But if you wish it . . .
ORGON. Ah!
TARTUFFE. Enough; so be it.
But one thing must be settled, as I see it.
For your dear honor, and for our friendship's sake,
There's one precaution I feel bound to take.
I shall avoid your wife, and keep away . . .
ORGON. No, you shall not, whatever they may say.
It pleases me to vex them, and for spite
I'd have them see you with her day and night.
What's more, I'm going to drive them to despair
By making you my only son and heir;
This very day, I'll give to you alone
Clear deed and title to everything I own.
A dear, good friend and son-in-law-to-be
Is more than wife, or child, or kin to me.
Will you accept my offer, dearest son?
TARTUFFE. In all things, let the will of Heaven be done.
ORGON. Poor fellow! Come, we'll go draw up the deed.
Then let them burst with disappointed greed!

Act IV

SCENE 1. *Cléante, Tartuffe*

CLEANTE. Yes, all the town's discussing it, and truly,
Their comments do not flatter you unduly.
I'm glad we've met, Sir, and I'll give my view
Of this sad matter in a word or two.
As for who's guilty, that I shan't discuss;

Let's say it was Damis who caused the fuss;
Assuming, then, that you have been ill-used
By young Damis, and groundlessly accused,
Ought not a Christian to forgive, and ought
He not to stifle every vengeful thought?
Should you stand by and watch a father make
His only son an exile for your sake?
Again I tell you frankly, be advised:
The whole town, high and low, is scandalized;
This quarrel must be mended, and my advice is
Not to push matters to a further crisis.
No, sacrifice your wrath to God above,
And help Damis regain his father's love.

TARTUFFE. Alas, for my part I should take great joy
In doing so. I've nothing against the boy.
I pardon all, I harbor no resentment;
To serve him would afford me much contentment.
But Heaven's interest will not have it so:
If he comes back, then I shall have to go.
After his conduct—so extreme, so vicious—
Our further intercourse would look suspicious.
God knows what people would think! Why, they'd describe
My goodness to him as a sort of bribe;
They'd say that out of guilt I made pretense
Of loving-kindness and benevolence—
That, fearing my accuser's tongue, I strove
To buy his silence with a show of love.

CLEANTE. Your reasoning is badly warped and stretched,
And these excuses, Sir, are most far-fetched.
Why put yourself in charge of Heaven's cause?
Does Heaven need our help to enforce its laws?
Leave vengeance to the Lord, Sir; while we live,
Our duty's not to punish, but forgive;
And what the Lord commands, we should obey
Without regard to what the world may say.
What! Shall the fear of being misunderstood
Prevent our doing what is right and good?
No, no: let's simply do what Heaven ordains,
And let no other thoughts perplex our brains.

TARTUFFE. Again, Sir, let me say that I've forgiven
Damis, and thus obeyed the laws of Heaven;
But I am not commanded by the Bible
To live with one who smears my name with libel.

CLEANTE. Were you commanded, Sir, to indulge the whim
Of poor Orgon, and to encourage him

In suddenly transferring to your name
A large estate to which you have no claim?

TARTUFFE. 'Twould never occur to those who know me best
To think I acted from self-interest.
The treasures of this world I quite despise;
Their specious glitter does not charm my eyes;
And if I have resigned myself to taking
The gift which my dear Brother insists on making,
I do so only, as he well understands,
Lest so much wealth fall into wicked hands,
Lest those to whom it might descend in time
Turn it to purposes of sin and crime,
And not, as I shall do, make use of it
For Heaven's glory and mankind's benefit.

CLEANTE. Forget these trumped-up fears. Your argument
Is one the rightful heir might well resent;
It *is* a moral burden to inherit
Such wealth, but give Damis a chance to bear it.
And would it not be worse to be accused
Of swindling, than to see that wealth misused?
I'm shocked that you allowed Orgon to broach
This matter, and that you feel no self-reproach;
Does true religion teach that lawful heirs
May freely be deprived of what is theirs?
And if the Lord has told you in your heart
That you and young Damis must dwell apart,
Would it not be the decent thing to beat
A generous and honorable retreat,
Rather than let the son of the house be sent,
For your convenience, into banishment?
Sir, if you wish to prove the honesty
Of your intentions . . .

TARTUFFE. Sir, it is a half past three.
I've certain pious duties to attend to,
And hope my prompt departure won't offend you.

CLEANTE. [*Alone*] Damn.

SCENE 2. *Elmire, Mariane, Cléante, Dorine*

DORINE. Stay, Sir, and help Mariane, for Heaven's sake!
She's suffering so, I fear her heart will break.
Her father's plan to marry her off tonight
Has put the poor child in a desperate plight.
I hear him coming. Let's stand together, now,

And see if we can't change his mind, somehow,
About this match we all deplore and fear.

SCENE 3. *Orgon, Elmire, Mariane, Cléante, Dorine*

ORGON. Hah! Glad to find you all assembled here.
[*To* MARIANE] This contract, child, contains your happiness,
And what it says I think your heart can guess.
MARIANE. [*Falling to her knees*]
Sir, by that Heaven which sees me here distressed,
And by whatever else can move your breast,
Do not employ a father's power, I pray you,
To crush my heart and force it to obey you,
Nor by your harsh commands oppress me so
That I'll begrudge the duty which I owe—
And do not so embitter and enslave me
That I shall hate the very life you gave me.
If my sweet hopes must perish, if you refuse
To give me to the one I've dared to choose,
Spare me at least—I beg you, I implore—
The pain of wedding one whom I abhor;
And do not, by a heartless use of force,
Drive me to contemplate some desperate course.
ORGON. [*Feeling himself touched by her*]
Be firm, my soul. No human weakness, now.
MARIANE. I don't resent your love for him. Allow
Your heart free rein, Sir; give him your property,
And if that's not enough, take mine from me;
He's welcome to my money; take it, do,
But don't, I pray, include my person too.
Spare me, I beg you; and let me end the tale
Of my sad days behind a convent veil.
ORGON. A convent! Hah! When crossed in their amours,
All lovesick girls have the same thought as yours.
Get up! The more you loathe the man, and dread him,
The more ennobling it will be to wed him.
Marry Tartuffe, and mortify your flesh!
Enough; don't start that whimpering afresh.
DORINE. But why . . . ?
ORGON. Be still, there. Speak when you're spoken to.
Not one more bit of impudence out of you.
CLEANTE. If I may offer a word of counsel here . . .
ORGON. Brother, in counselling you have no peer;
All your advice is forceful, sound, and clever;
I don't propose to follow it, however.

ELMIRE. [*To* ORGON] I am amazed, and don't know what to say;
Your blindness simply takes my breath away.
You are indeed bewitched, to take no warning
From our account of what occurred this morning.
ORGON. Madam, I know a few plain facts, and one
Is that you're partial to my rascal son;
Hence, when he sought to make Tartuffe the victim
Of a base lie, you dared not contradict him.
Ah, but you underplayed your part, my pet;
You should have looked more angry, more upset.
ELMIRE. When men make overtures, must we reply
With righteous anger and a battle-cry?
Must we turn back their amorous advances
With sharp reproaches and with fiery glances?
Myself, I find such offers merely amusing,
And make no scenes and fusses in refusing;
My taste is for good-natured rectitude,
And I dislike the savage sort of prude
Who guards her virtue with her teeth and claws,
And tears men's eyes out for the slightest cause:
The Lord preserve me from such honor as that,
Which bites and scratches like an alley-cat!
I've found that a polite and cool rebuff
Discourages a lover quite enough.
ORGON. I know the facts, and I shall not be shaken.
ELMIRE. I marvel at your power to be mistaken.
Would it, I wonder, carry weight with you
If I could *show* you that our tale was true?
ORGON. Show me?
ELMIRE. Yes.
ORGON. Rot.
ELMIRE. Come, what if I found a way
To make you see the facts as plain as day?
ORGON. Nonsense.
ELMIRE. Do answer me; don't be absurd.
I'm not now asking you to trust our word.
Suppose that from some hiding-place in here
You learned the whole sad truth by eye and ear—
What would you say of your good friend, after that?
ORGON. Why, I'd say . . . nothing, by Jehoshaphat!
It can't be true.
ELMIRE. You've been too long deceived,
I'm quite tired of being disbelieved.
Come now: let's put my statements to the test,
And you shall see the truth made manifest.

ORGON. I'll take that challenge. Now do your uttermost.
We'll see how you make good your empty boast.
ELMIRE. [*To* DORINE] Send him to me.
DORINE. He's crafty; it may be hard
To catch the cunning scoundrel off his guard.
ELMIRE. No, amorous men are gullible. Their conceit
So blinds them that they're never hard to cheat.
Have him come down. [*To* CLEANTE & MARIANE] Please leave us, for a bit.

SCENE 4. *Elmire, Orgon*

ELMIRE. Pull up this table, and get under it.
ORGON. What?
ELMIRE. It's essential that you be well-hidden.
ORGON. Why there?
ELMIRE. Oh, Heavens! Just do as you are bidden.
I have my plans; we'll soon see how they fare.
Under the table, now; and once you're there,
Take care that you are neither seen nor heard.
ORGON. Well, I'll indulge you, since I gave my word
To see you through this infantile charade.
ELMIRE. Once it is over, you'll be glad we played.
[To her husband, who is now under the table]
I'm going to act quite strangely, now, and you
Must not be shocked at anything I do.
Whatever I may say, you must excuse
As part of that deceit I'm forced to use.
I shall employ sweet speeches in the task
Of making that impostor drop his mask;
I'll give encouragement to his bold desires,
And furnish fuel to his amorous fires.
Since it's for your sake, and for his destruction,
That I shall seem to yield to his seduction,
I'll gladly stop whenever you decide
That all your doubts are fully satisfied.
I'll count on you, as soon as you have seen
What sort of man he is, to intervene,
And not expose me to his odious lust
One moment longer than you feel you must.
Remember: you're to save me from my plight
Whenever . . . He's coming! Hush! Keep out of sight!

SCENE 5. *Tartuffe, Elmire, Orgon*

TARTUFFE. You wish to have a word with me, I'm told.
ELMIRE. Yes, I've a little secret to unfold.

Before I speak, however, it would be wise
To close that door, and look about for spies.
[TARTUFFE *goes to the door, closes it, and returns.*]
The very last thing that must happen now
Is a repetition of this morning's row.
I've never been so badly caught off guard.
Oh, how I feared for you! You saw how hard
I tried to make that troublesome Damis
Control his dreadful temper, and hold his peace.
In my confusion, I didn't have the sense
Simply to contradict his evidence;
But as it happened, that was for the best,
And all has worked out in our interest.
This storm has only bettered your position;
My husband doesn't have the least suspicion,
And now, in mockery of those who do,
He bids me be continually with you.
And that is why, quite fearless of reproof,
I now can be alone with my Tartuffe,
And why my heart—perhaps too quick to yield—
Feels free to let its passion be revealed.

TARTUFFE. Madam, your words confuse me. Not long ago,
You spoke in quite a different style, you know.

ELMIRE. Ah, Sir, if that refusal made you smart,
It's little that you know of woman's heart,
Or what that heart is trying to convey
When it resists in such a feeble way!
Always, at first, our modesty prevents
The frank avowal of tender sentiments:
However high the passion which inflames us,
Still, to confess its power somehow shames us.
Thus we reluct, at first, yet in a tone
Which tells you that our heart is overthrown,
That what our lips deny, our pulse confesses,
And that, in time, all noes will turn to yesses.
I fear my words are all too frank and free,
And a poor proof of woman's modesty;
But since I'm started, tell me, if you will—
Would I have tried to make Damis be still,
Would I have listened, calm and unoffended,
Until your lengthy offer of love was ended,
And been so very mild in my reaction,
Had your sweet words not given me satisfaction?
And when I tried to force you to undo
The marriage-plans my husband has in view,

What did my urgent pleading signify
If not that I admired you, and that I
Deplored the thought that someone else might own
Part of a heart I wished for mine alone?
TARTUFFE. Madam, no happiness is so complete
As when, from lips we love, come words so sweet;
Their nectar floods my every sense, and drains
In honeyed rivulets through all my veins.
To please you is my joy, my only goal;
Your love is the restorer of my soul;
And yet I must beg leave, now, to confess
Some lingering doubts as to my happiness.
Might this not be a trick? Might not the catch
Be that you wish me to break off the match
With Mariane, and so have feigned to love me?
I shan't quite trust your fond opinion of me
Until the feelings you've expressed so sweetly
Are demonstrated somewhat more concretely,
And you have shown, by certain kind concessions,
That I may put my faith in your professions
ELMIRE. [*She coughs, to warn her husband.*] Why be in such a hurry?
Must my heart
Exhaust its bounty at the very start?
To make that sweet admission cost me dear,
But you'll not be content, it would appear,
Unless my store of favors is disbursed
To the last farthing, and at the very first.
TARTUFFE. The less we merit, the less we dare to hope,
And with our doubts, mere words can never cope.
We trust no promised bliss till we receive it;
Not till a joy is ours can we believe it.
I, who so little merit your esteem,
Can't credit this fulfillment of my dream,
And shan't believe it, Madam, until I savor
Some palpable assurance of your favor.
ELMIRE. My, how tyrannical your love can be,
And how it flusters and perplexes me!
How furiously you take one's heart in hand,
And make your every wish a fierce command!
Come, must you hound and harry me to death?
Will you not give me time to catch my breath?
Can it be right to press me with such force,
Give me no quarter, show me no remorse,
And take advantage, by your stern insistence,
Of the fond feelings which weaken my resistance?

TARTUFFE. Well, if you look with favor upon my love,
Why, then, begrudge me some clear proof thereof?
ELMIRE. But how can I consent without offense
To Heaven, toward which you feel such reverence?
TARTUFFE. If Heaven is all that holds you back, don't worry.
I can remove that hindrance in a hurry.
Nothing of that sort need obstruct our path.
ELMIRE. Must one not be afraid of Heaven's wrath?
TARTUFFE. Madam, forget such fears, and be my pupil,
And I shall teach you how to conquer scruple.
Some joys, it's true, are wrong in Heaven's eyes;
Yet Heaven is not averse to compromise;
There is a science, lately formulated,
Whereby one's conscience may be liberated,[3]
And any wrongful act you care to mention
May be redeemed by purity of intention.
I'll teach you, Madam, the secrets of that science;
Meanwhile, just place on me your full reliance.
Assuage my keen desires, and feel no dread:
The sin, if any, shall be on my head.
[ELMIRE *coughs, this time more loudly.*]
You've a bad cough.
ELMIRE. Yes, yes, It's bad indeed.
TARTUFFE. [*Producing a little paper bag*]
A bit of licorice may be what you need.
ELMIRE. No, I've a stubborn cold, it seems. I'm sure it
Will take much more than licorice to cure it.
TARTUFFE. How aggravating.
ELMIRE. Oh, more than I can say.
TARTUFFE. If you're still troubled, think of things this way:
No one shall know our joys, save us alone,
And there's no evil till the act is known;
It's scandal, Madam, which makes it an offense,
And it's no sin to sin in confidence.
ELMIRE. [*Having coughed once more*]
Well, clearly I must do as you require,
And yield to your importunate desire.
It is apparent, now, that nothing less
Will satisfy you, and so I acquiesce.
To go so far is much against my will;
I'm vexed that it should come to this; but still,
Since you are so determined on it, since you
Will not allow mere language to convince you,

3. Molière appended his own footnote to this line: "It is a scoundrel who speaks."

And since you ask for concrete evidence, I
See nothing for it, now, but to comply.
If this is sinful, if I'm wrong to do it,
So much the worse for him who drove me to it.
The fault can surely not be charged to me.
TARTUFFE. Madam, the fault is mine, if fault there be,
And . . .
ELMIRE. Open the door a little, and peek out;
I wouldn't want my husband poking about.
TARTUFFE. Why worry about the man? Each day he grows
More gullible; one can lead him by the nose.
To find us here would fill him with delight,
And if he saw the worst, he'd doubt his sight.
ELMIRE. Nevertheless, do step out for a minute
Into the hall, and see that no one's in it.

SCENE 6. *Orgon, Elmire*

ORGON. [*Coming out from under the table*]
That man's a perfect monster, I must admit!
I'm simply stunned. I can't get over it.
ELMIRE. What, coming out so soon? How premature!
Get back in hiding, and wait until you're sure.
Stay till the end, and be convinced completely;
We mustn't stop till things are proved concretely.
ORGON. Hell never harbored anything so vicious!
ELMIRE. Tut, don't be hasty. Try to be judicious.
Wait, and be certain that there's no mistake.
No jumping to conclusions, for Heaven's sake!
[*She places* ORGON *behind her, as* TARTUFFE *re-enters.*]

SCENE 7. *Tartuffe, Elmire, Orgon*

TARTUFFE. [*Not seeing* ORGON]
Madam, all things have worked out to perfection;
I've given the neighboring rooms a full inspection;
No one's about; and now I may at last . . .
ORGON. [*Intercepting him*] Hold on, my passionate fellow, not so fast!
I should advise a little more restraint.
Well, so you thought you'd fool me, my dear saint!
How soon you wearied of the saintly life—
Wedding my daughter, and coveting my wife!
I've long suspected you, and had a feeling
That soon I'd catch you at your double-dealing.
Just now, you've given me evidence galore;
It's quite enough; I have no wish for more.

ELMIRE. [*To* TARTUFFE] I'm sorry to have treated you so slyly,
But circumstances forced me to be wily.
TARTUFFE. Brother, you can't think . . .
ORGON. No more talk from you;
Just leave this household, without more ado.
TARTUFFE. What I intended . . .
ORGON. That seems fairly clear.
Spare me your falsehoods and get out of here.
TARTUFFE. No, I'm the master, and you're the one to go!
This house belongs to me, I'll have you know,
And I shall show you that you can't hurt *me*
By this contemptible conspiracy,
That those who cross me know not what they do,
And that I've means to expose and punish you,
Avenge offended Heaven, and make you grieve
That ever you dared order me to leave.

SCENE 8. *Elmire, Orgon*

ELMIRE. What was the point of all that angry chatter?
ORGON. Dear God, I'm worried. This is no laughing matter.
ELMIRE. How so?
ORGON. I fear I understood his drift.
I'm much disturbed about that deed of gift.
ELMIRE. You gave him . . . ?
ORGON. Yes, it's all been drawn and signed.
But one thing more is weighing on my mind.
ELMIRE. What's that?
ORGON. I'll tell you; but first let's see if there's
A certain strong-box in his room upstairs.

Act V

SCENE 1. *Orgon, Cléante*

CLEANTE. Where are you going so fast?
ORGON. God knows!
CLEANTE. Then wait;
Let's have a conference, and deliberate
On how this situation's to be met.
ORGON. That strong-box has me utterly upset;
This is the worst of many, many shocks.
CLEANTE. Is there some fearful mystery in that box?
ORGON. My poor friend Argas brought that box to me
With his own hands, in utmost secrecy;
'Twas on the very morning of his flight.

It's full of papers which, if they came to light,
Would ruin him—or such is my impression.
CLEANTE. Then why did you let it out of your possession?
ORGON. Those papers vexed my conscience, and it seemed best
To ask the counsel of my pious guest.
The cunning scoundrel got me to agree
To leave the strong-box in his custody,
So that, in case of an investigation,
I could employ a slight equivocation
And swear I didn't have it, and thereby,
At no expense to conscience, tell a lie.
CLEANTE. It looks to me as if you're out on a limb.
Trusting him with that box, and offering him
That deed of gift, were actions of a kind
Which scarcely indicate a prudent mind.
With two such weapons, he has the upper hand,
And since you're vulnerable, as matters stand,
You erred once more in bringing him to bay.
You should have acted in some subtler way.
ORGON. Just think of it: behind that fervent face,
A heart so wicked, and a soul so base!
I took him in, a hungry beggar, and then . . .
Enough, by God! I'm through with pious men:
Henceforth I'll hate the whole false brotherhood,
And persecute them worse than Satan could.
CLEANTE. Ah, there you go—extravagant as ever!
Why can you not be rational? You never
Manage to take the middle course, it seems,
But jump, instead, between absurd extremes.
You've recognized your recent grave mistake
In falling victim to a pious fake;
Now, to correct that error, must you embrace
An even greater error in its place,
And judge our worthy neighbors as a whole
By what you've learned of one corrupted soul?
Come, just because one rascal made you swallow
A show of zeal which turned out to be hollow,
Shall you conclude that all men are deceivers,
And that, today, there are no true believers?
Let atheists make that foolish inference;
Learn to distinguish virtue from pretense,
Be cautious in bestowing admiration,
And cultivate a sober moderation.
Don't humor fraud, but also don't asperse

True piety; the latter fault is worse,
And it is best to err, if err one must,
As you have done, upon the side of trust.

SCENE 2. *Damis, Orgon, Cléante*

DAMIS. Father, I hear that scoundrel's uttered threats
Against you; that he pridefully forgets
How, in his need, he was befriended by you,
And means to use your gifts to crucify you.
ORGON. It's true, my boy. I'm too distressed for tears.
DAMIS. Leave it to me, Sir; let me trim his ears.
Faced with such insolence, we must not waver.
I shall rejoice in doing you the favor
Of cutting short his life, and your distress.
CLEANTE. What a display of young hotheadedness!
Do learn to moderate your fits of rage.
In this just kingdom, this enlightened age,
One does not settle things by violence.

SCENE 3. *Madame Pernelle, Mariane, Elmire, Dorine, Damis, Orgon, Cléante*

MADAME PERNELLE. I hear strange tales of very strange events.
ORGON. Yes, strange events which these two eyes beheld.
The man's ingratitude is unparalleled.
I save a wretched pauper from starvation,
House him, and treat him like a blood relation,
Shower him every day with my largesse,
Give him my daughter, and all that I possess;
And meanwhile the unconscionable knave
Tries to induce my wife to misbehave;
And not content with such extreme rascality,
Now threatens me with my own liberality,
And aims, by taking base advantage of
The gifts I gave him out of Christian love,
To drive me from my house, a ruined man,
And make me end a pauper, as he began.
DORINE. Poor fellow!
MADAME PERNELLE. No, my son, I'll never bring
Myself to think him guilty of such a thing.
ORGON. How's that?
MADAME PERNELLE. The righteous always were maligned.
ORGON. Speak clearly, Mother. Say what's on your mind.
MADAME PERNELLE. I mean that I can smell a rat, my dear.
You know how everybody hates him, here.
ORGON. That has no bearing on the case at all.

MADAME PERNELLE. I told you a hundred times, when you were small,
That virtue in this world is hated ever;
Malicious men may die, but malice never.
ORGON. No doubt that's true, but how does it apply?
MADAME PERNELLE. They've turned you against him by a clever lie.
ORGON. I've told you, I was there and saw it done.
MADAME PERNELLE. Ah, slanderers will stop at nothing, Son.
ORGON. Mother, I'll lose my temper . . . For the last time,
I tell you I was witness to the crime.
MADAME PERNELLE. The tongues of spite are busy night and noon,
And to their venom no man is immune.
ORGON. You're talking nonsense. Can't you realize
I saw it; saw it; saw it with my eyes?
Saw, do you understand me? Must I shout it
Into your ears before you'll cease to doubt it?
MADAME PERNELLE. Appearances can deceive, my son. Dear me,
We cannot always judge by what we see.
ORGON. Drat! Drat!
MADAME PERNELLE.One often interprets things awry;
Good can seem evil to a suspicious eye.
ORGON. Was I to see his pawing at Elmire
As an act of charity?
MADAME PERNELLE. Till his guilt is clear,
A man deserves the benefit of the doubt.
You should have waited, to see how things turned out.
ORGON. Great God in Heaven, what more proof did I need?
Was I to sit there, watching, until he'd . . .
You drive me to the brink of impropriety.
MADAME PERNELLE. No, no, a man of such surpassing piety
Could not do such a thing. You cannot shake me.
I don't believe it, and you shall not make me.
ORGON. You vex me so that, if you weren't my mother,
I'd say to you . . . some dreadful thing or other.
DORINE. It's your turn now, Sir, not to be listened to;
You'd not trust us, and now she won't trust you.
CLEANTE. My friends, we're wasting time which should be spent
In facing up to our predicament.
I fear that scoundrel's threats weren't made in sport.
DAMIS. Do you think he'd have the nerve to go to court?
ELMIRE. I'm sure he won't: they'd find it all too crude
A case of swindling and ingratitude.
CLEANTE. Don't be too sure. He won't be at a loss
To give his claims a high and righteous gloss;
And clever rogues with far less valid cause
Have trapped their victims in a web of laws.

I say again that to antagonize
A man so strongly armed was most unwise.
ORGON. I know it; but the man's appalling cheek
Outraged me so, I couldn't control my pique.
CLEANTE. I wish to Heaven that we could devise
Some truce between you, or some compromise.
ELMIRE. If I had known what cards he held, I'd not
Have roused his anger by my little plot.
ORGON. [*To* DORINE, *as* M. LOYAL *enters*] What is that fellow looking for? Who is he?
Go talk to him—and tell him that I'm busy.

SCENE 4. *Monsieur Loyal, Madame Pernelle, Orgon, Damis, Mariane, Dorine, Elmire, Cléante*

MONSIEUR LOYAL. Good day, dear sister. Kindly let me see
Your master.
DORINE. He's involved with company,
And cannot be disturbed just now, I fear.
MONSIEUR LOYAL. I hate to intrude; but what has brought me here
Will not disturb your master, in any event.
Indeed, my news will make him most content.
DORINE. Your name?
MONSIEUR LOYAL. Just say that I bring greetings from
Monsieur Tartuffe, on whose behalf I've come.
DORINE. [*To* ORGON] Sir, he's a very gracious man, and bears
A message from Tartuffe, which, he declares,
Will make you most content.
CLEANTE. Upon my word,
I think this man had best be seen, and heard.
ORGON. Perhaps he has some settlement to suggest.
How shall I treat him? What manner would be best?
CLEANTE. Control your anger, and if he should mention
Some fair adjustment, give him your full attention.
MONSIEUR LOYAL. Good health to you, good Sir. May Heaven confound
Your enemies, and may your joys abound.
ORGON. [*Aside, to* CLEANTE] A gentle salutation: it confirms
My guess that he is here to offer terms.
MONSIEUR LOYAL. I've always held your family most dear;
I served your father, Sir, for many a year.
ORGON. Sir, I must ask your pardon; to my shame,
I cannot now recall your face or name.
MONSIEUR LOYAL. Loyal's my name; I come from Normandy,
And I'm a bailiff, in all modesty.
For forty years, praise God, it's been my boast

To serve with honor in that vital post,
And I am here, Sir, if you will permit
The liberty, to serve you with this writ . . .
ORGON. To—*what?*
MONSIEUR LOYAL. Now, please, Sir, let us have no friction:
It's nothing but an order of eviction.
You are to move your goods and family out
And make way for new occupants, without
Deferment or delay, and give the keys . . .
ORGON. I? Leave this house?
MONSIEUR LOYAL. Why yes, Sir, if you please.
This house, Sir, from the cellar to the roof,
Belongs now to the good Monsieur Tartuffe,
And he is lord and master of your estate
By virtue of a deed of present date,
Drawn in due form, with clearest legal phrasing . . .
DAMIS. Your insolence is utterly amazing!
MONSIEUR LOYAL. Young man, my business here is not with you
But with your wise and temperate father, who,
Like every worthy citizen, stands in awe
Of justice, and would never obstruct the law.
ORGON. But . . .
MONSIEUR LOYAL. Not for a million, Sir, would you rebel
Against authority; I know that well.
You'll not make trouble, Sir, or interfere
With the execution of my duties here.
DAMIS. Someone may execute a smart tattoo
On that black jacket[4] of yours, before you're through.
MONSIEUR LOYAL. Sir, bid your son be silent. I'd much regret
Having to mention such a nasty threat
Of violence, in writing my report.
DORINE. [*Aside*] This man Loyal's a most disloyal sort!
MONSIEUR LOYAL. I love all men of upright character,
And when I agreed to serve these papers, Sir,
It was your feelings that I had in mind.
I couldn't bear to see the case assigned
To someone else, who might esteem you less
And so subject you to unpleasantness.
ORGON. What's more unpleasant than telling a man to leave
His house and home?
MONSIEUR LOYAL. You'd like a short reprieve?
If you desire it, Sir, I shall not press you,
But wait until tomorrow to dispossess you.

4. In the original, *justaucorps à longues basques*, a close-fitting, long black coat with skirts, the customary dress of a bailiff.

Splendid. I'll come and spend the night here, then,
Most quietly, with half a score of men.
For form's sake, you might bring me, just before
You go to bed, the keys to the front door.
My men, I promise, will be on their best
Behavior, and will not disturb your rest.
But bright and early, Sir, you must be quick
And move out all your furniture, every stick:
The men I've chosen are both young and strong,
And with their help it shouldn't take you long.
In short, I'll make things pleasant and convenient,
And since I'm being so extremely lenient,
Please show me, Sir, a like consideration,
And give me your entire cooperation.

ORGON. [*Aside*] I may be all but bankrupt, but I vow
I'd give a hundred louis, here and now,
Just for the pleasure of landing one good clout
Right on the end of that complacent snout.

CLEANTE. Careful; don't make things worse.

DAMIS. My bootsole itches
To give that beggar a good kick in the breeches.

DORINE. Monsieur Loyal, I'd love to hear the whack
Of a stout stick across your fine broad back.

MONSIEUR LOYAL. Take care: a woman too may go to jail if
She uses threatening language to a bailiff.

CLEANTE. Enough, enough, Sir. This must not go on.
Give me that paper, please, and then begone.

MONSIEUR LOYAL. Well, *au revoir.* God give you all good cheer!

ORGON. May God confound you, and him who sent you here!

SCENE 5. *Orgon, Cléante, Mariane, Elmire, Madame Pernelle, Dorine, Damis*

ORGON. Now, Mother, was I right or not? This writ
Should change your notion of Tartuffe a bit.
Do you perceive his villainy at last?

MADAME PERNELLE. I'm thunderstruck. I'm utterly aghast.

DORINE. Oh, come, be fair. You mustn't take offense
At this new proof of his benevolence.
He's acting out of selfless love, I know.
Material things enslave the soul, and so
He kindly has arranged your liberation
From all that might endanger your salvation.

ORGON. Will you not ever hold your tongue, you dunce?

CLEANTE. Come, you must take some action, and at once.

ELMIRE. Go tell the world of the low trick he's tried.
The deed of gift is surely nullified

By such behavior, and public rage will not
Permit the wretch to carry out his plot.

SCENE 6. *Valère, Orgon, Cléante, Elmire, Mariane, Madame Pernelle, Damis, Dorine*

VALERE. Sir, though I hate to bring you more bad news,
Such is the danger that I cannot choose.
A friend who is extremely close to me
And knows my interest in your family
Has, for my sake, presumed to violate
The secrecy that's due to things of state,
And sends me word that you are in a plight
From which your one salvation lies in flight.
That scoundrel who's imposed upon you so
Denounced you to the King an hour ago
And, as supporting evidence, displayed
The strong-box of a certain renegade
Whose secret papers, so he testified,
You had disloyally agreed to hide.
I don't know just what charges may be pressed,
But there's a warrant out for your arrest;
Tartuffe has been instructed, furthermore,
To guide the arresting officer to your door.
CLEANTE. He's clearly done this to facilitate
His seizure of your house and your estate.
ORGON. That man, I must say, is a vicious beast!
VALERE. You can't afford to delay, Sir, in the least.
My carriage is outside, to take you hence;
This thousand louis should cover all expense.
Let's lose no time, or you shall be undone;
The sole defense, in this case, is to run.
I shall go with you all the way, and place you
In a safe refuge to which they'll never trace you.
ORGON. Alas, dear boy, I wish that I could show you
My gratitude for everything I owe you.
But now is not the time; I pray the Lord
That I may live to give you your reward.
Farewell, my dears; be careful . . .
CLEANTE. Brother, hurry.
We shall take care of things; you needn't worry.

SCENE 7. *The Officer, Tartuffe, Valère, Orgon, Elmire, Mariane, Madame Pernelle, Dorine, Cléante, Damis*

TARTUFFE. Gently, Sir, gently; stay right where you are.
No need for haste; your lodging isn't far.
You're off to prison, by order of the Prince.

ORGON. This is the crowning blow, you wretch; and since
It means my total ruin and defeat,
Your villainy is now at last complete.
TARTUFFE. You needn't try to provoke me; it's no use.
Those who serve Heaven must expect abuse.
CLEANTE. You are indeed most patient, sweet, and blameless.
DORINE. How he exploits the name of Heaven! It's shameless.
TARTUFFE. Your taunts and mockeries are all for naught;
To do my duty is my only thought.
MARIANE. Your love of duty is most meritorious,
And what you've done is little short of glorious.
TARTUFFE. All deeds are glorious, Madam, which obey
The sovereign prince who sent me here today.
ORGON. I rescued you when you were destitute;
Have you forgotten that, you thankless brute?
TARTUFFE. No, no, I well remember everything;
But my first duty is to serve my King.
That obligation is so paramount
That other claims, beside it, do not count;
And for it I would sacrifice my wife,
My family, my friend, or my own life.
ELMIRE. Hypocrite!
DORINE. All that we most revere, he uses
To cloak his plots and camouflage his ruses.
CLEANTE. If it is true that you are animated
By pure and loyal zeal, as you have stated,
Why was this zeal not roused until you'd sought
To make Orgon a cuckold, and been caught?
Why weren't you moved to give your evidence
Until your outraged host had driven you hence?
I shan't say that the gift of all his treasure
Ought to have damped your zeal in any measure;
But if he is a traitor, as you declare,
How could you condescend to be his heir?
TARTUFFE. [*To the* OFFICER] Sir, spare me all this clamor; it's growing shrill.
Please carry out your orders, if you will.
OFFICER.[5] Yes, I've delayed too long, Sir. Thank you kindly.
You're just the proper person to remind me.
Come, you are off to join the other boarders
In the King's prison, according to his orders.
TARTUFFE. Who? I, Sir?
OFFICER. Yes.

5. In the original, *un exempt*. He would actually have been a gentleman from the king's personal bodyguard with the rank of lieutenant-colonel or "master of the camp."

TARTUFFE. To prison? This can't be true!
OFFICER. I owe an explanation, but not to you.
[*To* ORGON] Sir, all is well; rest easy, and be grateful.
We serve a Prince to whom all sham is hateful,
A Prince who sees into our inmost hearts,
And can't be fooled by any trickster's arts.
His royal soul, though generous and human,
Views all things with discernment and acumen;
His sovereign reason is not lightly swayed,
And all his judgments are discreetly weighed.
He honors righteous men of every kind,
And yet his zeal for virtue is not blind,
Nor does his love of piety numb his wits
And make him tolerant of hypocrites.
'Twas hardly likely that this man could cozen
A King who's foiled such liars by the dozen.
With one keen glance, the King perceived the whole
Perverseness and corruption of his soul,
And thus high Heaven's justice was displayed:
Betraying you, the rogue stood self-betrayed.
The King soon recognized Tartuffe as one
Notorious by another name, who'd done
So many vicious crimes that one could fill
Ten volumes with them, and be writing still.
But to be brief: our sovereign was appalled
By this man's treachery toward you, which he called
The last, worst villainy of a vile career,
And bade me follow the impostor here
To see how gross his impudence could be,
And force him to restore your property.
Your private papers, by the King's command,
I hereby seize and give into your hand.
The King, by royal order, invalidates
The deed which gave this rascal your estates,
And pardons, furthermore, your grave offense
In harboring an exile's documents.
By these decrees, our Prince rewards you for
Your loyal deeds in the late civil war,[6]
And shows how heartfelt is his satisfaction
In recompensing any worthy action,
How much he prizes merit, and how he makes
More of men's virtues than of their mistakes.
DORINE. Heaven be praised!

6. A reference to Orgon's role in supporting the king during the Fronde.

MADAME PERNELLE. I breathe again, at last.
ELMIRE. We're safe.
MARIANE. I can't believe the danger's past.
ORGON. [*To* TARTUFFE]. Well, traitor, now you see . . .
CLEANTE Ah, brother,
please,
Let's not descend to such indignities.
Leave the poor wretch to his unhappy fate,
And don't say anything to aggravate
His present woes; but rather hope that he
Will soon embrace an honest piety,
And mend his ways, and by a true repentance
Move our just King to moderate his sentence.
Meanwhile, go kneel before your sovereign's throne
And thank him for the mercies he has shown.
ORGON. Well said: let's go at once and, gladly kneeling,
Express the gratitude which all are feeling.
Then, when that first great duty has been done,
We'll turn with pleasure to a second one,
And give Valère, whose love has proved so true,
The wedded happiness which is his due.

JEAN RACINE
1639–1699

Racine's capacity to communicate the full intensity of passion in tragedies marked by their formal decorum and their elevated tone gave him immediate and lasting fame among French dramatists. He brings to material adapted from classic texts an immediacy of psychological insight to which twentieth-century audiences readily respond.

Born into the family of a government official in the Valois district, eighty miles from Paris, Racine attended the College de Beauvais. Later (1655–1659), he studied in the Jansenist center of Port-Royal. (Jansenism, a strict Catholic movement emphasizing moral self-examination and severely controlled conduct, exercised a profound influence on Racine.) In 1660, encouraged by the poet Jean de la Fontaine, Racine came to Paris, where his early plays failed, driving him to a period of seclusion in Provence. When he returned to Paris in 1663, however, the court and the nobility patronized him, and he rapidly developed a reputation as a major playwright. In 1677 he left Paris and returned to Port-Royal, an environment appropriate to his increasing interest in religious thought. He married Catherine de Romanet, who bore him seven children, most of whom became nuns or priests. Remaining in the country, he wrote history, made short trips to Paris, and traveled as historiographer with Louis XIV's campaigns. Buried at Port-Royal, he was exhumed in 1711 and reburied next to Pascal at the church of St. Étienne-du-Mont in Paris.

Only one of Racine's twelve plays, an early comedy, deviated from the tragic mode. His first tragedies imitated the work of his contemporary, Pierre Corneille; later, he chose Biblical and classical models. *Phaedra* (1677) adapts, with new emphasis, the action of Euripides' *Hippolytus*, making the guilty woman rather than the relatively passive man the protagonist and using the highly charged sexual situation between the two to generate intense psychological drama. To twentieth-century readers, the play's most immediately obvious aspect may be its conventional formalities: long declamatory speeches, stylized exchanges in compressed half lines, the artificiality of conveying such complicated relationships and histories through the action of a single day. Such devices, however—which would have seemed as artificial to seventeenth-century audiences as they do to us, although more familiar—intensify the impact of the central characters' anguish and their desperate attempts to deal with it. If the play's surface is formal, its depths seethe with passion.

Passion, of course, is the subject of *Phaedra*. The conflict between reason and passion that preoccupied many thinkers in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries here plays itself out with stark urgency. Passion triumphs, in *Phaedra*, over all principles of control, bringing death to the two central characters and misery to their survivors. As in Greek tragedy, although by rather different means, the reader feels not only the self-destructiveness of the human psyche but the pathos and the heroism of the doomed effort to transcend the limits of the given.

The play opens not with Phaedra herself but with Hippolytus, meditating about his heroic father, Theseus. Like Molière, Racine uses the family as microcosm of larger social orders, but the intense conflicts that throb beneath the surface in many real-life families here undergo no comic transformation. Hippolytus has his own problems, quite apart from Phaedra. Blessed and burdened with a larger-than-life father, he must choose whether to try to imitate that father or to seek other ways of being a man. "I sucked the pride which so amazes you / From an Amazonian mother," he tells his friend Theramenes, alluding to the "proud, disdainful sentiments" that have prevented him from feeling interest in any woman. But matters cannot remain so simple. Theseus has distinguished himself in two ways: by heroic womanizing (he leaves a trail of women behind him wherever he goes) and by heroic action, the conquering and destruction of monsters human and inhuman. As the play opens, Hippolytus acknowledges in himself the first incursions of love. No longer can his adolescent defense, his refusal of any resemblance to his father, serve him. When Theseus returns, Hippolytus will beg permission to seek his own heroism:

> Before
> You reached my present age, already
> More than one tyrant, more than one grim monster
> Had felt your mighty strength. . . .
> Suffer my courage to be used at last.

He wants, he says, even by death to "prove to all the world / I was your son." By the time he makes this plea, however, his innocent desire to prove his manhood, to declare his separateness from and worthiness of his father, has been overwhelmed by darker forces.

Phaedra's impulses are less innocent—less "natural," she suggests. In a poignant passage, she imagines Hippolytus and his youthful beloved, Aricia, expressing their love in a natural setting, themselves a part of the natural world. She understands her own sin as an internal revolution of feeling against control; she speaks of desperately seeking her "lost reason" in the entrails of sacrifices she makes to Venus, trying to avert her fate. Never does she excuse herself, never does she believe herself justified in loving the son of the man who kidnapped her into marriage. When Theseus is thought dead, Phaedra declares herself unworthy to rule a nation because she cannot rule herself. Yet such moral awareness fails to help her: knowing her sin, she continues to enact it, at least in feeling. The play evokes the full torment of such experience.

As for powerful Theseus, conqueror of women, defier of the supernatural, ally of Neptune—this kingly figure returns to find himself powerless at home. The son and wife who by social convention exist in utter subordination to him turn into enemies he has no capacity to master. First his wife's nurse tells him that his son has attempted to seduce Phaedra. The rivalry of sons and fathers lies deep: if sons fear they can never equal their fathers, fathers fear that the young necessarily overcome the old. Theseus believes the nurse's bare assertion, unsupported by substantial evidence. He banishes his son and invokes Neptune's power to destroy him. Then Aricia's hints lead him to suspect his wife, who confesses her own emotional sin while already on the verge of self-inflicted death. Theseus remains alone, bereft, his tyrannical impulse now devoid of domestic object. His own passions, too quickly fired—jealous possessiveness of his wife, jealous rivalry with his son—have deprived him of two beings he loved.

The play provides no villains. Phaedra, in other versions of the story a monster of lust, here becomes a woman struggling against her nature, as profoundly committed to standards of control as to the violent feelings that overthrow them. Hippolytus, in the process of self-discovery, at a delicate balance point of maturity, cannot protect himself against the alternations of closely linked love and hate in a woman whose passions, and whose self-awareness, far exceed his. Theseus, in the ignorance of success, fails in comprehension, not understanding himself, his wife, or his son. All three exemplify the pathos and the dignity of the human struggle to be human.

Phaedra dies with the word *purity* on her lips, seeking self-purification in death, the only course now possible to her. Hippolytus dies in the beauty of his youth, deprived of age's suffering and fulfillment. Theseus lives to try once more to rule adequately, perhaps chastened by suffering into greater awareness. The names of the Greek gods survive in this drama: Aphrodite torments Phaedra, Neptune serves Theseus' impetuous will. But the gods now function as projections of human passion: Phaedra's sexual lust, Theseus' lust for power. Phaedra's torment suggests a Christian effort at purification, a Christian ideal of self-denial. The drama, in Racine's handling of the ancient story, projects upon a giant screen conflicts all men and women undergo, the surge of feeling warring with the ideal of self-restraint. By concentrating the play of passions within a small family group and a confined space of time, while recalling connections between the characters' feelings and historical events that lie behind them; by giving Theseus and Phaedra

heroic dignity and stature; by linking this family with the fate of nations, Racine forces his readers to feel the intensity and the large significance of feelings and happenings that might in other treatments seem merely sordid. He gives his characters timeless reality—speaking to his time, and to ours.

To translate Racine into English involves particularly difficult problems, since the French Alexandrine couplet, composed of twelve-syllable lines, does not adapt naturally to English verse. Kenneth Muir's version, in blank verse, sacrifices rhyme for the sake of easy movement but succeeds in approximating the high dignity of the original.

A useful biography of Racine is A. F. B. Clark, *Racine* (1939). G. Brereton, *Jean Racine: A Critical Biography* (1951), combines biography with literary criticism. Valuable critical insight is provided by O. de Mourgues, *Racine: Or, The Triumph of Relevance* (1967).

Phaedra[1]

Dramatis Personæ

THESEUS, *King of Athens*
PHAEDRA, *his wife*
HIPPOLYTUS, *son of Theseus and Antiope*
ARICIA, *Princess of the blood royal of Athens*
THERAMENES, *tutor to Hippolytus*
ŒNONE, *nurse and confidante of Phaedra*
ISMENE, *confidante of Aricia*
PANOPE, *woman of Phaedra's suite*
GUARDS

SCENE—*Troezen*

Act I

SCENE 1. *Hippolytus and Theramenes*

HIPPOLYTUS. It is decided, dear Theramenes.
I'm leaving now, and cutting short my stay
In pleasant Troezen. In my state of doubt
I blush at my own sloth. Six months and more
My father has been absent, yet I stay
Still ignorant of his fate, not even knowing
In what part of the world he hides his head.
THERAMENES. Where will you seek him then? I have already,
My lord, to satisfy your natural fears,

1. Translated by Kenneth Muir.

Crossed the Corinthian sea, and asked for Theseus
Upon those distant shores where Acheron[2]
Is lost among the dead. I went to Elidos
And sailed from Tenaros upon the sea
Where Icarus[3] once fell. By what new hope,
Or in what lucky region will you find
His footprints now? Who knows, indeed, who knows
Whether it is the King your father's will,
That we should try to probe the mystery
Of his long absence? While we are afraid,
Even for his life, that hero, unperturbed,
Screening from us his latest love exploit,
May just be waiting till a woman . . .

HIPPOLYTUS. Stop,
Dear Theramenes; respect the King
Who has outgrown the headstrong faults of youth.
No such unworthy obstacle detains him.
Phaedra has conquered his inconstancy,
And fears no rival now. In seeking him,
I do my duty, and thereby escape
A place I dare not stay in.

THERAMENES. Since when, my lord,
Have you been frightened of the peaceful place
You used to love in childhood? You once preferred it
To the noisy pomp of Athens and the court.
What danger, or rather, should I say, what grief
Drives you away?

HIPPOLYTUS. Alas, that happy time
Is now no more. For everything has changed
Since to these shores the gods despatched the Queen,
The daughter of Minos and of Pasiphaë.[4]

THERAMENES. I know the cause indeed; for Phaedra here
Vexes and wounds your sight—a dangerous
Stepmother, who had scarce set eyes on you
Ere she procured your exile. But her hatred
Is either vanished, or at least relaxed.
Besides, what perils can you undergo
From a dying woman, one who seeks to die?
Phaedra, who will not speak about her illness,
Tired of herself and even of the sunshine,

2. A river that flows into Hades; across it Charon ferried the dead. 3. Son of Daedalus. Escaping from Crete by means of wings made by his father, Icarus flew so high that the sun melted the wax holding his wings and he fell to his death. 4. Phaedra was the daughter of King Minos of Crete and of Pasiphaë, sister to Circe. Enamored of a white bull sent by Poseidon, Pasiphaë consequently gave birth to the Minotaur, the Cretan monster later killed by Theseus. Phaedra was thus half-sister to the Minotaur.

Is scarcely hatching plots against you.
HIPPOLYTUS. No:
Her vain hostility is not my fear.
In leaving her, I flee another foe:
I flee—I will admit it—young Aricia,
Last of a fatal race that has conspired
Against us.
THERAMENES. What? Do you yourself, my lord,
Persecute her? The Pallantids' lovely sister[5]
Was not involved in her treacherous brothers' plots.
And should you hate her innocent charms?
HIPPOLYTUS. If I
Did hate her, I would not be fleeing.
THERAMENES. My lord,
May I explain your flight? Is it that you
No longer are that proud Hippolytus,
Relentless enemy of the laws of love,
And of a yoke to which your father bowed
So many times? Does Venus whom your pride
So long has slighted wish to justify
The amorous Theseus? While, like the rest of mortals,
You're forced to cense her altars? Are you in love,
My lord?
HIPPOLYTUS. What do you dare to ask, my friend?
You have known my heart since it began to beat,
And can you ask me to repudiate
My former proud, disdainful sentiments?
I sucked the pride which so amazes you
From an Amazonian mother;[6] and when I reached
A riper age, and knew myself, I gloried
In what I was. Then in your friendly zeal
You told me all my father's history.
My soul, attentive to your voice, was thrilled
To hear the tale of his heroic deeds—
Consoling mortals for Alcides' absence,[7]
By slaying monsters, putting brigands down,
Procrustes, Cercyon, Sciron, and Sinis,
The scattered bones of the giant of Epidaurus,
Crete reeking with the Minotaur's foul blood.
But when you told of deeds less glorious,
The way his faith was pledged a hundred times—

5. The Pallantids were the fifty sons of Pallas, Pandion's second son. Aegeus, father of Theseus, was Pandion's adopted son. Theseus killed all the Pallantids because they threatened his kingship of Athens; their "lovely sister" is Aricia. 6. Hippolytus's mother was Antiope, sister of Hippolyta, queen of the Amazons. 7. Hercules.

Helen of Sparta[8] stolen from her kin,
Salamis witness of Periboea's tears,
And many more, whose names he has forgotten,
Of credulous women by his love deceived:
Ariadne on her rocky isle
Telling her wrongs;[9] and Phaedra at the last,
Kidnapped, but under better auspices;
You know how listening to the sorry tale
I begged you cut it short, and would have been
Happy to blot out from my memory
The worser half of the tale. And shall I now
Be bound so ignominiously by the gods?
My base affections, unlike those of Theseus,
Can claim no heap of honors as excuse,
And so deserve more scorn. As I have slain
No monster yet, I have not earned the right
So to transgress; and if my pride must melt,
Should I have chosen for my conqueror
Aricia? Surely my wandering senses
Should have recalled that we are kept apart
By an eternal obstacle. My father
Holds her in reprobation, and forbids her
Ever to marry: of a guilty stem
He fears a shoot, and wishes to entomb
With her the memory of her brothers' name.
Under his tutelage until she dies,
Never for her shall Hymen's fires be lit.[1]
Should I support her rights against a father
Incensed against her, give example to
Temerity, and let my youth embark
Upon a wild sea? . . .

THERAMENES. If your hour is come,
My lord, heaven cares not for our reasons. Theseus,
Wishing to shut your eyes, has opened them.
His hatred, rousing a rebellious flame,
Lends a new luster to his enemy.
But, after all, why fear an honest love?
If it is sweet, why should you not dare taste it?
Why will you trust a shy or sullen scruple?
Or fear to walk where Hercules once trod?

8. Daughter of Zeus and Leda, later the wife of Menelaus of Sparta (and the cause of the Trojan War). In her girlhood she was abducted by Theseus and Peirithous; her brothers rescued her and brought her back home. Periboea, the mother of Ajax, was one of the women Theseus seduced and abandoned. 9. Ariadne, Phaedra's sister, was abandoned by Theseus on the island of Naxos after she rescued him from the Minotaur. 1. I.e., she will never marry: Hymen was the god of marriage.

What spirits had not Venus tamed? And where
Would you be, you who fight against her, if
Antiope,[2] always to her laws opposed,
Had not with modest ardor burned for Theseus?
But why do you affect a haughty speech?
Confess that all is changed: and for some days
You're seen less often, proud and solitary,
Racing the chariot on the shore, or skilled
In the art of Neptune, making the wild steeds
Obedient to the bit. The forest echoes
Less often to our shouts. Your eyes are heavy,
Charged with a secret passion. There is no doubt:
You love, you burn; you perish from an illness
Which you conceal. And are you now in love
With charming Aricia?

HIPPOLYTUS. Theramenes,
I'm setting off in quest of my lost father.

THERAMENES. Won't you see Phaedra, my lord, before you go?

HIPPOLYTUS. So I intend; and you may tell her so.
I'll see her—since my duty thus ordains.
But what's the new misfortune which disturbs
Her dear Œnone?

SCENE 2. *Hippolytus, Theramenes, Œnone*

ŒNONE. Alas! my lord, what trouble
Can equal mine? The Queen has nearly reached
Her fatal term. In vain both night and day
I've watched beside her. She's dying of a sickness
She hides from me; and in her spirit reigns
Continual disorder. Restless affliction
Now drags her from her bed to see once more
The light of day; and her deep grief demands
That all should keep away. She's coming now.

HIPPOLYTUS. It is enough. I'll leave this place to her,
And not offend her with my hated face.

SCENE 3. *Phaedra and Œnone*

PHAEDRA. Let's go no further, dear Œnone, stay.
I've reached the limit of my strength; my eyes
Are blinded by the daylight, and my knees
Give way beneath me. [*She sits.*]

2. As an Amazon, Hippolytus' mother Antiope was committed to chastity.

ŒNONE. O all-powerful Gods,
May all our tears appease you!
PHAEDRA. How these vain
Adornments, how these veils, now weigh me down.
What busy hand, in tying all these knots,
Has taken care to gather on my brow
This heavy load of hair? Now all afflicts me,
Hurts me, and conspires to hurt me.
ŒNONE. How
Her wishes seem now to destroy each other!
Madam, it was yourself, with your own hands,
Who dressed and decked your hair, wishing to show
Yourself, and see once more the light of day.
But now you see it, ready to hide yourself,
You hate the day you sought.
PHAEDRA. O shining Sun,[3]
Author of my sad race, thou of whom my mother
Boasted herself the daughter, who blush perhaps
At these my sufferings, I see you now
For the last time.
ŒNONE. What! have you not lost
That cruel desire? And shall I see you still
Renouncing life and making of your death
The dreadful preparations?
PHAEDRA. O that I were seated
In the forest shade, where through a cloud of dust
I could behold a chariot racing by!
ŒNONE. What, madam?
PHAEDRA. Fool! Where am I? What have I said?
Where have my wits been wandering? I have lost them.
The gods have robbed me of them. I blush, Œnone.
I let you see too much my shameful sorrows,
And, spite of me, my eyes are filled with tears.
ŒNONE. If you must blush, blush rather at your silence
Which but augments your griefs. Deaf to our pleading,
Rebellious to our care, and without pity,
Do you wish to end your days? What madness now
Stops them in mid-career? What spell or poison
Has drained their source? Three nights have come and gone
Since sleep last entered in your eyes; three days
Have chased the darkness since you took some food.
What frightful scheme are you attempting now?
For you insult the gods who gave you life,

3. Helios, the sun-god, was the father of Phaedra's mother Pasiphaë.

Betray the husband to whom your faith is given,
Betray your hapless children whom you throw
Under a rigorous yoke. Think that one day
Will snatch their mother from them, and give up
Their hopes to the stranger's son, to that proud foe
Of you, and of your blood, the Amazon's son,
Hippolytus.

PHAEDRA. Ah Gods!

ŒNONE. Does this reproach—?

PHAEDRA. Wretch! What name has issued from your mouth?

ŒNONE. You are right to be angry: I like to see you tremble
At that ill-omened name. Then live! Both love and duty
Reanimate you. Live. Do not let the son
Of the Scythian,[4] crushing your children with his rule,
Command the noblest blood of Greece and heaven.
But don't delay: each moment threatens life.
Repair your weakened strength, while yet life's torch
Can be rekindled.

PHAEDRA. I have too much prolonged
Its guilty span.

ŒNONE. What! are you torn apart
By some remorse? What crime could have produced
Such agony? Your hands were never stained
With innocent blood.

PHAEDRA. Thanks to the gods, my hands
Are guiltless still. But would to heaven my heart
Were innocent as they!

ŒNONE. What frightful scheme
Have you conceived to terrify your heart?

PHAEDRA. I have said enough. Spare me the rest. I die
Because I cannot such confession make.

ŒNONE. Die then; and keep inhuman silence still.
But seek another hand to close your eyes.
Although there but remains a feeble flame
In you, my soul will journey to the dead
Before you, since there are a thousand ways
By which we can go thither—mine the shortest.
Cruel! When have I betrayed your confidence?
Think, that my arms received you at your birth,
For you I've left my country and my children.
Is this the price of my fidelity?

PHAEDRA. What fruit can come from so much violence?
You would be horror-struck if I should tell you.

4. Scythia, home of the Amazons, was for the Greeks associated with barbarians.

ŒNONE. What will you say to me more horrible
Than seeing you expire before my eyes?
PHAEDRA. But when you know my crime and the dread fate
That crushes me, I shall die just the same,
And die more guilty.
ŒNONE. Madam, by all the tears
That I have shed for you, by your weak knees
That I embrace now, free my mind from doubt.
PHAEDRA. You wish it: rise.
ŒNONE. Speak: I am listening.
PHAEDRA. What shall I say? And where shall I begin?
ŒNONE. Cease to insult me by these needless fears.
PHAEDRA. O hate of Venus and her fatal wrath!
Love led my mother into desperate ways.
ŒNONE. Forget them, madam. Let an eternal silence
Hide their remembrance.
PHAEDRA. My sister, Ariadne,[5]
Stricken with love, upon a desolate coast
Despairing died.
ŒNONE. What are you doing, madam?
What mortal spite enkindles you today
Against your nearest . . . ?
PHAEDRA. Since Venus so ordains,
Last and most wretched of my tragic race,
I too shall perish.
ŒNONE. Are you in love?
PHAEDRA. All of love's frenzies I endure.
ŒNONE. For whom?
PHAEDRA. You're going to hear the last extreme of horror.
I love . . . I shudder at the fatal name . . .
I love . . .
ŒNONE. Whom do you love?
PHAEDRA. You know the son
Of the Amazon—the prince I've harshly used.
ŒNONE. Hippolytus! Great Gods!
PHAEDRA. 'Tis you have named him.
Not I.
ŒNONE. O righteous heaven! The blood in my veins
Is turned to ice. O crime! O hapless race!
Disastrous voyage! O unlucky coast!
Why did we travel to your perilous shores?
PHAEDRA. My evil comes from a more distant place.

5. Ariadne died on Naxos after Theseus's desertion of her.

Scarce had I wedded Theseus and established
My happiness it seemed, I saw in Athens
My haughty foe. I saw him—blushed and blanched
To see him—and my soul was all distraught.
My eyes were blinded, and I could not speak.
I felt my body freeze and burn; I knew
The terrible fires of Venus, the tortures fated
To one whom she pursues. I hoped to avert them
By my assiduous prayers. I built for her
A temple, and took pains to adorn its walls.
Myself surrounded by the sacrifices,
I sought for my lost reason in their entrails.
Weak remedies of love incurable!
In vain upon the altars I burnt incense;
My lips implored the goddess, but I worshipped
Only Hippolytus; and seeing him
Each day even at the altar's foot
I offered all to the god I dared not name.
I shunned him everywhere. O heavy weight
Of misery! My eyes beheld the son
In the father's countenance. At length I dared
To rebel against myself. I spurred my spirit
To persecute him, striving thus to banish
The enemy I worshipped by assuming
A stepmother's proverbial cruelty.
I clamored for his exile till my cries
Tore my dear enemy from his father's arms.
I breathed again, Œnone. In his absence
My calmer days flowed by in innocence,
Compliant to my husband, while my griefs
Lay hidden. I bore him children. But in vain
Were all precautions, for Fate intervened.
Brought by my husband to Troezen, once more
I saw the enemy I had sent away.
My keen wound bled again—it is no more
A passion hidden in my veins, but now
It's Venus fastened on her helpless prey.
I have a just abhorrence of my crime;
I hate my life, abominate my lust;
Longing by death to rescue my good name
And hide my black love from the light of day.
Your tears have conquered me. I have confessed
All my dark secret; and I won't regret it
If you respect now my approaching death,

And do not wound me with unjust reproofs,
Or with vain remedies keep alive within me
The last faint spark of life.

SCENE 4. *Phaedra, Œnone, Panope*

PANOPE. I would prefer
To hide these tidings from you, madam, but
I must reveal them. Death has robbed you now
Of your unconquerable husband, and
It is known to all but you.
ŒNONE. What do you say?
PANOPE. That the mistaken Queen in vain demands
Theseus' return from heaven; and that from ships
Arrived in port, Hippolytus, his son,
Has just heard of his death.
PHAEDRA. Heaven!
PANOPE. For the choice
Of ruler, Athens is divided. Some
Vote for the Prince, your son, and others, madam,
Forgetting the laws of the State, dare give their voices
To the son of the stranger.[6] It is even said
An insolent faction has designed to place
Aricia on the throne. I thought you should
Be warned about this danger. Hippolytus
Is ready to depart, and it is feared,
If he becomes involved in this new storm,
Lest he draw to him all the fickle mob.
ŒNONE. No more, Panope. The Queen has heard you,
And won't neglect your warning.

SCENE 5. *Phaedra and Œnone*

ŒNONE. I had ceased,
Madam, to urge that you should live. Indeed,
I thought that I should follow you to the grave;
I had no further voice to change your mind.
But this new blow imposes other laws.
Your fortune shows a different face; the King
Is now no more, and his place must be filled.
His death has left you with a son to whom
You have a duty; slave if he loses you,
A king if you live. On whom in his misfortune
Do you wish that he should lean? His tears will have
No hand but yours to wipe them; and his cries,

6. Athenian law made the son of an Athenian and a non-Greek woman illegitimate; Hippolytus' mother was Antiope the Amazon. It is not clear why Phaedra's children are not similarly classified.

Borne even to the gods, would then incense
His ancestors against his mother. Live.
You have no longer reason to reproach
Yourself; your love becomes a usual love;
Theseus in dying cuts the sacred knots
Which made the crime and horror of your passion.
Hippolytus becomes less terrible to you,
And you can see him without guiltiness.
Perhaps, convinced of your aversion, he
Is going to lead the rebels. Undeceive him,
Appease his spirit. King of these happy shores,
Troezen is his portion; but he knows
That the laws give your son the lofty ramparts
Minerva[7] builded. Both of you, indeed,
Have a true enemy. Unite together
To combat Aricia.

PHAEDRA. To your advice
I let myself be drawn. Well, let me live,
If I can be restored to life; and if
My love for a son can in this grievous moment
Reanimate the rest of my weak spirits.

Act II

SCENE 1. *Aricia and Ismene*

ARICIA. Hippolytus asks to see me in this place?
Hippolytus seeks me here to say good-by?
Ismene, is it true? You're not mistaken?

ISMENE. It is the first result of Theseus' death.
Madame, prepare yourself to see the hearts
Scattered by Theseus fly from every side
Towards you. Aricia at last is mistress
Of her fate, and soon will see the whole of Greece
Submit to her.

ARICIA. It's not a false report?
Do I cease to be a slave, and have no foe?

ISMENE. No, madam, the gods are now no more against you,
And Theseus has rejoined your brothers' shades.

ARICIA. Is it known what caused his death?

ISMENE. They spread
An unbelievable tale of it. It is said
That stealing a new love this faithless husband

7. The Greek goddess Athene, patroness of Athens.

Was swallowed by the waves. It is even said—
A widespread rumor this—that he descended
To Hades with Peirithous,[8] and saw
Cocytus[9] and the gloomy banks, and living
Appeared to the infernal shades, but then
Could not emerge from those sad regions,
And cross the bourn from which there's no return.
ARICIA. Shall I believe a man before his hour
Can enter the dark dwelling of the dead?
What spell could draw him to those fearsome coasts?
ISMENE. Theseus is dead, madam, and you alone
Have doubts of it. Athens is mourning for it,
Troezen, informed of it, acknowledges
Hippolytus as King; and Phaedra, here
In this palace, trembling for her son, now seeks
The advice of anxious friends.
ARICIA. Do you believe
Hippolytus, less cruel than his father,
Will make my chains less heavy, sympathize
With my misfortunes?
ISMENE. Madam, I do believe it.
ARICIA. But do you really know that heartless man?
By what fond hope do you think he'll pity me?
In me alone respect a sex he scorns?
You've seen how he avoids me, seeks those places
Where I am not.
ISMENE. I know all that is said
About his coldness. But I've seen when near you
This proud Hippolytus; and in seeing him,
The rumor of his pride has doubly whetted
My curiosity. His actual presence
Seemed not to correspond. At your first glances
I've seen him get confused. His eyes, which wished
Vainly to shun you, could not leave your face.
The name of lover would offend his heart,
But yet he has a lover's tender eyes,
If not his words.
ARICIA. How my heart, dear Ismene,
Drinks in a speech which may have little basis.
Is it believable to you who know me
That the sad plaything of a pitiless fate,

8. Theseus went with Peirithous, king of the Lapiths, with whom he had earlier abducted Helen, to Hades to help his friend steal Persephone. Hercules freed Theseus, whom Pluto had imprisoned, but could not free Peirithous, who was later killed. 9. River in Hades, tributary to Acheron.

Whose heart is fed on bitterness and tears,
Should be acquainted with the trivial griefs
Of love? The remnant of the blood of a king,
Erechtheus, the noble son of Earth,
Alone I have escaped war's ravages.
I've lost six brothers in the flower of youth—
Hope of a famous house!—all reaped by the sword.
The moistened earth regretfully drank the blood
Of the offspring of Erechtheus.[1] You know
How since their death a cruel law was made,
Forbidding Greeks to breathe a lover's sighs
For me. It is feared the sister's reckless flames
May kindle once again her brothers' ashes.
But you know well with what disdainful eye
I looked upon a conqueror's suspicions;
And how, opposed to love, I often thanked
The unjust Theseus whose convenient harshness
Aided my scorn. But then my eyes had not
Beheld his son. Not that by eyes alone
Basely enchanted, I love his beauty and charm,
Gifts with which nature wishes to honor him,
And which he scorns, or seems unconscious of;
I love in him his nobler wealth, his father's virtues,
Without his faults. I love—I do confess it—
That generous pride that never yet has bowed
Beneath the amorous yoke. Phaedra took pride
In Theseus' practiced sighs. But as for me,
I am more proud, and shun the easy glory
Of gaining homage that a thousand others
Have had before me, and of penetrating
A heart completely open. But to bend
A heart inflexible, to make a soul
Insensible to love feel all its pain,
To enchain a captive by his bonds amazed,
In vain rebellion against the pleasing yoke,
That's what I wish; and that is what provokes me.
It's easier to disarm Hercules
Than Prince Hippolytus; and conquests soon
And often made will bring less glory to
The victor's eyes. But, dear Ismene, how
Unwise I am! for I shall be resisted
Only too much; and you perhaps will hear me
Lament the pride that I admire today.

1. Their ancestor, son of Earth and reared by Athene.

If he would love! With what extreme delight
Would I make him . . .
ISMENE. You'll hear him now, himself.
He comes to you.

SCENE 2. *Aricia, Ismene, Hippolytus*

HIPPOLYTUS. Madame, before I leave,
I thought that I should tell you of your fate.
My father lives no more. My apprehension
Presaged the reasons of his too long absence;
And death alone, stopping his famous deeds,
Could hide him for so long within this world.
The gods have yielded to the Fates at last
The friend and the successor of Alcides.[2]
I think your hatred, allowing him his virtues,
Will hear without regret what is his due.
One hope allays my deadly sorrow now.
From your strict tutelage I'll deliver you,
Revoke the laws whose rigor I've deplored.
Do what you will. Dispose of your own heart,
And in this Troezen, my heritage,
Which has forthwith accepted me as King,
I leave you as free, nay freer, than myself.
ARICIA. Temper your generosity, my lord,
For its excess embarrasses me. So
To honor my disgrace will put me—more
Than you think—under the harsh laws from which
You would exempt me.
HIPPOLYTUS. Athens, undecided
In the choice of a successor, speaks of you,
Names me and the Queen's son.
ARICIA. Me, my lord?
HIPPOLYTUS. I know, without self-flattery, that a law
Seems to reject me. Greece reproaches me
With an alien mother. But if my brother were
My only rival, over him I have
Some veritable claims that I would save
Out of the law's caprice. Another bridle,
More lawful, checks my boldness. I yield to you,
Or rather give you back what is your own,
A scepter which your ancestors received
From the most famous man that ever lived;
Adoption placed it in Ægeus' hands;[3]

2. Theseus is "successor" to Alcides, or Hercules, as a destroyer of monsters.
3. Pandion's son by adoption, and Theseus' father.

Athens protected and enlarged by Theseus
Joyfully recognized so good a king,
And left in oblivion your luckless brothers.
Now Athens calls you back within her walls;
With a long quarrel she has groaned enough;
Enough her fields have reeked with blood of thine.
Troezen obeys me; and the plains of Crete
Offer to Phaedra's son a rich domain.
Attica is yours, and I am going
On your behalf to reunite the suffrages
We share between us.

ARICIA. Astonished and confused
At all I hear, I am afraid . . . afraid
A dream abuses me. Am I awake?
Can I believe in such a plan? What god,
My lord, what god has put it in your breast?
How justly is your glory spread abroad
In every place! And how the truth surpasses
Your fame! You would betray yourself for me?
Would it not be enough for you to refrain
From hating me? And to prevent your soul
So long from this hostility . . .

HIPPOLYTUS. I hate you,
Madam? However they depict my pride,
Do you think it bore a monster? What settled hate,
What savage manners could, in seeing you,
Not become milder? Could I have resisted
The charm that . . .

ARICIA. What, my lord?

HIPPOLYTUS. I've gone too far.
I see that reason yields to violence.
Since I've begun to speak, I must continue.
I must inform you, madam, of a secret
My heart no longer can contain. You see
Before you a lamentable prince, a type
Of headstrong pride. I, rebel against love,
For long have scorned its captives. I deplored
The shipwreck of weak mortals, and proposed
To contemplate the tempests from the shore.
But now enslaved under the common law,
I see myself transported. In a moment
My mad audacity has been subdued.
My proud soul is at last enslaved. For nearly
Six months, ashamed and desperate, and wearing
The marks of torture, against you, against myself,

Vainly I strove. Present I fled from you,
Absent I sought you. In the midst of forests
Your image followed me; the light of day,
The shadows of the night, brought to my eyes
The charms I shunned, and everything conspired
To make the rebel Hippolytus your captive.
Now for all fruit of my superfluous cares,
I seek but do not find myself. My bow, my spears,
My chariot call to me in vain. No more
Do I remember Neptune's lessons; the woods
Now echo to my groans. My idle steeds
Have now forgot my voice. Perhaps the tale
Of love so wild will make you, as you listen,
Blush for your work. What an uncouth recital
Of a heart that's offered you. What a strange captive
For bonds so beautiful! But to your eyes
The offering should be the richer for it;
Remember that I speak an alien tongue
And don't reject vows that are ill expressed,
Vows that without you I had never formed.

SCENE 3. *Aricia, Ismene, Hippolytus, Theramenes*

THERAMENES. My lord, the Queen is coming. I come before
To tell you that she seeks you.
HIPPOLYTUS. Me?
THERAMENES. I don't know why.
But she has sent to ask for you. She wishes
To speak with you before you go.
HIPPOLYTUS. Phaedra!
What shall I say to her? And what can she
Expect . . .
ARICIA. My lord, you can't refuse to hear her.
Though you are sure of her hostility,
You ought to have some pity for her tears.
HIPPOLYTUS. Yet you are going. And I depart, not knowing
Whether I have offended by my words
The charms that I adore. I do not know
Whether this heart I leave now in your hands . . .
ARICIA. Go, Prince, pursue your generous designs;
Put tributary Athens in my power
And all those gifts that you have wished to make me,
I accept. But yet that Empire, great and glorious,
Is not to me the richest of your gifts.

SCENE 4. *Hippolytus and Theramenes*

HIPPOLYTUS. Friend, is all ready? But the Queen approaches.
Go, see that all's prepared for our departure.
Run, give the signal, and return at once
To free me from a vexing interview.

SCENE 5. *Hippolytus, Phaedra, Œnone*

PHAEDRA. He's here: my blood retreats towards my heart,
And I forget what I had meant to say.
ŒNONE. Think of a son whose sole hope lies in you.
PHAEDRA. It is said that your immediate departure
Is sundering us, my lord. I come to wed
My tears unto your griefs; and to explain
My anxious fears to you. My son is now
Without a father; and the day is near
Which of my death will make him witness too.
His youth is threatened by a thousand foes,
And you alone can arm against them—but
Secret remorse is fretting in my soul.
I fear you're deaf to his cries, and that you'll wreak
On him your wrath against an odious mother.
HIPPOLYTUS. Madam, I do not harbor such base feelings.
PHAEDRA. Although you hate me, I shall not complain,
My lord: for you have seen me bent to harm you.
You could not read the tables of my heart.
I've taken care to invite your enmity,
And could not bear your presence where I dwelt.
In public, and in private, your known foe,
I've wished the seas to part us, and even forbidden
The mention of your name within my hearing.
But if one measures punishment by the offense,
If only hatred can attract your hate,
Never was woman who deserved more pity,
My lord, and less deserved your enmity.
HIPPOLYTUS. A mother jealous for her children's rights
Seldom forgives her stepson. I know it, madam.
Nagging suspicions are the commonest fruits
Of second marriage; and another wife
Would have disliked me just the same; and I
Might well have had to swallow greater wrongs.
PHAEDRA. Ah, my lord! Heaven—I dare avow it now—
Has made me an exception to that rule.

And what a different care perplexes me
And eats me up.

HIPPOLYTUS. Madam, it is not time
To grieve. Perhaps your husband is alive.
Heaven to our tears may grant his swift return.
Neptune, his tutelary god, protects him,
To whom my father never prayed in vain.

PHAEDRA. None has beheld the marches[4] of the dead
A second time, my lord. Since he has seen
Those dismal shores, you hope in vain some god
Will send him back. The greedy Acheron
Never lets go its prey. What do I say?
He is not dead since he still lives in you.
Ever before my eyes I see my husband.
I see him, speak with him, and my heart still . . .
I'm wandering, my lord. My foolish feelings,
In spite of me, declare themselves.

HIPPOLYTUS. I see
Love's wonderful effects. Dead though he is,
Theseus is always present to your eyes:
Your soul is ever burning with your love.

PHAEDRA. Yes, Prince, I pine and burn for Theseus.
I love him, not as when he visited
The underworld, a fickle lover, bent
To stain great Pluto's bed, but faithful, proud,
Attractive, young, and even a little shy,
Charming all hearts, an image of the gods,
Or even as you are now. He had your bearing,
Your eyes, your speech; and such a modesty
Made flush his face when over the Cretan waves
He came and turned the hearts of Minos' daughters.[5]
What were you doing then? Why without you
Did he assemble there the flower of Greece?
And why were you too young to sail with him
Unto our shores? For then you would have slain
The Minotaur, despite the devious ways
Of his vast lair: my sister, to redeem you
From your confusion, with the fateful thread
Would have armed your hand[6]—but no, for I myself,
Inspired by love, would have forestalled her plan.
It would have been me, Prince; by timely aid,
I would have led you through the labyrinth.

4. Borderlands. 5. I.e., Phaedra and Ariadne. 6. The Minotaur inhabited the heart of a maze. Ariadne provided Theseus with a ball of thread by which he left a trail behind him and could retrace his steps after killing the monster.

How many cares that charming head of yours
Would then have cost me! I would not have trusted
To that weak thread alone, but walked before you,
Companion in the peril which you chose:
And going down into the labyrinth,
Phaedra would have returned with you, or else
Been lost with you.

HIPPOLYTUS. O Gods! What do I hear?
Do you forget that Theseus is my father,
And you his wife?

PHAEDRA. By what do you judge that I
Have done so, Prince? Would I forget my honor?

HIPPOLYTUS. Forgive me, madam. I admit, with blushing,
I misinterpreted an innocent speech.
I am ashamed to stay within your sight;
I'm going. . . .

PHAEDRA. Ah! cruel! You've understood too well.
I've said enough to save you from mistaking.
Know Phaedra, then, and all her madness. Yes,
I love; but do not think that I condone it,
Or think it innocent; nor that I ever
With base complaisance added to the poison
Of my mad passion. Hapless victim of
Celestial vengeance,[7] I abhor myself
More than you can. The gods are witnesses—
Those gods who kindled in my breast the flame
Fatal to all my blood, whose cruel boast
Was to seduce a weak and mortal heart.
Recall what's past. I did not flee from you,
Hardhearted man, I drove you away. I wished
To seem to you both hateful and inhuman.
To resist you better I aroused your hatred.
But what have profited my useless pains?
You loathed me more: I did not love you less;
And your misfortunes lent you further charms.
I've languished, shriveled in the flames, in tears.
Your eyes will tell you so—if for a moment
Your eyes could look at me. What am I saying?
Think you that this confession I have made
Was voluntary? I trembled for a son
I did not dare betray and came to beg you
No more to hate him—futile schemes devised
By a heart too full of what it loves. Alas!

7. Phaedra feels herself a victim of Venus, the goddess of love; she loves Hippolytus against her will.

I could only speak to you about yourself.
Avenge yourself; punish an odious love,
Son worthy of a noble father, free
The universe of a monster who offends you.
Theseus' widow dares to love Hippolytus!
Believe me, Prince,
This dreadful monster would not seek to flee.
There is my heart: there you should aim your blow.
I feel it now, eager to expiate
Its sin, advance towards your arm. Strike.
Or if you think it unworthy of your blows,
Your hatred envying me a death so sweet,
Or if you think your hand with blood too vile
Would be imbrued, lend me your sword instead.
Give it me. [*She takes sword.*]

ŒNONE. What are you doing, madam?
O righteous Gods! But someone's coming. Leave
These hateful testimonies. Come inside,
And flee a certain shame.

SCENE 6. *Hippolytus and Theramenes*

THERAMENES. Is it Phaedra who flees,
Or rather is led away? O why, my lord,
These marks of sorrow? I see you without sword,
Speechless and pale.

HIPPOLYTUS. Theramenes, let's flee.
I am amazed, and cannot without horror
Behold myself. Phaedra . . . but no, great Gods!
In deep oblivion may this horrid secret
Remain entombed!

THERAMENES. If you would now depart,
The sails are ready. But Athens has decided.
Her chiefs have taken the votes of all the tribes.
Your brother wins, and Phaedra gets her way.

HIPPOLYTUS. Phaedra?

THERAMENES. A herald, bearing Athens' will,
Comes to remit the reins of government
Into her hands. Her son is King, my lord.

HIPPOLYTUS. O Gods, who know her heart, is it her virtue
That thus you recompense?

THERAMENES. There is, however,
A muffled rumor that the King's alive.
It is said that in Epirus he's appeared.
But I, who sought him there, I know too well . . .

HIPPOLYTUS. No matter. Let us listen to everything,

And neglect nothing. Examine this report
And trace it to its source. If it should prove
Unfounded, let's depart. Whatever the cost,
Let's put the scepter into worthy hands.

Act III

SCENE 1. *Phaedra and Œnone*

PHAEDRA. O! that the honors which are brought to me
Were paid elsewhere! Why do you urge me so?
Can you wish me to be seen? What do you come with
To flatter my desolation? Hide me rather.
Not only have I spoken; but my frenzy
Is noised abroad. I've said those things which ought
Never to be heard. O heavens! The way he listened!
By devious means he somehow failed to grasp
What I was saying—then he recoiled. His blush
Doubled my shame. Why did you turn aside
The death I sought? Did he turn pale with fear
When with his sword I sought my breast, or seek
To snatch it from me? Since my hands had touched it
But once, it was made horrible in his eyes,
And would profane his hands.
ŒNONE. Thus in your woes
Lamenting to yourself, you feed a flame
That ought to be put out. Would it not be better,
Worthy the blood of Minos, in nobler cares
To seek your peace. To spite a heartless man
Who had recourse to flight, assume the conduct
Of affairs, and reign.
PHAEDRA. I reign? To place the State
Under my law, when reason reigns no longer
Over myself; when I have abdicated
From the empire of my senses; when beneath
A yoke of shame I scarcely breathe; when I
Am dying.
ŒNONE. Fly.
PHAEDRA. I cannot leave him.
ŒNONE. You dared
To banish him, and dare not shun him now?
PHAEDRA. Too late. He knows of my mad passion.
I've crossed the bounds of rigid modesty,
Declared my shame before my conqueror's eyes,
And hope has slipped perforce into my heart.

It was you who rallied my declining strength,
When my departing soul was on my lips,
And by your flattering counsels knew the way
To bring me back to life. You made me glimpse
How I could love him.

ŒNONE. To save you from your ills,
Guilty or innocent, what would I not
Have done? But if an insult ever touched you,
Can you forget his haughty scorn? And how
With cruel eyes his obstinate rigor let you
Lie prostrate at his feet. How his fierce pride
Rendered him odious! If only Phaedra
Had seen him, at that moment, with my eyes!

PHAEDRA. Œnone, he may leave this native pride
Which wounds you. Nurtured in the pathless woods,
He has their roughness. Hardened by savage laws,
He hears love spoken of for the first time;
Perhaps it was surprise that caused his silence;
Perhaps my pleas had too much violence.

ŒNONE. Remember a barbarian gave him birth.

PHAEDRA. Although a Scythian and barbarian,
She yet has loved.

ŒNONE. He has for all our sex
A deadly hatred.

PHAEDRA. So I shall not see him
Prefer a rival. All your counsels now
Are out of season. Serve my passion, Œnone,
And not my reason. He opposes now
To love a heart impenetrable; let us
Discover some more vulnerable place.
The charms of ruling have appeared to touch him.
Athens attracts him; he has not been able
To hide it. His ships have turned their prows; their sails
Flap in the wind. Find this ambitious youth,
Œnone; make the royal crown to glitter
Before his eyes. Let him wear upon his brow
The sacred diadem. I only wish
The honor of his love, and yield to him
The power I cannot keep. He will instruct
My son in the art of ruling, who may perhaps
Regard him as a father. Both son and mother
I put under his power. Try every means
To bend him; he will listen to your speech
More readily than to mine. Urge, weep, and moan.
Paint Phaedra dying; do not blush to use

The tone of a suppliant. I will approve
Of all you do. You are my only hope.
I await your coming to decide my fate.

SCENE 2. *Phaedra*

PHAEDRA. O thou who seest the shame to which I've come,
Venus implacable, am I confounded
Enough for thee? Thou canst not further urge
Thy cruelty; thy victory is complete.
O cruel! If thou wishest another triumph
Attack an enemy who is more rebellious.
Hippolytus flees thee; and, thy wrath defying,
Has never to thy altars bowed the knee.
Thy name appears to shock his haughty ears.
Goddess, avenge thyself. Thy cause is mine.
O let him love! Œnone is returned.
I am detested then. He would not hear you?

SCENE 3. *Phaedra and Œnone*

ŒNONE. Madam, you must repress the very thought
Of your vain passion, and recall again
Your former virtue. The King that we thought dead
Will soon appear before your eyes. Theseus
Is come. The people rush to see him. I went,
At your command, to seek Hippolytus,
When I heard a thousand shouts. . . .
PHAEDRA. My husband lives,
Œnone. It is enough. I have confessed
A love which foully wrongs him. Theseus lives.
I wish to know no more.
ŒNONE. What?
PHAEDRA. I foretold it,
But you would not believe it. Your tears prevailed
Over my shame. I would have died today
Worthy of tears. I followed your advice—
I die dishonored.
ŒNONE. Die?
PHAEDRA. O righteous heaven!
What have I done today? My husband's coming,
And his son with him. I shall see the witness
Of my adulterous passion watch how boldly
I greet his father—my heart still full of sighs
To which he would not listen, and my eyes
Still moist with tears he scorned. Do you suppose
That he, so sensitive to Theseus' honor,

Will hide the fires that burn me—and betray
His father and his king? Could he contain
The horror I inspire? He would keep silence
In vain. I know my perfidies, Œnone;
I am not one of those who in their crimes
Enjoy a tranquil peace, and know the art
To keep their countenance without a blush.
I know my madness: I recall it all.
I think already that these walls, these arches,
Are going to speak; they but await my husband
Before they utter forth my crimes. Die, then.
My death will free me from a crowd of horrors.
Is it a great mischance to cease to live?
Death has no terrors for the unfortunate.
I only fear the name I leave behind me.
A dreadful heritage for my poor children!
The blood of Jupiter should puff up their courage,
With a just pride; but yet a mother's crime
Will be a heavy burden. One day, I fear,
A speech—too true!—will cast it in their teeth
They had a guilty mother; and I fear
That crushed by such a hateful load, they'll never
Dare raise their eyes.

ŒNONE. It is true. I pity them.
Never was fear more justified than yours.
But why expose them to such insults? Why
Against yourself give evidence? All would be lost.
It will be said that guilty Phaedra fled
The terrible sight of husband she betrayed.
Hippolytus will rejoice that by your death
You corroborate his tale. What could I say
To your accuser? Face to face with him
I shall be easy to confound, and see him
Rejoicing in his triumph, while he tells
Your shame to all who listen. Rather let
Fire from heaven consume me! But tell me true
Is he still dear to you? And with what eyes
Do you behold this insolent prince?

PHAEDRA. I see him
Even as a monster hideous to my eyes.

ŒNONE. Why yield him then a total victory?
You fear him, madam. Dare to accuse him first
Of the crime that he will charge you with today.
Who will contradict you? Everything
Speaks against him—his sword by lucky chance

Left in your hands, your present sore distress,
Your former sorrow, his father long ago
Warned by your outcries, and his actual exile
Obtained by you yourself.
PHAEDRA. How should I dare
Oppress and slander innocence?
ŒNONE. My zeal
Only requires your silence. Like you I shrink
From such an action. You would find me readier
To face a thousand deaths; but since I'd lose you
Without this painful rememdy, and your life
For me is of such value that all else
Must yield to it, I'll speak. And Theseus, angered
By what I tell him, will restrict his vengeance
To his son's exile. When he punishes,
A father is always father, satisfied
With a light penalty. But even if
His guiltless blood is spilt, your threatened honor
Is yet too valuable to be exposed.
Whatever it demands, you must submit,
Madam. And to save your threatened honor
All must be sacrificed, including virtue.
Someone is coming. I see Theseus.
PHAEDRA. Ah!
I see Hippolytus. In his haughty eyes
I see my ruin written. Do what you will,
I resign myself to you. In my disorder,
I can do nothing for myself.

SCENE 4. *Phaedra, Œnone, Theseus, Hippolytus, Theramenes*

THESEUS. Now fortune,
Madam, no longer frowns, and in your arms . . .
PHAEDRA. Stay, Theseus. Do not profane the love you feel.
I am not worthy of your sweet caresses.
You are insulted. Fortune has not spared
Your wife during your absence. I am unworthy
To please you, or approach you; and hence forward
I ought to think only of where to hide.

SCENE 5. *Theseus, Hippolytus, Theramenes*

THESEUS. What is the reason for this strange reception?
HIPPOLYTUS. Phaedra alone the mystery can explain:
But if my ardent prayers can move your heart,
Permit me not to see her any more.
And let Hippolytus disappear forever

From places where she dwells.

THESEUS. Leave me, my son?

HIPPOLYTUS. I sought her not: you brought her to these shores,
And when you left entrusted to the banks
Of Troezen, Aricia and the Queen,
I was instructed to look after them.
But what can now delay me? In my youth
I showed enough my prowess in the forests
Against unworthy foes; and could I not,
Escaping an ignoble idleness,
In blood more glorious stain my spears? Before
You reached my present age, already
More than one tyrant, more than one grim monster
Had felt your mighty strength; already you,
Chastiser of insolence, had secured the shores
Of the two seas; the private traveler feared
Outrage no more; and Hercules could rest
From his long labors, hearing of your deeds.
But I, an unknown son of famous sire,
Am even further from my mother's deeds![8]
Suffer my courage to be used at last;
And if some monster has escaped your arm,
Let me then lay the honorable skin
Before your feet; or by the lasting memory
Of a fine death perpetuate the days
So nobly ended, and prove to all the world
I was your son.

THESEUS. What do I now behold?
What horror makes my frightened family
Flee from my sight? If I return so feared,
So little wanted, why, heaven, from my prison
Did you release me? I had one friend alone;
Imprudently he wished to steal the wife
Of the King of Epirus.[9] I aided, with regret,
His amorous designs; but angry fate
Blinded us both. The King surprised me there,
Defenseless, weaponless. I saw Peirithous,
Sad object of my tears, by this barbarian
Given to cruel monsters whom he fed
With blood of luckless mortals. He shut me up
In dismal caverns underground that neighbored
The empire of the shades. After six months
The gods again looked on me. I deceived

8. Hippolytus' mother, an Amazon, also performed brave deeds. 9. A district in western Greece, on the Ionian Sea.

The eyes of those who guarded me. I cleansed
The world of a perfidious enemy;
To his own monsters he became a prey.
And when with joy I approach the dearest things
Now left me by the gods—what do I say?—
When to itself my soul returns and takes its fill
Of that dear sight, for welcome I receive
A shuddering fear and horror. All flee; all shrink
From my embraces. And I feel the terror
That I inspire. I'd like to be again
In the prisons of Epirus. Speak. Phaedra complains
That I am wronged. Who has betrayed me? Why
Have I not been avenged? Has Greece, to whom
So many times my arms proved useful, now
Granted asylum to a criminal?
You do not answer! Is my son, my own son,
Leagued with my enemies? Let us go in.
I cannot stay in doubt that overwhelms me.
Let me know both the offense and the offender.
Let Phaedra tell the cause of her distress.

SCENE 6. *Hippolytus and Theramenes*

HIPPOLYTUS. Where did that speech, which petrified me, tend?
Does Phaedra, still a prey to her mad passion,
Wish to accuse, and so destroy, herself?
What will the King say? What destructive poison
Is scattered over all his house by love.
And I, full of a love he will detest,
How different from the man that he remembers!
What black presentiments affright me now!
But innocence has nought to fear. Let's go:
Seek by what happy art I can awaken
My father's tenderness—speak of a love
That he may wish to crush, though all his power
Will not be able to drive it from my heart.

Act IV

SCENE 1. *Theseus and Œnone*

THESEUS. What do I hear? A traitor, a rash traitor,
To plot this outrage to his father's honor?
How harshly, Destiny, dost thou pursue me!
I know not where I'm going, nor what I am!
O tenderness and bounty ill repaid!

Audacious projects! evil thought! To reach
The goal of his black passion he sought the aid
Of violence. I recognize the sword—
The instrument of his rage—with which I armed him
For nobler purposes. All the ties of blood
Could not restrain him! And Phaedra hesitated
To punish him! Her silence spared the villain!

ŒNONE. She rather spared a pitiable father.
Being ashamed of a violent lover's scheme
And of the wicked fire caught from her eyes,
Phaedra desired to die; her murderous hand
Would have put out the pure light of her eyes.
I saw her raise her arm. I ran to stop her.
Alone I tried to save her for your love,
And, mourning for her troubles and your fears,
I have unwillingly interpreted
The tears you saw.

THESEUS. The villain! He was not able
To stop himself from turning pale. I saw him
Tremble with fear when he encountered me.
I was astonished at his lack of joy;
His cold embraces froze my tenderness.
But was this guilty passion which devours him
Already manifest in Athens?

ŒNONE. My lord,
Recall the Queen's complaints. A criminal love
Was cause of all her hatred.

THESEUS. And did this passion
Kindle again at Troezen?

ŒNONE. O my lord,
I have told you all that passed. Too long the Queen
Has in her mortal grief been left alone;
So let me leave, and hasten to her side.

SCENE 2. *Theseus and Hippolytus*

THESEUS. Ah! here he is. Great Gods! What eye, as mine,
Would not have been deceived? Why should the brow
Of a profane adulterer shine with virtue?
And should one not by certain signs perceive
The heart of villainous men?

HIPPOLYTUS. May I inquire,
My lord, what dismal cloud is on your face?
Dare you confide in me?

THESEUS. Villain! Do you then dare
To show yourself before me? Monster, whom

Too long the thunder's spared, vile brigand,
Of whom I purged the earth, as I believed,
After the transport of a horrible love
Had brought your lust even to your father's bed,
You show your hostile head! You would appear
In places full of your own infamy,
And do not seek, under an unknown sky
A country which my name has not yet reached.
Flee, traitor! Do not come to brave my hatred,
Or try a rage that I can scarcely hold.
I have enough opprobrium that I caused
The birth of such a criminal, without
Your shameful death should come to soil the glory
Of all my noble deeds. Flee! If you do not wish
A sudden death to add you to the villains
This hand has punished, take good care that never
The star that lights us see you in this place
Set a rash foot. Fly, I say; and hasten
To purge my territories forever from
Your horrible aspect. And thou, O Neptune!
If formerly my courage cleansed your shores
Of infamous assassins, remember now,
That for reward of all my happy efforts,
Thou promisedst to grant one prayer of mine.
In the long rigors of a cruel prison
I did not once implore thy immortal power;
Niggardly of the help that I expected,
I saved my prayers for greater needs. Today
I do implore thee. Avenge a wretched father!
This traitor I abandon to thy wrath.
In his own blood stifle his shameless lusts.
And by thy furies I shall recognize
Thy favors.

HIPPOLYTUS. Does Phaedra charge Hippolytus
With love incestuous? Such an excess of horror
Renders me speechless. So many sudden blows
Crush me at once, they take away my words
And choke my utterance.

THESEUS. Traitor, you thought
Phaedra would bury in a cowardly silence
Your brutal conduct. You should not have left
The sword which in her hands has helped to damn you.
Or rather, piling up your perfidy,
You should have bought her silence with her life.

HIPPOLYTUS. With this black falsehood righteously incensed,

I would now speak the truth; but I suppress
A secret that would touch you too. Approve
The respect which seals my lips; and, without wishing
To augment your griefs, I urge you to examine
My life. Remember who I am. Small crimes
Always precede the great. Whoever crosses
The bounds of law may violate at last
The holiest rights. There are degrees of crime
Just as of virtue—never innocence
Changes to utter license at one stroke.
One day alone is not enough to turn
A good man to a treacherous murderer,
Still less to incest. Suckled at the breast
Of a chaste heroine, I have not belied
The fountain of her blood. Pitheus,[1] thought
To be the wisest of all men, did deign
To instruct me. I do not wish to give
Too favorable a picture of myself;
But if some virtue's fallen to my share,
My lord, I think that I have clearly shown
My hatred of the crimes imputed to me.
By this Hippolytus is known in Greece.
I've pushed my virtue to the edge of harshness.
My moral inflexibility is known.
The day's not purer than my inmost heart,
And people wish Hippolytus could be smitten
By some profane love. . . .

THESEUS. Yes, it is that same pride
Which now condemns you. I see the hateful cause
Of your frigidity. Phaedra alone
Charmed your lascivious eyes; your soul, indifferent
To every other object, disdained to burn
With innocent flames.

HIPPOLYTUS. No, father, this my heart—
I cannot hide it longer—has not disdained
To burn with virtuous love. I do confess
My veritable offense. I love. I love
('Tis true) despite your prohibition, sir.
Aricia to her laws holds me enslaved.
The daughter of Pallas has overcome your son.
I worship her; rebellious to your orders
I can neither sigh nor burn, except for her.

THESEUS. You love her? Heavens! But no, the artifice

1. The most learned man of his age, Theseus' guardian. After marrying Phaedra, Theseus sent Hippolytus to Pitheus, who adopted him as heir to the throne of Troezen.

Is gross. You feign yourself a criminal
To justify yourself
HIPPOLYTUS. For six months now,
My lord, I shunned her, but I loved. I came
Trembling to tell you. Can nothing disabuse you?
Or by what terrible oath can I convince you?
By earth, and heaven, and by the whole of nature . . .
THESEUS. Rogues always have recourse to perjury.
Cease, cease, and spare me further useless speech,
If your feigned virtue has no other aid.
HIPPOLYTUS. Although to you it may seem false and cunning,
Phaedra, within her heart, will be more just.
THESEUS. Ah! how your impudence excites my wrath!
HIPPOLYTUS. How long my exile? What the place prescribed?
THESEUS. Even if you should go beyond the pillars
Of Hercules,[2] I still would be too near you.
HIPPOLYTUS. Charged with this hideous crime, I should not have
One friend to plead for me when you desert me.
THESEUS. Go seek for friends who morbidly applaud
Adultery and incest, ungrateful traitors,
Dishonorable and lawless, fit protectors
Of such a villain.
HIPPOLYTUS. You speak to me once more
Of incest and adultery. I hold
My peace. Yet Phaedra's mother . . . Phaedra springs
From a race, as you well know, my lord, more filled
With horrors than mine is.
THESEUS. What! will your rage
Lose all restraint before me? For the last time,
Out of my sight! Go, traitor. Do not wait
For a wrathful father to have you driven out
With infamy.

SCENE 3. *Theseus*

THESEUS. O wretched man, you run
To inevitable destruction. Neptune, feared
Even by the gods themselves, has given his word,
And he'll perform it. An avenging god
Pursues you, and you'll not escape. I loved you,
And feel that notwithstanding your offense
My heart is yearning for you in advance.
But it was you who forced me to condemn you.
Was ever father more outraged than I?

2. The two points of land on either side of the Strait of Gibraltar, at the western end of the Mediterranean and thus representing one edge of the known world.

Just gods, you see the grief that overwhelms me.
How could I father such a guilty child?

SCENE 4. *Theseus and Phaedra*

PHAEDRA. My lord, I come to you with fearful heart.
I overheard your wrathful voice, and tremble
Lest your dire threats should have a prompt result.
If there is still time, spare your child, your blood.
I dare to implore you. Save me from the horror
Of hearing his blood cry. O do not cause me
The everlasting grief of spilling it
By a father's hand.
THESEUS. No, madam, in my own blood
My hand has not been steeped. But none the less
He's not escaped me. An immortal hand
Is charged with his destruction. Neptune himself
Owes it to me, and you will be avenged.
PHAEDRA. Neptune owes it to you! Your wrathful prayers . . .
THESEUS. What! do you fear now lest they should be answered?
Rather join yours unto my lawful prayers.
Recount to me his crimes in all their vileness;
Heat up my anger which is too restrained,
Too slow. For you are not acquainted yet
With all his crimes. His mad attempt against you
Has led to further wrongs. Your mouth, he says,
Is full of lies; and he maintains, his heart
And faith are given to Aricia—that he loves her.
PHAEDRA. What, my lord?
THESEUS. That's what he said, but I
Knew how to take this frivolous pretense.
Let's hope from Neptune a swift stroke of justice.
I'm going myself to pray before his altar,
To accomplish his immortal vows with speed.

SCENE 5. *Phaedra*

PHAEDRA. He's gone. What news has beaten on my ears!
What half-extinguished fire within my breast
Revives! What thunderbolt! What dreadful news!
I flew, with all my heart, to save his son,
Breaking away from the restraining arms
Of terrified Œnone; to my remorse
I yielded. And who knows how far it would
Have carried me? Perhaps to accuse myself;
Perhaps, if my voice had failed not, the dread truth
Might have escaped me. . . . Hippolytus feels love,

But not for me. Aricia has his heart!
Aricia has his faith! Gods! When the ingrate,
Pitiless to my pleading, armed himself
With eye so proud and brow so stern, I thought
His heart to love would be forever closed,
Invulnerable to all my sex; and yet
Another has bent his will; and in his eyes
Another has found favor. Perhaps he has
A heart that's easily touched. I am alone
The object of his scorn. And I undertook
The task of his defense!

SCENE 6. *Phaedra and Œnone*

PHAEDRA. Do you know
Œnone, what I have just learnt?
ŒNONE. No, madam.
But trembling I have come to you, and pale,
Aware of your intentions; and I feared
A madness which might well be fatal to you.
PHAEDRA. Would you believe it, Œnone? I have a rival.
ŒNONE. What?
PHAEDRA. Hippolytus is in love. I cannot doubt it.
That savage enemy no one could conquer
Whom pleading and respect would both annoy,
The tiger I encountered but with fear,
Has recognized a conqueror at least.
Aricia has found the way to his heart.
ŒNONE. Aricia?
PHAEDRA. O pain I never knew before!
To what new torment am I now reserved!
All I have suffered, all my frenzied fears,
My passion's fury and its fierce remorse,
The unbearable insult of his cruel repulse,
Shadowed but feebly what I now endure.
They love each other. By what potent spell
Have I been hoodwinked? How have they met? Since when?
And where? You must have known: why did you hide it?
Could you not tell me of their furtive love?
Were they not often seen to speak together,
To seek each other? Did they go to hide
Deep in the woods? But they, alas, could meet
With perfect freedom. Heaven itself approved
Their innocent desires. They could pursue
Their amorous purposes without remorse,
And every day, for them, broke clear and calm!

While I, sad castaway of Nature, hid
From day and light. Death is the only god
I dared invoke; and I waited him,
Feeding on gall and steeped in tears, but yet
I did not dare (so closely I was watched)
To weep my fill. I tasted that sour pleasure
In fear and trembling; and with brow serene
Disguising my distress, I was deprived
Too often of my tears.

ŒNONE. But their vain loves
Will bear no fruit, for they will meet no more.

PHAEDRA. Forever and forever they will love.
At the moment when I speak—ah! deadly thought!—
They brave the fury of a maddened lover.
Despite the exile which will sunder them,
They vow eternal faith. I cannot bear
A joy which is an outrage to me. Œnone,
Take pity on my jealous rage. That girl
Must be destroyed; the anger of my husband
Against her hateful blood must be aroused
To no light penalty. The sister's crime
Exceeds the brothers'. In my jealous fury
I wish to urge him . . . But what am I doing?
Where has my reason fled? I jealous? I
To beg of Theseus? My husband is not dead,
And I am still aflame. For whom? Each word
Makes my hair stand on end. My crimes already
Have overflowed the measure. Both at once
I breathe the stench of incest and deceit.
My murderous hands, all apt for vengeance, burn
To plunge in innocent blood! Wretch! And I live!
And I endure the sight of sacred Phoebus
From whom I am derived. My ancestor
Is sire and master of the gods; and heaven,
Nay all the universe, is teeming now
With my forbears. Where then can I hide?
Flee to eternal night. What do I say?
For there my father holds the fatal urn,[3]
Put by the Fates in his stern hands, 'tis said.
Minos in Hades judges the pale ghosts.
Ah, how his shade will tremble when his eyes
Behold his daughter there, confessing sins—

3. After his death, Minos of Crete became, along with his brother Rhadamanthus, one of the judges of souls in the underworld. The urn held the lots determining to what abode in the underworld the souls of the dead were to be sent.

Crimes yet unknown in hell! What wilt thou say,
Father, to see this hideous spectacle?
Methinks I now behold the dreadful urn
Fall from thy hand! Methinks I see thee search
For some new punishment, thyself become
The torturer of thine own blood. Forgive:
A cruel god has doomed thy family.
Behold his vengeance in thy daughter's lust.
But yet, alas, never has my sad heart
Once plucked the fruit of the atrocious crime
Whose shame pursues me. Dogged by miseries
To the last gasp, in torture, I render up
A life I long to lose.

ŒNONE. Repel, madam,
An unreal terror! Behold with other eyes
A venial fault. You love. One's destiny
Cannot be overcome, and you were drawn
By a fatal spell. Is it a prodigy
Unknown before amongst us? And has love
Conquered no other hearts than yours alone?
Frailty is but too natural to us all.
You are a mortal—bow to mortals' lot.
The yoke that you bewail is nothing new:
The gods themselves—the dwellers on Olympus—
Who scare us from such crimes, have before now
Been scorched with lawless fires.

PHAEDRA. What do I hear?
What counsels do you dare to give me now?
Would you thus poison me until the end?
Wretch! Thus you ruined me; and when I fled
You brought me back. It was your pleading
Made me forget my duty. When I avoided
Hippolytus, it was you who made me see him.
What have you done? Why has your wicked mouth
Blackened his honor? Perhaps he will be slain,
The father's impious prayer to Neptune answered.
No longer will I hearken to you. Go,
Thou execrable monster, go and leave me
To my unhappy fate. May the just gods
Reward thee with a punishment to fright
Those who by servile arts feed princes' vices,
Urging them down the path they wish to take,
And smoothing it before them—base flatterers,
The most pernicious gift the angry heavens
Can give to kings. [*Exit* PHAEDRA.]

ŒNONE. Ah! Gods! to do her service
I have done all, left all. And I receive
This for reward. I get but my deserts.

Act V

SCENE 1. *Hippolytus and Aricia*

ARICIA. How in this mortal danger can you still
Keep silence, and thus leave a loving father
In error? If you scorn my pleading tears,
And easily consent no more to see,
Go, separate yourself from sad Aricia:
But yet, before you leave, preserve your life;
Defend your honor from a vile reproach,
And force your father to revoke his prayers.
There is still time. Why, by what caprice,
Do you leave the field thus free to your accuser?
Enlighten Theseus.

HIPPOLYTUS. What have I not said?
Should I reveal the soiling of his bed?
Should I, by telling a too truthful tale,
Make flush my father's brow? For you alone
Have pierced the hateful mystery. My heart
Can be unbosomed only to the gods
And you. I could not hide from you—by this
Judge if I love you—all I would conceal
Even from myself. But yet remember, madam,
Under what seal I have revealed it to you.
Forget, if you are able, what I've said,
And may you never open your chaste lips
To tell of this affair. Let us rely
Upon the justice of the gods, for they
Are much concerned to justify me; and Phaedra
Sooner or later punished for her crime
Cannot avoid deserved ignominy.
That's all I ask of you. I permit all else
To my unbounded anger. Leave the serfdom
To which you are reduced, and follow me.
Dare to accompany my flight, Aricia.
Dare to come with me; snatch yourself away
From this unholy place, where virtue breathes
A poisoned air. To hide your disappearance,
Profit from the confusion that is caused
By my disgrace. I can assure the means

For your departure. All your guards are mine,
Powerful upholders of our cause. Argos
Holds out its arms to us, and Sparta calls us.
Let's bear our righteous cries to mutual friends;
And suffer not that Phaedra by our ruin
Should drive us from the throne, and to her son
Promise your spoil and mine. The chance is good;
We must embrace it. . . . What fear now restrains you?
You seem uncertain. Your interest alone
Inspires me to this boldness. When I am
Ablaze, what freezes you? Are you afraid
To tread with me the paths of exile?

ARICIA. Alas!
How dear, my lord, would such an exile be!
Tied to your fate, with what delight would I
Live, by the rest of mortals quite forgotten!
But since I'm not united by such ties,
Can I, with honor, flee with you? I know
That without blemish I can free myself
From Theseus' hands—it would not be to leave
The bosom of my family—and flight
Is lawful if we flee from tyrants. But,
My lord, you love me, and my startled honor . . .

HIPPOLYTUS. No, no, I've too much care of your renown.
A nobler plan has brought me in your presence:
Flee from your enemies, and follow me,
Your husband. Free in our misfortunes, since
Heaven has ordained it so, our troth depends
Upon ourselves alone. Hymen need not
Be ringed with torches. At the gates of Troezen,
Among the tombs, the ancient sepulchers
Of the princes of my line, is a holy temple
Dreadful to perjurers. 'Tis there that mortals
Dare not make empty vows, lest they receive
Swift punishment; and, fearing there to meet
Inevitable death, the lie has not
A sterner bridle. There, if you will trust me,
We will confirm the solemn oath, and take
To witness it the god who's worshipped there,
Praying that he will act as father to us.
I'll call to witness the most sacred gods,
The chaste Diana, Juno the august,[4]
And all the gods who, witnessing my love,

4. Diana was goddess of the moon and of chastity; Juno, wife of Jupiter, was queen of the gods.

Will guarantee my holy promises.
ARICIA. The King is coming. Fly, Prince; leave at once.
I will remain a moment, to conceal
My own departure. Go, but leave with me
Some faithful guide to lead my timid steps
To where you wait for me.

SCENE 2. *Aricia, Theseus, Ismene*

THESEUS [*Aside*]. O Gods! enlighten
My troubled heart, and deign to show the truth
That I am seeking here.
ARICIA [*To* ISMENE]. Remember all,
My dear Ismene, and prepare for flight.

SCENE 3. *Aricia and Theseus*

THESEUS. You change your color, and seem speechless, madam.
What was Hippolytus doing here?
ARICIA. My lord,
To bid me an eternal farewell.
THESEUS. Your eyes
Have learnt to conquer that rebellious spirit,
And his first sighs were your accomplishment.
ARICIA. My lord, I cannot hide the truth from you.
He's not inherited your unjust hate;
He does not treat me as a criminal.
THESEUS. I see. He vows you an eternal love.
Do not rely on his inconstant heart,
For he would swear as much to others.
ARICIA. He,
My lord?
THESEUS. You ought to have made him less inconstant.
How can you bear this horrible division
Of his affections?
ARICIA. And how do you endure
That a horrible tale should smirch a blameless life?
Have you so little knowledge of his heart?
Do you discriminate so ill, my lord,
'Twixt crime and innocence? Must a hateful cloud
Conceal his virtue from your eyes alone,
Which brightly shines for others? It is wrong
To give him up to lying tongues. Cease now:
Repent your murderous prayers. Fear lest the heavens
Should bear you so much hatred as to grant
What you implored. For often in their wrath
They take our proferred victims; and their gifts

Are but the punishments of our own crimes.
THESEUS. No. You wish in vain to hide his outrage.
You're blinded by your love. I put my trust
In sure and irreproachable witnesses:
I've seen, I've seen a stream of genuine tears.
ARICIA. Take care, my lord. Your hands invincible
Have freed mankind of monsters without number,
But all are not destroyed, and you have left
One still alive. . . . Your son, my lord, forbids me
To tell you more. And knowing the respect
He wishes to retain for you, I would
Afflict him sorely if I dared to speak.
I imitate his modesty, and flee
Out of your presence, lest I should be forced
To break my silence.

SCENE 4. *Theseus*

THESEUS. What is in her mind?
What does it hide, this speech of hers, begun
So many times, and always interrupted?
Would they distract me with an empty feint?
Have they agreed together to torture me?
But I myself, in spite of my stern rigor,
What plaintive voice within my heart cried out?
I am afflicted by a secret pity,
And stand amazed. Let me a second time
Interrogate Œnone. I want to have
A clearer picture of the crime. Guards,
Send for Œnone. Let her come alone.

SCENE 5. *Theseus and Panope*

PANOPE. My lord, I know not what the Queen is planning,
But yet I fear her violent distress.
Mortal despair is painted on her face,
Marked with Death's pallor. Œnone, from her presence
Driven away with shame, has thrown herself
Into the deep sea: it is not known why
She took her desperate action; and the waves
Have hidden her forever.
THESEUS. What do I hear?
PANOPE. The Queen has not been calmed by this dread deed.
Distress still grows within her doubtful soul.
Sometimes, to ease her secret griefs, she takes
Her children, bathing them with tears,
And then, renouncing her maternal love,

She suddenly repels them with her hand.
Then here and there she walks irresolute,
Her wandering eyes no longer knowing us.
Thrice she has written; then, with change of mind,
Thrice she has torn the letter she began.
Deign to see her, my lord, and try to help her.

THESEUS. O heavens! Œnone dead! and Phaedra now
Desires to die. Recall my son. Let him
Defend himself. Let him come and speak with me.
I'm ready to hear him. O Neptune, do not hasten
Thy deadly blessings. I would now prefer
That they should never be fulfilled. Perhaps
I have believed unfaithful witnesses
And raised too soon towards thee my cruel hands.
By what despair now will my prayers be followed!

SCENE 6. *Theseus and Theramenes*

THESEUS. Theramenes, is it you? What have you done
With Hippolytus? I entrusted him to you
From a tender age. But what has caused these tears
I see you shedding. What is my son doing?

THERAMENES. O tardy and superfluous cares, vain love!
Hippolytus is no more.

THESEUS. O Gods!

THERAMENES. I have seen
The most lovable of mortals die, and I must add,
My lord, the least guilty.

THESEUS. My son is dead?
When I hold out my arms to him, the gods
Have hastened his destruction. What dread blow
Has snatched him from me? What sudden thunderclap?

THERAMENES. Scarce had we passed the gates of Troezen,
He rode upon his chariot; his sad guards,
Around him ranged, were silent as their lord.
Brooding, he followed the Mycenæ road,
And loosely held the reins. His splendid steeds,
Which once with noble zeal obeyed his voice,
Now with dejected eye and lowered head
Seemed to adapt themselves to his sad thoughts.
Then suddenly from out the waves there came
A dreadful cry which broke the silent air
And from the bosom of the earth a voice
With dreadful groans replied. Our blood was frozen,
Even to our hearts. The manes of the listening steeds
Stood up. Then on the liquid plain arose

A watery mountain which appeared to boil.
The wave approached, then broke, and vomited
Among the foamy seas a raging monster:
His huge head armed with menacing horns, his body
Covered with yellow scales, half-bull, half-dragon,
With his croup curved in involuted folds.
The seashore trembled with his bellowing;
The sky with horror saw that savage monster;
The earth was moved, the air infected with it;
The sea which brought it started back amazed.
Everyone fled; seeing all courage vain,
They sought asylum in a neighboring temple.
Hippolytus alone, a worthy son
Of a heroic father, stopped his horses,
Seized his javelins, approached the monster,
And, with a dart, thrown with unerring aim,
Wounded it in the flank. With rage and pain,
The monster leapt, and at the horses' feet
Fell roaring, rolled itself, and offered them
Its flaming mouth, which covered them with fire,
And blood and smoke. Then terror seized them; deaf,
This time, nor voice nor bridle did they know.
Their master spent himself in useless efforts;
Their bits were reddened with a bloody foam.
'Tis said, that in this terrible confusion
A god was seen who spurred their dusty flanks.
Fear hurtled them across the rocks. The axle
Screeched and snapped. The bold Hippolytus
Saw all his chariot shiver into splinters;
And tangled in the reins, he fell. Excuse
My grief. That cruel sight will be for me
An everlasting source of tears. I've seen,
My lord, I've seen your most unlucky son
Dragged by the horses which his hands had fed.
He tried to check them; but, frightened by his voice,
They ran; and soon his body was a single wound.
The plain resounded with our grievous cries.
At last they slackened speed; they stopped not far
From those old tombs where his royal ancestors
Are the cold relics. There I ran, in tears,
And his guard followed me. A trail of blood
Showed us the way. The rocks were stained with it.
The loathsome brambles carried bloodstained scraps
Of hair torn from his head. I reached him, called
To him; he stretched his hand to me, and opened

His dying eyes, then closed them suddenly.
"The heavens," said he, "now snatch my guiltless life.
Look after Aricia when I am dead.
Dear friend, if my father one day learns the truth,
And weeps the tragic ending of a son
Falsely accused, in order to appease
My blood and plaintive ghost, tell him to treat
His captive kindly, to give her . . ." At this word
The hero died and left within my arms
Only a corpse, disfigured, where the wrath
Of the gods had triumphed, one which his father's eyes
Would fail to recognize.

THESEUS. My son! dear hope
Now taken from me! Inexorable gods,
Too well indeed you have fulfilled your word!
To what remorse my life is now reserved!

THERAMENES. Then gentle Aricia arrived; she came,
My lord, escaping from your wrath, to take him
Before the gods as husband. She approached.
She saw the red and reeking grass; she saw
(What an object for a lover's eyes!)
Hippolytus lying there a shapeless mass.
A while she wished to doubt of her disaster
And failed to recognize the man she loved.
She saw Hippolytus—and asked for him still.
At last too sure that he was lying there,
She with a mournful look reproached the gods;
Cold, moaning, almost lifeless, she fell down
At her lover's feet. Ismene was beside her;
Ismene, weeping, brought her back to life,
Or rather, back to grief. And I have come,
Hating the light, to tell you the last wish
Of a dead hero; and discharge, my lord,
The unhappy task his dying heart reposed
Upon me. But I see his mortal foe
Approaching.

SCENE 7. *Theseus, Theramenes, Phaedra, Panope, Guards*

THESEUS. Well, you triumph, and my son
Is lifeless. Ah! how I have cause to fear!
A cruel suspicion, excusing him, alarms me.
But, madam, he is dead. Receive your victim,
Joy in his death, whether unjust or lawful.
I'll let my eyes forever be abused,
Believe him criminal, since you accuse him.

His death alone gives matter for my tears
Without my seeking harsh enlightenment,
Which could not bring him back, and might increase
The sum of my misfortunes. Let me, far from you,
Far from this coast flee from the bloody image
Of my rent son. Perplexed and persecuted
By deadly memories, I would banish me
From the whole world. Everything seems to rise
Against my injustice. Even my very fame
Augments my punishment. Less known of men,
I could the better hide. I hate the honors
The gods bestow upon me; and I'm going
To mourn their murderous favors, and no more
Tire them with useless prayers. Whate'er they granted,
Would never compensate me for the loss
Of what they've taken away.

PHAEDRA. No, Theseus.
I must break an unjust silence; to your son
Restore his innocence. He was not guilty.

THESEUS. Unhappy father! It was by your word
That I condemned him. Cruel! do you think
That you can be excused . . . ?

PHAEDRA. My time is precious.
Hear me, Theseus. It was I myself
Who cast upon your chaste and modest son
Unholy and incestuous eyes. The heavens
Put in my breast that fatal spark—the rest
Was undertaken by the vile Œnone.
She trembled lest Hippolytus should disclose
A passion he abhorred. The traitress then,
Relying on my utter weakness, hastened
To accuse him to your face. She's punished for it.
Fleeing my wrath she sought amidst the waves
Too soft a punishment. The sword by now
Would have cut short my life, had I not left
Virtue suspected. Baring my remorse
Before you, I wished to take a slower road
To the house of Death. I have taken—I have made
Course through my burning veins a deadly poison
Medea[5] brought to Athens. Already the venom
Has reached my dying heart, and thrown upon it
An unimagined cold. Already I see,

5. A sorceress who helped Jason get the Golden Fleece and later, deserted by him, killed her rival and her own children and burned her palace before fleeing to Athens. According to one legend, she tried to poison Theseus. (See Euripides' *Medea* in this anthology.)

As through a mist, the sky above, the husband
My presence outrages; and Death, that robs
My eyes of clearness, to the day the soil
Restores its purity.

PANOPE. She is dying, my lord.

THESEUS. Oh! that the memory of her black deed
Could perish with her! Of my error now
Only too well enlightened, let us go
To mix the blood of my unhappy son
With tears; to embrace the little that remains
Of that dear son, and expiate the madness
Of my detested prayer; to render him
The honors that he has too much deserved;
And, the better to appease his angry spirit,
Despite her family's plotting, from today
I'll hold Aricia as my own true child.

SOR JUANA INÉS DE LA CRUZ
1648–1695

One hardly expects to find a spirited defense of women's intellectual rights issuing from the pen of a seventeenth-century Mexican nun, but *Reply to Sor Filotea de la Cruz*, by Sister Juana Inés de la Cruz, is exactly that. In the guise of declaring her humility and her religious subordination, the nun manages to advance claims for her sex more far-reaching and profound than any previously offered.

Born into an upper-class family, Sister Juana in her teens served as lady-in-waiting at the Viceregal court. She soon took the veil, however; her *Reply* suggests a reason in her desire for a safe environment in which to pursue her intellectual interests. Religious vocation did not prevent her from writing in secular forms: lyric poetry and drama. Indeed, she achieved an important literary reputation, later coming to be known throughout the Spanish-speaking world as the "Tenth Muse." Since her religious superiors intermittently rebuked her for her worldly interests, however, she appears to have developed a powerful sense of guilt. It is said that the natural disasters—a solar eclipse, storms, and famine—plaguing Mexico City in the 1690s intensified her guilt; in 1694, she reaffirmed her faith, signing her statement in her own blood with the words, "I, Sister Juana Inés de la Cruz, the worst in the world." She died after nursing the sick in an epidemic.

The *Reply* stems directly from Sister Juana's venture into theological polemic. In 1690 she wrote a commentary on a sermon delivered forty years earlier by the Portuguese Jesuit Antonio de Vieyra, a sermon in which he disputed with Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas about the nature of Christ's greatest expression of love at His life's end. Her commentary, in the form of

a letter, was published, without her consent, by the bishop of Puebla. The bishop provided the title, *Athenagoric Letter*, or "letter worthy of the wisdom of Athena," but he also prefixed his own letter to Sister Juana, signed with the pseudonym "Filotea de la Cruz." Here he advised the nun to focus her attention and her talents more on religious matters. In her *Reply* (1691), she nominally accepted the bishop's rebuke; the smooth surface of her elegant prose, however, conceals both rage and determination to assert her right—and that of other women—to a fully realized life of the mind.

The artistry of this piece of self-defense demonstrates Sister Juana's powers and thus constitutes part of her justification. Systematically refusing to make any overt claims for herself, she declares her desire to do whatever her associates wish or demand of her. While asserting her own unimportance, she illustrates the range of her knowledge and of her rhetorical skill. The sheer abundance of her biblical allusions and of her quotations from theological texts, for instance, proves that she has mastered a large body of religious material and that she has not sacrificed religious to secular study. Her elaborate protestations of deference, her vocabulary of insignificance, her narrative of subservience: all show the verbal dexterity that enables her to achieve her own rhetorical ends even as she denies her commitment to purely personal goals.

If she acknowledges no self-seeking, she yet declares and demonstrates her ungovernable passion for the life of the mind. She tells of how she joined the convent despite fears that the community "would intrude upon the peaceful silence of my books." "Certain learned persons," however, explained to her that her desire for solitary intellectual experience constituted "temptation." She therefore entered the religious life, believing, she says, "that I was fleeing from myself, but—wretch that I am!—I brought with me my worst enemy, my inclination, which I do not know whether to consider a gift or a punishment from Heaven; for once dimmed and encumbered by the many activities common to Religion, that inclination exploded in me like gunpowder." Although this sentence explicitly labels her intellectual inclinations her worst enemy and suggests that they might be considered divine punishment, the same sentence dramatizes the uncontrollable force of those explosive inclinations and hints the negative potential of religious experience, which dims and encumbers the mind. No matter how often this woman admits that her longings amount to a form of "vice," she embodies in her prose the energy and the vividness they generate and makes her audience feel their positive weight.

The autobiographical aspects of Sister Juana's self-defense give it special immediacy for modern readers, who may recognize versions of their own dilemmas in her narrative of difficulties. Of course, girls no longer have to trick their way into learning or plead for permission to dress in boy's clothes in order to go to the university. But even twentieth-century young women have been known to experience the kind of hostility Sister Juana reports as the response to her remarkable achievement. Yet more recognizable as a frequent form of female anxiety is the nun's concern to proclaim her responsiveness to others, her "tender and affable nature," which causes the other nuns, she says, to hold her "in great affection." She insists that she fills all the responsibilities of a woman as well as displays the kinds of capacity more

generally associated with men, and she performs her womanly and her religious duties *first*, reserving her scholarly pursuits for leisure hours.

But of course her larger argument depends on her utter denial that intelligence or a thirst for knowledge should be considered a sex-linked characteristic. She draws on history for evidence of female intellectual power; one may feel the irony of the fact that her list of female worthies requires so much annotation today. The names of these notable women have hardly become household words. Still, these names, these histories, do exist, providing powerful support for Sister Juana's position. Even more forceful is the testimony of her own experience: her account of how, deprived of books, she finds matter for intellectual inquiry everywhere—in the yolk of an egg, the spinning of a top, the reading of the Bible. This is, the reader comes to believe, a woman born to think. If she arouses uneasiness when she implicitly equates herself, as object of persecution, with Christ, she also makes one feel directly the horror of women's official exclusion, in the past, from intellectual pursuits.

Little has been written in English about Sister Juana. A volume in the Twayne series, *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz*, by Gerard Flynn (1971), provides a biographical, critical, and bibliographical introduction. She is also treated in histories of Latin American literature: for example, J. Franco, *An Introduction to Spanish-American Literature* (1969). This first English-language translation of the *Reply*, by Margaret Sayers Peden, was commissioned in 1981 by a small independent publisher in Salisbury, Connecticut (Lime Rock Press), and first appeared in a limited edition illustrated with black-and-white photographs of sites in Mexico associated with Sister Juana, taken by Fulbright scholar Gabriel North Seymour.

Reply to Sor Filotea de la Cruz[1]

My most illustrious *señora*, dear lady. It has not been my will, my poor health, or my justifiable apprehension that for so many days delayed my response. How could I write, considering that at my very first step my clumsy pen encountered two obstructions in its path? The first (and, for me, the most uncompromising) is to know how to reply to your most learned, most prudent, most holy, and most loving letter. For I recall that when Saint Thomas, the Angelic Doctor of Scholasticism, was asked about his silence regarding his teacher Albertus Magnus,[2] he replied that he had not spoken because he knew no words worthy of Albertus. With so much greater reason, must not I too be silent? Not, like the Saint, out of humility, but because in reality I know nothing I can say that is worthy of you. The second obstruction is to know how to express my appreciation for a favor as unexpected as extreme, for having my scribblings printed, a gift so immeasurable as to surpass my most ambitious aspiration,

1. Translated by Margaret Peden. 2. Saint Albert the Great (1193?–1280), scholastic philosopher, called the Universal Doctor; he exercised great influence on his student, Thomas Aquinas.

my most fervent desire, which even as an entity of reason never entered my thoughts. Yours was a kindness, finally, of such magnitude that words cannot express my gratitude, a kindness exceeding the bounds of appreciation, as great as it was unexpected—which is as Quintilian[3] said: *aspirations engender minor glory; benefices, major.* To such a degree as to impose silence on the receiver.

When the blessedly sterile—that she might miraculously become fecund—Mother of John the Baptist saw in her house such an extraordinary visitor as the Mother of the Word, her reason became clouded and her speech deserted her; and thus, in the place of thanks, she burst out with doubts and questions: *And whence is to me [that the mother of my Lord should come to me?]*[4] And whence cometh such a thing to *me*? And so also it fell to Saul when he found himself the chosen, the anointed, King of Israel: *Am I not a son of Jemini, of the least tribe of Israel, and my kindred the last among all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Why then hast thou spoken this word to me?*[5] And thus say I, most honorable lady. Why do I receive such favor? By chance, am I other than an humble nun, the lowliest creature of the world, the most unworthy to occupy your attention? "Wherefore then speakest thou so to me?" "And whence is this to me?" Nor to the first obstruction do I have any response other than I am little worthy of your eyes; nor to the second, other than wonder, in the stead of thanks, saying that I am not capable of thanking you for the smallest part of that which I owe you. This is not pretended modesty, lady, but the simplest truth issuing from the depths of my heart, that when the letter which with propriety you called *Atenagórica*[6] reached my hands, in print, I burst into tears of confusion (withal, that tears do not come easily to me) because it seemed to me that your favor was but a remonstrance God made against the wrong I have committed, and that in the same way He corrects others with punishment He wishes to subject me with benefices, with this special favor for which I know myself to be myself to be His debtor, as for an infinitude of others from His boundless kindness. I looked upon this favor as a particular way to shame and confound me, it being the most exquisite means of castigation, that of causing me, by my own intellect, to be the judge who pronounces sentence and who denounces my ingratitude. And thus, when here in my solitude I think on these things, I am wont to say: Blessed art Thou, oh Lord, for Thou hast not chosen to place in the hands of others my judgment, nor yet in mine, but hast reserved that to Thy own, and freed me from myself, and from the necessity to sit in judgment on myself,

3. Marcus Fabius Quintilianus (ca. A.D. 35–100), born in Spain, who became a famous Roman orator and wrote on rhetoric. The word here rendered into English as "benefices" would be better understood as "good works." 4. Luke 1:43. 5. 1 Sam. 9:21. 6. Sor Juana's letter criticizing Father Vieyra's sermon was retitled by the bishop *Carta Atenagórica*, "Letter Worthy of Athena," Greek goddess of wisdom.

which judgment, forced from my own intellect, could be no less than condemnation, but Thou hast reserved me to Thy mercy, because Thou lovest me more than I can love myself.

I beg you, lady, to forgive this digression to which I was drawn by the power of truth, and, if I am to confess all the truth, I shall confess that I cast about for some manner by which I might flee the difficulty of a reply, and was sorely tempted to take refuge in silence. But as silence is a negative thing, though it explains a great deal through the very stress of not explaining, we must assign some meaning to it that we may understand what the silence is intended to say, for if not, silence will say nothing, as that is its very office: *to say nothing*. The holy Chosen Vessel, Saint Paul, having been caught up into paradise, and having heard the arcane secrets of God, *heard secret words, which it is not granted to man to utter.*[7] He does not say what he heard; he says that he cannot say it. So that of things one cannot say, it is needful to say at least that they cannot be said, so that it may be understood that not speaking is not the same as having nothing to say, but rather being unable to express the many things there are to say. Saint John says that if all the marvels our Redeemer wrought "were written every one, the world itself, I think, would not be able to contain the books that should be written."[8] And Vieyra[9] says on this point that in this single phrase the Evangelist said more than in all else he wrote; and this same Lusitanian Phoenix speaks well (but when does he not speak well, even when he does not speak well of others?) because in those words Saint John said everything left unsaid and expressed all that was left to be expressed. And thus I, lady, shall respond only that I do not know how to respond; I shall thank you in saying only that I am incapable of thanking you; and I shall say, through the indication of what I leave to silence, that it is only with the confidence of one who is favored and with the protection of one who is honorable that I presume to address our magnificence, and if this be folly, be forgiving of it, for folly may be good fortune, and in this manner I shall provide further occasion for your benignity and you will better shape my intellect.

Because he was halting of speech, Moses thought himself unworthy to speak with Pharaoh, but after he found himself highly favored of God, and thus inspired, he not only spoke with God Almighty but dared ask the impossible: *shew me thy face.*[1] In this same manner, lady, and in view of how you favor me, I no longer see as impossible the obstructions I posed in the beginning: for who was it who had my letter printed unbeknownst to me? Who entitled it, who bore the

7. 2 Cor. 12:4. 8. John 21:25. 9. Antonio Vieira (1608–1697), author of the sermon which Sor Juana had earlier criticized, was a Portuguese ecclesiastic whose most important work was converting the Indians of Brazil. *Lusitania* (below): Roman name for Portugal. 1. Exodus 33:13.

cost, who honored it, it being so unworthy in itself, and in its author? What will such a person not do, not pardon? What would he fail to do, or fail to pardon? And thus, based on the supposition that I speak under the safe-conduct of your favor, and with the assurance of your benignity, and with the knowledge that like a second Ahasuerus[2] you have offered to me to kiss the top of the golden scepter of your affection as a sign of conceding to me your benevolent license to speak and offer judgments in your exalted presence, I say to you that I have taken to heart your most holy admonition that I apply myself to the study of the Sacred Books, which, though it comes in the guise of counsel, will have for me the authority of a precept, but with the not insignificant consolation that even before your counsel I was disposed to obey your pastoral suggestion as your direction, which may be inferred from the premise and argument of my Letter. For I know well that your most sensible warning is not directed against it, but rather against those worldly matters of which I have written.[3] And thus I had hoped with the Letter to make amends for any lack of application you may (with great reason) have inferred from others of my writings; and, speaking more particularly, I confess to you with all the candor of which you are deserving, and with the truth and clarity which are the natural custom in me, that my not having written often of sacred matters was not caused by disaffection or by want of application, but by the abundant fear and reverence due those Sacred Letters, knowing myself incapable of their comprehension and unworthy of their employment. Always resounding in my ears, with no little horror, I hear God's threat and prohibition to sinners like myself. *Why dost thou declare my justices, and take my covenant in thy mouth?*[4] This question, as well as the knowledge that even learned men are forbidden to read the Canticle of Canticles[5] until they have passed thirty years of age, or even Genesis—the latter for its obscurity; the former in order that the sweetness of those epithalamia not serve as occasion for imprudent youth to transmute their meaning into carnal emotion, as borne out by my exalted Father Saint Jerome,[6] who ordered that these be the last verses to be studied, and for the same reason: *And finally, one may read without peril the Song of Songs, for if it is read one may suffer harm through not understanding those Epithalamia of the spiritual wedding which is expressed in carnal terms.* And Seneca[7] says: *In the early years the faith is dim.* For how then would I have dared take in my unworthy hands these

2. King of Persia, who stretched out his gold scepter to his queen, Esther, and said he would grant her whatever she wished. Esther 5:2–3. 3. Sor Juana had published secular poetry and drama. 4. Psalms 50:16. 5. Song of Solomon, which employs erotic imagery. 6. Eusebius Sophronius Hieronymus (ca. 342–420), ascetic and scholar, most learned of the Latin church fathers, a prolific author of treaties and commentaries. Sor Juana belonged to a Jeronymite convent; Jerome had founded the order. 7. Lucius Annaeus Seneca (c. 3 B.C.–A.D. 63), Roman philosopher and orator.

verses, defying gender, age, and, above all, custom? And thus I confess that many times this fear has plucked my pen from my hand and has turned my thoughts back toward the very same reason from which they had wished to be born: which obstacle did not impinge upon profane matters, for a heresy against art is not punished by the Holy Office but by the judicious with derision, and by critics with censure, and censure, *just or unjust, is not to be feared*, as it does not forbid the taking of communion or hearing of mass, and offers me little or no cause for anxiety, because in the opinion of those who defame my art, I have neither the obligation to know nor the aptitude to triumph. If, then, I err, I suffer neither blame nor discredit: I suffer no blame, as I have no obligation; no discredit, as I have no possibility of triumphing—*and no one is obliged to do the impossible.* And, in truth, I have written nothing except when compelled and constrained, and then only to give pleasure to others; not alone without pleasure of my own, but with absolute repugnance, for I have never deemed myself one who has any worth in letters or the wit necessity demands of one who would write; and thus my customary response to those who press me, above all in sacred matters, is, what capacity of reason have I? what application? what resources? what rudimentary knowledge of such matters beyond that of the most superficial scholarly degrees? Leave these matters to those who understand them; I wish no quarrel with the Holy Office, for I am ignorant, and I tremble that I may express some proposition that will cause offense or twist the true meaning of some scripture. I do not study to write, even less to teach—which in one like myself were unseemly pride—but only to the end that if I study, I will be ignorant of less. This is my response, and these are my feelings.

I have never written of my own choice, but at the urging of others, to whom with reason I might say, *You have compelled me.*[8] But one truth I shall not deny (first, because it is well-known to all, and second, because although it has not worked in my favor, God has granted me the mercy of loving truth above all else), which is that from the moment I was first illuminated by the light of reason, my inclination toward letters has been so vehement, so overpowering, that not even the admonitions of others—and I have suffered many—nor my own meditations—and they have not been few—have been sufficient to cause me to forswear this natural impulse that God placed in me: the Lord God knows why, and for what purpose. And He knows that I have prayed that He dim the light of my reason, leaving only that which is needed to keep His Law, for there are those who would say that all else is unwanted in a woman, and there are even those who would hold that such knowledge does injury. And my

8. 2 Cor. 12:11.

Holy Father knows too that as I have been unable to achieve this (my prayer has not been answered), I have sought to veil the light of my reason—along with my name—and to offer it up only to Him who bestowed it upon me, and He knows that none other was the cause of my entering into Religion, notwithstanding that the spiritual exercises and company of a community were repugnant to the freedom and quiet I desired for my studious endeavors. And later, in that community, the Lord God knows—and, in the world, only the one who must know[9]—how diligently I sought to obscure my name, and how this was not permitted, saying it was temptation: and so it would have been. If it were in my power, lady, to repay you in some part what I owe you, it might be done by telling you this thing which has never before passed my lips, except to be spoken to the one who should hear it. It is my hope that by having opened wide to you the doors of my heart, by having made patent to you its most deeply-hidden secrets, you will deem my confidence not unworthy of the debt I owe to your most august person and to your most uncommon favors.

Continuing the narrations of my inclinations, of which I wish to give you a thorough account, I will tell you that I was not yet three years old when my mother determined to send one of my elder sisters to learn to read at a school for girls we call the *Amigas*. Affection, and mischief, caused me to follow her, and when I observed how she was being taught her lessons I was so inflamed with the desire to know how to read, that deceiving—for so I knew it to be—the mistress, I told her that my mother had meant for me to have lessons too. She did not believe it, as it was little to be believed, but, to humour me, she acceded. I continued to go there, and she continued to teach me, but now, as experience had disabused her, with all seriousness; and I learned so quickly that before my mother knew of it I could already read, for my teacher had kept it from her in order to reveal the surprise and reap the reward at one and the same time. And I, you may be sure, kept the secret, fearing that I would be whipped for having acted without permission. The woman who taught me, may God bless and keep her, is still alive and can bear witness to all I say. I also remember that in those days, my tastes being those common to that age, I abstained from eating cheese because I had heard that it made one slow of wits, for in me the desire for learning was stronger than the desire for eating—as powerful as that is in children. When later, being six or seven, and having learned how to read and write, along with all the other skills of needlework and household arts that girls learn, it came to my attention that in Mexico City there were Schools, and a University, in which one studied

9. Presumably her confessor, Father Antonio Núñez.

the sciences. The moment I heard this, I began to plague my mother with insistent and importunate pleas: she should dress me in boy's clothing and send me to Mexico City to live with relatives, to study and be tutored at the University. She would not permit it, and she was wise, but I assuaged my disappointment by reading the many and varied books belonging to my grandfather, and there were not enough punishments, nor reprimands, to prevent me from reading: so that when I came to the city many marveled, not so much at my natural wit, as at my memory, and at the amount of learning I had mastered at an age when many have scarcely learned to speak well.

I began to study Latin grammar—in all, I believe, I had no more than twenty lessons—and so intense was my concern that though among women (especially a woman in the flower of her youth) the natural adornment of one's hair is held in such high esteem, I cut off mine to the breadth of some four to six fingers, measuring the place it had reached, and imposing upon myself the condition that if by the time it had again grown to that length I had not learned such and such a thing I had set for myself to learn while my hair was growing, I would again cut it off as punishment for being so slow-witted. And it did happen that my hair grew out and still I had not learned what I had set for myself—because my hair grew quickly and I learned slowly—and in fact I did cut it in punishment for such stupidity: for there seemed to me no cause for a head to be adorned with hair and naked of learning—which was the more desired embellishment. And so I entered the religious order, knowing that life there entailed certain conditions (I refer to superficial, and not fundamental, regards) most repugnant to my nature; but given the total antipathy I felt for marriage, I deemed convent life the least unsuitable and the most honorable I could elect if I were to insure my salvation. Working against that end, first (as, finally, the most important) was the matter of all the trivial aspects of my nature which nourished my pride, such as wishing to live alone, and wishing to have no obligatory occupation that would inhibit the freedom of my studies, nor the sounds of a community that would intrude upon the peaceful silence of my books. These desires caused me to falter some while in my decision, until certain learned persons enlightened me, explaining that they were temptation, and, with divine favor, I overcame them, and took upon myself the state which now so unworthily I hold. I believed that I was fleeing from myself, but—wretch that I am!—I brought with me my worst enemy, my inclination, which I do not know whether to consider a gift or a punishment from Heaven, for once dimmed and encumbered by the many activities common to Religion, that inclination exploded in me like gunpowder, proving how *privation is the source of appetite.*

I turned again (which is badly put, for I never ceased), I contin-

ued, then, in my studious endeavour (which for me was respite during those moments not occupied by my duties) of reading and more reading, of study and more study, with no teachers but my books. Thus I learned how difficult it is to study those soulless letters, lacking a human voice or the explication of a teacher. But I suffered this labor happily for my love of learning. Oh, had it only been for love of God, which were proper, how worthwhile it would have been! I strove mightily to elevate these studies, to dedicate them to His service, as the goal to which I aspired was to study Theology—it seeming to me debilitating for a Catholic not to know everything in this life of the Divine Mysteries that can be learned through natural means—and, being a nun and not a layperson, it was seemly that I profess my vows to learning through ecclesiastical channels; and especially, being a daughter of a Saint Jerome and a Saint Paula,[1] it was essential that such erudite parents not be shamed by a witless daughter. This is the argument I proposed to myself, and it seemed to me well-reasoned. It was, however (and this cannot be denied) merely glorification and approbation of my inclination, and enjoyment of it offered as justification. And so I continued, as I have said, directing the course of my studies toward the peak of Sacred Theology, it seeming necessary to me, in order to scale those heights, to climb the steps of the human sciences and arts; for how could one undertake the study of the Queen of Sciences if first one had not come to know her servants?

How, without Logic, could I be apprised of the general and specific way in which the Holy Scripture is written? How, without Rhetoric, could I understand its figures, its tropes, its locutions? How, without Physics,[2] so many innate questions concerning the nature of animals, their sacrifices, wherein exist so many symbols, many already declared, many still to be discovered? How should I know whether Saul's being refreshed by the sound of David's harp was due to the virtue and natural power of Music, or to a transcendent power God wished to place in David? How, without Arithmetic, could one understand the computations of the years, days, months, hours, those mysterious weeks communicated by Gabriel to Daniel,[3] and others for whose understanding one must know the nature, concordance, and properties of numbers? How, without Geometry, could one measure the Holy Arc of the Covenant and the Holy City of Jerusalem, whose mysterious measures are foursquare in their dimensions, as well as the miraculous proportions of all their parts? How, without Architecture, could one know the great Temple of Solomon, of which

1. A Roman woman (d. 404), converted to Christianity after her daughter's death, who founded a nunnery next to St. Jerome's monastery at Bethlehem and helped Jerome in his studies.
2. I.e., physic, or medicine. 3. While Daniel is praying, Gabriel comes to him to interpret, with great chronological detail, a vision he has previously had. Daniel 9:21–27.

God Himself was the Author who conceived the disposition and the design, and the Wise King but the overseer who executed it, of which temple there was no foundation without mystery, no column without symbolism, no cornice without allusion, no architrave without significance; and similarly others of its parts, of which the least fillet was never intended solely for the service and complement of Art, but as symbol of greater things? How, without great knowledge of the laws and parts of which History is comprised, could one understand historical Books? Or those recapitulations in which many times what happened first is seen in the narrated account to have happened later? How, without great learning in Canon and Civil Law, could one understand Legal Books? How, without great erudition, could one apprehend the secular histories of which the Holy Scripture makes mention, such as the many customs of the Gentiles, their many rites, their many ways of speaking? How without the abundant laws and lessons of the Holy Fathers could one understand the obscure lesson of the Prophets? And without being expert in Music, how could one understand the exquisite precision of the musical proportions that grace so many Scriptures, particularly those in which Abraham beseeches God in defense of the Cities,[4] asking whether He would spare the place were there but fifty just men therein; and then Abraham reduced that number to five less than fifty, forty-five, which is a ninth, and is as Mi to Re; then to forty, which is a tone, and is as Re to Mi; from forty to thirty, which is a diatessaron, the interval of the perfect fourth; from thirty to twenty, which is the perfect fifth; and from twenty to ten, which is the octave, the diapason; and as there are no further harmonic proportions, made no further reductions. How might one understand this without Music? And there in the Book of Job, God says to Job: *Shalt thou be able to join together the shining stars the Pleiades, or canst thou stop the turning about of Arcturus? Canst thou bring forth the day star in its time, and make the evening star to rise upon the children of the earth?*[5] Which message, without knowledge of Astrology, would be impossible to apprehend. And not only these noble sciences; there is no applied art that is not mentioned. And, finally, in consideration of the Book that comprises all books, and the Science in which all sciences are embraced, and for whose comprehension all sciences serve, and even after knowing them all (which we now see is not easy, nor even possible), there is one condition that takes precedence over all the rest, which is uninterrupted prayer and purity of life, that one may entreat of God that purgation of spirit and illumination of mind necessary for the understanding of such elevated matters: and

4. Abraham beseeches God to save Sodom for the sake of its just men. Genesis 18:23–33.
5. Job 38:31–32.

if that be lacking, none of the aforesaid will have been of any purpose.

Of the Angelic Doctor Saint Thomas[6] the Church affirms: *When reading the most difficult passages of the Holy Scripture, he joined fast with prayer. And he was wont to say to his companion Brother Reginald that all he knew derived not so much from study or his own labor as from the grace of God.* How then should I—so lacking in virtue and so poorly read—find courage to write? But as I had acquired the rudiments of learning, I continued to study ceaselessly divers subjects, having for none any particular inclination, but for all in general; and having studied some more than others was not owing to preference, but to the chance that more books on certain subjects had fallen into my hands, causing the election of them through no discretion of my own. And as I was not directed by preference, nor, forced by the need to fulfill certain scholarly requirements, constrained by time in the pursuit of any subject, I found myself free to study numerous topics at the same time, or to leave some for others; although in this scheme some order was observed, for some I deigned[7] study and others diversion, and in the latter I found respite from the former. From which it follows that though I have studied many things I know nothing, as some have inhibited the learning of others. I speak specifically of the practical aspect of those arts that allow practice, because it is clear that when the pen moves the compass must lie idle, and while the harp is played the organ is stilled, *et sic de caeteris.*[8] And because much practice is required of one who would acquire facility, none who divides his interest among various exercises may reach perfection. Whereas in the formal and theoretical arts the contrary is true, and I would hope to persuade all with my experience, which is that one need not inhibit the other, but, in fact, each may illuminate and open the way to others, by nature of their variations and their hidden links, which were placed in this universal chain by the wisdom of their Author in such a way that they conform and are joined together with admirable unity and harmony. This is the very chain the ancients believed did issue from the mouth of Jupiter, from which were suspended all things linked one with another, as is demonstrated by the Reverend Father Athanasius Kircher[9] in his curious book, *De Magnate.* All things issue from God, Who is at once the center and the circumference from which and in which all lines begin and end.

I myself can affirm that what I have not understood in an author

6. Thomas Aquinas (ca. 1225–1274), Dominican theologian, author of *Summa Theologica* (ca. 1266), and for centuries the most important authority on church doctrine. 7. I.e., deemed, considered. 8. And so for other things. 9. German Jesuit scientist (1601?–1680), author of *Magnes sive de arte magnetica* ("The Magnet: or, of the Magnetic Science").

in one branch of knowledge I may understand in a second in a branch that seems remote from the first. And authors, in their elucidation, may suggest metaphorical examples in other arts: as when logicians say that to prove whether parts are equal, the means is to the extremes as a determined measure to two equidistant bodies; or in stating how the argument of the logician moves, in the manner of a straight line, along the shortest route, while that of the rhetorician moves as a curve, by the longest, but that both finally arrive at the same point. And similarly, as it is when they say that the Exegetes are like an open hand, and the Scholastics like a closed fist.[1] And thus it is no apology, nor do I offer it as such, to say that I have studied many subjects, seeing that each augments the other; but that I have not profited is the fault of my own ineptitude and the inadequacy of my intelligence, not the fault of the variety. But what may be offered as exoneration is that I undertook this great task without benefit of teacher, or fellow students with whom to confer and discuss, having for a master no other than a mute book, and for a colleague, an insentient inkwell; and in the stead of explication and exercise, many obstructions, not merely those of my religious obligations (for it is already known how useful and advantageous is the time employed in them), rather, all the attendant details of living in a community: how I might be reading, and those in the adjoining cell would wish to play their instruments, and sing; how I might be studying, and two servants who had quarreled would select me to judge their dispute; or how I might be writing, and a friend come to visit me, doing me no favor but with the best of will, at which time one must not only accept the inconvenience, but be grateful for the hurt. And such occurrences are the normal state of affairs, for as the times I set apart for study are those remaining after the ordinary duties of the community are fulfilled, they are the same moments available to my sisters, in which they may come to interrupt my labor; and only those who have experience of such a community will know how true this is, and how it is only the strength of my vocation that allows me happiness; that, and the great love existing between me and my beloved sisters, for as love is union, it knows no extremes of distance.

With this I confess how interminable has been my labor; and how I am unable to say what I have with envy heard others state—that they have not been plagued by the thirst for knowledge: blessed are they. For me, not the knowing (for still I do not know), merely the desiring to know, has been such torment that I can say, as has my Father Saint Jerome (although not with his accomplishment) . . . *my conscience is witness to what effort I have expended, what difficulties I have suffered, how many times I have despaired, how often I*

1. The Exegetes emphasized interpretation; the Scholastics, logic.

have ceased my labors and turned to them again, driven by the hunger for knowledge; my conscience is witness, and that of those who have lived beside me. With the exception of the companions and witnesses (for I have been denied even this consolation), I can attest to the truth of these words. And to the fact that even so, my black inclination has been so great that it has conquered all else!

It has been my fortune that, among other benefices,[2] I owe to God a most tender and affable nature, and because of it my sisters (who being good women do not take note of my faults) hold me in great affection, and take pleasure in my company; and knowing this, and moved by the great love I hold for them—having greater reason than they—I enjoy even more *their* company. Thus I was wont in our rare idle moments to visit among them, offering them consolation and entertaining myself in their conversation. I could not help but note, however, that in these times I was neglecting my study, and I made a vow not to enter any cell unless obliged by obedience or charity; for without such a compelling constraint—the constraint of mere intention not being sufficient—my love would be more powerful than my will. I would (knowing well my frailty) make this vow for the period of a few weeks, or a month; and when that time had expired, I would allow myself a brief respite of a day or two before renewing it, using that time not so much for rest (for *not* studying has never been restful for me) as to assure that I not be deemed cold, remote, or ungrateful in the little-deserved affection of my dearest sisters.

In this practice one may recognize the strength of my inclination. I give thanks to God, Who willed that such an ungovernable force be turned toward letters and not to some other vice. From this it may also be inferred how obdurately against the current my poor studies have sailed (more accurately, have foundered). For still to be related is the most arduous of my difficulties—those mentioned until now, either compulsory or fortuitous, being merely tangential—and still unreported the more directly aimed slings and arrows that have acted to impede and prevent the exercise of my study. Who would have doubted, having witnessed such general approbation, that I sailed before the wind across calm seas, amid the laurels of widespread acclaim. But out Lord God knows that it has not been so; He knows how from amongst the blossoms of this very acclaim emerged such a number of aroused vipers, hissing their emulation and their persecution, that one could not count them. But the most noxious, those who most deeply wounded me, have not been those who persecuted me with open loathing and malice, but rather those who in loving me and desiring my well-being (and who are deserving of

2. I.e., benefits or kindnesses.

God's blessing for their good intent) have mortified and tormented me more than those others with their abhorrence. "Such studies are not in conformity with sacred innocence; surely she will be lost; surely she will, by cause of her very perspicacity and acuity, grow heady at such exalted heights." How was I to endure? An uncommon sort of martyrdom in which I was both martyr and executioner. And for my (in me, twice hapless) facility in making verses, even though they be sacred verses, what sorrows have I not suffered? What sorrows not ceased to suffer? Be assured, lady, it is often that I have meditated on how one who distinguishes himself—or one on whom God chooses to confer distinction, for it is only He who may do so—is received as a common enemy, because it seems to some that he usurps the applause they deserve, or that he dams up the admiration to which they aspired, and so they persecute that person.

That politically barbaric law of Athens by which any person who excelled by cause of his natural gifts and virtues was exiled from his Republic in order that he not threaten the public freedom still endures, is still observed in our day, although not for the reasons held by the Athenians. Those reasons have been replaced by another, no less efficient though not as well founded, seeming, rather, a maxim more appropriate to that impious Machiavelli[3]—which is to abhor one who excels, because he deprives others of regard. And thus it happens, and thus it has always happened.

For if not, what was the cause of the rage and loathing the Pharisees directed against Christ,[4] there being so many reasons to love Him? If we behold His presence, what is more to be loved than that Divine beauty? What more powerful to stir one's heart? For if ordinary human beauty holds sway over strength of will, and is able to subdue it with tender and enticing vehemence, what power would Divine beauty exert, with all its prerogatives and sovereign endowments? What might move, what effect, what not move and not effect, such incomprehensible beauty, that beauteous face through which, as through a polished crystal, were diffused the rays of Divinity? What would not be moved by that semblance which beyond incomparable human perfections revealed Divine illuminations? If the visage of Moses, merely from conversation with God, caused men to fear to come near him,[5] how much finer must be the face of God-made-flesh? And among other virtues, what more to be loved than that celestial modesty? That sweetness and kindness disseminating mercy in every movement? That profound humility and gentleness? Those words of eternal life and eternal wisdom? How therefore is it possible

3. Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527), Italian statesman whose writings (notably *The Prince*, included in part in this anthology) advocated political unscrupulousness. 4. The Pharisees, members of a strict Jewish sect emphasizing conformity to the law, were according to the New Testament prominent in plotting the death of Christ. Mark 3.6, John 11:47–57. 5. See Exodus 34:30.

that such beauty did not stir their souls, that they did not follow after Him, enamored and enlightened?

The Holy Mother, my Mother Teresa,[6] says that when she beheld the beauty of Christ never again was she inclined toward any human creature, for she saw nothing that was not ugliness compared to such beauty. How was it then that in men it engendered such contrary reactions? For although they were uncouth and vile and had no knowledge or appreciation of His perfections, not even as they might profit from them, how was it they were not moved by the many advantages of such benefices as He performed for them, healing the sick, resurrecting the dead, restoring those possessed of the devil? How was it they did not love Him? But God is witness that it was for these very acts they did not love Him, that they despised Him. As they themselves testified.

They gather together in their council and say: *What do we? for this man doth many miracles.*[7] Can this be cause? If they had said: here is an evil-doer, a transgressor of the law, a rabble-rouser who with deceit stirs up the populace, they would have lied—as they did indeed lie when they spoke these things. But there were more opposite reasons for effecting what they desired, which was to take His life; and to give as reason that he had performed wondrous deeds seems not befitting learned men, for such were the Pharisees. Thus it is that in the heat of passion learned men erupt with such irrelevancies; for we know it as truth that only for this reason was it determined that Christ should die. Oh, men, if men you may be called, being so like to brutes, what is the cause of so cruel a determination? Their only response is that "this man doth many miracles." May God forgive them. Then is performing signal deeds cause enough that one should die? This "he doth many miracles" evokes *the root of Jesse, who standeth for an ensign of the people,*[8] and that *and for a sign which shall be contradicted.*[9] He is a sign? Then He shall die. He excels? Then He shall suffer, for that is the reward for one who excels.

Often on the crest of temples are placed as adornment figures of the winds and of fame, and to defend them from the birds, they are covered with iron barbs; this appears to be in defense, but is in truth obligatory propriety: the figure thus elevated cannot survive without the very barbs that prick it; there on high is found the animosity of the air, on high the ferocity of the elements, on high is unleashed the anger of the thunderbolt, on high stands the target for slings and arrows. Oh unhappy eminence, exposed to such uncounted perils. Oh sign, become the target of envy and the butt of contradiction. Whatever eminence, whether that of dignity, nobility, riches, beauty,

6. Saint Teresa de Ávila (1515–1582), a mystical writer, responsible for a great awakening of religious fervor. 7. John 11:47. 8. Isaiah 11:10. 9. Luke 2:34.

or science, must suffer this burden; but the eminence that undergoes the most severe attack is that of reason. First, because it is the most defenseless, for riches and power strike out against those who dare attack them; but not so reason, for while it is the greater it is more modest and long-suffering, and defends itself less. Second, as Gracian[1] stated so eruditely, *favors in man's reason are favors in his nature.*

For no other cause except that the angel is superior in reason is the angel above man; for no other cause does man stand above the beast but by his reason; and thus, as no one wishes to be lower than another, neither does he confess that another is superior in reason, as reason is a consequence of being superior. One will abide, and will confess that another is nobler than he, that another is richer, more handsome, and even that he is more learned, but that another is richer in reason scarcely any will confess: *Rare is he who will concede genius.* That is why the assault against this virtue works to such profit.

When the soldiers mocked, made entertainment and diversion of our Lord Jesus Christ, they brought Him a worn purple garment and a hollow reed, and a crown of thorns to crown Him King of Fools.[2] But though the reed and the purple were an affront, they did not cause suffering. Why does only the crown give pain? Is it not enough that like the other emblems the crown was a symbol of ridicule and ignominy, as that was its intent? No. Because the sacred head of Christ and His divine intellect were the depository of wisdom, and the world is not satisfied for wisdom to be the object of mere ridicule, it must also be done injury and harm. A head that is a storehouse of wisdom can expect nothing but a crown of thorns. What garland may human wisdom expect when it is known what was bestowed on that divine wisdom? Roman pride crowned the many achievements of their Captains with many crowns: he who defended the city received the civic crown; he who fought his way into the hostile camp received the camp crown; he who scaled the wall, the mural;[3] he who liberated a beseiged city, or any army besieged either in the field or in the enemy camp, received the obsidional, the siege, crown; other feats were crowned with naval, ovation, or triumphal crowns, as described by Pliny and Aulus Gellius.[4] Observing so many and varied crowns, I debated as to which Christ's crown must have been, and determined that it was the siege crown, for (as well you know, lady) that was the most honored crown and was called obsidional after *obsidio,* which means siege; which crown was made not from gold, or silver, but from the leaves and grasses flourishing on the

1. Baltasar Gracián (1601–1658), Spanish Jesuit philosopher. 2. See Matthew 27:28–31. 3. Pertaining to walls; the word *crown* is understood. 4. Latin writer (fl. 2nd century), author of *Noctes Atticae,* valuable for its quotations from lost works. *Pliny:* Pliny the Younger (62?–ca. 113), Roman orator and statesman, author of well-known letters about Roman life.

field where the feat was achieved. And as the heroic feat of Christ was to break the siege of the Prince of Darkness, who had laid siege to all the earth, as is told in the Book of Job, quoting Satan: *I have gone round about the earth, and walked through it*,[5] and as St. Peter says: *As a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour.*[6] And our Master came and caused him to lift the siege: *Now shall the prince of this world be cast out.*[7] So the soldiers crowned Him not with gold or silver but with the natural fruit of the world, which was the field of battle—and which, after the curse *Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee*,[8] produced only thorns—and thus it was a most fitting crown for the courageous and wise Conqueror, with which His mother Synagogue crowned Him. And the daughters of Zion, weeping, came out to witness the sorrowful triumph,[9] as they had come rejoicing for the triumph of Solomon,[1] because the triumph of the wise is earned with sorrow and celebrated with weeping, which is the manner of the triumph of wisdom; and as Christ is the King of wisdom, He was the first to wear that crown; and as it was sanctified on His brow, it removed all fear and dread from those who are wise, for they know they need aspire to no other honor.

The Living Word, Life, wished to restore life to Lazarus, who was dead. His disciples did not know His purpose and they said to Him: *Rabbi, the Jews but now sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?* And the Redeemer calmed their fear: *Are there not twelve hours of the day?*[2] It seems they feared because there had been those who wished to stone Him when He rebuked them, calling them thieves and not shepherds of sheep.[3] And thus the disciples feared that if He returned to the same place—for even though rebukes be just, they are often badly received—He would be risking his life. But once having been disabused and having realized that He was setting forth to raise up Lazarus from the dead, what was it that caused Thomas, like Peter in the Garden, to say *Let us also go, that we may die with him?*[4] What say you, Sainted Apostle? The Lord does not go out to die; whence your misgiving? For Christ goes not to rebuke, but to work an act of mercy, and therefore they will do Him no harm. These same Jews could have assured you, for when He reproved those who wished to stone Him, *Many good works I have shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do you stone me?* they replied: *For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy.*[5] And as they say they will not stone Him for doing good works, and now He goes to do a work so great as to raise up Lazarus from the dead, whence your misgiving? Why do you fear? Were it not better to say: let us go to gather the fruits of appreciation for the good work our Master is

5. Job 1:7. 6. 1 Peter 5:8. 7. John 12:31. 8. Genesis 3:18: the curse on Adam and Eve after the Fall. 9. See Luke 23:27–28. 1. See Song of Solomon 3:11. 2. John 11:8–9. 3. See John 10:1–31. 4. John 11:16. 5. John 10:32–33.

about to do; to see him lauded and applauded for His benefice; to see men marvel at His miracle. Why speak words seemingly so alien to the circumstance as *Let us also go?* Ah, woe, the Saint feared as a prudent man and spoke as an Apostle. Does Christ not go to work a miracle? Why, what *greater* peril? It is less to be suffered that pride endure rebukes than envy witness miracles. In all the above, most honored lady, I do not wish to say (nor is such folly to be found in me) that I have been persecuted for my wisdom, but merely for my love of wisdom and letters, having achieved neither one nor the other.

At one time even the Prince of the Apostles was very far from wisdom, as is emphasized in that *But Peter followed afar off.*[6] Very distant from the laurels of a learned man is one so little in his judgment that he was *Not knowing what he said.*[7] And being questioned on his mastery of wisdom, he himself was witness that he had not achieved the first measure: *But he denied him, saying: Woman, I know him not.*[8] And what becomes of him? We find that having this reputation of ignorance, he did not enjoy its good fortune, but, rather, the affliction of being taken for wise. And why? There was no other motive but: *This man also was with him*[9] He was fond of wisdom, it filled His heart, He followed after it, He prided himself as a pursuer and lover of wisdom; and although He followed from so *afar off* that He neither understood nor achieved it, His love for it was sufficient that He incur its torments. And there was present that soldier to cause Him distress, and a certain maid-servant to cause Him grief. I confess that I find myself very distant from the goals of wisdom, for all that I have desired to follow it, even from *afar off.* But in this I have been brought closer to the fire of persecution, to the crucible of torment, and to such lengths that they have asked that study be forbidden to me.

At one time this was achieved through the offices of a very saintly and ingenuous Abbess who believed that study was a thing of the Inquisition, who commanded me not to study. I obeyed her (the three some[1] months her power to command endured) in that I did not take up a book; but that I study not at all is not within my power to achieve, and this I could not obey, for though I did not study in books, I studied all the things that God had wrought, reading in them, as in writing and in books, all the workings of the universe. I looked on nothing without reflection; I heard nothing without meditation, even in the most minute and imperfect things; because as there is no creature, however lowly, in which one cannot recognize that *God made me*, there is none that does not astound reason, if properly meditated on. Thus, I reiterate, I saw and admired all things; so that even the very persons with whom I spoke, and the things they

6. Luke 22:54. 7. Luke 9:33, referring to Peter. 8. Luke 22:57. 9. Luke 22:56: a serving maid says this of Peter, who thereupon denies knowing Jesus. 1. I.e., "the three or so."

said, were cause for a thousand meditations. Whence the variety of genius and wit, being all of a single species? Which the temperaments and hidden qualities that occasioned such variety? If I saw a figure, I was forever combining the proportion of its lines and measuring it with my reason and reducing it to new proportions. Occasionally as I walked along the far wall of one of our dormitories (which is a most capacious room) I observed that though the lines of the two sides were parallel and the ceiling perfectly level, in my sight they were distorted, the lines seeming to incline toward one another, the ceiling seeming lower in the distance than in proximity: from which I inferred that *visual* lines run straight but not parallel, forming a pyramidal figure. I pondered whether this might not be the reason that caused the ancients to question whether the world were spherical. Because, although it so seems, this could be a deception of vision, suggesting concavities where possibly none existed.

This manner of reflection has always been my habit, and is quite beyond my will to control; on the contrary, I am wont to become vexed that my intellect makes me weary; and I believed that it was so with everyone, as well as making verses, until experience taught me otherwise; and it is so strong in me this nature, or custom, that I look at nothing without giving it further examination. Once in my presence two young girls were spinning a top and scarcely had I seen the motion and the figure described, when I began, out of this madness of mine, to meditate on the effortless *motus*[2] of the spherical form, and how the impulse persisted even when free and independent of its cause—for the top continued to dance even at some distance from the child's hand, which was the causal force. And not content with this, I had flour brought and sprinkled about, so that as the top danced one might learn whether these were perfect circles it described with its movement; and I found that they were not, but, rather, spiral lines that lost their circularity as the impetus declined. Other girls sat playing at spillikins[3] (surely the most frivolous game that children play); I walked closer to observe the figures they formed, and seeing that by chance three lay in a triangle, I set to joining one with another, recalling that this was said to be the form of the mysterious ring of Solomon,[4] in which he was able to see the distant splendor and images of the Holy Trinity, by virtue of which the ring worked such prodigies and marvels. And the same shape was said to form David's harp, and that is why Saul was refreshed at its sound; and harps today largely conserve that shape.

And what shall I tell you, lady, of the natural secrets I have discovered while cooking? I see that an egg holds together and fries in butter or in oil, but, on the contrary, in syrup shrivels into shreds;

2. Motion. 3. Jackstraws. 4. It may, like Solomon's seal, have contained the image of the star of David, composed of triangles.

observe that to keep sugar in a liquid state one need only add a drop or two of water in which a quince or other bitter fruit has been soaked; observe that the yolk and the white of one egg are so dissimilar that each with sugar produces a result not obtainable with both together. I do not wish to weary you with such inconsequential matters, and make mention of them only to give you full notice of my nature, for I believe they will be occasion for laughter. But, lady, as women, what wisdom may be ours if not the philosophies of the kitchen? Lupercio Leonardo [5] spoke well when he said: how well one may philosophize when preparing dinner. And I often say, when observing these trivial details: had Aristotle prepared victuals, he would have written more. And pursuing the manner of my cogitations, I tell you that this process is so continuous in me that I have no need for books. And on one occasion, when because of a grave upset of the stomach the physicians forbade me to study, I passed thus some days, but then I proposed that it would be less harmful if they allowed me books, because so vigorous and vehement were my cogitations that my spirit was consumed more greatly in a quarter of an hour than in four days' studying books. And thus they were persuaded to allow me to read. And moreover, lady, not even have my dreams been excluded from this ceaseless agitation of my imagination; indeed, in dreams it is wont to work more freely and less encumbered, collating with greater clarity and calm the gleanings of the day, arguing and making verses, of which I could offer you an extended catalogue, as well as of some arguments and inventions that I have better achieved sleeping than awake. I relinquish this subject in order not to tire you, for the above is sufficient to allow your discretion and acuity to penetrate perfectly and perceive my nature, as well as the beginnings, the methods, and the present state of my studies.

Even, lady, were these merits (and I see them celebrated as such in men), they would not have been so in me, for I cannot but study. If they are faults, then, for the same reasons, I believe I have none. Nevertheless, I live always with so little confidence in myself that neither in my study, nor in any other thing, do I trust my judgment; and thus I remit the decision to your sovereign genius, submitting myself to whatever sentence you may bestow, without controversy, without reluctance, for I have wished here only to present you with a simple narration of my inclination toward letters.

I confess, too, that though it is true, as I have stated, that I had no need of books, it is nonetheless also true that they have been no little inspiration, in divine as in human letters. Because I find a Debbora [6] administering the law, both military and political, and governing a people among whom there were many learned men. I find a most

5. Lupercio Leonardo de Argensola (1559–1639), poet, playwright, and historian. 6. Or Deborah, a prophetess who judged the Israelites. Judges 4:4–14.

wise Queen of Saba,[7] so learned that she dares to challenge with hard questions the wisdom of the greatest of all wise men, without being reprimanded for doing so, but, rather, as a consequence, to judge unbelievers. I see many and illustrious women; some blessed with the gift of prophecy, like Abigail,[8] others of persuasion, like Esther;[9] others with pity, like Rehab;[1] others with perseverance, like Anna, the mother of Samuel;[2] and an infinite number of others, with divers gifts and virtues.

If I again turn to the Gentiles, the first I encounter are the Sibyls,[3] those women chosen by God to prophesy the principal mysteries of our Faith, and with learned and elegant verses that surpass admiration. I see adored as a goddess of the sciences a woman like Minerva,[4] the daughter of the first Jupiter and mistress over all the wisdom of Athens. I see a Polla Argentaria, who helped Lucan, her husband, write his epic *Pharsalia*.[5] I see the daughter of the divine Tiresias,[6] more learned than her father. I see a Zenobia, Queen of the Palmyrans,[7] as wise as she was valiant. An Arete, most learned daughter of Aristippus.[8] A Nicostrate,[9] framer of Latin verses and most erudite in Greek. An Aspasia Milesia, who taught philosophy and rhetoric, and who was a teacher of the philosopher Pericles. An Hypatia, who taught astrology, and studied many years in Alexandria. A Leontium, a Greek woman, who questioned the philosopher Theophrastus, and convinced him. A Julia, a Corinna, a Cornelia;[1] and, finally, a great throng of women deserving to be named, some as Greeks, some as muses, some as seers; for all were nothing more than learned women, held, and celebrated—and venerated as well—as such by antiquity. Without mentioning an infinity of other women whose names fill books. For example, I find the Egyptian Catherine,[2] studying and influencing the wisdom of all the wise men of Egypt. I see a Gertrudis[3] studying, writing, and teaching. And not to overlook

7. Or Sheba, who tested King Solomon with questions. 1 Kings 10:1–3. 8. Wife of a surly husband, Nabal: after Nabal insulted King David, she went to the king with presents and prophesied his future triumphs, thus saving her husband's life. 1 Samuel 25:2–35. 9. She persuaded her husband, King Ahasuerus, to protect the Jews. Esther 5:1–9:32. 1. Or Rahab, a harlot who protected two Israelites from the King of Jericho. Joshua 2:1–7. 2. Or Hannah, who after years of childlessness received the answer to her prayers in the birth of Samuel. 1 Samuel 1:1–20. 3. Female prophets of the ancient world. 4. Or Athena, goddess of wisdom. 5. Epic poem on the civil war between Caesar and Pompey, properly called *Bellum Civile* (ca. A.D. 62–65). 6. Legendary blind Theban seer (see Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* in this anthology); his daughter was Manto, known for her skill in divination by fire. 7. Learned widow of Odenathus, she declared her independence from Rome and expanded the Middle Eastern territory under her rule, naming herself Augusta, empress of Rome. She was finally defeated and captured in 272. 8. Greek philosopher (ca. 435–ca. 360 B.C.). 9. Or Carmentis; legendary daughter of Pallas, king of Arcadia, and (in legend) inventor of the Roman alphabet. 1. Julia Domna (2nd century A.D.), wife of the Roman emperor Septimius Severus, known for her learning as Julia the Philosopher; Corinna (fl. ca. 500? B.C.) was a lyric poet of Tanagra who wrote for a group of women; Cornelia (fl. 2nd cent. B.C.), the second daughter of Scipio Africanus and wife of Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus, was noted for her devotion to her children's education after her husband's death. 2. St. Catherine (4th cent.?), allegedly so wise she could refute fifty philosophers at once. 3. St. Gertrude (d. 1302), Benedictine nun and visionary, an important mystic.

examples close to home, I see my most holy mother Paula, learned in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, and most able in interpreting the Scriptures. And what greater praise than, having as her chronicler a Jeronimus Maximus,[4] that Saint scarcely found himself competent for his task, and says, with that weighty deliberation and energetic precision with which he so well expressed himself: "If all the members of my body were tongues, they still would not be sufficient to proclaim the wisdom and virtue of Paula." Similarly praiseworthy was the widow Blesilla; also, the illustrious virgin Eustochium,[5] both daughters of this same saint; especially the second, who, for her knowledge, was called the Prodigy of the World. The Roman Fabiola[6] was most well-versed in the Holy Scripture. Proba Falconia, a Roman woman, wrote elegant centos,[7] containing verses from Virgil, about the mysteries of Our Holy Faith. It is well-known by all that Queen Isabel,[8] wife of the tenth Alfonso, wrote about astrology. Many others I do not list, out of the desire not merely to transcribe what others have said (a vice I have always abominated); and many are flourishing today, as witness Christina Alexandra,[9] Queen of Sweden, as learned as she is valiant and magnanimous, and the Most Honorable Ladies, the Duquesa of Abeyro and the Condesa of Villaumbrosa.

The venerable Doctor Arce[1] (by his virtue and learning a worthy teacher of the Scriptures) in his scholarly *Bibliorum* raises this question: *Is it permissible for women to dedicate themselves to the study of the Holy Scriptures, and to their interpretation?* and he offers as negative arguments the opinions of many saints, especially that of the Apostle: *Let women keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted them to speak*, etc.[2] He later cites other opinions and, from the same Apostle, verses from his letter to Titus: *The aged women in like manner, in holy attire . . . teaching well,*[3] with interpretations by the Holy Fathers. Finally he resolves, with all prudence, that teaching publicly from a University chair, or preaching from the pulpit, is not permissible for women; but that to study, write, and teach privately not only is permissible, but most advantageous and useful. It is evident that this is not to be the case with all women, but with those to whom God may have granted special virtue and prudence, and who may be well advanced in learning, and having the essential talent and requisites for such a sacred calling. This view is indeed just, so much so that not only women, who are held to be so inept, but also men, who merely for being men believe they are wise, should be prohibited from interpreting the Sacred Word if they are not learned and virtuous and of gentle and well-inclined natures; that this is not

4. St. Jerome. 5. Blesilla and Eustochium were daughters of Saint Paula, like her taught by Saint Jerome. 6. One of Jerome's disciples. 7. Compositions made up of verses from other authors. 8. Of Spain, wife of Alfonso X, "Alfonso the Wise" (1221–1284). 9. (1626–1689); she attracted many scholars and artists to her court. 1. Juan Díaz de Arce (1594–1653), author of theological books. 2. 1 Cor. 14:34. 3. Titus 2:3–5.

so has been, I believe, at the root of so much sectarianism and so many heresies. For there are many who study but are ignorant, especially those who are in spirit arrogant, troubled, and proud, so eager for new interpretations of the Word (which itself rejects new interpretations) that merely for the sake of saying what no one else has said they speak a heresy, and even then are not content. Of these the Holy Spirit says: *For wisdom will not enter into a malicious soul.*[4] To such as these more harm results from knowing than from ignorance. A wise man has said: he who does not know Latin is not a complete fool; but he who knows it is well qualified to be.[5] And I would add that a fool may reach perfection (if ignorance may tolerate perfection) by having studied his tittle of philosophy and theology and by having some learning of tongues, by which he may be a fool in many sciences and languages: a great fool cannot be contained solely in his mother tongue.

For such as these, I reiterate, study is harmful, because it is as if to place a sword in the hands of a madman; which, though a most noble instrument for defense, is in his hands his own death and that of many others. So were the Divine Scriptures in the possession of the evil Pelagius[6] and the intractable Arius,[7] of the evil Luther,[8] and the other heresiarchs like our own Doctor (who was neither ours nor a doctor) Cazalla.[9] To these men, wisdom was harmful, although it is the greatest nourishment and the life of the soul; in the same way that in a stomach of sickly constitution and adulterated complexion, the finer the nourishment it receives, the more arid, fermented, and perverse are the humors it produces; thus these evil men: the more they study, the worse opinions they engender, their reason being obstructed with the very substance meant to nourish it, and they study much and digest little, exceeding the limits of the vessel of their reason. Of which the Apostle says: *For I say, by the grace that is given me, to all that are among you, not to be more wise than it behoveth to be wise, but to be wise unto sobriety, and according as God hath divided to every one the measure of faith.*[1] And in truth, the Apostle did not direct these words to women, but to men; and that *keep silence* is intended not only for women, but for *all* incompetents. If I desire to know as much, or more, than Aristotle or Saint Augustine, and if I have not the aptitude of Saint Augustine or Aristotle, though I study more than either, not only will I not achieve learning, but I will weaken and dull the workings of my feeble reason

4. Book of Wisdom (in the Apocrypha) 1:4. 5. Alluding to the Spanish proverb: "A fool, unless he knows Latin, is never a great fool." 6. Heretical monk (ca. 355–ca. 425) who taught that men do not need divine grace, since they have a natural tendency to seek the good. 7. Libyan theologian (ca. 256–336), founder of the Arian heresy which declared that Christ was neither eternal nor equal with God. 8. Martin Luther (1483–1546), German leader of the Protestant Reformation, from Sor Juana's point of view another heretic. 9. Augustino Cazallo, Spanish Protestant (1510–1559), executed by the Inquisition for promulgating Lutheran doctrine. 1. Rom. 12:13.

with the disproportionateness of the goal.

Oh, that each of us—I, being ignorant, the first—should take the measure of our talents before we study, or, more importantly, write, with the covetous ambition to equal and even surpass others, how little spirit we should have for it, and how many errors we should avoid, and how many tortured intellects of which we have experience, we should have had no experience! And I place my own ignorance in the forefront of all these, for if I knew all I should, I would not write. And I protest that I do so only to obey you; and with such apprehension that you owe me more that I have taken up my pen in fear than you would have owed had I presented you more perfect works. But it is well that they go to your correction. Cross them out, tear them up, reprove me, and I shall appreciate that more than all the vain applause others may offer. *That just men shall correct me in mercy, and shall reprove me; but let not the oil of the sinner fatten my head.*[2] And returning again to our Arce, I say that in affirmation of his opinion he cites the words of my father, Saint Jerome: *To Leta, Upon the Education of Her Daughter.* Where he says: *Accustom her tongue, still young, to the sweetness of the Psalms. Even the names through which little by little she will become accustomed to form her phrases should not be chosen by chance, but selected and repeated with care; the prophets must be included, of course, and the apostles, as well, and all the Patriarchs beginning with Adam and down to Mathew and Luke, so that as she practices other things she will be readying her memory for the future. Let your daily task be taken from the flower of the Scriptures.* And if this Saint desired that a young girl scarcely beginning to talk be educated in this fashion, what would he desire for his nuns and his spiritual daughters? These beliefs are illustrated in the examples of the previously mentioned Eustochium and Fabiola, and Marcella, her sister, and Pacatula, and others whom the Saint honors in his epistles, exhorting them to this sacred exercise, as they are recognized in the epistle I cited, *Let your daily task . . .* , which is affirmation of and agreement with the *aged women . . . teaching well* of Saint Paul. My illustrious Father's *Let your daily task . . .* makes clear that the teacher of the child is to be Leta herself, the child's mother.

Oh, how much injury might have been avoided in our land if our aged women had been learned, as was Leta, and had they known how to instruct as directed by Saint Paul and by my Father, Saint Jerome. And failing this, and because of the considerable idleness to which our poor women have been relegated, if a father desires to provide his daughters with more than ordinary learning, he is forced by necessity, and by the absence of wise elder women, to bring men

2. Psalms 140:5.

to teach the skills of reading, writing, counting, the playing of musical instruments, and other accomplishments, from which no little harm results, as is experienced every day in doleful examples of perilous association, because through the immediacy of contact and the intimacy born from the passage of time, what one may never have thought possible is easily accomplished. For which reason many prefer to leave their daughters unpolished and uncultured rather than to expose them to such notorious peril as that of familiarity with men, which quandary could be prevented if there were learned elder women, as Saint Paul wished to see, and if the teaching were handed down from one to another, as is the custom with domestic crafts and all other traditional skills.

For what objection can there be that an older woman, learned in letters and in sacred conversation and customs, have in her charge the education of young girls? This would prevent these girls being lost either for lack of instruction or for hesitating to offer instruction through such dangerous means as male teachers, for even when there is no greater risk of indecency than to seat beside a modest woman (who still may blush when her own father looks directly at her) a strange man who treats her as if he were a member of the household and with the authority of an intimate, the modesty demanded in interchange with men, and in conversation with them, is sufficient reason that such an arrangement not be permitted. For I do not find that the custom of men teaching women is without its peril, lest it be in the severe tribunal of the confessional, or from the remote decency of the pulpit, or in the distant learning of books—never in the personal contact of immediacy. And the world knows this is true; and, notwithstanding, it is permitted solely from the want of learned elder women. Then is it not detrimental, the lack of such women? This question should be addressed by those who, bound to that *Let women keep silence in the church*, say that it is blasphemy for women to learn and teach, as if it were not the Apostle himself who said: *The aged women . . . teaching well.* As well as the fact that this prohibition touches upon historical fact as reported by Eusebium:[3] which is that in the early Church, women were charged with teaching the doctrine to one another in the temples and the sound of this teaching caused confusion as the Apostles were preaching and this is the reason they were ordered to be silent; and even today, while the homilist is preaching, one does not pray aloud.

Who will argue that for the comprehension of many Scriptures one must be familiar with the history, customs, ceremonies, proverbs, and even the manners of speaking of those times in which they were written, if one is to apprehend the references and allusions of

3. Probably Eusebius of Caesaria (ca. 263–339?), an early church historian.

more than a few passages of the Holy Word. *And rend your heart and not your garments.*[4] Is this not a reference to the ceremony in which Hebrews rent their garments as a sign of grief, as did the evil pontiff when he said that Christ had blasphemed? In many scriptures the Apostle writes of succour for widows; did they not refer to the customs of those times? Does not the example of the valiant woman, *Her husband is honourable in the gates,*[5] allude to the fact that the tribunals of the judges were at the gates of the cities? That *Dare terram Deo,* give of your land to God, did that not mean to make some votive offering? And did they not call the public sinners *hiemantes,* those who endure the winter, because they made their penance in the open air instead of at a town gate as others did? And Christ's plaint to that Pharisee who had neither kissed him nor given him water for his feet,[6] was that not because it was the Jews' usual custom to offer these acts of hospitality? And we find an infinite number of additional instances not only in the Divine Letters, but human, as well, such as *adorate purpuram,* venerate the purple, which meant obey the King; *manumittere eum,* manumit them, alluding to the custom and ceremony of striking the slave with one's hand to signify his freedom. That *intonuit coelum,* heaven thundered, in Virgil, which alludes to the augury of thunder from the west, which was held to be good.[7] Martial's *tu nunquam leporem edisti,*[8] you never ate hare, has not only the wit of ambiguity in its *leporem,*[9] but, as well, the allusion to the reputed propensity of hares [to bless with beauty those who dine on them]. That proverb, *maleam legens, que sunt domi obliviscere,* to sail along the shore of Malia is to forget what one has at home, alludes to the great peril of the promontory of Laconia.[1] That chaste matron's response to the unwanted suit of her pretender: "the hinge-pins shall not be oiled for my sake, nor shall the torches blaze," meaning that she did not want to marry, alluded to the ceremony of anointing the doorways with oils and lighting the nuptial torches in the wedding ceremony, as if now we would say, they shall not prepare the thirteen coins for my dowry, nor shall the priest invoke the blessing. And thus it is with many comments of Virgil and Homer and all the poets and orators. In addition, how many are the difficulties found even in the grammar of the Holy Scripture, such as writing a plural for a singular, or changing from the second to third persons, as in the Psalms, *Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth, for thy breasts are better than wine.*[2] Or placing adjectives in the genitive instead of the accusative,

4. Joel 2:13. 5. Proverbs 31:23. 6. Luke 7:44–45. 7. Sor Juana possibly misremembers *Aeneid* 2:693, "thunder on the left." 8. Marcus Valerius Martialis (ca. 40–ca. 104), Roman epigrammatic poet. "Edisti numquam, Gellia, tu leporem": *Epigrams* 5:29. 9. Which can also mean charm, grace, attractiveness. 1. The site of ancient Sparta, conquered by Macedonia in the 4th century B.C. 2. Song of Solomon 1:2.

as in *Calicem salutaris accipiam*, I will take the chalice of salvation.[3] Or to replace the feminine with the masculine, and, in contrast, to call any sin adultery.

All this demands more investigation than some believe, who strictly as grammarians, or, at most, employing the four principles of applied logic, attempt to interpret the Scriptures while clinging to that *Let the women keep silence in the church*, not knowing how it is to be interpreted. As well as that other verse, *Let the women learn in silence.*[4] For this latter scripture works more to women's favor than their disfavor, as it commands them to learn; and it is only natural that they must maintain silence while they learn. And it is also written, *Hear, oh Israel, and be silent.*[5] Which addresses the entire congregation of men and women, commanding all to silence, because if one is to hear and learn, it is with good reason that he attend and be silent. And if it is not so, I would want these interpreters and expositors of Saint Paul to explain to me how they interpret that scripture, *Let the women keep silence in the church*. For either they must understand it to refer to the material church, that is the church of pulpits and cathedras,[6] or to the spiritual, the community of the faithful, which is the Church. If they understand it to be the former, which, in my opinion, is its true interpretation, then we see that if in fact it is not permitted of women to read publicly in church, nor preach, why do they censure those who study privately? And if they understand the latter, and wish that the prohibition of the Apostle be applied transcendentally—that not even in private are women to be permitted to write or study—how are we to view the fact that the Church permitted a Gertrudis, a Santa Teresa, a Saint Birgitta,[7] the Nun of Agreda,[8] and so many others, to write? And if they say to me that these women were saints, they speak the truth; but this poses no obstacle to my argument. First, because Saint Paul's proposition is absolute, and encompasses all women not excepting saints, as Martha and Mary,[9] Marcella,[1] Mary, mother of Jacob, and Salome,[2] all were in their time, and many other zealous women of the early church. But we see, too, that the Church allows women who are not saints to write, for the Nun of Agreda and Sor María de la Antigua[3] are not canonized, yet their writings are circulated. And when Santa Teresa and the others were writing, they were not as yet canonized. In which case, Saint Paul's prohibition was directed solely to the public office of the pulpit, for if the Apostle had forbidden women to write, the

3. Psalms 115:13. 4. 1 Tim. 2:11 5. Not a biblical quotation. 6. The cathedra is the throne of the bishop in his church. 7. Or Bridget of Sweden (1303–1373). 8. Maria de Agreda (1602–1635), Spanish Franciscan nun, author of *The Mystic City of God*, 1670, a work allegedly divinely inspired. 9. Sisters: Mary anointed Jesus's feet (John 12:3); Martha was preoccupied with household tasks (Luke 10:40–42). 1. One of the women taught by Jerome. 2. In the King James Bible, mother of *James* and Salome, who came to the empty sepulcher to anoint Jesus's body. Mark 16:1. 3. Spanish nun (1544–1617).

Church would not have allowed it. Now I do not make so bold as to teach—which in me would be excessively presumptuous—and as for writing, that requires a greater talent than mine, and serious reflection. As Saint Cyprian[4] says: *The things we write require most conscientious consideration.* I have desired to study that I might be ignorant of less; for (according to Saint Augustine[5]) some things are learned to be enacted and others only to be known: *We learn some things to know them, others, to do them.* Then, where is the offense to be found if even what is licit to women—which is to teach by writing—I do not perform, as I know that I am lacking in means, following the counsel of Quintilian: *Let each person learn not only from the precepts of others, but also let him reap counsel from his own nature.*

If the offense is to be found in the *Atenagórica* letter, was that letter anything other than the simple expression of my feeling, written with the implicit permission of our Holy Mother Church? For if the Church, in her most sacred authority, does not forbid it, why must others do so? That I proffered an opinion contrary to that of de Vieyra was audacious, but, as a Father, was it not audacious that he speak against the three Holy Fathers of the Church? My reason, such as it is, is it not as unfettered as his, as both issue from the same source? Is his opinion to be considered as a revelation, as a principle of the Holy Faith, that we must accept blindly? Furthermore, I maintained at all times the respect due such a virtuous man, a respect in which his defender was sadly wanting, ignoring the phrase of Titus Lucius:[6] *Respect is companion to the arts.* I did not touch a thread of the robes of the Society of Jesus; nor did I write for other than the consideration of the person who suggested that I write. And, according to Pliny, *how different the condition of one who writes from that of one who merely speaks.* Had I believed the letter was to be published I would not have been so inattentive. If, as the censor says, the letter is heretical, why does he not denounce it? And with that he would be avenged, and I content, for, which is only seemly, I esteem more highly my reputation as a Catholic and obedient daughter of the Holy Mother Church than all the approbation due a learned woman. If the letter is rash, and he does well to criticize it, then laugh, even if with the laugh of the rabbit, for I have not asked that he approve; as I was free to dissent from de Vieyra, so will anyone be free to oppose my opinion.

But how I have strayed, lady. None of this pertains here, nor is it intended for your ears, but as I was discussing my accusers I remembered the words of one that recently have appeared, and, though my

4. Thascius Caecilius Cyprianus (ca. 200–258), one of the church fathers, known for his efforts to enforce church discipline. 5. Aurelius Augustinus (354–430), baptized by Saint Ambrose in 387, author of *De Civitate Dei*, a vindication of the church which long possessed great authority. 6. Better known as Saturantius Apuleius, greatly celebrated in his time (2d century A.D.) for eloquence.

intent was to speak in general, my pen, unbidden, slipped, and began to respond in particular. And so, returning to our Arce, he says that he knew in this city two nuns: one in the Convent of the Regina, who had so thoroughly committed the Breviary to memory that with the greatest promptitude and propriety she applied in her conversation its verses, psalms, and maxims of saintly homilies. The other, in the Convent of the Conception, was so accustomed to reading the Epistles of my Father Saint Jerome, and the Locutions of this Saint, that Arce says, *It seemed I was listening to Saint Jerome himself, speaking in Spanish.* And of this latter woman he says that after her death he learned that she had translated these Epistles into the Spanish language. What pity that such talents could not have been employed in major studies with scientific principles. He does not give the name of either, although he offers these women as confirmation of his opinion, which is that not only is it licit, but most useful and essential for women to study the Holy Word, and even more essential for nuns; and that study is the very thing to which your wisdom exhorts me, and in which so many arguments concur.

Then if I turn my eyes to the oft-chastized faculty of making verses—which is in me so natural that I must discipline myself that even this letter not be written in that form—I might cite those lines, *All I wished to express took the form of verse.*[7] And seeing that so many condemn and criticize this ability, I have conscientiously sought to find what harm may be in it, and I have not found it, but, rather, I see verse acclaimed in the mouths of the Sibyls; sanctified in the pens of the Prophets, especially King David, of whom the exalted Expositor my beloved Father[8] says (explicating the measure of his meters): *in the manner of Horace and Pindar, now it hurries along in iambs, now it rings in alcaic, now swells in sapphic, then arrives in broken feet.* The greater part of the Holy Books are in meter, as is the Book of Moses; and those of Job (as Saint Isidore[9] states in his *Etymologiae*) are in heroic verse. Solomon wrote the Canticle of Canticles in verse; and Jeremias, his *Lamentations.* And so, says Cassiodorus:[1] *All poetic expression had as its source the Holy Scriptures.* For not only does our Catholic Church not disdain verse, it employs verse in its hymns, and recites the lines of Saint Ambrose,[2] Saint Thomas, Saint Isidore, and others. Saint Bonaventure[3] was so taken with verse that he writes scarcely a page where it does not appear. It is readily apparent that Saint Paul had studied verse, for he quotes and translates verses of Aratus: *For in him we live, and move, and are.*[4] And he quotes also that verse of Parmenides: *The*

7. Ovid, *Tristia*, 4.10.25ff. 8. I.e., Jerome. 9. (ca. 560–636), Spanish archbishop who helped organize the church in Spain. 1. Flavius Magnus Aurelius Cassiodorus (ca. 485–ca.580), Roman monk and author of *Institutiones*, a course of studies for monks. 2. (339–397), bishop of Milan who had an important share in the conversion of Saint Augustine. 3. (1221–1274), Franciscan bishop and cardinal who preached the importance of study.

Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slothful bellies.[5] Saint Gregory Nazianzen[6] argues in elegant verses the questions of matrimony and virginity. And, how should I tire? The Queen of Wisdom, Our Lady, with Her sacred lips, intoned the Canticle of the Magnificat;[7] and having brought forth this example, it would be offensive to add others that were profane, even those of the most serious and learned men, for this alone is more than sufficient confirmation; and even though Hebrew elegance could not be compressed into Latin measure, for which reason, although the sacred translator, more attentive to the importance of the meaning, omitted the verse, the Psalms retain the number and divisions of verses, and what harm is to be found in them? For misuse is not the blame of art, but rather of the evil teacher who perverts the arts, making of them the snare of the devil; and this occurs in all the arts and sciences.

And if the evil is attributed to the fact that a woman employs them, we have seen how many have done so in praiseworthy fashion; what then is the evil in my being a woman? I confess openly my own baseness and meanness; but I judge that no couplet of mine has been deemed indecent. Furthermore, I have never written of my own will, but under the pleas and injunctions of others; to such a degree that the only piece I remember having written for my own pleasure was a little trifle they called *El sueño.*[8] That letter, lady, which you so greatly honored, I wrote more with repugnance than any other emotion; both by reason of the fact that it treated sacred matters, for which (as I have stated) I hold such reverent awe, and because it seems to wish to impugn, a practice for which I have natural aversion; and I believe that had I foreseen the blessed destiny to which it was fated—for like a second Moses I had set it adrift, naked, on the waters of the Nile of silence, where you, a princess, found and cherished it[9]—I believe, I reiterate, that had I known, the very hands of which it was born would have drowned it, out of the fear that these clumsy scribblings from my ignorance appear before the light of your great wisdom; by which one knows the munificence of your kindness, for your goodwill applauds precisely what your reason must wish to reject. For as fate cast it before your doors, so exposed, so orphaned, that it fell to you even to give it a name, I must lament that among other deformities it also bears the blemish of haste; both because of the unrelenting ill-health I suffer, and for the profusion of duties imposed on me by obedience, as well as the want of anyone

4. Acts 17:28. 5. Titus 1:12. 6. Gregorius Nazianzenus, bishop of Constantinople and associate of Jerome. The allusion is to the first of his forty moral poems, 732 lines eulogizing virginity. 7. Luke 1:46–55. 8. "The Dream," one of Sor Juana's best-known poems, which tells of the flight of her soul toward learning. 9. Because Pharaoh had ordered all male Hebrew infants killed, Moses's mother placed him in a basket by the Nile, where he was found and rescued by Pharaoh's daughter. Exodus 2:1–10.

to guide me in my writing and the need that it all come from my hand, and, finally, because the writing went against my nature and I wished only to keep my promise to one whom I could not disobey, I could not find the time to finish properly, and thus I failed to include whole treatises and many arguments that presented themselves to me, but which I omitted in order to put an end to the writing—many, that had I known the letter was to be printed, I would not have excluded, even if merely to satisfy some objections that have since arisen and which could have been refuted. But I shall not be so ill-mannered as to place such indecent objects before the purity of your eyes, for it is enough that my ignorance be an offense in your sight, without need of entrusting to it the effronteries of others. If they should wing your way (and they are of such little weight that this will happen), then you will command what I am to do; for, if it does not run contrary to your will, my defense shall be not to take up my pen, for I deem that one affront need not occasion another, if one recognizes the error in the very place it lies concealed. As my Father Saint Jerome says, *good discourse seeks not things*, and Saint Ambrose, *it is the nature of a guilty conscience to lie concealed*. Nor do I consider that I have been impugned, for one statute of the Law states: *An accusation will not endure unless nurtured by the person who brought it forth*. What *is* a matter to be weighed is the effort spent in copying the accusation. A strange madness, to expend more effort in denying acclaim than in earning it! I, lady, have chosen not to respond (although others did so without my knowledge); it suffices that I have seen certain treatises, among them one so learned I send it to you so that reading it will compensate in part for the time you squandered on my writing. If, lady, you wish that I act contrary to what I have proposed here for your judgment and opinion, the merest indication of your desire will, as is seemly, countermand my inclination, which, as I have told you, is to be silent, for although Saint John Chrysostom [1] says, *those who slander must be refuted, and those who question, taught*, I know also that Saint Gregory [2] says, *It is no less a victory to tolerate enemies than to overcome them*. And that patience conquers by tolerating and triumphs by suffering. And if among the Roman Gentiles it was the custom when their captains were at the highest peak of glory—when returning triumphant from other nations, robed in purple and wreathed with laurel, crowned-but-conquered kings pulling their carriages in the stead of beasts, accompanied by the spoils of the riches of all the world, the conquering troops adorned with the insignia of their heroic feats, hear-

1. (ca. 347–407), known as the greatest orator of the church, author of many homilies and treatises. 2. Gregory the Great (ca. 540–604), pope from 590, deeply concerned with the reformation of the church.

ing the plaudits of the people who showered them with titles of honor and renown such as Fathers of the Nation, Columns of the Empire, Walls of Rome, Shelter of the Republic, and other glorious names—a soldier went before these captains in this moment of the supreme apogee of glory and human happiness crying out in a loud voice to the conqueror (by his consent and order of the Senate): Behold how you are mortal; behold how you have this or that defect, not excepting the most shameful, as happened in the triumph of Caesar, when the vilest soldiers clamored in his ear: *Beware, Romans, for we bring you the bald adulterer.* Which was done so that in the midst of such honor the conquerers not be swelled up with pride, and that the ballast of these insults act as counterweight to the bellying sails of such approbation, and that the ship of good judgment not founder amidst the winds of acclamation. If this, I say, was the practice among Gentiles, who knew only the light of Natural Law, how much might we Catholics, under the injunction to love our enemies, achieve by tolerating them? And in my own behalf I can attest that calumny has often mortified me, but never harmed me, being that I hold as a great fool one who having occasion to receive credit suffers the difficulty and loses the credit, as it is with those who do not resign themselves to death, but, in the end, die anyway, their resistance not having prevented death, but merely deprived them of the credit of resignation and caused them to die badly when they might have died well. And thus, lady, I believe these experiences do more good than harm, and I hold as greater the jeopardy of applause to human weakness, as we are wont to appropriate praise that is not our own, and must be ever watchful, and carry graven on our hearts those words of the Apostle: *Or what hast thou that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received, why doest thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?* [3] so that these words serve as a shield to fend off the sharp barbs of commendations, which are as spears which when not attributed to God (whose they are), claim our lives and cause us to be thieves of God's honor and usurpers of the talents He bestowed on us and the gifts that He lent to us, for which we must give the most strict accounting. And thus, lady, I fear applause more than calumny, because the latter, with but the simple act of patience becomes gain, while the former requires many acts of reflection and humility and proper recognition so that it not become harm. And I know and recognize that it is by special favor of God that I know this, as it enables me in either instance to act in accord with the words of Saint Augustine: *One must believe neither the friend who praises nor the enemy who detracts.* Although most often I squander God's favor, or vitiate with such defects and imperfections that I spoil what, being

3. 2 Cor. 11:4.

His, was good. And thus in what little of mine that has been printed, neither the use of my name, nor even consent for the printing, was given by my own counsel, but by the license of another who lies outside my domain, as was also true with the printing of the *Atenagórica* letter, and only a few *Exercises of the Incarnation* and *Offerings of the Sorrow* were printed for public devotions with my pleasure, but without my name; of which I am sending some few copies that (if you so desire) you may distribute them among our sisters, the nuns of that holy community, as well as in that city. I send but one copy of the *Sorrows* because the others have been exhausted and I could find no other copy. I wrote them long ago, solely for the devotions of my sisters, and later they were spread abroad; and their contents are disproportionate as regards my unworthiness and my ignorance, and they profited that they touched on matters of our exalted Queen; for I cannot explain what it is that inflames the coldest heart when one refers to the Most Holy Mary. It is my only desire, esteemed lady, to remit to you works worthy of your virtue and wisdom; as the poet said: *Though strength may falter, good will must be praised. In this, I believe, the gods will be content.*

If ever I write again, my scribbling will always find its way to the haven of your holy feet and the certainty of your correction, for I have no other jewel with which to pay you, and, in the lament of Seneca, he who has once bestowed benefices has committed himself to continue; and so you must be repaid out of your own munificence, for only in this way shall I with dignity be freed from debt and avoid that the words of that same Seneca come to pass: *It is contemptible to be surpassed in benefices.*[4] For in his gallantry the generous creditor gives to the poor debtor the means to satisfy his debt. So God gave his gift to a world unable to repay Him: He gave his son that He be offered a recompense worthy of Him.

If, most venerable lady, the tone of this letter may not have seemed right and proper, I ask forgiveness for its homely familiarity, and the less than seemly respect in which by treating you as a nun, one of my sisters, I have lost sight of the remoteness of your most illustrious person; which, had I seen you without your veil, would never have occurred; but you in all your prudence and mercy will supplement or amend the language, and if you find unsuitable the *Vos* of the address I have employed, believing that for the reverence I owe you, Your Reverence seemed little reverent, modify it in whatever manner seems appropriate to your due, for I have not dared exceed the limits of your custom, nor transgress the boundary of your modesty.

And hold me in your grace, and entreat for me divine grace, of which the Lord God grant you large measure, and keep you, as I

4. *On Benefits* 5.2.1.

pray Him, and am needful. From this convent of our Father Saint Jerome in Mexico City, the first day of the month of March of sixteen hundred and ninety-one. Allow me to kiss your hand, your most favored

Juana Inés de la Cruz

FRANÇOIS-MARIE AROUET DE VOLTAIRE

1694–1778

Voltaire's *Candide* (1759) brings to near perfection the art of black comedy. It subjects its characters to an accumulation of horrors so bizarre that they provoke a bewildered response of laughter as self-protection—even while they demand that the reader pay attention to the serious implications of such extravagance.

Voltaire had prepared himself to write such a work by varied experience—including that of political imprisonment. He was born François-Marie Arouet, son of a minor treasury official in Paris. After attending a Jesuit school, he took up the study of law, which, however, he soon abandoned. In his early twenties (1717–18), he spent eleven months in the Bastille for writing satiric verses about the aristocracy. His incarceration did not dissuade him from a literary career; by 1718 he was using the name *Voltaire* and beginning to acquire literary and social reputation—as well as some wealth: his speculations in the Compagnie des Indes made him rich by 1726. Money, however, did not protect him from spending more time in the Bastille during that year; after his release, he passed three years in exile, mainly in England. From 1734 to 1749, he studied widely, living with Mme. du Châtelet on her estate at Cirey. For the next three years he stayed with Frederick the Great of Prussia at his Potsdam court; after that arrangement collapsed, Voltaire bought property in Switzerland and in adjacent France, settling first at his own chateau, Les Delices, outside Geneva; then at nearby Ferney, in France. His international reputation as writer and social critic steadily increased; in the year of his death, he returned triumphantly to Paris.

Like his English contemporary, Samuel Johnson, Voltaire wrote in many important genres: tragedy, epic, history, philosophy, fiction. His *Philosophical Dictionary* (1764), with its witty and penetrating definitions, typifies his range and acumen and his participation in his period's effort to take control of experience by intellect. While still a young man, Voltaire wrote a *History of Charles XII* of Sweden, a work unusual for its time in its novelistic technique and its assumption that "history" includes the personal lives of powerful individuals and has nothing to do with divine intervention. Before *Candide* (1759), he had published another philosophic tale, *Zadig* (1748), following the pattern of Oriental narrative. Like Candide, Zadig goes through an educational process of experience; it teaches him inconclusive lessons about life's unforeseeable contingencies.

Candide mocks both the artificial order of fiction (through its ludicrously multiplied recognition scenes and its symmetrical division of the protagonist's travels into three equal parts) and what Voltaire suggests is the equally artificial order posited by philosophic optimists. The view of the universe suggested by Pope's *Essay on Man*, for instance, insists on the rationality of a pattern ungraspable by human reason. It does so, however, *Candide* implicitly argues, only by attending to the abstract and undemonstrable and ignoring the omnipresent pain of immediate experience. Gottfried Leibniz, the German philosopher, provides Voltaire's most specific target in *Candide*, with the complexities of his version of optimism reduced for satiric purposes to the facile formula, "Everything is for the best in this best of all possible worlds." The formulation is of course unfair to Leibniz, whose philosophic optimism, like Pope's, implies belief in an unknowable universal order—roughly equivalent to Christian Providence—but no lack of awareness about the actual misery and depravity human beings experience.

The exuberance and extravagance of Voltaire's imagination force us to laugh at what we may feel embarrassed to laugh at: the plight of the woman whose buttock has been cut off to make rump steak for her hungry companions, the weeping of two girls whose monkey-lovers have been killed, the situation of six exiled, poverty-stricken kings. Like Swift, Voltaire keeps his readers off balance. Raped, cut to pieces, hanged, stabbed in the belly, the central characters of *Candide* keep coming back to life at opportune moments, as though no disaster could have permanent or ultimately destructive effects. Such reassuring fantasy suggests that we don't need to worry, it's all a joke, an outpouring of fertile fancy designed to ridicule an outmoded philosophic system with no particular relevance to us. On the other hand, historical reality keeps intruding. Those six hungry kings are real, actual figures, actually dispossessed. Candide sees Admiral Byng executed: an admiral who really lived, and really died by firing squad for not engaging an enemy with sufficient ferocity. The Lisbon earthquake actually occurred; thirty to forty thousand people literally lost their lives in it. The extravagances of reality equal those of the storyteller; Voltaire demands that the reader imaginatively confront and somehow come to terms with horrors that surround us still.

The real problem, *Candide* suggests, is not natural or human disaster so much as human complacency. When Candide sees Admiral Byng shot, he comments on the injustice of the execution. "That's perfectly true, came the answer; but in this country it is useful from time to time to kill one admiral in order to encourage the others." Early in the nineteenth century, William Wordsworth wrote, "much it grieved my heart to think / What man has made of man." His tone and perspective differ dramatically from Voltaire's, but his point is the same: human beings use their faculties to increase corruption. Failure to take seriously any human death is a form of moral corruption; failure to acknowledge the intolerability of war, in all its concrete detail of rape and butchery, epitomizes such corruption at its worst.

In a late chapter of *Candide*, the central character, less naïve than he once was, inquires about whether men have always massacred one another. Have they, he asks, "always been liars, traitors, ingrates, thieves, weaklings, sneaks, cowards, backbiters, gluttons, drunkards, misers, climbers, killers, calumniators, sensualists, fanatics, hypocrites, and fools?" His interlocutor,

Martin, responds that, just as hawks have always devoured pigeons, human beings have always manifested the same vices. This ironic variation on the period's conviction of the universality and continuity of human nature epitomizes Voltaire's sense of outrage, which in some respects parallels Swift's in the fourth book of *Gulliver's Travels*. Swift demonstrates the implications of "reason" considered as an ideal and shows its irrelevance to actual human behavior; Voltaire shows how the claim of a rational universal order can provide a way to avoid the hard problems of living in a world where human beings have become liars, traitors, and so on. His Swiftian catalogue of vice and folly expresses the moral insufficiency and perversity of humankind. Martin's cynical assumption that people are naturally corrupt, as hawks naturally eat smaller birds, constitutes another form of avoidance. The assumed inevitability of vice, like belief that all is for the best, justifies passivity. Nothing *can* be done, nothing *should* be done, or nothing *matters* (the view of Lord Pococurante, another figure Candide encounters). So the characters of this fiction, including Candide himself, mainly pursue self-gratification. Even this course they do not follow judiciously: when Candide and Cacambo find themselves in the earthly paradise of Eldorado, "the two happy men resolved to be so no longer," driven by fantasies of improving their condition. Yet, unlike Gulliver, they acquire wisdom at last, learning to withstand "three great evils, boredom, vice, and poverty," by working hard at what comes to hand and avoiding futile theorizing about the nature of the universe.

Although Voltaire's picture of the human condition reveals the same indignation that marks Swift's, he allows at least conditional hope for moderate satisfaction in this life. Candide's beloved Cunégonde loses all her beauty, but she becomes an accomplished pastry cook; Candide possesses a garden he can cultivate. Greed, malice, and lust do not comprise the total possibility for humankind. If Voltaire's tone sometimes expresses outrage, at other times it verges on the playful. When, for example, he mocks the improbabilities of romance by his characters' miraculous resuscitations, or parodies the restrictions of classical form by sending Candide and his friends on an epic journey, one can feel his amused awareness of our human need to make order and our human desire to comfort ourselves by fictions. But as he insists that much of the order we claim to perceive itself comprises a comforting fiction, as he uses satire's fierce energies to challenge our complacencies, he reveals once more the underside of the Enlightenment ideal of reason. That we human beings have reason, Voltaire tells us, is no ground on which to flatter ourselves; rightly used, it exposes our insufficiencies.

Biographies and critical studies of Voltaire include R. Aldington, *Voltaire* (1934); G. Brandes, *The Life of Voltaire* (undated); I. O. Wade, *Voltaire and "Candide"* (1959); and T. Besterman, *Voltaire* (1969).

Candide, or Optimism[1]

translated from the German of Doctor Ralph with the additions which were found in the Doctor's pocket when he died at Minden in the Year of Our Lord 1759

CHAPTER 1
How Candide Was Brought up in a Fine Castle and How He Was Driven Therefrom

There lived in Westphalia,[2] in the castle of the Baron of Thunder-Ten-Tronckh, a young man on whom nature had bestowed the perfection of gentle manners. His features admirably expressed his soul; he combined an honest mind with great simplicity of heart; and I think it was for this reason that they called him Candide. The old servants of the house suspected that he was the son of the Baron's sister by a respectable, honest gentleman of the neighborhood, whom she had refused to marry because he could prove only seventy-one quarterings,[3] the rest of his family tree having been lost in the passage of time.

The Baron was one of the most mighty lords of Westphalia, for his castle had a door and windows. His great hall was even hung with a tapestry. The dogs of his courtyard made up a hunting pack on occasion, with the stableboys as huntsmen; the village priest was his grand almoner. They all called him "My Lord," and laughed at his stories.

The Baroness, who weighed in the neighborhood of three hundred and fifty pounds, was greatly respected for that reason, and did the honors of the house with a dignity which rendered her even more imposing. Her daughter Cunégonde,[4] aged seventeen, was a ruddy-cheeked girl, fresh, plump, and desirable. The Baron's son seemed in every way worthy of his father. The tutor Pangloss was the oracle of the household, and little Candide listened to his lectures with all the good faith of his age and character.

Pangloss gave instruction in metaphysico-theologico-cosmo-loonig-ology.[5] He proved admirably that there cannot possibly be an effect without a cause and that in this best of all possible worlds the

1. Translated with notes by Robert M. Adams. 2. A province of western Germany, near Holland and the lower Rhineland. Flat, boggy, and drab, it is noted chiefly for its excellent ham. In a letter to his niece, written during his German expedition of 1750, Voltaire described the "vast, sad, sterile, detestable countryside of Westphalia." 3. Genealogical divisions of one's family-tree. Seventy-one of them is a grotesque number to have, representing something over 2,000 years of uninterrupted nobility. 4. Cunégonde gets her odd name from Kunigunda, wife to Emperor Henry II, who walked barefoot and blindfolded on red-hot irons to prove her chastity; Pangloss gets his name from Greek words meaning all-tongue. 5. The "looney" I have buried in this burlesque word corresponds to a buried *nigaud*—"booby" in the French. Christian Wolff, disciple of Leibniz, invented and popularized the word "cosmology." The catch phrases in the following sentence, echoed by popularizers of Leibniz, make reference to the determinism of his system, its linking of cause with effect, and its optimism.

Baron's castle was the best of all castles and his wife the best of all possible Baronesses.

—It is clear, said he, that things cannot be otherwise than they are, for since everything is made to serve an end, everything necessarily serves the best end. Observe: noses were made to support spectacles, hence we have spectacles. Legs, as anyone can plainly see, were made to be breeched, and so we have breeches. Stones were made to be shaped and to build castles with; thus My Lord has a fine castle, for the greatest Baron in the province should have the finest house; and since pigs were made to be eaten, we eat pork all year round.[6] Consequently, those who say everything is well are uttering mere stupidities; they should say everything is for the best.

Candide listened attentively and believed implicitly; for he found Miss Cunégonde exceedingly pretty, though he never had the courage to tell her so. He decided that after the happiness of being born Baron of Thunder-Ten-Tronckh, the second order of happiness was to be Miss Cunégonde; the third was seeing her every day, and the fourth was listening to Master Pangloss, the greatest philosopher in the province and consequently in the entire world.

One day, while Cunégonde was walking near the castle in the little woods that they called a park, she saw Dr. Pangloss in the underbrush; he was giving a lesson in experimental physics to her mother's maid, a very attractive and obedient brunette. As Miss Cunégonde had a natural bent for the sciences, she watched breathlessly the repeated experiments which were going on; she saw clearly the doctor's sufficient reason, observed both cause and effect, and returned to the house in a distracted and pensive frame of mind, yearning for knowledge and dreaming that she might be the sufficient reason of young Candide—who might also be hers.

As she was returning to the castle, she met Candide, and blushed; Candide blushed too. She greeted him in a faltering tone of voice; and Candide talked to her without knowing what he was saying. Next day, as everyone was rising from the dinner table, Cunégonde and Candide found themselves behind a screen; Cunégonde dropped her handkerchief, Candide picked it up; she held his hand quite innocently, he kissed her hand quite innocently with remarkable vivacity and emotion; their lips met, their eyes lit up, their knees trembled, their hands wandered. The Baron of Thunder-Ten-Tronckh passed by the screen and, taking note of this cause and this effect, drove Candide out of the castle by kicking him vigorously on the backside. Cunégonde fainted; as soon as she recovered, the Baroness slapped her face; and everything was confusion in the most beautiful and agreeable of all possible castles.

6. The argument from design supposes that everything in this world exists for a specific reason; Voltaire objects not to the argument as a whole, but to the abuse of it.

CHAPTER 2
What Happened to Candide Among the Bulgars[7]

Candide, ejected from the earthly paradise, wandered for a long time without knowing where he was going, weeping, raising his eyes to heaven, and gazing back frequently on the most beautiful of castles which contained the most beautiful of Baron's daughters. He slept without eating, in a furrow of a plowed field, while the snow drifted over him; next morning, numb with cold, he dragged himself into the neighboring village, which was called Waldberghoff-trarbk-dikdorff; he was penniless, famished, and exhausted. At the door of a tavern he paused forlornly. Two men dressed in blue[8] took note of him:

—Look, chum, said one of them, there's a likely young fellow of just about the right size.

They approached Candide and invited him very politely to dine with them.

—Gentlemen, Candide replied with charming modesty, I'm honored by your invitation, but I really don't have enough money to pay my share.

—My dear sir, said one of the blues, people of your appearance and your merit don't have to pay; aren't you five feet five inches tall?

—Yes, gentlemen, that is indeed my stature, said he, making a bow.

—Then, sir, you must be seated at once; not only will we pay your bill this time, we will never allow a man like you to be short of money; for men were made only to render one another mutual aid.

—You are quite right, said Candide; it is just as Dr. Pangloss always told me, and I see clearly that everything is for the best.

They beg him to accept a couple of crowns, he takes them, and offers an I.O.U.; they won't hear of it, and all sit down at table together.

—Don't you love dearly . . . ?

—I do indeed, says he, I dearly love Miss Cunégonde.

—No, no, says one of the gentlemen, we are asking if you don't love dearly the King of the Bulgars.

—Not in the least, says he, I never laid eyes on him.

—What's that you say? He's the most charming of kings, and we must drink his health.

—Oh, gladly, gentlemen; and he drinks.

—That will do, they tell him; you are now the bulwark, the sup-

7. Voltaire chose this name to represent the Prussian troops of Frederick the Great because he wanted to make an insinuation of pederasty against both the soldiers and their master. *Cf.* French *bougre*, English "bugger." 8. The recruiting officers of Frederick the Great, much feared in eighteenth-century Europe, wore blue uniforms. Frederick had a passion for sorting out his soldiers by size; several of his regiments would accept only six-footers.

port, the defender, the hero of the Bulgars; your fortune is made and your future assured.

Promptly they slip irons on his legs and lead him to the regiment. There they cause him to right face, left face, present arms, order arms, aim, fire, doubletime, and they give him thirty strokes of the rod. Next day he does the drill a little less awkwardly and gets only twenty strokes; the third day, they give him only ten, and he is regarded by his comrades as a prodigy.

Candide, quite thunderstruck, did not yet understand very clearly how he was a hero. One fine spring morning he took it into his head to go for a walk, stepping straight out as if it were a privilege of the human race, as of animals in general, to use his legs as he chose.[9] He had scarcely covered two leagues when four other heroes, each six feet tall, overtook him, bound him, and threw him into a dungeon. At the court-martial they asked which he preferred, to be flogged thirty-six times by the entire regiment or to receive summarily a dozen bullets in the brain. In vain did he argue that the human will is free and insist that he preferred neither alternative; he had to choose; by virtue of the divine gift called "liberty" he decided to run the gauntlet thirty-six times, and actually endured two floggings. The regiment was composed of two thousand men. That made four thousand strokes, which laid open every muscle and nerve from his nape to his butt. As they were preparing for the third beating, Candide, who could endure no more, begged as a special favor that they would have the goodness to smash his head. His plea was granted; they bandaged his eyes and made him kneel down. The King of the Bulgars, passing by at this moment, was told of the culprit's crime; and as this king had a rare genius, he understood, from everything they told him of Candide, that this was a young metaphysician, extremely ignorant of the ways of the world, so he granted his royal pardon, with a generosity which will be praised in every newspaper in every age. A worthy surgeon cured Candide in three weeks with the ointments described by Dioscorides.[1] He already had a bit of skin back and was able to walk when the King of the Bulgars went to war with the King of the Abares.[2]

9. This episode was suggested by the experience of a Frenchman named Courtilz, who had deserted from the Prussian army and been bastinadoed for it. Voltaire intervened with Frederick to gain his release. But it also reflects the story that Wolff, Leibniz's disciple, got into trouble with Frederick's father when someone reported that his doctrine denying free will had encouraged several soldiers to desert. "The argument of the grenadier," who was said to have pleaded pre-established harmony to justify his desertion, so infuriated the king that he had Wolff expelled from the country. 1. Dioscorides' treatise on *materia medica*, dating from the first century A.D., was not the most up to date. 2. A tribe of semicivilized Scythians, who might be supposed at war with the Bulgars; allegorically, the Abares are the French, who opposed the Prussians in the Seven Years' War (1756–1763). According to the title page of 1761, "Doctor Ralph," the dummy author of *Candide*, himself perished at the battle of Minden (Westphalia) in 1759.

CHAPTER 3
How Candide Escaped from the Bulgars, and What Became of Him

Nothing could have been so fine, so brisk, so brilliant, so well-drilled as the two armies. The trumpets, the fifes, the oboes, the drums, and the cannon produced such a harmony as was never heard in hell. First the cannons battered down about six thousand men on each side; then volleys of musket fire removed from the best of worlds about nine or ten thousand rascals who were cluttering up its surface. The bayonet was a sufficient reason for the demise of several thousand others. Total casualties might well amount to thirty thousand men or so. Candide, who was trembling like a philosopher, hid himself as best he could while this heroic butchery was going on.

Finally, while the two kings in their respective camps celebrated the victory by having *Te Deums* sung, Candide undertook to do his reasoning of cause and effect somewhere else. Passing by mounds of the dead and dying, he came to a nearby village which had been burnt to the ground. It was an Abare village, which the Bulgars had burned, in strict accordance with the laws of war. Here old men, stunned from beatings, watched the last agonies of their butchered wives, who still clutched their infants to their bleeding breasts; there, disemboweled girls, who had first satisfied the natural needs of various heroes, breathed their last; others, half-scorched in the flames, begged for their death stroke. Scattered brains and severed limbs littered the ground.

Candide fled as fast as he could to another village; this one belonged to the Bulgars, and the heroes of the Abare cause had given it the same treatment. Climbing over ruins and stumbling over corpses, Candide finally made his way out of the war area, carrying a little food in his knapsack and never ceasing to dream of Miss Cunégonde. His supplies gave out when he reached Holland; but having heard that everyone in that country was rich and a Christian, he felt confident of being treated as well as he had been in the castle of the Baron before he was kicked out for the love of Miss Cunégonde.

He asked alms of several grave personages, who all told him that if he continued to beg, he would be shut up in a house of correction and set to hard labor.

Finally he approached a man who had just been talking to a large crowd for an hour on end; the topic was charity. Looking doubtfully at him, the orator demanded:

—What are you doing here? Are you here to serve the good cause?

—There is no effect without a cause, said Candide modestly; all events are linked by the chain of necessity and arranged for the best.

I had to be driven away from Miss Cunégonde, I had to run the gauntlet, I have to beg my bread until I can earn it; none of this could have happened otherwise.

—Look here, friend, said the orator, do you think the Pope is Antichrist?[3]

—I haven't considered the matter, said Candide; but whether he is or not, I'm in need of bread.

—You don't deserve any, said the other; away with you, you rascal, you rogue, never come near me as long as you live.

Meanwhile, the orator's wife had put her head out of the window, and, seeing a man who was not sure the Pope was Antichrist, emptied over his head a pot full of———Scandalous! The excesses into which women are led by religious zeal!

A man who had never been baptized, a good Anabaptist[4] named Jacques, saw this cruel and heartless treatment being inflicted on one of his fellow creatures, a featherless biped possessing a soul;[5] he took Candide home with him, washed him off, gave him bread and beer, presented him with two florins, and even undertook to give him a job in his Persian-rug factory—for these items are widely manufactured in Holland. Candide, in an ecstasy of gratitude, cried out:

—Master Pangloss was right indeed when he told me everything is for the best in this world; for I am touched by your kindness far more than by the harshness of that black-coated gentleman and his wife.

Next day, while taking a stroll about town, he met a beggar who was covered with pustules, his eyes were sunken, the end of his nose rotted off, his mouth twisted, his teeth black, he had a croaking voice and a hacking cough, and spat a tooth every time he tried to speak.

CHAPTER 4
How Candide Met His Old Philosophy Tutor, Doctor Pangloss, and What Came of It

Candide, more touched by compassion even than by horror, gave this ghastly beggar the two florins that he himself had received from his honest Anabaptist friend Jacques. The phantom stared at him, burst into tears, and fell on his neck. Candide drew back in terror.

—Alas, said one wretch to the other, don't you recognize your dear Pangloss any more?

3. Voltaire is satirizing extreme Protestant sects that have sometimes seemed to make hatred of Rome the sum and substance of their creed. 4. Holland, as the home of religious liberty, had offered asylum to the Anabaptists, whose radical views on property and religious discipline had made them unpopular during the sixteenth century. Granted tolerance, they settled down into respectable burghers. Since this behavior confirmed some of Voltaire's major theses, he had a high opinion of contemporary Anabaptists. 5. Plato's famous minimal definition of a man, which he corrected by the addition of a soul to distinguish man from a plucked chicken.

—What are you saying? You, my dear master! you, in this horrible condition? What misfortune has befallen you? Why are you no longer in the most beautiful of castles? What has happened to Miss Cunégonde, that pearl among young ladies, that masterpiece of Nature?

—I am perishing, said Pangloss.

Candide promptly led him into the Anabaptist's stable, where he gave him a crust of bread, and when he had recovered:—Well, said he, Cunégonde?

—Dead, said the other.

Candide fainted. His friend brought him around with a bit of sour vinegar which happened to be in the stable. Candide opened his eyes.

—Cunégonde, dead! Ah, best of worlds, what's become of you now? But how did she die? It wasn't of grief at seeing me kicked out of her noble father's elegant castle?

—Not at all, said Pangloss; she was disemboweled by the Bulgar soldiers, after having been raped to the absolute limit of human endurance; they smashed the Baron's head when he tried to defend her, cut the Baroness to bits, and treated my poor pupil exactly like his sister. As for the castle, not one stone was left on another, not a shed, not a sheep, not a duck, not a tree; but we had the satisfaction of revenge, for the Abares did exactly the same thing to a nearby barony belonging to a Bulgar nobleman.

At this tale Candide fainted again; but having returned to his senses and said everything appropriate to the occasion, he asked about the cause and effect, the sufficient reason, which had reduced Pangloss to his present pitiful state.

—Alas, said he, it was love; love, the consolation of the human race, the preservative of the universe, the soul of all sensitive beings, love, gentle love.

—Unhappy man, said Candide, I too have had some experience of this love, the sovereign of hearts, the soul of our souls; and it never got me anything but a single kiss and twenty kicks in the rear. How could this lovely cause produce in you such a disgusting effect?

Pangloss replied as follows:—My dear Candide! you knew Paquette, that pretty maidservant to our august Baroness. In her arms I tasted the delights of paradise, which directly caused these torments of hell, from which I am now suffering. She was infected with the disease, and has perhaps died of it. Paquette received this present from an erudite Franciscan, who took the pains to trace it back to its source; for he had it from an elderly countess, who picked it up from a captain of cavalry, who acquired it from a marquise, who caught it from a page, who had received it from a Jesuit, who during his nov-

itiate got it directly from one of the companions of Christopher Columbus. As for me, I shall not give it to anyone, for I am a dying man.

—Oh, Pangloss, cried Candide, that's a very strange genealogy. Isn't the devil at the root of the whole thing?

—Not at all, replied that great man; it's an indispensable part of the best of worlds, a necessary ingredient; if Columbus had not caught, on an American island, this sickness which attacks the source of generation and sometimes prevents generation entirely—which thus strikes at and defeats the greatest end of Nature herself—we should have neither chocolate nor cochineal. It must also be noted that until the present time this malady, like religious controversy, has been wholly confined to the continent of Europe. Turks, Indians, Persians, Chinese, Siamese, and Japanese know nothing of it as yet; but there is a sufficient reason for which they in turn will make its acquaintance in a couple of centuries. Meanwhile, it has made splendid progress among us, especially among those big armies of honest, well-trained mercenaries who decide the destinies of nations. You can be sure that when thirty thousand men fight a pitched battle against the same number of the enemy, there will be about twenty thousand with the pox on either side.

—Remarkable indeed, said Candide, but we must see about curing you.

—And how can I do that, said Pangloss, seeing I don't have a cent to my name? There's not a doctor in the whole world who will let your blood or give you an enema without demanding a fee. If you can't pay yourself, you must find someone to pay for you.

These last words decided Candide; he hastened to implore the help of his charitable Anabaptist, Jacques, and painted such a moving picture of his friend's wretched state that the good man did not hesitate to take in Pangloss and have him cured at his own expense. In the course of the cure, Pangloss lost only an eye and an ear. Since he wrote a fine hand and knew arithmetic, the Anabaptist made him his bookkeeper. At the end of two months, being obliged to go to Lisbon on business, he took his two philosophers on the boat with him. Pangloss still maintained that everything was for the best, but Jaçques didn't agree with him.

—It must be, said he, that men have corrupted Nature, for they are not born wolves, yet that is what they become. God gave them neither twenty-four-pound cannon nor bayonets, yet they have manufactured both in order to destroy themselves. Bankruptcies have the same effect, and so does the justice which seizes the goods of bankrupts in order to prevent the creditors from getting them.[6]

6. Voltaire had suffered losses from various bankruptcy proceedings.

—It was all indispensable, replied the one-eyed doctor, since private misfortunes make for public welfare, and therefore the more private misfortunes there are, the better everything is.

While he was reasoning, the air grew dark, the winds blew from all directions, and the vessel was attacked by a horrible tempest within sight of Lisbon harbor.

CHAPTER 5
Tempest, Shipwreck, Earthquake, and What Happened to Doctor Pangloss, Candide, and the Anabaptist, Jacques

Half of the passengers, weakened by the frightful anguish of seasickness and the distress of tossing about on stormy waters, were incapable of noticing their danger. The other half shrieked aloud and fell to their prayers, the sails were ripped to shreds, the masts snapped, the vessel opened at the seams. Everyone worked who could stir, nobody listened for orders or issued them. The Anabaptist was lending a hand in the after part of the ship when a frantic sailor struck him and knocked him to the deck; but just at that moment, the sailor lurched so violently that he fell head first over the side, where he hung, clutching a fragment of the broken mast. The good Jacques ran to his aid, and helped him to climb back on board, but in the process was himself thrown into the sea under the very eyes of the sailor, who allowed him to drown without even glancing at him. Candide rushed to the rail, and saw his benefactor rise for a moment to the surface, then sink forever. He wanted to dive to his rescue; but the philosopher Pangloss prevented him by proving that the bay of Lisbon had been formed expressly for this Anabaptist to drown in. While he was proving the point *a priori*, the vessel opened up and everyone perished except for Pangloss, Candide, and the brutal sailor who had caused the virtuous Anabaptist to drown; this rascal swam easily to shore, while Pangloss and Candide drifted there on a plank.

When they had recovered a bit of energy, they set out for Lisbon; they still had a little money with which they hoped to stave off hunger after escaping the storm.

Scarcely had they set foot in the town, still bewailing the loss of their benefactor, when they felt the earth quake underfoot; the sea was lashed to a froth, burst into the port, and smashed all the vessels lying at anchor there. Whirlwinds of fire and ash swirled through the streets and public squares; houses crumbled, roofs came crashing down on foundations, foundations split; thirty thousand inhabitants of every age and either sex were crushed in the ruins.[7] The sailor

7. The great Lisbon earthquake and fire occurred on November 1, 1755; between thirty and forty thousand deaths resulted.

whistled through his teeth, and said with an oath;—There'll be something to pick up here.

—What can be the sufficient reason of this phenomenon? asked Pangloss.

—The Last Judgment is here, cried Candide.

But the sailor ran directly into the middle of the ruins, heedless of danger in his eagerness for gain; he found some money, laid violent hands on it, got drunk, and, having slept off his wine, bought the favors of the first streetwalker he could find amid the ruins of smashed houses, amid corpses and suffering victims on every hand. Pangloss however tugged at his sleeve.

—My friend, said he, this is not good form at all; your behavior falls short of that required by the universal reason; it's untimely, to say the least.

—Bloody hell, said the other, I'm a sailor, born in Batavia; I've been four times to Japan and stamped four times on the crucifix;[8] get out of here with your universal reason.

Some falling stonework had struck Candide; he lay prostrate in the street, covered with rubble, and calling to Pangloss:—For pity's sake bring me a little wine and oil; I'm dying.

—This earthquake is nothing novel, Pangloss replied; the city of Lima, in South America, underwent much the same sort of tremor, last year; same causes, same effects; there is surely a vein of sulphur under the earth's surface reaching from Lima to Lisbon.

—Nothing is more probable, said Candide; but, for God's sake, a little oil and wine.

—What do you mean, probable? replied the philosopher; I regard the case as proved.

Candide fainted and Pangloss brought him some water from a nearby fountain.

Next day, as they wandered amid the ruins, they found a little food which restored some of their strength. Then they fell to work like the others, bringing relief to those of the inhabitants who had escaped death. Some of the citizens whom they rescued gave them a dinner as good as was possible under the circumstances; it is true that the meal was a melancholy one, and the guests watered their bread with tears; but Pangloss consoled them by proving that things could not possibly be otherwise.

—For, said he, all this is for the best, since if there is a volcano at Lisbon, it cannot be somewhere else, since it is unthinkable that things should not be where they are, since everything is well.

8. The Japanese, originally receptive to foreign visitors, grew fearful that priests and proselytizers were merely advance agents of empire, and expelled both the Portuguese and Spanish early in the seventeenth century. Only the Dutch were allowed to retain a small foothold, under humiliating conditions, of which the notion of stamping on the crucifix is symbolic. It was never what Voltaire suggests here, an actual requirement for entering the country.

A little man in black, an officer of the Inquisition,[9] who was sitting beside him, politely took up the question, and said:—It would seem that the gentleman does not believe in original sin, since if everything is for the best, man has not fallen and is not liable to eternal punishment.

—I most humbly beg pardon of your excellency, Pangloss answered, even more politely, but the fall of man and the curse of original sin entered necessarily into the best of all possible worlds.

—Then you do not believe in free will? said the officer.

—Your excellency must excuse me, said Pangloss; free will agrees very well with absolute necessity, for it was necessary that we should be free, since a will which is determined . . .

Pangloss was in the middle of his sentence, when the officer nodded significantly to the attendant who was pouring him a glass of port, or Oporto, wine.

CHAPTER 6
How They Made a Fine Auto-da-Fé to Prevent Earthquakes, and How Candide Was Whipped

After the earthquake had wiped out three quarters of Lisbon, the learned men of the land could find no more effective way of averting total destruction than to give the people a fine auto-da-fé;[1] the University of Coimbra had established that the spectacle of several persons being roasted over a slow fire with full ceremonial rites is an infallible specific against earthquakes.

In consequence, the authorities had rounded up a Biscayan convicted of marrying a woman who had stood godmother to his child, and two Portuguese who while eating a chicken had set aside a bit of bacon used for seasoning.[2] After dinner, men came with ropes to tie up Doctor Pangloss and his disciple Candide, one for talking and the other for listening with an air of approval; both were taken separately to a set of remarkably cool apartments, where the glare of the sun is never bothersome; eight days later they were both dressed in *sanbenitos* and crowned with paper mitres;[3] Candide's mitre and *sanbenito* were decorated with inverted flames and with devils who had neither tails nor claws; but Pangloss's devils had both tails and claws, and his flames stood upright. Wearing these costumes, they marched in a procession, and listened to a very touching sermon, followed by a beautiful concert of plainsong. Candide was flogged in cadence to

9. Specifically, a *familier* or *poursuivant*, an undercover agent with powers of arrest. 1. Literally, "act of faith," a public ceremony of repentance and humiliation. Such an auto-da-fé was actually held in Lisbon, June 20, 1756. 2. The Biscayan's fault lay in marrying someone within the forbidden bounds of relationship, an act of spiritual incest. The men who declined pork or bacon were understood to be crypto-Jews. 3. The cone-shaped paper cap (intended to resemble a bishop's mitre) and flowing yellow cape were customary garb for those pleading before the Inquisition.

the music; the Biscayan and the two men who had avoided bacon were burned, and Pangloss was hanged, though hanging is not customary. On the same day there was another earthquake, causing frightful damage.[4]

Candide, stunned, stupefied, despairing, bleeding, trembling, said to himself:—If this is the best of all possible worlds, what are the others like? The flogging is not so bad, I was flogged by the Bulgars. But oh my dear Pangloss, greatest of philosophers, was it necessary for me to watch you being hanged, for no reason that I can see? Oh my dear Anabaptist, best of men, was it necessary that you should be drowned in the port? Oh Miss Cunégonde, pearl of young ladies, was it necessary that you should have your belly slit open?

He was being led away, barely able to stand, lectured, lashed, absolved, and blessed, when an old woman approached and said,—My son, be of good cheer and follow me.

CHAPTER 7
How an Old Woman Took Care of Candide, and How He Regained What He Loved

Candide was of very bad cheer, but he followed the old woman to a shanty; she gave him a jar of ointment to rub himself, left him food and drink; she showed him a tidy little bed; next to it was a suit of clothing.

—Eat, drink, sleep, she said; and may Our Lady of Atocha, Our Lord St. Anthony of Padua, and Our Lord St. James of Compostela watch over you. I will be back tomorrow.

Candide, still completely astonished by everything he had seen and suffered, and even more by the old woman's kindness, offered to kiss her hand.

—It's not *my* hand you should be kissing, said she. I'll be back tomorrow; rub yourself with the ointment, eat and sleep.

In spite of his many sufferings, Candide ate and slept. Next day the old woman returned bringing breakfast; she looked at his back and rubbed it herself with another ointment; she came back with lunch; and then she returned in the evening, bringing supper. Next day she repeated the same routine.

—Who are you? Candide asked continually. Who told you to be so kind to me? How can I ever repay you?

The good woman answered not a word; she returned in the evening, and without food.

—Come with me, says she, and don't speak a word.

Taking him by the hand, she walks out into the countryside with him for about a quarter of a mile; they reach an isolated house, quite

4. In fact, the second quake occurred December 21, 1755.

surrounded by gardens and ditches. The old woman knocks at a little gate, it opens. She takes Candide up a secret stairway to a gilded room furnished with a fine brocaded sofa; there she leaves him, closes the door, disappears. Candide stood as if entranced; his life, which had seemed like a nightmare so far, was now starting to look like a delightful dream.

Soon the old woman returned; on her feeble shoulder leaned a trembling woman, of a splendid figure, glittering in diamonds, and veiled.

—Remove the veil, said the old woman to Candide.

The young man stepped timidly forward, and lifted the veil. What an event! What a surprise! Could it be Miss Cunégonde? Yes, it really was! She herself! His knees give way, speech fails him, he falls at her feet, Cunégonde collapses on the sofa. The old woman plies them with brandy, they return to their senses, they exchange words. At first they could utter only broken phrases, questions and answers at cross purposes, sighs, tears, exclamations. The old woman warned them not to make too much noise, and left them alone.

—Then it's really you, said Candide, you're alive, I've found you again in Portugal. Then you never were raped? You never had your belly ripped open, as the philosopher Pangloss assured me?

—Oh yes, said the lovely Cunégonde, but one doesn't always die of these two accidents.

—But your father and mother were murdered then?

—All too true, said Cunégonde, in tears.

—And your brother?

—Killed too.

—And why are you in Portugal? and how did you know I was here? and by what device did you have me brought to this house?

—I shall tell you everything, the lady replied; but first you must tell me what has happened to you since that first innocent kiss we exchanged and the kicking you got because of it.

Candide obeyed her with profound respect; and though he was overcome, though his voice was weak and hesitant, though he still had twinges of pain from his beating, he described as simply as possible everything that had happened to him since the time of their separation. Cunégonde lifted her eyes to heaven; she wept at the death of the good Anabaptist and at that of Pangloss; after which she told the following story to Candide, who listened to every word while he gazed on her with hungry eyes.

CHAPTER 8
Cunégonde's Story

—I was in my bed and fast asleep when heaven chose to send the Bulgars into our castle of Thunder-Ten-Tronckh. They butchered

my father and brother, and hacked my mother to bits. An enormous Bulgar, six feet tall, seeing that I had swooned from horror at the scene, set about raping me; at that I recovered my senses, I screamed and scratched, bit and fought, I tried to tear the eyes out of the big Bulgar—not realizing that everything which had happened in my father's castle was a mere matter of routine. The brute then stabbed me with a knife on my left thigh, where I still bear the scar.

—What a pity! I should very much like to see it, said the simple Candide.

—You shall, said Cunégonde; but shall I go on?

—Please do, said Candide.

So she took up the thread of her tale:—A Bulgar captain appeared, he saw me covered with blood and the soldier too intent to get up. Shocked by the monster's failure to come to attention, the captain killed him on my body. He then had my wound dressed, and took me off to his quarters, as a prisoner of war. I laundered his few shirts and did his cooking; he found me attractive, I confess it, and I won't deny that he was a handsome fellow, with a smooth, white skin; apart from that, however, little wit, little philosophical training; it was evident that he had not been brought up by Doctor Pangloss. After three months, he had lost all his money and grown sick of me; so he sold me to a Jew named Don Issachar, who traded in Holland and Portugal, and who was mad after women. This Jew developed a mighty passion for my person, but he got nowhere with it; I held him off better than I had done with the Bulgar soldier; for though a person of honor may be raped once, her virtue is only strengthened by the experience. In order to keep me hidden, the Jew brought me to his country house, which you see here. Till then I had thought there was nothing on earth so beautiful as the castle of Thunder-Ten-Tronckh; I was now undeceived.

—One day the Grand Inquisitor took notice of me at mass; he ogled me a good deal, and made known that he must talk to me on a matter of secret business. I was taken to his palace; I told him of my rank; he pointed out that it was beneath my dignity to belong to an Israelite. A suggestion was then conveyed to Don Issachar that he should turn me over to My Lord the Inquisitor. Don Issachar, who is court banker and a man of standing, refused out of hand. The inquisitor threatened him with an auto-da-fé. Finally my Jew, fearing for his life, struck a bargain by which the house and I would belong to both of them as joint tenants; the Jew would get Mondays, Wednesdays, and the Sabbath, the inquisitor would get the other days of the week. That has been the arrangement for six months now. There have been quarrels; sometimes it has not been clear whether the night from Saturday to Sunday belonged to the old or the new dispensation. For my part, I have so far been able to hold

both of them off; and that, I think, is why they are both still in love with me.

—Finally, in order to avert further divine punishment by earthquake, and to terrify Don Issachar, My Lord the Inquisitor chose to celebrate an auto-da-fé. He did me the honor of inviting me to attend. I had an excellent seat; the ladies were served with refreshments between the mass and the execution. To tell you the truth, I was horrified to see them burn alive those two Jews and that decent Biscayan who had married his child's godmother; but what was my surprise, my terror, my grief, when I saw, huddled in a *san-benito* and wearing a mitre, someone who looked like Pangloss! I rubbed my eyes, I watched his every move, I saw him hanged; and I fell back in a swoon. Scarcely had I come to my senses again, when I saw you stripped for the lash; that was the peak of my horror, consternation, grief, and despair. I may tell you, by the way, that your skin is even whiter and more delicate than that of my Bulgar captain. Seeing you, then, redoubled the torments which were already overwhelming me. I shrieked aloud, I wanted to call out, 'Let him go, you brutes!' but my voice died within me, and my cries would have been useless. When you had been thoroughly thrashed: 'How can it be,' I asked myself, 'that agreeable Candide and wise Pangloss have come to Lisbon, one to receive a hundred whiplashes, the other to be hanged by order of My Lord the Inquisitor, whose mistress I am? Pangloss must have deceived me cruelly when he told me that all is for the best in this world.'

—Frantic, exhausted, half out of my senses, and ready to die of weakness, I felt as if my mind were choked with the massacre of my father, my mother, my brother, with the arrogance of that ugly Bulgar soldier, with the knife slash he inflicted on me, my slavery, my cookery, my Bulgar captain, my nasty Don Issachar, my abominable inquisitor, with the hanging of Doctor Pangloss, with that great plainsong *miserere* which they sang while they flogged you—and above all, my mind was full of the kiss which I gave you behind the screen, on the day I saw you for the last time. I praised God, who had brought you back to me after so many trials. I asked my old woman to look out for you, and to bring you here as soon as she could. She did just as I asked; I have had the indescribable joy of seeing you again, hearing you and talking with you once more. But you must be frightfully hungry; I am, myself; let us begin with a dinner.

So then and there they sat down to table; and after dinner, they adjourned to that fine brocaded sofa, which has already been mentioned; and there they were when the eminent Don Issachar, one of the masters of the house, appeared. It was the day of the Sabbath; he was arriving to assert his rights and express his tender passion.

CHAPTER 9
What Happened to Cunégonde, Candide, the Grand Inquisitor, and a Jew

This Issachar was the most choleric Hebrew seen in Israel since the Babylonian captivity.

—What's this, says he, you bitch of a Christian, you're not satisfied with the Grand Inquisitor? Do I have to share you with this rascal, too?

So saying, he drew a long dagger, with which he always went armed, and, supposing his opponent defenceless, flung himself on Candide. But our good Westphalian had received from the old woman, along with his suit of clothes, a fine sword. Out it came, and though his manners were of the gentlest, in short order he laid the Israelite stiff and cold on the floor, at the feet of the lovely Cunégonde.

—Holy Virgin! she cried. What will become of me now? A man killed in my house! If the police find out, we're done for.

—If Pangloss had not been hanged, said Candide, he would give us good advice in this hour of need, for he was a great philosopher. Lacking him, let's ask the old woman.

She was a sensible body, and was just starting to give her opinion of the situation, when another little door opened. It was just one o'clock in the morning, Sunday morning. This day belonged to the inquisitor. In he came, and found the whipped Candide with a sword in his hand, a corpse at his feet, Cunégonde in terror, and an old woman giving them both good advice.

Here now is what passed through Candide's mind in this instant of time; this is how he reasoned:—If this holy man calls for help, he will certainly have me burned, and perhaps Cunégonde as well; he has already had me whipped without mercy; he is my rival; I have already killed once; why hesitate?

It was a quick, clear chain of reasoning; without giving the inquisitor time to recover from his surprise, he ran him through, and laid him beside the Jew.

—Here you've done it again, said Cunégonde; there's no hope for us now. We'll be excommunicated, our last hour has come. How is it that you, who were born so gentle, could kill in two minutes a Jew and a prelate?

—My dear girl, replied Candide, when a man is in love, jealous, and just whipped by the Inquisition, he is no longer himself.

The old woman now spoke up and said:—There are three Andalusian steeds in the stable, with their saddles and bridles; our brave Candide must get them ready: my lady has some gold coin and diamonds; let's take to horse at once, though I can only ride on one

buttock; we will go to Cadiz. The weather is as fine as can be, and it is pleasant to travel in the cool of the evening.

Promptly, Candide saddled the three horses. Cunégonde, the old woman, and he covered thirty miles without a stop. While they were fleeing, the Holy Brotherhood[5] came to investigate the house; they buried the inquisitor in a fine church, and threw Issachar on the dunghill.

Candide, Cunégonde, and the old woman were already in the little town of Avacena, in the middle of the Sierra Morena; and there, as they sat in a country inn, they had this conversation.

CHAPTER 10
In Deep Distress, Candide, Cunégonde, and the Old Woman Reach Cadiz; They Put to Sea

—Who then could have robbed me of my gold and diamonds? said Cunégonde, in tears. How shall we live? what shall we do? where shall I find other inquisitors and Jews to give me some more?

—Ah, said the old woman, I strongly suspect that reverend Franciscan friar who shared the inn with us yesterday at Badajoz. God save me from judging him unfairly! But he came into our room twice, and he left long before us.

—Alas, said Candide, the good Pangloss often proved to me that the fruits of the earth are a common heritage of all, to which each man has equal right. On these principles, the Franciscan should at least have left us enough to finish our journey. You have nothing at all, my dear Cunégonde?

—Not a maravedi, said she.

—What to do? said Candide.

—We'll sell one of the horses, said the old woman; I'll ride on the croup behind my mistress, though only on one buttock, and so we will get to Cadiz.

There was in the same inn a Benedictine prior; he bought the horse cheap. Candide, Cunégonde, and the old woman passed through Lucena, Chillas, and Lebrixa, and finally reached Cadiz. There a fleet was being fitted out and an army assembled, to reason with the Jesuit fathers in Paraguay, who were accused of fomenting among their flock a revolt against the kings of Spain and Portugal near the town of St. Sacrement.[6] Candide, having served in the Bulgar army, performed the Bulgar manual of arms before the general of the little

5. A semireligious order with police powers, very active in eighteenth-century Spain. 6. Actually, Colonia del Sacramento. Voltaire took great interest in the Jesuit role in Paraguay, which he has much oversimplified and largely misrepresented here in the interests of his satire. In 1750 they did, however, offer armed resistance to an agreement made between Spain and Portugal. They were subdued and expelled in 1769.

army with such grace, swiftness, dexterity, fire, and agility, that they gave him a company of infantry to command. So here he is, a captain; and off he sails with Miss Cunégonde, the old woman, two valets, and the two Andalusian steeds which had belonged to My Lord the Grand Inquisitor of Portugal.

Throughout the crossing, they spent a great deal of time reasoning about the philosophy of poor Pangloss.

—We are destined, in the end, for another universe, said Candide; no doubt that is the one where everything is well. For in this one, it must be admitted, there is some reason to grieve over our physical and moral state.

—I love you with all my heart, said Cunégonde; but my soul is still harrowed by thoughts of what I have seen and suffered.

—All will be well, replied Candide; the sea of this new world is already better than those of Europe, calmer and with steadier winds. Surely it is the New World which is the best of all possible worlds.

—God grant it, said Cunégonde; but I have been so horribly unhappy in the world so far, that my heart is almost dead to hope.

—You pity yourselves, the old woman told them; but you have had no such misfortunes as mine.

Cunégonde nearly broke out laughing; she found the old woman comic in pretending to be more unhappy than she.

—Ah, you poor old thing, said she, unless you've been raped by two Bulgars, been stabbed twice in the belly, seen two of your castles destroyed, witnessed the murder of two of your mothers and two of your fathers, and watched two of your lovers being whipped in an auto-da-fé, I do not see how you can have had it worse than me. Besides, I was born a baroness, with seventy-two quarterings, and I have worked in a scullery.

—My lady, replied the old woman, you do not know my birth and rank; and if I showed you my rear end, you would not talk as you do, you might even speak with less assurance.

These words inspired great curiosity in Candide and Cunégonde, which the old woman satisfied with this story.

CHAPTER 11
The Old Woman's Story

—My eyes were not always bloodshot and red-rimmed, my nose did not always touch my chin, and I was not born a servant. I am in fact the daughter of Pope Urban the Tenth and the Princess of Palestrina.[7] Till the age of fourteen, I lived in a palace so splendid that

7. Voltaire left behind a comment on this passage, a note first published in 1829: "Note the extreme discretion of the author; hitherto there has never been a pope named Urban X; he avoided attributing a bastard to a known pope. What circumspection! what an exquisite conscience!"

all the castles of all your German barons would not have served it as a stable; a single one of my dresses was worth more than all the assembled magnificence of Westphalia. I grew in beauty, in charm, in talent, surrounded by pleasures, dignities, and glowing visions of the future. Already I was inspiring the young men to love; my breast was formed—and what a breast! white, firm, with the shape of the Venus de Medici; and what eyes! what lashes, what black brows! What fire flashed from my glances and outshone the glitter of the stars, as the local poets used to tell me! The women who helped me dress and undress fell into ecstasies, whether they looked at me from in front or behind; and all the men wanted to be in their place.

—I was engaged to the ruling prince of Massa-Carrara; and what a prince he was! as handsome as I, softness and charm compounded, brilliantly witty, and madly in love with me. I loved him in return as one loves for the first time, with a devotion approaching idolatry. The wedding preparations had been made, with a splendor and magnificence never heard of before; nothing but celebrations, masks, and comic operas, uninterruptedly; and all Italy composed in my honor sonnets of which not one was even passable. I had almost attained the very peak of bliss, when an old marquise who had been the mistress of my prince invited him to her house for a cup of chocolate. He died in less than two hours, amid horrifying convulsions. But that was only a trifle. My mother, in complete despair (though less afflicted than I), wished to escape for a while the oppressive atmosphere of grief. She owned a handsome property near Gaeta.[8] We embarked on a papal galley gilded like the altar of St. Peter's in Rome. Suddenly a pirate ship from Salé swept down and boarded us. Our soldiers defended themselves as papal troops usually do; falling on their knees and throwing down their arms, they begged of the corsair absolution *in articulo mortis*.[9]

—They were promptly stripped as naked as monkeys, and so was my mother, and so were our maids of honor, and so was I too. It's a very remarkable thing, the energy these gentlemen put into stripping people. But what surprised me even more was that they stuck their fingers in a place where we women usually admit only a syringe. This ceremony seemed a bit odd to me, as foreign usages always do when one hasn't traveled. They only wanted to see if we didn't have some diamonds hidden there; and I soon learned that it's a custom of long standing among the genteel folk who swarm the seas. I learned that my lords the very religious knights of Malta never overlook this ceremony when they capture Turks, whether male or female; it's one of those international laws which have never been questioned.

—I won't try to explain how painful it is for a young princess to

8. About halfway between Rome and Naples. 9. Literally, when at the point of death. Absolution from a corsair in the act of murdering one is of very dubious validity.

be carried off into slavery in Morocco with her mother. You can imagine everything we had to suffer on the pirate ship. My mother was still very beautiful; our maids of honor, our mere chambermaids, were more charming than anything one could find in all Africa. As for myself, I was ravishing, I was loveliness and grace supreme, and I was a virgin. I did not remain so for long; the flower which had been kept for the handsome prince of Massa-Carrara was plucked by the corsair captain; he was an abominable negro, who thought he was doing me a great favor. My Lady the Princess of Palestrina and I must have been strong indeed to bear what we did during our journey to Morocco. But on with my story; these are such common matters that they are not worth describing.

—Morocco was knee deep in blood when we arrived. Of the fifty sons of the emperor Muley-Ismael,[1] each had his faction, which produced in effect fifty civil wars, of blacks against blacks, of blacks against browns, halfbreeds against halfbreeds; thoughout the length and breadth of the empire, nothing but one continual carnage.

—Scarcely had we stepped ashore, when some negroes of a faction hostile to my captor arrived to take charge of his plunder. After the diamonds and gold, we women were the most prized possessions. I was now witness of a struggle such as you never see in the temperate climate of Europe. Northern people don't have hot blood; they don't feel the absolute fury for women which is common in Africa. Europeans seem to have milk in their veins; it is vitriol or liquid fire which pulses through these people around Mount Atlas. The fight for possession of us raged with the fury of the lions, tigers, and poisonous vipers of that land. A Moor snatched my mother by the right arm, the first mate held her by the left; a Moorish soldier grabbed one leg, one of our pirates the other. In a moment's time almost all our girls were being dragged four different ways. My captain held me behind him while with his scimitar he killed everyone who braved his fury. At last I saw all our Italian women, including my mother, torn to pieces, cut to bits, murdered by the monsters who were fighting over them. My captive companions, their captors, soldiers, sailors, blacks, browns, whites, mulattoes, and at last my captain, all were killed, and I remained half dead on a mountain of corpses. Similar scenes were occurring, as is well known, for more than three hundred leagues around, without anyone skimping on the five prayers a day decreed by Mohammed.

—With great pain, I untangled myself from this vast heap of bleeding bodies, and dragged myself under a great orange tree by a neighboring brook, where I collapsed, from terror, exhaustion, horror, despair, and hunger. Shortly, my weary mind surrendered to a

1. Having reigned for more than fifty years, a potent and ruthless sultan of Morocco, he died in 1727 and left his kingdom in much the condition described.

sleep which was more of a swoon than a rest. I was in this state of weakness and languor, between life and death, when I felt myself touched by something which moved over my body. Opening my eyes, I saw a white man, rather attractive, who was groaning and saying under his breath: *'O che sciagura d'essere senza coglioni!'*[2]

CHAPTER 12
The Old Woman's Story Continued

—Amazed and delighted to hear my native tongue, and no less surprised by what this man was saying, I told him that there were worse evils than those he was complaining of. In a few words, I described to him the horrors I had undergone, and then fainted again. He carried me to a nearby house, put me to bed, gave me something to eat, served me, flattered me, comforted me, told me he had never seen anyone so lovely, and added that he had never before regretted so much the loss of what nobody could give him back.

'I was born at Naples, he told me, where they caponize two or three thousand children every year; some die of it, others acquire a voice more beautiful than any woman's, still others go on to become governors of kingdoms.[3] The operation was a great success with me, and I became court musician to the Princess of Palestrina . . .'

'Of my mother,' I exclaimed.

'Of your mother,' cried he, bursting into tears; 'then you must be the princess whom I raised till she was six, and who already gave promise of becoming as beautiful as you are now!'

'I am that very princess; my mother lies dead, not a hundred yards from here, buried under a pile of corpses.'

—I told him my adventures, he told me his: that he had been sent by a Christian power to the King of Morocco, to conclude a treaty granting him gunpowder, cannon, and ships with which to liquidate the traders of the other Christian powers.

'My mission is concluded,' said this honest eunuch; 'I shall take ship at Ceuta and bring you back to Italy. *Ma che sciagura d'essere senza coglioni!*'

—I thanked him with tears of gratitude, and instead of returning me to Italy, he took me to Algiers and sold me to the dey of that country. Hardly had the sale taken place, when that plague which has made the rounds of Africa, Asia, and Europe broke out in full fury at Algiers. You have seen earthquakes; but tell me, young lady, have you ever had the plague?

—Never, replied the baroness.

2. "Oh what a misfortune to have no testicles!" 3. The castrato Farinelli (1705–1782), originally a singer, came to exercise considerable political influence on the Kings of Spain, Philip V and Ferdinand VI.

—If you had had it, said the old woman, you would agree that it is far worse than an earthquake. It is very frequent in Africa, and I had it. Imagine, if you will, the situation of a pope's daughter, fifteen years old, who in three months' time had experienced poverty, slavery, had been raped almost every day, had seen her mother quartered, had suffered from famine and war, and who now was dying of pestilence in Algiers. As a matter of fact, I did not die; but the eunuch and the dey and nearly the entire seraglio of Algiers perished.

—When the first horrors of this ghastly plague had passed, the slaves of the dey were sold. A merchant bought me and took me to Tunis; there he sold me to another merchant, who resold me at Tripoli; from Tripoli I was sold to Alexandria, from Alexandria resold to Smyrna, from Smyrna to Constantinople. I ended by belonging to an aga of janizaries, who was shortly ordered to defend Azov against the besieging Russians.[4]

—The aga, who was a gallant soldier, took his whole seraglio with him, and established us in a little fort amid the Maeotian marshes,[5] guarded by two black eunuchs and twenty soldiers. Our side killed a prodigious number of Russians, but they paid us back nicely. Azov was put to fire and sword without respect for age or sex; only our little fort continued to resist, and the enemy determined to starve us out. The twenty janizaries had sworn never to surrender. Reduced to the last extremities of hunger, they were forced to eat our two eunuchs, lest they violate their oaths. After several more days, they decided to eat the women too.

—We had an imam,[6] very pious and sympathetic, who delivered an excellent sermon, persuading them not to kill us altogether.

'Just cut off a single rumpsteak from each of these ladies,' he said, 'and you'll have a fine meal. Then if you should need another, you can come back in a few days and have as much again; heaven will bless your charitable action, and you will be saved.'

—His eloquence was splendid, and he persuaded them. We underwent this horrible operation. The imam treated us all with the ointment that they use on newly circumcised children. We were at the point of death.

—Scarcely had the janizaries finished the meal for which we furnished the materials, when the Russians appeared in flat-bottomed boats; not a janizary escaped. The Russians paid no attention to the state we were in; but there are French physicians everywhere, and one of them, who knew his trade, took care of us. He cured us, and I shall remember all my life that when my wounds were healed, he made me a proposition. For the rest, he counselled us simply to have

4. Azov, near the mouth of the Don, was besieged by the Russians under Peter the Great in 1695–1696. *Janizaries:* An élite corps of the Ottoman armies. 5. The Roman name of the so-called Sea of Azov, a shallow swampy lake near the town. 6. In effect, a chaplain.

patience, assuring us that the same thing had happened in several other sieges, and that it was according to the laws of war.

—As soon as my companions could walk, we were herded off to Moscow. In the division of booty, I fell to a boyar who made me work in his garden, and gave me twenty whiplashes a day; but when he was broken on the wheel after about two years, with thirty other boyars, over some little court intrigue,[7] I seized the occasion; I ran away; I crossed all Russia; I was for a long time a chambermaid in Riga, then at Rostock, Vismara, Leipzig, Cassel, Utrecht, Leyden, The Hague, Rotterdam; I grew old in misery and shame, having only half a backside and remembering always that I was the daughter of a Pope; a hundred times I wanted to kill myself, but always I loved life more. This ridiculous weakness is perhaps one of our worst instincts; is anything more stupid than choosing to carry a burden that really one wants to cast on the ground? to hold existence in horror, and yet to cling to it? to fondle the serpent which devours us till it has eaten out our heart?

—In the countries through which I have been forced to wander, in the taverns where I have had to work, I have seen a vast number of people who hated their existence; but I never saw more than a dozen who deliberately put an end to their own misery: three negroes, four Englishmen, four Genevans, and a German professor named Robeck.[8] My last post was as servant to the Jew Don Issachar; he attached me to your service, my lovely one; and I attached myself to your destiny, till I have become more concerned with your fate than with my own. I would not even have mentioned my own misfortunes, if you had not irked me a bit, and if it weren't the custom, on shipboard, to pass the time with stories. In a word, my lady, I have had some experience of the world, I know it; why not try this diversion? Ask every passenger on this ship to tell you his story, and if you find a single one who has not often cursed the day of his birth, who has not often told himself that he is the most miserable of men, then you may throw me overboard head first.

CHAPTER 13
How Candide Was Forced to Leave the Lovely Cunégonde and the Old Woman

Having heard out the old woman's story, the lovely Cunégonde paid her the respects which were appropriate to a person of her rank and merit. She took up the wager as well, and got all the passengers,

7. Voltaire had in mind an ineffectual conspiracy against Peter the Great known as the "revolt of the streltsy" or musketeers, which took place in 1698. Though easily put down, it provoked from the emperor a massive and atrocious program of reprisals. 8. Johann Robeck (1672–1739) published a treatise advocating suicide and showed his conviction by drowning himself at the age of 67.

one after another, to tell her their adventures. She and Candide had to agree that the old woman had been right.

—It's certainly too bad, said Candide, that the wise Pangloss was hanged, contrary to the custom of autos-da-fé; he would have admirable things to say of the physical evil and moral evil which cover land and sea, and I might feel within me the impulse to dare to raise several polite objections.

As the passengers recited their stories, the boat made steady progress, and presently landed at Buenos Aires. Cunégonde, Captain Candide, and the old woman went to call on the governor, Don Fernando d'Ibaraa y Figueroa y Mascarenes y Lampourdos y Souza. This nobleman had the pride appropriate to a man with so many names. He addressed everyone with the most aristocratic disdain, pointing his nose so loftily, raising his voice so mercilessly, lording it so splendidly, and assuming so arrogant a pose, that everyone who met him wanted to kick him. He loved women to the point of fury; and Cunégonde seemed to him the most beautiful creature he had ever seen. The first thing he did was to ask directly if she were the captain's wife. His manner of asking this question disturbed Candide; he did not dare say she was his wife, because in fact she was not; he did not dare say she was his sister, because she wasn't that either; and though this polite lie was once common enough among the ancients,[9] and sometimes serves moderns very well, he was too pure of heart to tell a lie.

—Miss Cunégonde, said he, is betrothed to me, and we humbly beg your excellency to perform the ceremony for us.

Don Fernando d'Ibaraa y Figueroa y Mascarenes y Lampourdos y Souza twirled his moustache, smiled sardonically, and ordered Captain Candide to go drill his company. Candide obeyed. Left alone with My Lady Cunégonde, the governor declared his passion, and protested that he would marry her tomorrow, in church or in any other manner, as it pleased her charming self. Cunégonde asked for a quarter-hour to collect herself, consult the old woman, and make up her mind.

The old woman said to Cunégonde:—My lady, you have seventy-two quarterings and not one penny; if you wish, you may be the wife of the greatest lord in South America, who has a really handsome moustache; are you going to insist on your absolute fidelity? You have already been raped by the Bulgars; a Jew and an inquisitor have enjoyed your favors; miseries entitle one to privileges. I assure you that in your position I would make no scruple of marrying My Lord the Governor, and making the fortune of Captain Candide.

While the old woman was talking with all the prudence of age and

9. Voltaire has in mind Abraham's adventures with Sarah (Genesis 12) and Isaac's with Rebecca (Genesis 26).

experience, there came into the harbor a small ship bearing an alcalde and some alguazils.[1] This is what had happened.

As the old woman had very shrewdly guessed, it was a long-sleeved Franciscan who stole Cunégonde's gold and jewels in the town of Badajoz, when she and Candide were in flight. The monk tried to sell some of the gems to a jeweler, who recognized them as belonging to the Grand Inquisitor. Before he was hanged, the Franciscan confessed that he had stolen them, indicating who his victims were and where they were going. The flight of Cunégonde and Candide was already known. They were traced to Cadiz, and a vessel was hastily dispatched in pursuit of them. This vessel was now in the port of Buenos Aires. The rumor spread that an alcalde was aboard, in pursuit of the murderers of My Lord the Grand Inquisitor. The shrewd old woman saw at once what was to be done.

—You cannot escape, she told Cunégonde, and you have nothing to fear. You are not the one who killed my lord, and, besides, the governor, who is in love with you, won't let you be mistreated. Sit tight.

And then she ran straight to Candide:—Get out of town, she said, or you'll be burned within the hour.

There was not a moment to lose; but how to leave Cunégonde, and where to go?

CHAPTER 14
How Candide and Cacambo Were Received by the Jesuits of Paraguay

Candide had brought from Cadiz a valet of the type one often finds in the provinces of Spain and in the colonies. He was one quarter Spanish, son of a halfbreed in the Tucuman;[2] he had been choirboy, sacristan, sailor, monk, merchant, soldier, and lackey. His name was Cacambo, and he was very fond of his master because his master was a very good man. In hot haste he saddled the two Andalusian steeds.

—Hurry, master, do as the old woman says; let's get going and leave this town without a backward look.

Candide wept:—O my beloved Cunégonde! must I leave you now, just when the governor is about to marry us! Cunégonde, brought from so far, what will ever become of you?

—She'll become what she can, said Cacambo; women can always find something to do with themselves; God sees to it; let's get going.

—Where are you taking me? where are we going? what will we do without Cunégonde? said Candide.

—By Saint James of Compostela, said Cacambo, you were going

1. Police officers. 2. A province of Argentina, to the northwest of Buenos Aires.

to make war against the Jesuits, now we'll go make war for them. I know the roads pretty well, I'll bring you to their country, they will be delighted to have a captain who knows the Bulgar drill; you'll make a prodigious fortune. If you don't get your rights in one world, you will find them in another. And isn't it pleasant to see new things and do new things?

—Then you've already been in Paraguay? said Candide.

—Indeed I have, replied Cacambo; I was cook in the College of the Assumption, and I know the government of Los Padres[3] as I know the streets of Cadiz. It's an admirable thing, this government. The kingdom is more than three hundred leagues across; it is divided into thirty provinces. Los Padres own everything in it, and the people nothing; it's a masterpiece of reason and justice. I myself know nothing so wonderful as Los Padres, who in this hemisphere make war on the kings of Spain and Portugal, but in Europe hear their confessions; who kill Spaniards here, and in Madrid send them to heaven; that really tickles me; let's get moving, you're going to be the happiest of men. Won't Los Padres be delighted when they learn they have a captain who knows the Bulgar drill!

As soon as they reached the first barricade, Cacambo told the frontier guard that a captain wished to speak with My Lord the Commander. A Paraguayan officer ran to inform headquarters by laying the news at the feet of the commander. Candide and Cacambo were first disarmed and deprived of their Andalusian horses. They were then placed between two files of soldiers; the commander was at the end, his three-cornered hat on his head, his cassock drawn up, a sword at his side, and a pike in his hand. He nods, and twenty-four soldiers surround the newcomers. A sergeant then informs them that they must wait, that the commander cannot talk to them, since the reverend father provincial has forbidden all Spaniards from speaking, except in his presence, and from remaining more than three hours in the country.

—And where is the reverend father provincial? says Cacambo.

—He is reviewing his troops after having said mass, the sergeant replies, and you'll only be able to kiss his spurs in three hours.

—But, says Cacambo, my master the captain, who, like me, is dying from hunger, is not Spanish at all, he is German; can't we have some breakfast while waiting for his reverence?

The sergeant promptly went off to report this speech to the commander.

—God be praised, said this worthy; since he is German, I can talk to him; bring him into my bower.

Candide was immediately led into a leafy nook surrounded by a

3. The Jesuit fathers.

handsome colonnade of green and gold marble and trellises amid which sported parrots, birds of paradise,[4] hummingbirds, guinea fowl, and all the rarest species of birds. An excellent breakfast was prepared in golden vessels; and while the Paraguayans ate corn out of wooden bowls in the open fields under the glare of the sun, the reverend father commander entered into his bower.

He was a very handsome young man, with an open face, rather blonde in coloring, with ruddy complexion, arched eyebrows, liquid eyes, pink ears, bright red lips, and an air of pride, but a pride somehow different from that of a Spaniard or a Jesuit. Their confiscated weapons were restored to Candide and Cacambo, as well as their Andalusian horses; Cacambo fed them oats alongside the bower, always keeping an eye on them for fear of an ambush.

First Candide kissed the hem of the commander's cassock, then they sat down at the table.

—So you are German? said the Jesuit, speaking in that language.

—Yes, your reverence, said Candide.

As they spoke these words, both men looked at one another with great surprise, and another emotion which they could not control.

—From what part of Germany do you come? said the Jesuit.

—From the nasty province of Westphalia, said Candide; I was born in the castle of Thunder-Ten-Tronckh.

—Merciful heavens! cries the commander. Is it possible?

—What a miracle! exclaims Candide.

—Can it be you? asks the commander.

—It's impossible, says Candide.

They both fall back in their chairs, they embrace, they shed streams of tears.

—What, can it be you, reverend father! you, the brother of the lovely Cunégonde! you, who were killed by the Bulgars! you, the son of My Lord the Baron! you, a Jesuit in Paraguay! It's a mad world, indeed it is. Oh, Pangloss! Pangloss! how happy you would be, if you hadn't been hanged.

The commander dismissed his negro slaves and the Paraguayans who served his drink in crystal goblets. He thanked God and Saint Ignatius a thousand times, he clasped Candide in his arms, their faces were bathed in tears.

—You would be even more astonished, even more delighted, even more beside yourself, said Candide, if I told you that My Lady

4. In this passage and several later ones, Voltaire uses in conjunction two words, both of which mean hummingbird. The French system of classifying hummingbirds, based on the work of the celebrated Buffon, distinguishes *oiseaux-mouches* with straight bills from *colibris* with curved bills. This distinction is wholly fallacious. Hummingbirds have all manner of shaped bills, and the division of species must be made on other grounds entirely. At the expense of ornithological accuracy, I have therefore introduced birds of paradise to get the requisite sense of glitter and sheen.

Cunégonde, your sister, who you thought was disemboweled, is enjoying good health.

—Where?

—Not far from here, in the house of the governor of Buenos Aires; and to think that I came to make war on you!

Each word they spoke in this long conversation added another miracle. Their souls danced on their tongues, hung eagerly at their ears, glittered in their eyes. As they were Germans, they sat a long time at table, waiting for the reverend father provincial; and the commander spoke in these terms to his dear Candide.

CHAPTER 15
How Candide Killed the Brother of His Dear Cunégonde

—All my life long I shall remember the horrible day when I saw my father and mother murdered and my sister raped. When the Bulgars left, that adorable sister of mine was nowhere to be found; so they loaded a cart with my mother, my father, myself, two serving girls, and three little murdered boys, to carry us all off for burial in a Jesuit chapel some two leagues from our ancestral castle. A Jesuit sprinkled us with holy water; it was horribly salty, and a few drops got into my eyes; the father noticed that my lid made a little tremor; putting his hand on my heart, he felt it beat; I was rescued, and at the end of three weeks was as good as new. You know, my dear Candide, that I was a very pretty boy; I became even more so; the reverend father Croust,[5] superior of the abbey, conceived a most tender friendship for me; he accepted me as a novice, and shortly after, I was sent to Rome. The Father General had need of a resupply of young German Jesuits. The rulers of Paraguay accept as few Spanish Jesuits as they can; they prefer foreigners, whom they think they can control better. I was judged fit, by the Father General, to labor in this vineyard. So we set off, a Pole, a Tyrolean, and myself. Upon our arrival, I was honored with the posts of subdeacon and lieutenant; today I am a colonel and a priest. We are giving a vigorous reception to the King of Spain's men; I assure you they will be excommunicated as well as trounced on the battlefield. Providence has sent you to help us. But is it really true that my dear sister, Cunégonde, is in the neighborhood, with the governor of Buenos Aires?

Candide reassured him with a solemn oath that nothing could be more true. Their tears began to flow again.

The baron could not weary of embracing Candide; he called him his brother, his savior.

—Ah, my dear Candide, said he, maybe together we will be able

5. A Jesuit rector at Colmar with whom Voltaire had quarreled in 1754.

to enter the town as conquerors, and be united with my sister Cunégonde.

—That is all I desire, said Candide; I was expecting to marry her, and I still hope to.

—You insolent dog, replied the baron, you would have the effrontery to marry my sister, who has seventy-two quarterings! It's a piece of presumption for you even to mention such a crazy project in my presence.

Candide, terrified by this speech, answered:—Most reverend father, all the quarterings in the world don't affect this case; I have rescued your sister out of the arms of a Jew and an inquisitor; she has many obligations to me, she wants to marry me. Master Pangloss always taught me that men are equal; and I shall certainly marry her.

—We'll see about that, you scoundrel, said the Jesuit baron of Thunder-Ten-Tronckh; and so saying, he gave him a blow across the face with the flat of his sword. Candide immediately drew his own sword and thrust it up to the hilt in the baron's belly; but as he drew it forth all dripping, he began to weep.

—Alas, dear God! said he, I have killed my old master, my friend, my brother-in-law; I am the best man in the world, and here are three men I've killed already, and two of the three were priests.

Cacambo, who was standing guard at the entry of the bower, came running.

—We can do nothing but sell our lives dearly, said his master; someone will certainly come; we must die fighting.

Cacambo, who had been in similar scrapes before, did not lose his head; he took the Jesuit's cassock, which the commander had been wearing, and put it on Candide; he stuck the dead man's square hat on Candide's head, and forced him onto horseback. Everything was done in the wink of an eye.

—Let's ride, master; everyone will take you for a Jesuit on his way to deliver orders; and we will have passed the frontier before anyone can come after us.

Even as he was pronouncing these words, he charged off, crying in Spanish: —Way, make way for the reverend father colonel!

CHAPTER 16
What Happened to the Two Travelers with Two Girls, Two Monkeys, and the Savages Named Biglugs

Candide and his valet were over the frontier before anyone in the camp knew of the death of the German Jesuit. Foresighted Cacambo had taken care to fill his satchel with bread, chocolate, ham, fruit, and several bottles of wine. They pushed their Andalusian horses forward into unknown country, where there were no roads. Finally

a broad prairie divided by several streams opened before them. Our two travelers turned their horses loose to graze; Cacambo suggested that they eat too, and promptly set the example. But Candide said:
—How can you expect me to eat ham when I have killed the son of My Lord the Baron, and am now condemned never to see the lovely Cunégonde for the rest of my life? Why should I drag out my miserable days, since I must exist far from her in in the depths of despair and remorse? And what will the *Journal de Trévoux*[6] say of all this?

Though he talked this way, he did not neglect the food. Night fell. The two wanderers heard a few weak cries which seemed to be voiced by women. They could not tell whether the cries expressed grief or joy; but they leaped at once to their feet, with that uneasy suspicion which one always feels in an unknown country. The outcry arose from two girls, completely naked, who were running swiftly along the edge of the meadow, pursued by two monkeys who snapped at their buttocks. Candide was moved to pity; he had learned marksmanship with the Bulgars, and could have knocked a nut off a bush without touching the leaves. He raised his Spanish rifle, fired twice, and killed the two monkeys.

—God be praised, my dear Cacambo! I've saved these two poor creatures from great danger. Though I committed a sin in killing an inquisitor and a Jesuit, I've redeemed myself by saving the lives of two girls. Perhaps they are two ladies of rank, and this good deed may gain us special advantages in the country.

He had more to say, but his mouth shut suddenly when he saw the girls embracing the monkeys tenderly, weeping over their bodies, and filling the air with lamentations.

—I wasn't looking for quite so much generosity of spirit, said he to Cacambo; the latter replied: —You've really fixed things this time, master; you've killed the two lovers of these young ladies.

—Their lovers! Impossible! You must be joking, Cacambo; how can I believe you?

—My dear master, Cacambo replied, you're always astonished by everything. Why do you think it so strange that in some countries monkeys succeed in obtaining the good graces of women? They are one quarter human, just as I am one quarter Spanish.

—Alas, Candide replied, I do remember now hearing Master Pangloss say that such things used to happen, and that from these mixtures there arose pans, fauns, and satyrs, and that these creatures had appeared to various grand figures of antiquity; but I took all that for fables.

—You should be convinced now, said Cacambo; it's true, and you see how people make mistakes who haven't received a measure of

6. A journal published by the Jesuit order, founded in 1701 and consistently hostile to Voltaire.

education. But what I fear is that these girls may get us into real trouble.

These sensible reflections led Candide to leave the field and to hide in a wood. There he dined with Cacambo; and there both of them, having duly cursed the inquisitor of Portugal, the governor of Buenos Aires, and the baron, went to sleep on a bed of moss. When they woke up, they found themselves unable to move; the reason was that during the night the Biglugs,[7] natives of the country, to whom the girls had complained of them, had tied them down with cords of bark. They were surrounded by fifty naked Biglugs, armed with arrows, clubs, and stone axes. Some were boiling a caldron of water, others were preparing spits, and all cried out: —It's a Jesuit, a Jesuit! We'll be revenged and have a good meal; let's eat some Jesuit, eat some Jesuit!

—I told you, my dear master, said Cacambo sadly, I said those two girls would play us a dirty trick.

Candide, noting the caldron and spits, cried out: —We are surely going to be roasted or boiled. Ah, what would Master Pangloss say if he could see these men in a state of nature? All is for the best, I agree; but I must say it seems hard to have lost Miss Cunégonde and to be stuck on a spit by the Biglugs.

Cacambo did not lose his head.

—Don't give up hope, said he to the disconsolate Candide; I understand a little of the jargon these people speak, and I'm going to talk to them.

—Don't forget to remind them, said Candide, of the frightful inhumanity of eating their fellow men, and that Christian ethics forbid it.

—Gentlemen, said Cacambo, you have a mind to eat a Jesuit today? An excellent idea; nothing is more proper than to treat one's enemies so. Indeed, the law of nature teaches us to kill our neighbor, and that's how men behave the whole world over. Though we Europeans don't exercise our right to eat our neighbors, the reason is simply that we find it easy to get a good meal elsewhere; but you don't have our resources, and we certainly agree that it's better to eat your enemies than to let the crows and vultures have the fruit of your victory. But, gentlemen, you wouldn't want to eat your friends. You think you will be spitting a Jesuit, and it's your defender, the enemy of your enemies, whom you will be roasting. For my part, I was born in your country; the gentleman whom you see is my master, and far from being a Jesuit, he has just killed a Jesuit, the robe he is wearing was stripped from him; that's why you have taken a dislike to him.

7. Voltaire's name is "Oreillons" from Spanish "Orejones," a name mentioned in Garcilaso de Vega's *Historia General del Perú* (1609), on which Voltaire drew from many of the details in his picture of South America.

To prove that I am telling the truth, take his robe and bring it to the nearest frontier of the kingdom of Los Padres; find out for yourselves if my master didn't kill a Jesuit officer. It won't take long; if you find that I have lied, you can still eat us. But if I've told the truth, you know too well the principles of public justice, customs, and laws, not to spare our lives.

The Biglugs found this discourse perfectly reasonable; they appointed chiefs to go posthaste and find out the truth; the two messengers performed their task like men of sense, and quickly returned bringing good news. The Biglugs untied their two prisoners, treated them with great politeness, offered them girls, gave them refreshments, and led them back to the border of their state, crying joyously: —He isn't a Jesuit, he isn't a Jesuit!

Candide could not weary of exclaiming over his preservation.

—What a people! he said. What men! what customs! If I had not had the good luck to run a sword through the body of Miss Cunégonde's brother, I would have been eaten on the spot! But, after all, it seems that uncorrupted nature is good, since these folk, instead of eating me, showed me a thousand kindnesses as soon as they knew I was not a Jesuit.

CHAPTER 17
Arrival of Candide and His Servant at the Country of Eldorado, and What They Saw There

When they were out of the land of the Biglugs, Cacambo said to Candide: —You see that this hemisphere is no better than the other; take my advice, and let's get back to Europe as soon as possible.

—How to get back, asked Candide, and where to go? If I go to my own land, the Bulgars and Abares are murdering everyone in sight; if I go to Portugal, they'll burn me alive; if we stay here, we risk being skewered any day. But how can I ever leave that part of the world where Miss Cunégonde lives?

—Let's go toward Cayenne, said Cacambo, we shall find some Frenchmen there, for they go all over the world; they can help us; perhaps God will take pity on us.

To get to Cayenne was not easy; they knew more or less which way to go, but mountains, rivers, cliffs, robbers, and savages obstructed the way everywhere. Their horses died of weariness; their food was eaten; they subsisted for one whole month on wild fruits, and at last they found themselves by a little river fringed with coconut trees, which gave them both life and hope.

Cacambo, who was as full of good advice as the old woman, said to Candide: —We can go no further, we've walked ourselves out; I

see an abandoned canoe on the bank, let's fill it with coconuts, get into the boat, and float with the current; a river always leads to some inhabited spot or other. If we don't find anything pleasant, at least we may find something new.

—Let's go, said Candide, and let Providence be our guide.

They floated some leagues between banks sometimes flowery, sometimes sandy, now steep, now level. The river widened steadily; finally it disappeared into a chasm of frightful rocks that rose high into the heavens. The two travelers had the audacity to float with the current into this chasm. The river, narrowly confined, drove them onward with horrible speed and a fearful roar. After twenty-four hours, they saw daylight once more; but their canoe was smashed on the snags. They had to drag themselves from rock to rock for an entire league; at last they emerged to an immense horizon, ringed with remote mountains. The countryside was tended for pleasure as well as profit; everywhere the useful was joined to the agreeable. The roads were covered, or rather decorated, with elegantly shaped carriages made of a glittering material, carrying men and women of singular beauty, and drawn by great red sheep which were faster than the finest horses of Andalusia, Tetuan, and Mequinez.

—Here now, said Candide, is a country that's better than Westphalia.

Along with Cacambo, he climbed out of the river at the first village he could see. Some children of the town, dressed in rags of gold brocade, were playing quoits at the village gate; our two men from the other world paused to watch them; their quoits were rather large, yellow, red, and green, and they glittered with a singular luster. On a whim, the travelers picked up several; they were of gold, emeralds, and rubies, and the least of them would have been the greatest ornament of the Great Mogul's throne.

—Surely, said Cacambo, these quoit players are the children of the king of the country.

The village schoolmaster appeared at that moment, to call them back to school.

—And there, said Candide, is the tutor of the royal household.

The little rascals quickly gave up their game, leaving on the ground their quoits and playthings. Candide picked them up, ran to the schoolmaster, and presented them to him humbly, giving him to understand by sign language that their royal highnesses had forgotten their gold and jewels. With a smile, the schoolmaster tossed them to the ground, glanced quickly but with great surprise at Candide's face, and went his way.

The travelers did not fail to pick up the gold, rubies, and emeralds.

—Where in the world are we? cried Candide. The children of this land must be well trained, since they are taught contempt for gold and jewels.

Cacambo was as much surprised as Candide. At last they came to the finest house of the village; it was built like a European palace. A crowd of people surrounded the door, and even more were in the entry; delightful music was heard, and a delicious aroma of cooking filled the air. Cacambo went up to the door, listened, and reported that they were talking Peruvian; that was his native language, for every reader must know that Cacambo was born in Tucuman, in a village where they talk that language exclusively.

—I'll act as interpreter, he told Candide; it's an hotel, let's go in.

Promptly two boys and two girls of the staff, dressed in cloth of gold, and wearing ribbons in their hair, invited them to sit at the host's table. The meal consisted of four soups, each one garnished with a brace of parakeets, a boiled condor which weighed two hundred pounds, two roast monkeys of an excellent flavor, three hundred birds of paradise in one dish and six hundred hummingbirds in another, exquisite stews, delicious pastries, the whole thing served up in plates of what looked like rock crystal. The boys and girls of the staff poured them various beverages made from sugar cane.

The diners were for the most part merchants and travelers, all extremely polite, who questioned Cacambo with the most discreet circumspection, and answered his questions very directly.

When the meal was over, Cacambo as well as Candide supposed he could settle his bill handsomely by tossing onto the table two of those big pieces of gold which they had picked up; but the host and hostess burst out laughing, and for a long time nearly split their sides. Finally they subsided.

—Gentlemen, said the host, we see clearly that you're foreigners; we don't meet many of you here. Please excuse our laughing when you offered us in payment a couple of pebbles from the roadside. No doubt you don't have any of our local currency, but you don't need it to eat here. All the hotels established for the promotion of commerce are maintained by the state. You have had meager entertainment here, for we are only a poor town; but everywhere else you will be given the sort of welcome you deserve.

Cacambo translated for Candide all the host's explanations, and Candide listened to them with the same admiration and astonishment that his friend Cacambo showed in reporting them.

—What is this country, then, said they to one another, unknown to the rest of the world, and where nature itself is so different from our own? This probably is the country where everything is for the best; for it's absolutely necessary that such a country should exist

somewhere. And whatever Master Pangloss said of the matter, I have often had occasion to notice that things went badly in Westphalia.

CHAPTER 18
What They Saw in the Land of Eldorado

Cacambo revealed his curiosity to the host, and the host told him:
—I am an ignorant man and content to remain so; but we have here an old man, retired from the court, who is the most knowing person in the kingdom, and the most talkative.

Thereupon he brought Cacambo to the old man's house. Candide now played second fiddle, and acted as servant to his own valet. They entered an austere little house, for the door was merely of silver and the paneling of the rooms was only gold, though so tastefully wrought that the finest paneling would not surpass it. If the truth must be told, the lobby was only decorated with rubies and emeralds; but the patterns in which they were arranged atoned for the extreme simplicity.

The old man received the two strangers on a sofa stuffed with bird-of-paradise feathers, and offered them several drinks in diamond carafes; then he satisfied their curiosity in these terms.

—I am a hundred and seventy-two years old, and I heard from my late father, who was liveryman to the king, about the astonishing revolutions in Peru which he had seen. Our land here was formerly part of the kingdom of the Incas, who rashly left it in order to conquer another part of the world, and who were ultimately destroyed by the Spaniards. The wisest princes of their house were those who had never left their native valley; they decreed, with the consent of the nation, that henceforth no inhabitant of our little kingdom should ever leave it; and this rule is what has preserved our innocence and our happiness. The Spaniards heard vague rumors about this land, they called it El Dorado;[8] and an English knight named Raleigh even came somewhere close to it about a hundred years ago; but as we are surrounded by unscalable mountains and precipices, we have managed so far to remain hidden from the rapacity of the European nations, who have an inconceivable rage for the pebbles and mud of our land, and who, in order to get some, would butcher us all to the last man.

The conversation was a long one; it turned on the form of the government, the national customs, on women, public shows, the arts. At last Candide, whose taste always ran to metaphysics, told Cacambo to ask if the country had any religion.

8. The myth of this land of gold somewhere in Central or South America had been widespread since the sixteenth century. *The Discovery of Guiana*, published in 1595, described Sir Walter Raleigh's infatuation with the myth of Eldorado and served to spread the story still further.

The old man grew a bit red.

—How's that? he said. Can you have any doubt of it? Do you suppose we are altogether thankless scoundrels?

Cacambo asked meekly what was the religion of Eldorado. The old man flushed again.

—Can there be two religions? he asked. I suppose our religion is the same as everyone's, we worship God from morning to evening.

—Then you worship a single deity? said Cacambo, who acted throughout as interpreter of the questions of Candide.

—It's obvious, said the old man, that there aren't two or three or four of them. I must say the people of your world ask very remarkable questions.

Candide could not weary of putting questions to this good old man; he wanted to know how the people of Eldorado prayed to God.

—We don't pray to him at all, said the good and respectable sage; we have nothing to ask him for, since everything we need has already been granted; we thank God continually.

Candide was interested in seeing the priests; he had Cacambo ask where they were. The old gentleman smiled.

—My friends, said he, we are all priests; the king and all the heads of household sing formal psalms of thanksgiving every morning, and five or six thousand voices accompany them.

—What! you have no monks to teach, argue, govern, intrigue, and burn at the stake everyone who disagrees with them?

—We should have to be mad, said the old man; here we are all of the same mind, and we don't understand what you're up to with your monks.

Candide was overjoyed at all these speeches, and said to himself: —This is very different from Westphalia and the castle of My Lord the Baron; if our friend Pangloss had seen Eldorado, he wouldn't have called the castle of Thunder-Ten-Tronckh the finest thing on earth; to know the world one must travel.

After this long conversation, the old gentleman ordered a carriage with six sheep made ready, and gave the two travelers twelve of his servants for their journey to the court.

—Excuse me, said he, if old age deprives me of the honor of accompanying you. The king will receive you after a style which will not altogether displease you, and you will doubtless make allowance for the customs of the country if there are any you do not like.

Candide and Cacambo climbed into the coach; the six sheep flew like the wind, and in less than four hours they reached the king's palace at the edge of the capital. The entryway was two hundred and twenty feet high and a hundred wide; it is impossible to describe all the materials of which it was made. But you can imagine how much

finer it was than those pebbles and sand which we call gold and jewels.

Twenty beautiful girls of the guard detail welcomed Candide and Cacambo as they stepped from the carriage, took them to the baths, and dressed them in robes woven of hummingbird feathers; then the high officials of the crown, both male and female, led them to the royal chamber between two long lines, each of a thousand musicians, as is customary. As they approached the throne room, Cacambo asked an officer what was the proper method of greeting his majesty: if one fell to one's knees or on one's belly; if one put one's hands on one's head or on one's rear; if one licked up the dust of the earth—in a word, what was the proper form?[9]

—The ceremony, said the officer, is to embrace the king and kiss him on both cheeks.

Candide and Cacambo fell on the neck of his majesty, who received them with all the dignity imaginable, and asked them politely to dine.

In the interim, they were taken about to see the city, the public buildings rising to the clouds, the public markets and arcades, the fountains of pure water and of rose water, those of sugar cane liquors which flowed perpetually in the great plazas paved with a sort of stone which gave off odors of gillyflower and rose petals. Candide asked to see the supreme court and the hall of parliament; they told him there was no such thing, that lawsuits were unknown. He asked if there were prisons, and was told there were not. What surprised him more, and gave him most pleasure, was the palace of sciences, in which he saw a gallery two thousand paces long, entirely filled with mathematical and physical instruments.

Having passed the whole afternoon seeing only a thousandth part of the city, they returned to the king's palace. Candide sat down to dinner with his majesty, his own valet Cacambo, and several ladies. Never was better food served, and never did a host preside more jovially than his majesty. Cacambo explained the king's witty sayings to Candide, and even when translated they still seemed witty. Of all the things which astonished Candide, this was not, in his eyes, the least astonishing.

They passed a month in this refuge. Candide never tired of saying to Cacambo: —It's true, my friend, I'll say it again, the castle where I was born does not compare with the land where we now are; but Miss Cunégonde is not here, and you doubtless have a mistress somewhere in Europe. If we stay here, we shall be just like everybody else, whereas if we go back to our own world, taking with us

9. Candide's questions are probably derived from those of Gulliver on a similar occasion; see *Gulliver's Travels*, III ix.

just a dozen sheep loaded with Eldorado pebbles, we shall be richer than all the kings put together, we shall have no more inquisitors to fear, and we shall easily be able to retake Miss Cunégonde.

This harangue pleased Cacambo; wandering is such pleasure, it gives a man such prestige at home to be able to talk of what he has seen abroad, that the two happy men resolved to be so no longer, but to take their leave of his majesty.

—You are making a foolish mistake, the king told them; I know very well that my kingdom is nothing much; but when you are pretty comfortable somewhere, you had better stay there. Of course I have no right to keep strangers against their will, that sort of tyranny is not in keeping with our laws or our customs; all men are free; depart when you will, but the way out is very difficult. You cannot possibly go up the river by which you miraculously came; it runs too swiftly through its underground caves. The mountains which surround my land are ten thousand feet high, and steep as walls; each one is more than ten leagues across; the only way down is over precipices. But since you really must go, I shall order my engineers to make a machine which can carry you conveniently. When we take you over the mountains, nobody will be able to go with you, for my subjects have sworn never to leave their refuge, and they are too sensible to break their vows. Other than that, ask of me what you please.

—We only request of your majesty, Cacambo said, a few sheep loaded with provisions, some pebbles, and some of the mud of your country.

The king laughed.

—I simply can't understand, said he, the passion you Europeans have for our yellow mud; but take all you want, and much good may it do you.

He promptly gave orders to his technicians to make a machine for lifting these two extraordinary men out of his kingdom. Three thousand good physicists worked at the problem; the machine was ready in two weeks' time, and cost no more than twenty million pounds sterling, in the money of the country. Cacambo and Candide were placed in the machine; there were two great sheep, saddled and bridled to serve them as steeds when they had cleared the mountains, twenty pack sheep with provisions, thirty which carried presents consisting of the rarities of the country, and fifty loaded with gold, jewels, and diamonds. The king bade tender farewell to the two vagabonds.

It made a fine spectacle, their departure, and the ingenious way in which they were hoisted with their sheep up to the top of the mountains. The technicians bade them good-bye after bringing them to safety, and Candide had now no other desire and no other object than to go and present his sheep to Miss Cunégonde.

—We have, said he, enough to pay off the governor of Buenos

Aires—if, indeed, a price can be placed on Miss Cunégonde. Let us go to Cayenne, take ship there, and then see what kingdom we can find to buy up.

CHAPTER 19
What Happened to Them at Surinam, and How Candide Got to Know Martin

The first day was pleasant enough for our travelers. They were encouraged by the idea of possessing more treasures than Asia, Europe, and Africa could bring together. Candide, in transports, carved the name of Cunégonde on the trees. On the second day two of their sheep bogged down in a swamp and were lost with their loads; two other sheep died of fatigue a few days later; seven or eight others starved to death in a desert; still others fell, a little after, from precipices. Finally, after a hundred days' march, they had only two sheep left. Candide told Cacambo:—My friend, you see how the riches of this world are fleeting; the only solid things are virtue and the joy of seeing Miss Cunégonde again.

—I agree, said Cacambo, but we still have two sheep, laden with more treasure than the king of Spain will ever have; and I see in the distance a town which I suspect is Surinam; it belongs to the Dutch. We are at the end of our trials and on the threshold of our happiness.

As they drew near the town, they discovered a negro stretched on the ground with only half his clothes left, that is, a pair of blue drawers; the poor fellow was also missing his left leg and his right hand.

—Good Lord, said Candide in Dutch, what are you doing in that horrible condition, my friend?

—I am waiting for my master, Mr. Vanderdendur,[1] the famous merchant, answered the negro.

—Is Mr. Vanderdendur, Candide asked, the man who treated you this way?

—Yes, sir, said the negro, that's how things are around here. Twice a year we get a pair of linen drawers to wear. If we catch a finger in the sugar mill where we work, they cut off our hand; if we try to run away, they cut off our leg: I have undergone both these experiences. This is the price of the sugar you eat in Europe. And yet, when my mother sold me for ten Patagonian crowns on the coast of Guinea, she said to me: 'My dear child, bless our witch doctors, reverence them always, they will make your life happy; you have the honor of being a slave to our white masters, and in this way you are making

1. A name perhaps intended to suggest VanDuren, a Dutch bookseller with whom Voltaire had quarreled. In particular, the incident of gradually raising one's price recalls VanDuren, to whom Voltaire had successively offered 1,000, 1,500, 2,000, and 3,000 florins for the return of the manuscript of Frederick the Great's *Anti-Machiavel*.

the fortune of your father and mother.' Alas! I don't know if I made their fortunes, but they certainly did not make mine. The dogs, monkeys, and parrots are a thousand times less unhappy than we are. The Dutch witch doctors who converted me tell me every Sunday that we are all sons of Adam, black and white alike. I am no genealogist; but if these preachers are right, we must all be remote cousins; and you must admit no one could treat his own flesh and blood in a more horrible fashion.

—Oh Pangloss! cried Candide, you had no notion of these abominations! I'm through, I must give up your optimism after all.

—What's optimism? said Cacambo.

—Alas, said Candide, it is a mania for saying things are well when one is in hell.

And he shed bitter tears as he looked at his negro, and he was still weeping as he entered Surinam.

The first thing they asked was if there was not some vessel in port which could be sent to Buenos Aires. The man they asked was a Spanish merchant who undertook to make an honest bargain with them. They arranged to meet in a café; Candide and the faithful Cacambo, with their two sheep, went there to meet with him.

Candide, who always said exactly what was in his heart, told the Spaniard of his adventures, and confessed that he wanted to recapture Miss Cunégonde.

—I shall take good care *not* to send you to Buenos Aires, said the merchant; I should be hanged, and so would you. The lovely Cunégonde is his lordship's favorite mistress.

This was a thunderstroke for Candide; he wept for a long time; finally he drew Cacambo aside.

—Here, my friend, said he, is what you must do. Each one of us has in his pockets five or six millions' worth of diamonds; you are cleverer than I; go get Miss Cunégonde in Buenos Aires. If the governor makes a fuss, give him a million; if that doesn't convince him, give him two millions; you never killed an inquisitor, nobody will suspect you. I'll fit out another boat and go wait for you in Venice. That is a free country, where one need have no fear either of Bulgars or Abares or Jews or inquisitors.

Cacambo approved of this wise decision. He was in despair at leaving a good master who had become a bosom friend; but the pleasure of serving him overcame the grief of leaving him. They embraced, and shed a few tears; Candide urged him not to forget the good old woman. Cacambo departed that very same day; he was a very good fellow, that Cacambo.

Candide remained for some time in Surinam, waiting for another merchant to take him to Italy, along with the two sheep which were left him. He hired servants and bought everything necessary for the

long voyage; finally Mr. Vanderdendur, master of a big ship, came calling.

—How much will you charge, Candide asked this man, to take me to Venice—myself, my servants, my luggage, and those two sheep over there?

The merchant set a price of ten thousand piastres; Candide did not blink an eye.

—Oh, ho, said the prudent Venderdendur to himself, this stranger pays out ten thousand piastres at once, he must be pretty well fixed.

Then, returning a moment later, he made known that he could not set sail under twenty thousand.

—All right, you shall have them, said Candide.

—Whew, said the merchant softly to himself, this man gives twenty thousand piastres as easily as ten.

He came back again to say he could not go to Venice for less than thirty thousand piastres.

—All right, thirty then, said Candide.

—Ah ha, said the Dutch merchant, again speaking to himself; so thirty thousand piastres mean nothing to this man; no doubt the two sheep are loaded with immense treasures; let's say no more; we'll pick up the thirty thousand piastres first, and then we'll see.

Candide sold two little diamonds, the least of which was worth more than all the money demanded by the merchant. He paid him in advance. The two sheep were taken aboard. Candide followed in a little boat, to board the vessel at its anchorage. The merchant bides his time, sets sail, and makes his escape with a favoring wind. Candide, aghast and stupefied, soon loses him from view.

—Alas, he cries, now there is a trick worthy of the old world!

He returns to shore sunk in misery; for he had lost riches enough to make the fortunes of twenty monarchs.

Now he rushes to the house of the Dutch magistrate, and, being a bit disturbed, he knocks loudly at the door; goes in, tells the story of what happened, and shouts a bit louder than is customary. The judge begins by fining him ten thousand piastres for making such a racket; then he listens patiently to the story, promises to look into the matter as soon as the merchant comes back, and charges another ten thousand piastres as the costs of the hearing.

This legal proceeding completed the despair of Candide. In fact he had experienced miseries a thousand times more painful, but the coldness of the judge, and that of the merchant who had robbed him, roused his bile and plunged him into a black melancholy. The malice of men rose up before his spirit in all its ugliness, and his mind dwelt only on gloomy thoughts. Finally, when a French vessel was ready to leave for Bordeaux, since he had no more diamond-laden sheep to transport, he took a cabin at a fair price, and made it

known in the town that he would pay passage and keep, plus two thousand piastres, to any honest man who wanted to make the journey with him, on condition that this man must be the most disgusted with his own condition and the most unhappy man in the province.

This drew such a crowd of applicants as a fleet could not have held. Candide wanted to choose among the leading candidates, so he picked out about twenty who seemed companionable enough, and of whom each pretended to be more miserable than all the others. He brought them together at his inn and gave them a dinner, on condition that each would swear to tell truthfully his entire history. He would select as his companion the most truly miserable and rightly discontented man, and among the others he would distribute various gifts.

The meeting lasted till four in the morning. Candide, as he listened to all the stories, remembered what the old woman had told him on the trip to Buenos Aires, and of the wager she had made, that there was nobody on the boat who had not undergone great misfortunes. At every story that was told him, he thought of Pangloss.

—That Pangloss, he said, would be hard put to prove his system. I wish he was here. Certainly if everything goes well, it is in Eldorado and not in the rest of the world.

At last he decided in favor of a poor scholar who had worked ten years for the booksellers of Amsterdam. He decided that there was no trade in the world with which one should be more disgusted.

This scholar, who was in fact a good man, had been robbed by his wife, beaten by his son, and deserted by his daughter, who had got herself abducted by a Portuguese. He had just been fired from the little job on which he existed; and the preachers of Surinam were persecuting him because they took him for a Socinian.[2] The others, it is true, were at least as unhappy as he, but Candide hoped the scholar would prove more amusing on the voyage. All his rivals declared that Candide was doing them a great injustice, but he pacified them with a hundred piastres apiece.

CHAPTER 20
What Happened to Candide and Martin at Sea

The old scholar, whose name was Martin, now set sail with Candide for Bordeaux. Both men had seen and suffered much; and even if the vessel had been sailing from Surinam to Japan via the Cape of Good Hope, they would have been able to keep themselves amused

2. A follower of Faustus and Laelius Socinus, sixteenth-century Polish theologians, who proposed a form of "rational" Christianity which exalted the rational conscience and minimized such mysteries as the trinity. The Socinians, by a special irony, were vigorous optimists.

with instances of moral evil and physical evil during the entire trip.

However, Candide had one great advantage over Martin, that he still hoped to see Miss Cunégonde again, and Martin had nothing to hope for; besides, he had gold and diamonds, and though he had lost a hundred big red sheep loaded with the greatest treasures of the earth, though he had always at his heart a memory of the Dutch merchant's villainy, yet, when he thought of the wealth that remained in his hands, and when he talked of Cunégonde, especially just after a good dinner, he still inclined to the system of Pangloss.

—But what about you, Monsieur Martin, he asked the scholar, what do you think of all that? What is your idea of moral evil and physical evil?

—Sir, answered Martin, those priests accused me of being a Socinian, but the truth is that I am a Manichee.[3]

—You're joking, said Candide; there aren't any more Manichees in the world.

—There's me, said Martin; I don't know what to do about it, but I can't think otherwise.

—You must be possessed of the devil, said Candide.

—He's mixed up with so many things of this world, said Martin, that he may be in me as well as elsewhere; but I assure you, as I survey this globe, or globule, I think that God has abandoned it to some evil spirit—all of it except Eldorado. I have scarcely seen one town which did not wish to destroy its neighboring town, no family which did not wish to exterminate some other family. Everywhere the weak loathe the powerful, before whom they cringe, and the powerful treat them like brute cattle, to be sold for their meat and fleece. A million regimented assassins roam Europe from one end to the other, plying the trades of murder and robbery in an organized way for a living, because there is no more honest form of work for them; and in the cities which seem to enjoy peace and where the arts are flourishing, men are devoured by more envy, cares, and anxieties than a whole town experiences when it's under siege. Private griefs are worse even than public trials. In a word, I have seen so much and suffered so much, that I am a Manichee.

—Still there is some good, said Candide.

—That may be, said Martin, but I don't know it.

In the middle of this discussion, the rumble of cannon was heard. From minute to minute the noise grew louder. Everyone reached for his spyglass. At a distance of some three miles they saw two vessels fighting; the wind brought both of them so close to the French

3. Mani, a Persian sage and philosopher of the third century A.D., taught (probably under the influence of traditions stemming from Zoroaster and the worshippers of the sun god Mithra) that the earth is a field of dispute between two almost equal powers, one of light and one of darkness, both of which must be propitiated.

vessel that they had a pleasantly comfortable seat to watch the fight. Presently one of the vessels caught the other with a broadside so low and so square as to send it to the bottom. Candide and Martin saw clearly a hundred men on the deck of the sinking ship; they all raised their hands to heaven, uttering fearful shrieks; and in a moment everything was swallowed up.

—Well, said Martin, that is how men treat one another.

—It is true, said Candide, there's something devilish in this business.

As they chatted, he noticed something of a striking red color floating near the sunken vessel. They sent out a boat to investigate; it was one of his sheep. Candide was more joyful to recover this one sheep than he had been afflicted to lose a hundred of them, all loaded with big Eldorado diamonds.

The French captain soon learned that the captain of the victorious vessel was Spanish and that of the sunken vessel was a Dutch pirate. It was the same man who had robbed Candide. The enormous riches which this rascal had stolen were sunk beside him in the sea, and nothing was saved but a single sheep.

—You see, said Candide to Martin, crime is punished sometimes; this scoundrel of a Dutch merchant has met the fate he deserved.

—Yes, said Martin; but did the passengers aboard his ship have to perish too? God punished the scoundrel, and the devil drowned the others.

Meanwhile the French and Spanish vessels continued on their journey, and Candide continued his talks with Martin. They disputed for fifteen days in a row, and at the end of that time were just as much in agreement as at the beginning. But at least they were talking, they exchanged their ideas, they consoled one another. Candide caressed his sheep.

—Since I have found you again, said he, I may well rediscover Miss Cunégonde.

CHAPTER 21

Candide and Martin Approach the Coast of France: They Reason Together

At last the coast of France came in view.

—Have you ever been in France, Monsieur Martin? asked Candide.

—Yes, said Martin, I have visited several provinces. There are some where half the inhabitants are crazy, others where they are too sly, still others where they are quite gentle and stupid, some where they venture on wit; in all of them the principal occupation is lovemaking, the second is slander, and the third stupid talk.

—But, Monsieur Martin, were you ever in Paris?

—Yes, I've been in Paris; it contains specimens of all these types; it is a chaos, a mob, in which everyone is seeking pleasure and where hardly anyone finds it, at least from what I have seen. I did not live there for long; as I arrived, I was robbed of everything I possessed by thieves at the fair of St. Germain; I myself was taken for a thief, and spent eight days in jail, after which I took a proofreader's job to earn enough money to return on foot to Holland. I knew the writing gang, the intriguing gang, the gang with fits and convulsions.[4] They say there are some very civilized people in that town; I'd like to think so.

—I myself have no desire to visit France, said Candide; you no doubt realize that when one has spent a month in Eldorado, there is nothing else on earth one wants to see, except Miss Cunégonde. I am going to wait for her at Venice; we will cross France simply to get to Italy; wouldn't you like to come with me?

—Gladly, said Martin; they say Venice is good only for the Venetian nobles, but that on the other hand they treat foreigners very well when they have plenty of money. I don't have any; you do, so I'll follow you anywhere.

—By the way, said Candide, do you believe the earth was originally all ocean, as they assure us in that big book belonging to the ship's captain?[5]

—I don't believe that stuff, said Martin, nor any of the dreams which people have been peddling for some time now.

—But why, then, was this world formed at all? asked Candide.

—To drive us mad, answered Martin.

—Aren't you astonished, Candide went on, at the love which those two girls showed for the monkeys in the land of the Biglugs that I told you about?

—Not at all, said Martin, I see nothing strange in these sentiments; I have seen so many extraordinary things that nothing seems extraordinary any more.

—Do you believe, asked Candide, that men have always massacred one another as they do today? That they have always been liars, traitors, ingrates, thieves, weaklings, sneaks, cowards, backbiters, gluttons, drunkards, misers, climbers, killers, calumniators, sensualists, fanatics, hypocrites, and fools?

—Do you believe, said Martin, that hawks have always eaten pigeons when they could get them?

—Of course, said Candide.

4. The Jansenists, a sect of strict Catholics, became notorious for spirtual ecstasies. Their public displays reached a height during the 1720s, and Voltaire described them in *Le Siècle de Louis XIV* (chap. 37), as well as in the article on "Convulsions" in the *Philosophical Dictionary*. 5. The Bible: Genesis 1.

—Well, said Martin, if hawks have always had the same character, why do you suppose that men have changed?

—Oh, said Candide, there's a great deal of difference, because freedom of the will . . .

As they were disputing in this manner, they reached Bordeaux.

CHAPTER 22
What Happened in France to Candide and Martin

Candide paused in Bordeaux only long enough to sell a couple of Dorado pebbles and to fit himself out with a fine two-seater carriage, for he could no longer do without his philosopher Martin; only he was very unhappy to part with his sheep, which he left to the academy of science in Bordeaux. They proposed, as the theme of that year's prize contest, the discovery of why the wool of the sheep was red; and the prize was awarded to a northern scholar[6] who demonstrated by A plus B minus C divided by Z that the sheep ought to be red and die of sheep rot.

But all the travelers with whom Candide talked in the roadside inns told him: —We are going to Paris.

This general consensus finally inspired in him too a desire to see the capital; it was not much out of his road to Venice.

He entered through the Faubourg Saint-Marceau,[7] and thought he was in the meanest village of Westphalia.

Scarcely was Candide in his hotel, when he came down with a mild illness caused by exhaustion. As he was wearing an enormous diamond ring, and people had noticed among his luggage a tremendously heavy safe, he soon found at his bedside two doctors whom he had not called, several intimate friends who never left him alone, and two pious ladies who helped to warm his broth. Martin said: —I remember that I too was ill on my first trip to Paris; I was very poor; and as I had neither friends, pious ladies, nor doctors, I got well.

However, as a result of medicines and bleedings, Candide's illness became serious. A resident of the neighborhood came to ask him politely to fill out a ticket, to be delivered to the porter of the other world.[8] Candide wanted nothing to do with it. The pious ladies assured him it was a new fashion; Candide replied that he wasn't a man of fashion. Martin wanted to throw the resident out the window. The cleric swore that without the ticket they wouldn't bury Candide. Martin

6. Maupertuis Le Lapon, philosopher and mathematician, whom Voltaire had accused of trying to adduce mathematical proofs of the existence of God. 7. A district on the left bank, notably grubby in the eighteenth century. "As I entered [Paris] through the Faubourg Saint-Marceau, I saw nothing but dirty stinking little streets, ugly black houses, a general air of squalor and poverty, beggars, carters, menders of clothes, sellers of herb-drinks and old hats." J.-J. Rousseau, *Confessions*, Book IV. 8. In the middle of the eighteenth century, it became customary to require persons who were grievously ill to sign *billets de confession*, without which they could not be given absolution, admitted to the last sacraments, or buried in consecrated ground.

swore that he would bury the cleric if he continued to be a nuisance. The quarrel grew heated; Martin took him by the shoulders and threw him bodily out the door; all of which caused a great scandal, from which developed a legal case.

Candide got better; and during his convalescence he had very good company in to dine. They played cards for money; and Candide was quite surprised that none of the aces were ever dealt to him, and Martin was not surprised at all.

Among those who did the honors of the town for Candide there was a little abbé from Perigord, one of those busy fellows, always bright, always useful, assured, obsequious, and obliging, who waylay passing strangers, tell them the scandal of the town, and offer them pleasures at any price they want to pay. This fellow first took Candide and Martin to the theatre. A new tragedy was being played. Candide found himself seated next to a group of wits. That did not keep him from shedding a few tears in the course of some perfectly played scenes. One of the commentators beside him remarked during the intermission: —You are quite mistaken to weep, this actress is very bad indeed; the actor who plays with her is even worse; and the play is even worse than the actors in it. The author knows not a word of Arabic, though the action takes place in Arabia; and besides, he is a man who doesn't believe in innate ideas. Tomorrow I will show you twenty pamphlets written against him.

—Tell me, sir, said Candide to the abbé, how many plays are there for performance in France?

—Five or six thousand, replied the other.

—That's a lot, said Candide; how many of them are any good?

—Fifteen or sixteen, was the answer.

—That's a lot, said Martin.

Candide was very pleased with an actress who took the part of Queen Elizabeth in a rather dull tragedy[9] that still gets played from time to time.

—I like this actress very much, he said to Martin, she bears a slight resemblance to Miss Cunégonde; I should like to meet her.

The abbé from Perigord offered to introduce him. Candide, raised in Germany, asked what was the protocol, how one behaved in France with queens of England.

—You must distinguish, said the abbé; in the provinces, you take them to an inn; at Paris they are respected while still attractive, and thrown on the dunghill when they are dead.[1]

—Queens on the dunghill! said Candide.

9. *Le Comte d'Essex* by Thomas Corneille. 1. Voltaire engaged in a long and vigorous campaign against the rule that actors and actresses could not be buried in consecrated ground. The superstition probably arose from a feeling that by assuming false identities they drained their own souls.

—Yes indeed, said Martin, the abbé is right; I was in Paris when Miss Monime herself[2] passed, as they say, from this life to the other; she was refused what these folk call 'the honors of burial,' that is, the right to rot with all the beggars of the district in a dirty cemetery; she was buried all alone by her troupe at the corner of the Rue de Bourgogne; this must have been very disagreeable to her, for she had a noble character.

—That was extremely rude, said Candide.

—What do you expect? said Martin; that is how these folk are. Imagine all the contradictions, all the incompatibilities you can, and you will see them in the government, the courts, the churches, and the plays of this crazy nation.

—Is it true that they are always laughing in Paris? asked Candide.

—Yes, said the abbé, but with a kind of rage too; when people complain of things, they do so amid explosions of laughter; they even laugh as they perform the most detestable actions.

—Who was that fat swine, said Candide, who spoke so nastily about the play over which I was weeping, and the actors who gave me so much pleasure?

—He is a living illness, answered the abbé, who makes a business of slandering all the plays and books; he hates the successful ones, as eunuchs hate successful lovers; he's one of those literary snakes who live on filth and venom; he's a folliculator . . .

—What's this word *folliculator?* asked Candide.

—It's a folio filler, said the abbé, a Fréron.[3]

It was after this fashion that Candide, Martin, and the abbé from Perigord chatted on the stairway as they watched the crowd leaving the theatre.

—Although I'm in a great hurry to see Miss Cunégonde again, said Candide, I would very much like to dine with Miss Clairon,[4] for she seemed to me admirable.

The abbé was not the man to approach Miss Clairon, who saw only good company.

—She has an engagement tonight, he said; but I shall have the honor of introducing you to a lady of quality, and there you will get to know Paris as if you had lived here for years.

Candide, who was curious by nature, allowed himself to be brought to the lady's house, in the depths of the Faubourg St.-Honoré; they were playing faro;[5] twelve melancholy punters held in their hands a

2. Adrienne Lecouvreur (1690–1730), so called because she made her debut as Monime in Racine's *Mithridate*. Voltaire had assisted at her secret midnight funeral and wrote an indignant poem about it. 3. A successful and popular journalist, who had attacked several of Voltaire's plays, including *Tancrède*. 4. Actually Claire Leris (1723–1803). She had played the lead role in *Tancrède* and was for many years a leading figure on the Paris stage. 5. A game of cards, about which it is necessary to know only that a number of punters play against a banker or dealer. The pack is dealt out two cards at a time, and each player may bet on any card as much as he pleases. The sharp practices of the punters consist essentially of tricks for increasing their winnings without corresponding risks.

little sheaf of cards, blank summaries of their bad luck. Silence reigned supreme, the punters were pallid, the banker uneasy; and the lady of the house, seated beside the pitiless banker, watched with the eyes of a lynx for the various illegal redoublings and bets at long odds which the players tried to signal by folding the corners of their cards; she had them unfolded with a determination which was severe but polite, and concealed her anger lest she lose her customers. The lady caused herself to be known as the Marquise of Parolignac.[6] Her daughter, fifteen years old, sat among the punters and tipped off her mother with a wink to the sharp practices of these unhappy players when they tried to recoup their losses. The abbé from Perigord, Candide, and Martin came in; nobody arose or greeted them or looked at them; all were lost in the study of their cards.

—My Lady the Baroness of Thunder-Ten-Tronckh was more civil, thought Candide.

However, the abbé whispered in the ear of the marquise, who, half rising, honored Candide with a gracious smile and Martin with a truly noble nod; she gave a seat and dealt a hand of cards to Candide, who lost fifty thousand francs in two turns; after which they had a very merry supper. Everyone was amazed that Candide was not upset over his losses; the lackeys, talking together in their usual lackey language, said: —He must be some English milord.

The supper was like most Parisian suppers: first silence, then an indistinguishable rush of words; then jokes, mostly insipid, false news, bad logic, a little politics, a great deal of malice. They even talked of new books.

—Have you seen the new novel by Dr. Gauchat, the theologian?[7] asked the abbé from Perigord.

—Oh yes, answered one of the guests; but I couldn't finish it. We have a horde of impudent scribblers nowadays, but all of them put together don't match the impudence of this Gauchat, this doctor of theology. I have been so struck by the enormous number of detestable books which are swamping us that I have taken up punting at faro.

—And the *Collected Essays* of Archdeacon T——[8] asked the abbé, what do you think of them?

—Ah, said Madame de Parolignac, what a frightful bore he is! He takes such pains to tell you what everyone knows; he discourses so learnedly on matters which aren't worth a casual remark! He plunders, and not even wittily, the wit of other people! He spoils what he plunders, he's disgusting! But he'll never disgust me again; a couple of pages of the archdeacon have been enough for me.

6. A *paroli* is an illegal redoubling of one's bet; her name therefore implies a title grounded in cardsharping. 7. He had written against Voltaire, and Voltaire suspected him (wrongly) of having committed a novel, *L'Oracle des nouveaux philosophes*. 8. His name was Trublet, and he had said, among other disagreeable things, that Voltaire's epic poem, the *Henriade*, made him yawn and that Voltaire's genius was "the perfection of mediocrity."

There was at table a man of learning and taste, who supported the marquise on this point. They talked next of tragedies; the lady asked why there were tragedies which played well enough but which were wholly unreadable. The man of taste explained very clearly how a play could have a certain interest and yet little merit otherwise; he showed succinctly that it was not enough to conduct a couple of intrigues, such as one can find in any novel, and which never fail to excite the spectator's interest; but that one must be new without being grotesque, frequently touch the sublime but never depart from the natural; that one must know the human heart and give it words; that one must be a great poet without allowing any character in the play to sound like a poet; and that one must know the language perfectly, speak it purely, and maintain a continual harmony without ever sacrificing sense to mere sound.

—Whoever, he added, does not observe all these rules may write one or two tragedies which succeed in the theatre, but he will never be ranked among the good writers; there are very few good tragedies; some are idylls in well-written, well-rhymed dialogue, others are political arguments which put the audience to sleep, or revolting pomposities; still others are the fantasies of enthusiasts, barbarous in style, incoherent in logic, full of long speeches to the gods because the author does not know how to address men, full of false maxims and emphatic commonplaces.

Candide listened attentively to this speech and conceived a high opinion of the speaker; and as the marquise had placed him by her side, he turned to ask her who was this man who spoke so well.

—He is a scholar, said the lady, who never plays cards and whom the abbé sometimes brings to my house for supper; he knows all about tragedies and books, and has himself written a tragedy that was hissed from the stage and a book, the only copy of which ever seen outside his publisher's office was dedicated to me.

—What a great man, said Candide, he's Pangloss all over.

Then, turning to him, he said: —Sir, you doubtless think everything is for the best in the physical as well as the moral universe, and that nothing could be otherwise than as it is?

—Not at all, sir, replied the scholar, I believe nothing of the sort. I find that everything goes wrong in our world; that nobody knows his place in society or his duty, what he's doing or what he ought to be doing, and that outside of mealtimes, which are cheerful and congenial enough, all the rest of the day is spent in useless quarrels, as of Jansenists against Molinists,[9] parliament-men against churchmen, literary men against literary men, courtiers against courtiers,

9. The Jansenists (from Corneille Jansen, 1585–1638) were a relatively strict party of religious reform; the Molinists (from Luis Molina) were the party of the Jesuits. Their central issue of controversy was the relative importance of divine grace and human will to the salvation of man.

financiers against the plebs, wives against husbands, relatives against relatives—it's one unending warfare.

Candide answered: —I have seen worse; but a wise man, who has since had the misfortune to be hanged, taught me that everything was marvelously well arranged. Troubles are just the shadows in a beautiful picture.

—Your hanged philosopher was joking, said Martin; the shadows are horrible ugly blots.

—It is human beings who make the blots, said Candide, and they can't do otherwise.

—Then it isn't their fault, said Martin.

Most of the faro players, who understood this sort of talk not at all, kept on drinking; Martin disputed with the scholar, and Candide told part of his story to the lady of the house.

After supper, the marquise brought Candide into her room and sat him down on a divan.

—Well, she said to him, are you still madly in love with Miss Cunégonde of Thunder-Ten-Tronckh?

—Yes, ma'am, replied Candide. The marquise turned upon him a tender smile.

—You answer like a young man of Westphalia, said she; a Frenchman would have told me: 'It is true that I have been in love with Miss Cunégonde; but since seeing you, madame, I fear that I love her no longer.'

—Alas, ma'am, said Candide, I will answer any way you want.

—Your passion for her, said the marquise, began when you picked up her handkerchief; I prefer that you should pick up my garter.

—Gladly, said Candide, and picked it up.

—But I also want you to put it back on, said the lady; and Candide put it on again.

—Look you now, said the lady, you are a foreigner; my Paris lovers I sometimes cause to languish for two weeks or so, but to you I surrender the very first night, because we must render the honors of the country to a young man from Westphalia.

The beauty, who had seen two enormous diamonds on the two hands of her young friend, praised them so sincerely that from the fingers of Candide they passed over to the fingers of the marquise.

As he returned home with his Perigord abbé, Candide felt some remorse at having been unfaithful to Miss Cunégonde; the abbé sympathized with his grief; he had only a small share in the fifty thousand francs which Candide lost at cards, and in the proceeds of the two diamonds which had been half-given, half-extorted. His scheme was to profit, as much as he could, from the advantage of knowing Candide. He spoke at length of Cunégonde, and Candide told him that he would beg forgiveness for his beloved for his infidelity when he met her at Venice.

The Perigordian overflowed with politeness and unction, taking a tender interest in everything Candide said, everything he did, and everything he wanted to do.

—Well, sir, said he, so you have an assignation at Venice?

—Yes indeed, sir, I do, said Candide; it is absolutely imperative that I go there to find Miss Cunégonde.

And then, carried away by the pleasure of talking about his love, he recounted, as he often did, a part of his adventures with that illustrious lady of Westphalia.

—I suppose, said the abbé, that Miss Cunégonde has a fine wit and writes charming letters.

—I never received a single letter from her, said Candide; for, as you can imagine, after being driven out of the castle for love of her, I couldn't write; shortly I learned that she was dead; then I rediscovered her; then I lost her again, and I have now sent, to a place more than twenty-five hundred leagues from here, a special agent whose return I am expecting.

The abbé listened carefully, and looked a bit dreamy. He soon took his leave of the two strangers, after embracing them tenderly. Next day Candide, when he woke up, received a letter, to the following effect:

—Dear sir, my very dear lover, I have been lying sick in this town for a week, I have just learned that you are here. I would fly to your arms if I could move. I heard that you had passed through Bordeaux; that was where I left the faithful Cacambo and the old woman, who are soon to follow me here. The governor of Buenos Aires took everything, but left me your heart. Come; your presence will either return me to life or cause me to die of joy.

This charming letter, coming so unexpectedly, filled Candide with inexpressible delight, while the illness of his dear Cunégonde covered him with grief. Torn between these two feelings, he took gold and diamonds, and had himself brought, with Martin, to the hotel where Miss Cunégonde was lodging. Trembling with emotion, he enters the room; his heart thumps, his voice breaks. He tries to open the curtains of the bed, he asks to have some lights.

—Absolutely forbidden, says the serving girl; light will be the death of her.

And abruptly she pulls shut the curtain.

—My dear Cunégonde, says Candide in tears, how are you feeling? If you can't see me, won't you at least speak to me?

—She can't talk, says the servant.

But then she draws forth from the bed a plump hand, over which Candide weeps a long time, and which he fills with diamonds, meanwhile leaving a bag of gold on the chair.

Amid his transports, there arrives a bailiff followed by the abbé

from Perigord and a strong-arm squad.

—These here are the suspicious foreigners? says the officer; and he has them seized and orders his bullies to drag them off to jail.

—They don't treat visitors like this in Eldorado, says Candide.

—I am more a Manichee than ever, says Martin.

—But, please sir, where are you taking us? says Candide.

—To the lowest hole in the dungeons, says the bailiff.

Martin, having regained his self-possession, decided that the lady who pretended to be Cunégonde was a cheat, the abbé from Perigord was another cheat who had imposed on Candide's innocence, and the bailiff still another cheat, of whom it would be easy to get rid.

Rather than submit to the forms of justice, Candide, enlightened by Martin's advice and eager for his own part to see the real Cunégonde again, offered the bailiff three little diamonds worth about three thousand pistoles apiece.

—Ah, my dear sir! cried the man with the ivory staff, even if you have committed every crime imaginable, you are the most honest man in the world. Three diamonds! each one worth three thousand pistoles! My dear sir! I would gladly die for you, rather than take you to jail. All foreigners get arrested here; but let me manage it; I have a brother at Dieppe in Normandy; I'll take you to him; and if you have a bit of a diamond to give him, he'll take care of you, just like me.

—And why do they arrest all foreigners? asked Candide.

The abbé from Perigord spoke up and said: —It's because a beggar from Atrebatum[1] listened to some stupidities; that made him commit a parricide, not like the one of May, 1610, but like the one of December, 1594, much on the order of several other crimes committed in other years and other months by other beggars who had listened to stupidities.

The bailiff then explained what it was all about.[2]

—Foh! what beasts! cried Candide. What! monstrous behavior of this sort from a people who sing and dance? As soon as I can, let me get out of this country, where the monkeys provoke the tigers. In my own country I've lived with bears; only in Eldorado are there proper men. In the name of God, sir bailiff, get me to Venice where I can wait for Miss Cunégonde.

—I can only get you to Lower Normandy, said the guardsman.

He had the irons removed at once, said there had been a mistake,

1. The Latin name for the district of Artois, from which came Robert-François Damiens, who tried to stab Louis XV in 1757. The assassination failed, like that of Châtel, who tried to kill Henri IV in 1594, but unlike that of Ravaillac, who succeeded in killing him in 1610. 2. The point, in fact, is not too clear since arresting foreigners is an indirect way at best to guard against homegrown fanatics, and the position of the abbé from Perigord in the whole transaction remains confused. Has he called in the officer just to get rid of Candide? If so, why is he sardonic about the very suspicions he is trying to foster? Candide's reaction is to the notion that Frenchmen should be capable of political assassination at all; it seems excessive.

dismissed his gang, and took Candide and Martin to Dieppe, where he left them with his brother. There was a little Dutch ship at anchor. The Norman, changed by three more diamonds into the most helpful of men, put Candide and his people aboard the vessel, which was bound for Portsmouth in England. It wasn't on the way to Venice, but Candide felt like a man just let out of hell; and he hoped to get back on the road to Venice at the first possible occasion.

CHAPTER 23
Candide and Martin Pass the Shores of England; What They See There

—Ah, Pangloss! Pangloss! Ah, Martin! Martin! Ah, my darling Cunégonde! What is this world of ours? sighed Candide on the Dutch vessel.

—Something crazy, something abominable, Martin replied.

—You have been in England; are people as crazy there as in France?

—It's a different sort of crazy, said Martin. You know that these two nations have been at war over a few acres of snow near Canada, and that they are spending on this fine struggle more than Canada itself is worth.[3] As for telling you if there are more people in one country or the other who need a strait jacket, that is a judgment too fine for my understanding; I know only that the people we are going to visit are eaten up with melancholy.

As they chatted thus, the vessel touched at Portsmouth. A multitude of people covered the shore, watching closely a rather bulky man who was kneeling, his eyes blindfolded, on the deck of a man-of-war. Four soldiers, stationed directly in front of this man, fired three bullets apiece into his brain, as peaceably as you would want; and the whole assemblage went home, in great satisfaction.[4]

—What's all this about? asked Candide. What devil is everywhere at work?

He asked who was that big man who had just been killed with so much ceremony.

—It was an admiral, they told him.

—And why kill this admiral?

—The reason, they told him, is that he didn't kill enough people; he gave battle to a French admiral, and it was found that he didn't get close enough to him.

—But, said Candide, the French admiral was just as far from the

3. The wars of the French and English over Canada dragged intermittently through the eighteenth century till the peace of Paris sealed England's conquest (1763). Voltaire thought the French should concentrate on developing Louisiana where the Jesuit influence was less marked.
4. Candide has witnessed the execution of Admiral John Byng, defeated off Minorca by the French fleet under Galisonnière and executed by firing squad on March 14, 1757. Voltaire had intervened to avert the execution.

English admiral as the English admiral was from the French admiral.

—That's perfectly true, came the answer; but in this country it is useful from time to time to kill one admiral in order to encourage the others.

Candide was so stunned and shocked at what he saw and heard, that he would not even set foot ashore; he arranged with the Dutch merchant (without even caring if he was robbed, as at Surinam) to be taken forthwith to Venice.

The merchant was ready in two days; they coasted along France, they passed within sight of Lisbon, and Candide quivered. They entered the straits, crossed the Mediterranean, and finally landed at Venice.

—God be praised, said Candide, embracing Martin; here I shall recover the lovely Cunégonde. I trust Cacambo as I would myself. All is well, all goes well, all goes as well as possible.

CHAPTER 24
About Paquette and Brother Giroflée

As soon as he was in Venice, he had a search made for Cacambo in all the inns, all the cafés, all the stews—and found no trace of him. Every day he sent to investigate the vessels and coastal traders; no news of Cacambo.

—How's this? said he to Martin. I have had time to go from Surinam to Bordeaux, from Bordeaux to Paris, from Paris to Dieppe, from Dieppe to Portsmouth, to skirt Portugal and Spain, cross the Mediterranean, and spend several months at Venice—and the lovely Cunégonde has not come yet! In her place, I have met only that impersonator and that abbé from Perigord. Cunégonde is dead, without a doubt; and nothing remains for me too but death. Oh, it would have been better to stay in the earthly paradise of Eldorado than to return to this accursed Europe. How right you are, my dear Martin; all is but illusion and disaster.

He fell into a black melancholy, and refused to attend the fashionable operas or take part in the other diversions of the carnival season; not a single lady tempted him in the slightest. Martin told him: —You're a real simpleton if you think a half-breed valet with five or six millions in his pockets will go to the end of the world to get your mistress and bring her to Venice for you. If he finds her, he'll take her for himself; if he doesn't, he'll take another. I advise you to forget about your servant Cacambo and your mistress Cunégonde.

Martin was not very comforting. Candide's melancholy increased, and Martin never wearied of showing him that there is little virtue

and little happiness on this earth, except perhaps in Eldorado, where nobody can go.

While they were discussing this important matter and still waiting for Cunégonde, Candide noticed in St. Mark's Square a young Theatine[5] monk who had given his arm to a girl. The Theatine seemed fresh, plump, and flourishing; his eyes were bright, his manner cocky, his glance brilliant, his step proud. The girl was very pretty, and singing aloud; she glanced lovingly at her Theatine, and from time to time pinched his plump cheeks.

—At least you must admit, said Candide to Martin, that these people are happy. Until now I have not found in the whole inhabited earth, except Eldorado, anything but miserable people. But this girl and this monk, I'd be willing to bet, are very happy creatures.

—I'll bet they aren't, said Martin.

—We have only to ask them to dinner, said Candide, and we'll find out if I'm wrong.

Promptly he approached them, made his compliments, and invited them to his inn for a meal of macaroni, Lombardy partridges, and caviar, washed down with wine from Montepulciano, Cyprus, and Samos, and some Lacrima Christi. The girl blushed but the Theatine accepted gladly, and the girl followed him, watching Candide with an expression of surprise and confusion, darkened by several tears. Scarcely had she entered the room when she said to Candide: —What, can it be that Master Candide no longer knows Paquette?

At these words Candide, who had not yet looked carefully at her because he was preoccupied with Cunégonde, said to her: —Ah, my poor child! so you are the one who put Doctor Pangloss in the fine fix where I last saw him.

—Alas, sir, I was the one, said Paquette; I see you know all about it. I heard of the horrible misfortunes which befell the whole household of My Lady the Baroness and the lovely Cunégonde. I swear to you that my own fate has been just as unhappy. I was perfectly innocent when you knew me. A Franciscan, who was my confessor, easily seduced me. The consequences were frightful; shortly after My Lord the Baron had driven you out with great kicks on the backside, I too was forced to leave the castle. If a famous doctor had not taken pity on me, I would have died. Out of gratitude, I became for some time the mistress of this doctor. His wife, who was jealous to the point of frenzy, beat me mercilessly every day; she was a gorgon. The doctor was the ugliest of men, and I the most miserable creature on earth, being continually beaten for a man I did not love. You will understand, sir, how dangerous it is for a nagging woman to be married to a doctor. This man, enraged by his wife's ways, one day

5. A Catholic order founded in 1524 by Cardinal Cajetan and G. P. Caraffa, later Pope Paul IV.

gave her as a cold cure a medicine so potent that in two hours' time she died amid horrible convulsions. Her relatives brought suit against the bereaved husband; he fled the country, and I was put in prison. My innocence would never have saved me if I had not been rather pretty. The judge set me free on condition that he should become the doctor's successor. I was shortly replaced in this post by another girl, dismissed without any payment, and obliged to continue this abominable trade which you men find so pleasant and which for us is nothing but a bottomless pit of misery. I went to ply the trade in Venice. Ah, my dear sir, if you could imagine what it is like to have to caress indiscriminately an old merchant, a lawyer, a monk, a gondolier, an abbé; to be subjected to every sort of insult and outrage; to be reduced, time and again, to borrowing a skirt in order to go have it lifted by some disgusting man; to be robbed by this fellow of what one has gained from that; to be shaken down by the police, and to have before one only the prospect of a hideous old age, a hospital, and a dunghill, you will conclude that I am one of the most miserable creatures in the world.

Thus Paquette poured forth her heart to the good Candide in a hotel room, while Martin sat listening nearby. At last he said to Candide: —You see, I've already won half my bet.

Brother Giroflée[6] had remained in the dining room, and was having a drink before dinner.

—But how's this? said Candide to Paquette. You looked so happy, so joyous, when I met you; you were singing, you caressed the Theatine with such a natural air of delight; you seemed to me just as happy as you now say you are miserable.

—Ah, sir, replied Paquette, that's another one of the miseries of this business; yesterday I was robbed and beaten by an officer, and today I have to seem in good humor in order to please a monk.

Candide wanted no more; he conceded that Martin was right. They sat down to table with Paquette and the Theatine; the meal was amusing enough, and when it was over, the company spoke out among themselves with some frankness.

—Father, said Candide to the monk, you seem to me a man whom all the world might envy; the flower of health glows in your cheek, your features radiate pleasure; you have a pretty girl for your diversion, and you seem very happy with your life as a Theatine.

—Upon my word, sir, said Brother Giroflée, I wish that all the Theatines were at the bottom of the sea. A hundred times I have been tempted to set fire to my convent, and go turn Turk. My parents forced me, when I was fifteen years old, to put on this detestable robe, so they could leave more money to a cursed older brother of

6. His name means "gillyflower," and Paquette means "daisy."

mine, may God confound him! Jealousy, faction, and fury spring up, by natural law, within the walls of convents. It is true, I have preached a few bad sermons which earned me a little money, half of which the prior stole from me; the remainder serves to keep me in girls. But when I have to go back to the monastery at night, I'm ready to smash my head against the walls of my cell; and all my fellow monks are in the same fix.

Martin turned to Candide and said with his customary coolness:

—Well, haven't I won the whole bet?

Candide gave two thousand piastres to Paquette and a thousand to Brother Giroflée.

—I assure you, said he, that with that they will be happy.

—I don't believe so, said Martin; your piastres may make them even more unhappy than they were before.

—That may be, said Candide; but one thing comforts me, I note that people often turn up whom one never expected to see again; it may well be that, having rediscovered my red sheep and Paquette, I will also rediscover Cunégonde.

—I hope, said Martin, that she will some day make you happy; but I very much doubt it.

—You're a hard man, said Candide.

—I've lived, said Martin.

—But look at these gondoliers, said Candide; aren't they always singing?

—You don't see them at home, said Martin, with their wives and squalling children. The doge has his troubles, the gondoliers theirs. It's true that on the whole one is better off as a gondolier than as a doge; but the difference is so slight, I don't suppose it's worth the trouble of discussing.

—There's a lot of talk here, said Candide, of this Senator Pococurante,[7] who has a fine palace on the Brenta and is hospitable to foreigners. They say he is a man who has never known a moment's grief.

—I'd like to see such a rare specimen, said Martin.

Candide promptly sent to Lord Pococurante, asking permission to call on him tomorrow.

CHAPTER 25
Visit to Lord Pococurante, Venetian Nobleman

Candide and Martin took a gondola on the Brenta, and soon reached the palace of the noble Pococurante. The gardens were large and filled with beautiful marble statues; the palace was handsomely designed. The master of the house, sixty years old and very rich,

7. His name means "small care."

received his two inquisitive visitors perfectly politely, but with very little warmth; Candide was disconcerted and Martin not at all displeased.

First two pretty and neatly dressed girls served chocolate, which they whipped to a froth. Candide could not forbear praising their beauty, their grace, their skill.

—They are pretty good creatures, said Pococurante; I sometimes have them into my bed, for I'm tired of the ladies of the town, with their stupid tricks, quarrels, jealousies, fits of ill humor and petty pride, and all the sonnets one has to make or order for them; but, after all, these two girls are starting to bore me too.

After lunch, Candide strolled through a long gallery, and was amazed at the beauty of the pictures. He asked who was the painter of the two finest.

—They are by Raphael, said the senator; I bought them for a lot of money, out of vanity, some years ago; people say they're the finest in Italy, but they don't please me at all; the colors have all turned brown, the figures aren't well modeled and don't stand out enough, the draperies bear no resemblance to real cloth. In a word, whatever people may say, I don't find in them a real imitation of nature. I like a picture only when I can see in it a touch of nature itself, and there are none of this sort. I have many paintings, but I no longer look at them.

As they waited for dinner, Pococurante ordered a concerto performed. Candide found the music delightful.

—That noise? said Pococurante. It may amuse you for half an hour, but if it goes on any longer, it tires everybody though no one dares to admit it. Music today is only the art of performing difficult pieces, and what is merely difficult cannot please for long. Perhaps I should prefer the opera, if they had not found ways to make it revolting and monstrous. Anyone who likes bad tragedies set to music is welcome to them; in these performances the scenes serve only to introduce, inappropriately, two or three ridiculous songs designed to show off the actress's sound box. Anyone who wants to, or who can, is welcome to swoon with pleasure at the sight of a castrate wriggling through the role of Caesar or Cato, and strutting awkwardly about the stage. For my part, I have long since given up these paltry trifles which are called the glory of modern Italy, and for which monarchs pay such ruinous prices.

Candide argued a bit, but timidly; Martin was entirely of a mind with the senator.

They sat down to dinner, and after an excellent meal adjourned to the library. Candide, seeing a copy of Homer in a splendid binding, complimented the noble lord on his good taste.

—That is an author, said he, who was the special delight of great

Pangloss, the best philosopher in all Germany.

—He's no special delight of mine, said Pococurante coldly. I was once made to believe that I took pleasure in reading him; but that constant recital of fights which are all alike, those gods who are always interfering but never decisively, that Helen who is the cause of the war and then scarcely takes any part in the story, that Troy which is always under siege and never taken—all that bores me to tears. I have sometimes asked scholars if reading it bored them as much as it bores me; everyone who answered frankly told me the book dropped from his hands like lead, but that they had to have it in their libraries as a monument of antiquity, like those old rusty coins which can't be used in real trade.

Your Excellence doesn't hold the same opinion of Virgil? said Candide.

—I concede, said Pococurante, that the second, fourth, and sixth books of his *Aeneid* are fine; but as for his pious Aeneas, and strong Cloanthes, and faithful Achates, and little Ascanius, and that imbecile King Latinus, and middle-class Amata, and insipid Lavinia, I don't suppose there was ever anything so cold and unpleasant. I prefer Tasso and those sleepwalkers' stories of Ariosto.

—Dare I ask, sir, said Candide, if you don't get great enjoyment from reading Horace?

—There are some maxims there, said Pococurante, from which a man of the world can profit, and which, because they are formed into vigorous couplets, are more easily remembered; but I care very little for his trip to Brindisi, his description of a bad dinner, or his account of a quibblers' squabble between some fellow Pupilus, whose words he says *were full of pus*, and another whose words *were full of vinegar*.[8] I feel nothing but extreme disgust at his verses against old women and witches; and I can't see what's so great in his telling his friend Maecenas that if he is raised by him to the ranks of lyric poets, he will strike the stars with his lofty forehead. Fools admire everything in a well-known author. I read only for my own pleasure; I like only what is in my style.

Candide, who had been trained never to judge for himself, was much astonished by what he heard; and Martin found Pococurante's way of thinking quite rational.

—Oh, here is a copy of Cicero, said Candide. Now this great man I suppose you're never tired of reading.

—I never read him at all, replied the Venetian. What do I care whether he pleaded for Rabirius or Cluentius? As a judge, I have my hands full of lawsuits. I might like his philosophical works better,

8. *Satires* I. vii; Pococurante, with gentlemanly negligence, has corrupted Rupilius to Pupilus. Horace's poems against witches are *Epodes* V, VIII, XII; the one about striking the stars with his lofty forehead is *Odes* I.i.

but when I saw that he had doubts about everything, I concluded that I knew as much as he did, and that I needed no help to be ignorant.

—Ah, here are eighty volumes of collected papers from a scientific academy, cried Martin; maybe there is something good in them.

—There would be indeed, said Pococurante, if one of these silly authors had merely discovered a new way of making pins; but in all those volumes there is nothing but empty systems, not a single useful discovery.

—What a lot of stage plays I see over there, said Candide, some in Italian, some in Spanish and French.

—Yes, said the senator, three thousand of them, and not three dozen good ones. As for those collections of sermons, which all together are not worth a page of Seneca, and all these heavy volumes of theology, you may be sure I never open them, nor does anybody else.

Martin noticed some shelves full of English books.

—I suppose, said he, that a republican must delight in most of these books written in the land of liberty.

—Yes, replied Pococurante, it's a fine thing to write as you think; it is mankind's privilege. In all our Italy, people write only what they do not think; men who inhabit the land of the Caesars and Antonines dare not have an idea without the permission of a Dominican. I would rejoice in the freedom that breathes through English genius, if partisan passions did not corrupt all that is good in that precious freedom.

Candide, noting a Milton, asked if he did not consider this author a great man.

—Who? said Pococurante. That barbarian who made a long commentary on the first chapter of Genesis in ten books of crabbed verse? That clumsy imitator of the Greeks, who disfigures creation itself, and while Moses represents the eternal being as creating the world with a word, has the messiah take a big compass out of a heavenly cupboard in order to design his work? You expect me to admire the man who spoiled Tasso's hell and devil? who disguises Lucifer now as a toad, now as a pigmy? who makes him rehash the same arguments a hundred times over? who makes him argue theology? and who, taking seriously Ariosto's comic story of the invention of firearms, has the devils shooting off cannon in heaven? Neither I nor anyone else in Italy has been able to enjoy these gloomy extravagances. The marriage of Sin and Death, and the monster that Sin gives birth to, will nauseate any man whose taste is at all refined; and his long description of a hospital is good only for a gravedigger. This obscure, extravagant, and disgusting poem was despised at its birth; I treat it today as it was treated in its own country by its contempo-

raries. Anyhow, I say what I think, and care very little whether other people agree with me.

Candide was a little cast down by this speech; he respected Homer, and had a little affection for Milton.

—Alas, he said under his breath to Martin, I'm afraid this man will have a supreme contempt for our German poets.

—No harm in that, said Martin.

—Oh what a superior man, said Candide, still speaking softly, what a great genius this Pococurante must be! Nothing can please him.

Having thus looked over all the books, they went down into the garden. Candide praised its many beauties.

—I know nothing in such bad taste, said the master of the house; we have nothing but trifles here; tomorrow I am going to have one set out on a nobler design.

When the two visitors had taken leave of his excellency: —Well now, said Candide to Martin, you must agree that this was the happiest of all men, for he is superior to everything he possesses.

—Don't you see, said Martin, that he is disgusted with everything he possesses? Plato said, a long time ago, that the best stomachs are not those which refuse all food.

—But, said Candide, isn't there pleasure in criticizing everything, in seeing faults where other people think they see beauties?

—That is to say, Martin replied, that there's pleasure in having no pleasure?

—Oh well, said Candide, then I am the only happy man . . . or will be, when I see Miss Cunégonde again.

—It's always a good thing to have hope, said Martin.

But the days and the weeks slipped past; Cacambo did not come back, and Candide was so buried in his grief, that he did not even notice that Paquette and Brother Giroflée had neglected to come and thank him.

CHAPTER 26

About a Supper that Candide and Martin Had with Six Strangers, and Who They Were

One evening when Candide, accompanied by Martin, was about to sit down for dinner with the strangers staying in his hotel, a man with a soot-colored face came up behind him, took him by the arm, and said: —Be ready to leave with us, don't miss out.

He turned and saw Cacambo. Only the sight of Cunégonde could have astonished and pleased him more. He nearly went mad with joy. He embraced his dear friend.

—Cunégonde is here, no doubt? Where is she? Bring me to her, let me die of joy in her presence.

—Cunégonde is not here at all, said Cacambo, she is at Constantinople.

—Good Heavens, at Constantinople! but if she were in China, I must fly there, let's go.

—We will leave after supper, said Cacambo; I can tell you no more; I am a slave, my owner is looking for me, I must go wait on him at table; mum's the word; eat your supper and be prepared.

Candide, torn between joy and grief, delighted to have seen his faithful agent again, astonished to find him a slave, full of the idea of recovering his mistress, his heart in a turmoil, his mind in a whirl, sat down to eat with Martin, who was watching all these events coolly, and with six strangers who had come to pass the carnival season at Venice.

Cacambo, who was pouring wine for one of the strangers, leaned respectfully over his master at the end of the meal, and said to him: —Sire, Your Majesty may leave when he pleases, the vessel is ready.

Having said these words, he exited. The diners looked at one another in silent amazement, when another servant, approaching his master, said to him: —Sire, Your Majesty's litter is at Padua, and the bark awaits you.

The master nodded, and the servant vanished. All the diners looked at one another again, and the general amazement redoubled. A third servant, approaching a third stranger, said to him: —Sire, take my word for it, Your Majesty must stay here no longer; I shall get everything ready.

Then he too disappeared.

Candide and Martin had no doubt, now, that it was a carnival masquerade. A fourth servant spoke to a fourth master: —Your majesty will leave when he pleases—and went out like the others. A fifth followed suit. But the sixth servant spoke differently to the sixth stranger, who sat next to Candide. He said: —My word, sire, they'll give no more credit to Your Majesty, nor to me either; we could very well spend the night in the lockup, you and I. I've got to look out for myself, so good-bye to you.

When all the servants had left, the six strangers, Candide, and Martin remained under a pall of silence. Finally Candide broke it.

—Gentlemen, said he, here's a funny kind of joke. Why are you all royalty? I assure you that Martin and I aren't.

Cacambo's master spoke up gravely then, and said in Italian: —This is no joke, my name is Achmet the Third.[9] I was grand sultan

9. 1673–1736; he was deposed in 1730.

for several years; then, as I had dethroned my brother, my nephew dethroned me. My viziers had their throats cut; I was allowed to end my days in the old seraglio. My nephew, the Grand Sultan Mahmoud, sometimes lets me travel for my health; and I have come to spend the carnival season at Venice.

A young man who sat next to Achmet spoke after him, and said: —My name is Ivan; I was once emperor of all the Russias.[1] I was dethroned while still in my cradle; my father and mother were locked up, and I was raised in prison; I sometimes have permission to travel, though always under guard, and I have come to spend the carnival season at Venice.

The third said: —I am Charles Edward, king of England;[2] my father yielded me his rights to the kingdom, and I fought to uphold them; but they tore out the hearts of eight hundred of my partisans, and flung them in their faces. I have been in prison; now I am going to Rome, to visit the king, my father, dethroned like me and my grandfather; and I have come to pass the carnival season at Venice.

The fourth king then spoke up, and said: —I am a king of the Poles;[3] the luck of war has deprived me of my hereditary estates; my father suffered the same losses; I submit to Providence like Sultan Achmet, Emperor Ivan, and King Charles Edward, to whom I hope heaven grants long lives; and I have come to pass the carnival season at Venice.

The fifth said: —I too am a king of the Poles;[4] I lost my kingdom twice, but Providence gave me another state, in which I have been able to do more good than all the Sarmatian kings ever managed to do on the banks of the Vistula. I too have submitted to Providence, and I have come to pass the carnival season at Venice.

It remained for the sixth monarch to speak.

—Gentlemen, said he, I am no such great lord as you, but I have in fact been a king like any other. I am Theodore; I was elected king of Corsica.[5] People used to call me *Your Majesty*, and now they barely call me *Sir;* I used to coin currency, and now I don't have a cent; I used to have two secretaries of state, and now I scarcely have a valet; I have sat on a throne, and for a long time in London I was in jail, on the straw; and I may well be treated the same way here, though I have come, like your majesties, to pass the carnival season at Venice.

1. Ivan VI reigned from his birth in 1740 till 1756, then was confined in the Schlusselberg, and executed in 1764. 2. This is the Young Pretender (1720–1788), known to his supporters as Bonnie Prince Charlie. The defeat so theatrically described took place at Culloden, April 16, 1746. 3. Augustus III (1696–1763), Elector of Saxony and King of Poland, dethroned by Frederick the Great in 1756. 4. Stanislas Leczinski (1677–1766), father-in-law of Louis XV, who abdicated the throne of Poland in 1736, was made Duke of Lorraine and in that capacity befriended Voltaire. 5. Theodore von Neuhof (1690–1756), an authentic Westphalian, an adventurer and a soldier of fortune, who in 1736 was (for about eight months) the elected king of Corsica. He spent time in an Amsterdam as well as a London debtor's prison.

The five other kings listened to his story with noble compassion. Each one of them gave twenty sequins to King Theodore, so that he might buy a suit and some shirts; Candide gave him a diamond worth two thousand sequins.

—Who in the world, said the five kings, is this private citizen who is in a position to give a hundred times as much as any of us, and who actually gives it?[6]

Just as they were rising from dinner, there arrived at the same establishment four most serene highnesses, who had also lost their kingdoms through the luck of war, and who came to spend the rest of the carnival season at Venice. But Candide never bothered even to look at these newcomers because he was only concerned to go find his dear Cunégonde at Constantinople.

CHAPTER 27
Candide's Trip to Constantinople

Faithful Cacambo had already arranged with the Turkish captain who was returning Sultan Achmet to Constantinople to make room for Candide and Martin on board. Both men boarded ship after prostrating themselves before his miserable highness. On the way, Candide said to Martin: —Six dethroned kings that we had dinner with! and yet among those six there was one on whom I had to bestow charity! Perhaps there are other princes even more unfortunate. I myself have only lost a hundred sheep, and now I am flying to the arms of Cunégonde. My dear Martin, once again Pangloss is proved right, all is for the best.

—I hope so, said Martin.

—But, said Candide, that was a most unlikely experience we had at Venice. Nobody ever saw, or heard tell of, six dethroned kings eating together at an inn.

—It is no more extraordinary, said Martin, than most of the things that have happened to us. Kings are frequently dethroned; and as for the honor we had from dining with them, that's a trifle which doesn't deserve our notice.[7]

Scarcely was Candide on board than he fell on the neck of his former servant, his friend Cacambo.

6. A late correction of Voltaire's makes this passage read: —*Who is this man who is in a position to give a hundred times as much as any of us, and who actually gives it? Are you a king too, sir?*— *No, gentlemen, and I have no desire to be.* But this reading, though Voltaire's on good authority, produces a conflict with Candide's previous remark: —*Why are you all royalty? I assure you that Martin and I aren't.* Thus, it has seemed better for literary reasons to follow an earlier reading. Voltaire was very conscious of his situation as a man richer than many princes; in 1758 he had money on loan to no fewer than three highnesses, Charles Eugene, Duke of Wurtemburg; Charles Theodore, Elector Palatine; and the Duke of Saxe-Gotha. 7. Another late change adds the following question: —*What does it matter whom you dine with as long as you fare well at table?* I have omitted it, again on literary grounds.

—Well! said he, what is Cunégonde doing? Is she still a marvel of beauty? Does she still love me? How is her health? No doubt you have bought her a palace at Constantinople.

—My dear master, answered Cacambo, Cunégonde is washing dishes on the shores of the Propontis, in the house of a prince who has very few dishes to wash; she is a slave in the house of a onetime king named Ragotski,[8] to whom the Great Turk allows three crowns a day in his exile; but, what is worse than all this, she has lost all her beauty and become horribly ugly.

—Ah, beautiful or ugly, said Candide, I am an honest man, and my duty is to love her forever. But how can she be reduced to this wretched state with the five or six millions that you had?

—All right, said Cacambo, didn't I have to give two millions to Señor don Fernando d'Ibaraa y Figueroa y Mascarenes y Lampourdos y Souza, governor of Buenos Aires, for his permission to carry off Miss Cunégonde? And didn't a pirate cleverly strip us of the rest? And didn't this pirate carry us off to Cape Matapan, to Melos, Nicaria, Samos, Petra, to the Dardanelles, Marmora, Scutari? Cunégonde and the old woman are working for the prince I told you about, and I am the slave of the dethroned sultan.

—What a lot of fearful calamities linked one to the other, said Candide. But after all, I still have a few diamonds, I shall easily deliver Cunégonde. What a pity that she's become so ugly!

Then, turning toward Martin, he asked: —Who in your opinion is more to be pitied, the Emperor Achmet, the Emperor Ivan, King Charles Edward, or myself?

—I have no idea, said Martin; I would have to enter your hearts in order to tell.

—Ah, said Candide, if Pangloss were here, he would know and he would tell us.

—I can't imagine, said Martin, what scales your Pangloss would use to weigh out the miseries of men and value their griefs. All I will venture is that the earth holds millions of men who deserve our pity a hundred times more than King Charles Edward, Emperor Ivan, or Sultan Achmet.

—You may well be right, said Candide.

In a few days they arrived at the Black Sea canal. Candide began by repurchasing Cacambo at an exorbitant price; then, without losing an instant, he flung himself and his companions into a galley to go search out Cunégonde on the shores of Propontis, however ugly she might be.

There were in the chain gang two convicts who bent clumsily to

8. Francis Leopold Rakoczy (1676–1735) who was briefly king of Transylvania in the early eighteenth century. After 1720 he was interned in Turkey.

the oar, and on whose bare shoulders the Levantine[9] captain delivered from time to time a few lashes with a bullwhip. Candide naturally noticed them more than the other galley slaves, and out of pity came closer to them. Certain features of their disfigured faces seemed to him to bear a slight resemblance to Pangloss and to that wretched Jesuit, that baron, that brother of Miss Cunégonde. The notion stirred and saddened him. He looked at them more closely.

—To tell you the truth, he said to Cacambo, if I hadn't seen Master Pangloss hanged, and if I hadn't been so miserable as to murder the baron, I should think they were rowing in this very galley.

At the names of 'baron' and 'Pangloss' the two convicts gave a great cry, sat still on their bench, and dropped their oars. The Levantine captain came running, and the bullwhip lashes redoubled.

—Stop, stop, captain, cried Candide. I'll give you as much money as you want.

—What, can it be Candide? cried one of the convicts.

—What, can it be Candide? cried the other.

—Is this a dream? said Candide. Am I awake or asleep? Am I in this galley? Is that My Lord the Baron, whom I killed? Is that Master Pangloss, whom I saw hanged?

—It is indeed, they replied.

—What, is that the great philosopher? said Martin.

—Now, sir, Mr. Levantine Captain, said Candide, how much money do you want for the ransom of My Lord Thunder-Ten-Tronckh, one of the first barons of the empire, and Master Pangloss, the deepest metaphysician in all Germany?

—Dog of a Christian, replied the Levantine captain, since these two dogs of Christian convicts are barons and metaphysicians, which is no doubt a great honor in their country, you will give me fifty thousand sequins for them.

—You shall have them, sir, take me back to Constantinople and you shall be paid on the spot. Or no, take me to Miss Cunégonde.

The Levantine captain, at Candide's first word, had turned his bow toward the town, and he had them rowed there as swiftly as a bird cleaves the air.

A hundred times Candide embraced the baron and Pangloss.

—And how does it happen I didn't kill you, my dear baron? and my dear Pangloss, how can you be alive after being hanged? and why are you both rowing in the galleys of Turkey?

—Is it really true that my dear sister is in this country? asked the baron.

—Yes, answered Cacambo.

9. From the eastern Mediterranean.

—And do I really see again my dear Candide? cried Pangloss.

Candide introduced Martin and Cacambo. They all embraced; they all talked at once. The galley flew, already they were back in port. A Jew was called, and Candide sold him for fifty thousand sequins a diamond worth a hundred thousand, while he protested by Abraham that he could not possibly give more for it. Candide immediately ransomed the baron and Pangloss. The latter threw himself at the feet of his liberator, and bathed them with tears; the former thanked him with a nod, and promised to repay this bit of money at the first opportunity.

—But is it really possible that my sister is in Turkey? said he.

—Nothing is more possible, replied Cacambo, since she is a dishwasher in the house of a prince of Transylvania.

At once two more Jews were called; Candide sold some more diamonds; and they all departed in another galley to the rescue of Cunégonde.

CHAPTER 28

What Happened to Candide, Cunégonde, Pangloss, Martin, &c.

—Let me beg your pardon once more, said Candide to the baron, pardon me, reverend father, for having run you through the body with my sword.

—Don't mention it, replied the baron. I was a little too hasty myself, I confess it; but since you want to know the misfortune which brought me to the galleys, I'll tell you. After being cured of my wound by the brother who was apothecary to the college, I was attacked and abducted by a Spanish raiding party; they jailed me in Buenos Aires at the time when my sister had just left. I asked to be sent to Rome, to the father general. Instead, I was named to serve as almoner in Constantinople, under the French ambassador. I had not been a week on this job when I chanced one evening on a very handsome young ichoglan.[1] The evening was hot; the young man wanted to take a swim; I seized the occasion, and went with him. I did not know that it is a capital offense for a Christian to be found naked with a young Moslem. A cadi sentenced me to receive a hundred blows with a cane on the soles of my feet, and then to be sent to the galleys. I don't suppose there was ever such a horrible miscarriage of justice. But I would like to know why my sister is in the kitchen of a Transylvanian king exiled among Turks.

—But how about you, my dear Pangloss, said Candide; how is it possible that we have met again?

—It is true, said Pangloss, that you saw me hanged; in the normal course of things, I should have been burned, but you recall that a

1. A page to the sultan.

cloudburst occurred just as they were about to roast me. So much rain fell that they despaired of lighting the fire; thus I was hanged, for lack of anything better to do with me. A surgeon bought my body, carried me off to his house, and dissected me. First he made a cross-shaped incision in me, from the navel to the clavicle. No one could have been worse hanged than I was. In fact, the executioner of the high ceremonials of the Holy Inquisition, who was a subdeacon, burned people marvelously well, but he was not in the way of hanging them. The rope was wet, and tightened badly; it caught on a knot; in short, I was still breathing. The cross-shaped incision made me scream so loudly that the surgeon fell over backwards; he thought he was dissecting the devil, fled in an agony of fear, and fell downstairs in his flight. His wife ran in, at the noise, from a nearby room; she found me stretched out on the table with my cross-shaped incision, was even more frightened than her husband, fled, and fell over him. When they had recovered a little, I heard her say to him: 'My dear, what were you thinking of, trying to dissect a heretic? Don't you know those people are always possessed of the devil? I'm going to get the priest and have him exorcised.' At these words, I shuddered, and collected my last remaining energies to cry: 'Have mercy on me!' At last the Portuguese barber[2] took courage; he sewed me up again; his wife even nursed me; in two weeks I was up and about. The barber found me a job and made me lackey to a Knight of Malta who was going to Venice; and when this master could no longer pay me, I took service under a Venetian merchant, whom I followed to Constantinople.

—One day it occurred to me to enter a mosque; no one was there but an old imam and a very attractive young worshipper who was saying her prayers. Her bosom was completely bare; and between her two breasts she had a lovely bouquet of tulips, roses, anemones, buttercups, hyacinths, and primroses. She dropped her bouquet, I picked it up, and returned it to her with the most respectful attentions. I was so long getting it back in place that the imam grew angry, and, seeing that I was a Christian, he called the guard. They took me before the cadi, who sentenced me to receive a hundred blows with a cane on the soles of my feet, and then to be sent to the galleys. I was chained to the same galley and precisely the same bench as My Lord the Baron. There were in this galley four young fellows from Marseilles, five Neapolitan priests, and two Corfu monks, who assured us that these things happen every day. My Lord the Baron asserted that he had suffered a greater injustice than I; I, on the other hand, proposed that it was much more permissible to replace a bouquet in a bosom than to be found naked with an ichoglan. We were arguing

2. The two callings of barber and surgeon, since they both involved sharp instruments, were interchangeable in the early days of medicine.

the point continually, and getting twenty lashes a day with the bullwhip, when the chain of events within this universe brought you to our galley, and you ransomed us.

—Well, my dear Pangloss, Candide said to him, now that you have been hanged, dissected, beaten to a pulp, and sentenced to the galleys, do you still think everything is for the best in this world?

—I am still of my first opinion, replied Pangloss; for after all I am a philosopher, and it would not be right for me to recant since Leibniz could not possibly be wrong, and besides pre-established harmony is the finest notion in the world, like the plenum and subtle matter.[3]

CHAPTER 29
How Candide Found Cunégonde and the Old Woman Again

While Candide, the baron, Pangloss, Martin, and Cacambo were telling one another their stories, while they were disputing over the contingent or non-contingent events of this universe, while they were arguing over effects and causes, over moral evil and physical evil, over liberty and necessity, and over the consolations available to one in a Turkish galley, they arrived at the shores of Propontis and the house of the prince of Transylvania. The first sight to meet their eyes was Cunégonde and the old woman, who were hanging out towels on lines to dry.

The baron paled at what he saw. The tender lover Candide, seeing his lovely Cunégonde with her skin weathered, her eyes bloodshot, her breasts fallen, her cheeks seamed, her arms red and scaly, recoiled three steps in horror, and then advanced only out of politeness. She embarced Candide and her brother; everyone embraced the old woman; Candide ransomed them both.

There was a little farm in the neighborhood; the old woman suggested that Candide occupy it until some better fate should befall the group. Cunégonde did not know she was ugly, no one had told her; she reminded Candide of his promises in so firm a tone that the good Candide did not dare to refuse her. So he went to tell the baron that he was going to marry his sister.

—Never will I endure, said the baron, such baseness on her part, such insolence on yours; this shame at least I will not put up with; why, my sister's children would not be able to enter the Chapters in Germany.[4] No, my sister will never marry anyone but a baron of the empire.

3. Rigorous determinism requires that there be no empty spaces in the universe, so wherever it seems empty, one posits the existence of the "plenum." "Subtle matter" describes the soul, the mind, and all spiritual agencies—which can, therefore, be supposed subject to the influence and control of the great world machine, which is, of course, visibly material. Both are concepts needed to round out the system of optimistic determinism. 4. Knightly assemblies.

Cunégonde threw herself at his feet, and bathed them with her tears; he was inflexible.

—You absolute idiot, Candide told him, I rescued you from the galleys, I paid your ransom, I paid your sister's; she was washing dishes, she is ugly, I am good enough to make her my wife, and you still presume to oppose it! If I followed my impulses, I would kill you all over again.

—You may kill me again, said the baron, but you will not marry my sister while I am alive.

CHAPTER 30
Conclusion

At heart, Candide had no real wish to marry Cunégonde; but the baron's extreme impertinence decided him in favor of the marriage, and Cunégonde was so eager for it that he could not back out. He consulted Pangloss, Martin, and the faithful Cacambo. Pangloss drew up a fine treatise, in which he proved that the baron had no right over his sister and that she could, according to all the laws of the empire, marry Candide morganatically.[5] Martin said they should throw the baron into the sea. Cacambo thought they should send him back to the Levantine captain to finish his time in the galleys, and then send him to the father general in Rome by the first vessel. This seemed the best idea; the old woman approved, and nothing was said to his sister; the plan was executed, at modest expense, and they had the double pleasure of snaring a Jesuit and punishing the pride of a German baron.

It is quite natural to suppose that after so many misfortunes, Candide, married to his mistress, and living with the philosopher Pangloss, the philosopher Martin, the prudent Cacambo, and the old woman—having, besides, brought back so many diamonds from the land of the ancient Incas—must have led the most agreeable life in the world. But he was so cheated by the Jews[6] that nothing was left but his little farm; his wife, growing every day more ugly, became sour-tempered and insupportable; the old woman was ailing and even more ill-humored than Cunégonde. Cacambo, who worked in the garden and went into Constantinople to sell vegetables, was worn out with toil, and cursed his fate. Pangloss was in despair at being unable to shine in some German university. As for Martin, he was firmly persuaded that things are just as bad wherever you are; he endured in patience. Candide, Martin, and Pangloss sometimes argued over metaphysics and morals. Before the windows of the farmhouse they often watched the passage of boats bearing effendis, pashas, and

5. A morganatic marriage confers no rights on the partner of lower rank or on the offspring.
6. Voltaire's anti-Semitism, derived from various unhappy experiences with Jewish financiers, is not the most attractive aspect of his personality.

cadis into exile on Lemnos, Mytilene, and Erzeroum; they saw other cadis, other pashas, other effendis coming, to take the place of the exiles and to be exiled in their turn. They saw various heads, neatly impaled, to be set up at the Sublime Porte.[7] These sights gave fresh impetus to their discussions; and when they were not arguing, the boredom was so fierce that one day the old woman ventured to say: —I should like to know which is worse, being raped a hundred times by negro pirates, having a buttock cut off, running the gauntlet in the Bulgar army, being flogged and hanged in an auto-da-fé, being dissected and rowing in the galleys—experiencing, in a word, all the miseries through which we have passed—or else just sitting here and doing nothing?

—It's a hard question, said Candide.

These words gave rise to new reflections, and Martin in particular concluded that man was bound to live either in convulsions of misery or in the lethargy of boredom. Candide did not agree, but expressed no positive opinion. Pangloss asserted that he had always suffered horribly; but having once declared that everything was marvelously well, he continued to repeat the opinion and didn't believe a word of it.

One thing served to confirm Martin in his detestable opinions, to make Candide hesitate more than ever, and to embarrass Pangloss. It was the arrival one day at their farm of Paquette and Brother Giroflée, who were in the last stages of misery. They had quickly run through their three thousand piastres, had split up, made up, quarreled, been jailed, escaped, and finally Brother Giroflée had turned Turk. Paquette continued to ply her trade everywhere, and no longer made any money at it.

—I told you, said Martin to Candide, that your gifts would soon be squandered and would only render them more unhappy. You have spent millions of piastres, you and Cacambo, and you are no more happy than Brother Giroflée and Paquette.

—Ah ha, said Pangloss to Paquette, so destiny has brought you back in our midst, my poor girl! Do you realize you cost me the end of my nose, one eye, and an ear? And look at you now! eh! what a world it is, after all!

This new adventure caused them to philosophize more than ever.

There was in the neighborhood a very famous dervish, who was said to be the best philosopher in Turkey; they went to ask his advice. Pangloss was spokesman, and he said: —Master, we have come to ask you to tell us why such a strange animal as man was created.

7. The gate of the sultan's palace is often used by extension to describe his government as a whole. But it was in fact a real gate where the heads of traitors and public enemies were gruesomely exposed.

—What are you getting into? answered the dervish. Is it any of your business?

—But, reverend father, said Candide, there's a horrible lot of evil on the face of the earth.

—What does it matter, said the dervish, whether there's good or evil? When his highness sends a ship to Egypt, does he worry whether the mice on board are comfortable or not?

—What shall we do then? asked Pangloss.

—Hold your tongue, said the dervish.

—I had hoped, said Pangloss, to reason a while with you concerning effects and causes, the best of possible worlds, the origin of evil, the nature of the soul, and pre-established harmony.

At these words, the dervish slammed the door in their faces.

During this interview, word was spreading that at Constantinople they had just strangled two viziers of the divan,[8] as well as the mufti, and impaled several of their friends. This catastrophe made a great and general sensation for several hours. Pangloss, Candide, and Martin, as they returned to their little farm, passed a good old man who was enjoying the cool of the day at his doorstep under a grove of orange trees. Pangloss, who was as inquisitive as he was explanatory, asked the name of the mufti who had been strangled.

—I know nothing of it, said the good man, and I have never cared to know the name of a single mufti or vizier. I am completely ignorant of the episode you are discussing. I presume that in general those who meddle in public business sometimes perish miserably, and that they deserve their fate; but I never listen to the news from Constantinople; I am satisfied with sending the fruits of my garden to be sold there.

Having spoken these words, he asked the strangers into his house; his two daughters and two sons offered them various sherbets which they had made themselves, Turkish cream flavored with candied citron, orange, lemon, lime, pineapple, pistachio, and mocha coffee uncontaminated by the inferior coffee of Batavia and the East Indies. After which the two daughters of this good Moslem perfumed the beards of Candide, Pangloss, and Martin.

—You must possess, Candide said to the Turk, an enormous and splendid property?

I have only twenty acres, replied the Turk; I cultivate them with my children, and the work keeps us from three great evils, boredom, vice, and poverty.

Candide, as he walked back to his farm, meditated deeply over the words of the Turk. He said to Pangloss and Martin: —This good old

8. Intimate advisers of the sultan.

man seems to have found himself a fate preferable to that of the six kings with whom we had the honor of dining.

—Great place, said Pangloss, is very perilous in the judgment of all the philosophers; for, after all, Eglon, king of the Moabites, was murdered by Ehud; Absalom was hung up by the hair and pierced with three darts; King Nadab, son of Jeroboam, was killed by Baasha; King Elah by Zimri; Ahaziah by Jehu; Athaliah by Jehoiada; and Kings Jehoiakim, Jeconiah, and Zedekiah were enslaved. You know how death came to Croesus, Astyages, Darius, Dionysius of Syracuse, Pyrrhus, Perseus, Hannibal, Jugurtha, Ariovistus, Caesar, Pompey, Nero, Otho, Vitellius, Domitian, Richard II of England, Edward II, Henry VI, Richard III, Mary Stuart, Charles I, the three Henrys of France, and the Emperor Henry IV? You know . . .

—I know also, said Candide, that we must cultivate our garden.

—You are perfectly right, said Pangloss; for when man was put into the garden of Eden, he was put there *ut operaretur eum*, so that he should work it; this proves that man was not born to take his ease.

—Let's work without speculating, said Martin; it's the only way of rendering life bearable.

The whole little group entered into this laudable scheme; each one began to exercise his talents. The little plot yielded fine crops. Cunégonde was, to tell the truth, remarkably ugly; but she became an excellent pastry cook. Paquette took up embroidery; the old woman did the laundry. Everyone, down even to Brother Giroflée, did something useful; he became a very adequate carpenter, and even an honest man; and Pangloss sometimes used to say to Candide: —All events are linked together in the best of possible worlds; for, after all, if you had not been driven from a fine castle by being kicked in the backside for love of Miss Cunégonde, if you hadn't been sent before the Inquisition, if you hadn't traveled across America on foot, if you hadn't given a good sword thrust to the baron, if you hadn't lost all your sheep from the good land of Eldorado, you wouldn't be sitting here eating candied citron and pistachios.

—That is very well put, said Candide, but we must cultivate our garden.

Masterpieces of the Nineteenth Century: Varieties of Romanticism

Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive, / But to be young was very heaven." William Wordsworth alludes here to his experience, at the age of seventeen, of the French Revolution. The possibility of referring to a national cataclysm in such terms suggests the remarkable shift in sensibility, in dominant assumptions, in intellectual preoccupations, that occurred late in the eighteenth century. We call the evidence of that shift "Romanticism"—a designation so grandly inclusive as to defy definition. If our terms for the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries ("Enlightenment," "Age of Reason") emphasize one aspect of the prevailing intellectual culture to the exclusion of others equally important, the label "Romanticism" refers to so many cultural manifestations that one can hardly pin it down. In general, it implies new emphasis on imagination, on feeling, on the value of the primitive and untrammeled, and particularly a narrowing of outlook from the universal to the particular, from humankind or "man" to nation or ethnic group, and from the stability of community to the "fulfillment" of the individual. Such shifts have important political and philosophic as well as literary implications.

In the writings of individuals, one finds lines of continuity between the late and early parts of the eighteenth century; but when it comes to generalizations, all the important truths appear to have reversed themselves. In the middle of the century, reason was the guide to certainty; at the century's end, *feeling* tested authenticity. Earlier, tradition still anchored experience; now, the ideal of joyous liberation implied rejection of traditional authority. Wisdom had long associated itself with maturity, even with old age; by the end of the eighteenth century, Chateaubriand could glorify the child's capacity for feeling ("The morning of life is like the morning of the day, pure, picturesque, and harmonious") as implicitly superior to the older man's disillusionment. Voltaire had valued experience as a vital means of knowledge; at the beginning of the nineteenth century, innocence—in its nature evanescent—provided a more generally treasured resource.

Cause and effect, in such massive shifts of perspective, can never be ascertained. The French Revolution derived from new ideas about the sacredness of the individual; it also helped to generate such ideas. Without trying to distinguish causes from effects—indeed, with a strong suspicion that the

period's striking phenomena constitute simultaneous causes and effects—one can specify a number of ways that the world appeared to change, as the eighteenth century approached the nineteenth, as well as ways that these changes both solidified themselves and evoked challenges later in the nineteenth century.

NEW AND OLD

The embattled farmer of Concord fired the shot heard round the world in 1775; fourteen years later, the Bastille fell. Both the American and the French Revolution developed out of strong convictions about the innate rights of individual human beings—in other words, Protestantism in political form. Those who developed revolutionary theory glimpsed new human possibility. The hope of salvation lay in the overturn of established institutions.

Even in countries where revolution had not yet been accomplished, political ferment raged. In Russia, for example, one reactionary czar succeeded another, with brief intervals of apparent progressivism; a third of the population lived in serfdom. But many members of the upper classes in particular had absorbed western ideas by the end of the eighteenth century, and growing numbers joined radical or anarchist groups. The theory of revolution implied radical assault on virtually all social institutions. Fundamental hierarchies of government, notions of sovereignty and of aristocracy, inherited systems of distinction—all fell. Old conventions, once emblems of social and of literary stability, now exemplified the dead hand of the past. Only a few years before, the old, the inherited, and the traditional embodied truth, its power attested by its survival. But the revolutionaries felt themselves to be originators; the newness of what they proposed gave it the almost religious authority suggested by Wordsworth's allusions to "bliss" and "heaven."

The blessed state evoked by the new political thinkers embodied a sense of infinite possibility. Pope had written, in the *Essay on Man*, "The bliss of Man (could Pride that blessing find) / Is not to act or think beyond mankind." By the century's end, people were doing their best to "think beyond mankind"—or, at any rate, beyond what mankind had considered normal limitations. Evidence of this abounds, in revolutionary sermons preached from pulpits even in England, in writings by such flamboyant defenders of human rights as Thomas Paine, in the development, even, of a political theory about women's social position. Mary Wollstonecraft was not the first to note the oppression of women; Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, to cite only one example, had written more than a century before her. But Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) offered the first detailed argument that the ideal of fulfilled human possibility for men and for women demanded political acknowledgment of women's equal humanity.

The very existence of such a work (which achieved a second edition in the year of its first publication) testifies to the atmosphere of political expectancy in which men and women could rethink "self-evident" principles. Replacing the ideal of hierarchy (what Dr. Johnson reverenced as "subordination"), for example, was the revolutionary notion of human brotherhood. Liberty, equality, and fraternity, the French proclaimed; the new American nation celebrated essentially the same ideals. In practice, though, "fraternity" turned out to involve the citizens specifically of France, or of the new

United States. The emphasis on individual uniqueness extended itself to national uniqueness. Even in such a country as Italy, subject to foreign rules, its political organization repeatedly changed by Napoleon I, a country with little apparent power for self-determination, developing nationalist sentiment foretold the future. Although peace generally prevailed among nations in the early nineteenth century, the developing distinctions dividing one country imaginatively from another foretold future danger.

New ideas with massive practical consequences included more than the political. In 1776, Adam Smith published *The Wealth of Nations*, a theory of laissez-faire economics presaging the enormous importance of money in subsequent history. Matters of exchange and acquisition, Smith argued, could be left to regulate themselves—a doctrine behind which still lurked unobtrusively the confidence, expressed in market terms, that Pope had expressed in religious ones: "All Chance, Direction that thou canst not see, / All Discord, Harmony, not understood." As manufacturing and trade developed increasing financial vitality, however, their importance as financial resources in fact heightened discord, through growing nationalism. New forms of manufacture provided new substance for trade, generated new fortunes, produced a new social class—a "middle class" with the influence of wealth and without the inherited system of responsibilities, restrictions, decorums that had helped to control aristocratic possessors of wealth in preceding generations. Aristocrats had used their money, on the whole, to enlarge and beautify their estates. The new money-holders developed new ideas about what money might do. Re-invested, it could support innovation in manufacture and trade. It could educate the children of the uneducated; it could buy them (as it had been doing for a century) husbands and wives from the aristocracy; it could help to obviate ancient class distinctions. England's increasing economic ascendancy in the nineteenth century derived not only from new money but from the development of men willing and able to employ money ingeniously as power.

The enlarged possibilities of manufacture testified to practical applications of scientific research, another area of activity in which the new overwhelmingly replaced the old. In England and America especially, inventions multiplied: the steam engine, the spinning jenny, the cotton gin. Increasingly often, and in increasing numbers, men and women left their native rural environments to congregate in cities, where opportunities for relatively unskilled workers abounded—and where more and more people lived in congestion, poverty, and misery.

More vividly, perhaps, than ever before in history, the world was changing: was becoming, in fact, the world we ourselves assume, in which "mankind" as an ideal wanes, nations define themselves in psychic as well as military opposition to one another, money constitutes immediate power, science serves manufacture, hence commerce. From the beginning of these crucial changes, certain thinkers and writers realized the destructive possibilities inherent in every form of "progress." Heine, for instance, suggested the inequities of new political developments in such poems as "The Silesian Weavers," with its prophetic dirge for Germany; Victor Hugo, in "Memory of the Night of the Fourth," called attention to continuing brutalities of power. Change was not taking place fast enough, completely enough, to

gratify longings for universal justice; "progress" was always inadequate. No longer did the impulse to conserve past values express itself with the authority and power that Swift and Johnson had brought to the theme. As M. H. Abrams has written, "the Romantic period was eminently an age obsessed with the fact of violent change." Such change might provide ground for fear; it also supplied the substance for hope.

INDIVIDUALISM

Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), a German philosopher whose work influenced virtually all philosophers after him, questioned the power of reason to provide the most significant forms of knowledge—knowledge of the ultimately real. Feeling, on the other hand, might offer a guide. The individual will must engage itself in ethical struggle to locate and experience the good. Such followers of Kant as Johann Fichte (1762–1814) more clearly suggested an identification between will and what we call "ego." The idea of the self took on ever greater importance, for philosophers and for poets, for political thinkers, autobiographers, novelists.

To locate authority in the self rather than in society implies yet another radical break with the assumptions of the previous period. The idea of the self's importance is so familiar to us that it may be difficult to imagine the startling implications of the new focus. "I know the feelings of my heart, and I know men," Jean-Jacques Rousseau writes, at the beginning of his *Confessions*. "I am not made like any of those I have seen; I venture to believe that I am not made like any of those who are in existence." Faith in the absolute uniqueness of every consciousness became increasingly prevalent. Rousseau's significance for his period derives partly from the fact that his stress on the feelings of his heart and on his own specialness aroused recognition in his audience. No longer did the universality of human nature supply comfort to individuals; now they might seek reassurance instead in their uniqueness: the ultimate in protestantism—everyone his or her own church.

The new stress on and interest in the individual implied revaluation of inner as opposed to outer experience. Previously, life in the public arena had been assumed to test human capacities and to provide meaningful forms of experience. After Rousseau, however, psychic experience could provide the proper measure of an individual's emotional capacity. To place value *there* opened the possibility of taking women as seriously as men, children as seriously as adults, "savages" as seriously as civilized beings. Indeed, women, children, and savages were often thought to exceed cultivated adult males in their capacity both to feel and to express their feelings spontaneously—although the social subordination of such groups continued unchanged.

Even before Rousseau, the novel of sensibility in England and on the Continent revealed interest in highly developed emotional responsiveness. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774) made its author famous and inspired a cult of introverted, melancholy young people. In England, Henry Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* (1771) associated intense emotion with benevolent action. By the late century, the Gothic novel had become an important form—a novelistic mode often practiced by women which typically placed a young woman at the center of the action.

The heroines of such novels confront a kind of experience (usually involving at least apparent supernatural elements) for which their social training, that important resource of earlier heroines, provided no help; instead, quick intuitions and subtle feelings insure their triumph over apparently insurmountable obstacles with no loss of feminine delicacy.

Given the view of feeling's centrality that replaced the earlier stress on passion's fruitful tension with reason, new kinds of feeling drew literary attention. From its beginnings, the novel had tended to emphasize (usually in decorous terms) love between the sexes. Now romantic love became a central subject of poetry and drama as well. More surprising kinds of emotion also attracted literary attention. Alexander Pushkin, in his best-known story, "The Queen of Spades," imagines the evolving feelings of a young man eager to make his fortune at any cost; Heine glorifies emotions associated with morphine and the longing for death; Victor Hugo evokes Satan's internal experience as he falls, interminably, from heaven. These examples indicate that painful as well as pleasurable emotion interested readers and writers. The presence of emotional intensity of whatever kind became a hallmark of excellence. Lyric replaced epic as a glorified poetic genre, but fiction demonstrated the same new emphasis. Chateaubriand's René, an imagined character of comparable historical importance to Goethe's young Werther in his command over the imaginations of a generation, dwells obsessively on his sorrows. He thus captivated thousands of readers for whom the apparent disproportion between cause and effect—René has relatively little objective reason for his suicidal gloom—only heightens the fascination of his powerful feelings as self-justifying phenomena.

As the nineteenth century wore on, hope for a new terrestrial Eden faded. The efflorescence of commerce and the innovations of science turned out to have negative as well as positive consequences. As the novels of Charles Dickens and of Gustave Flaubert insist, the new middle class frequently became the repository of moral mediocrity. The autocracy of money had effects more brutal than those of inherited privilege. Science, once the emblem of progress, began to generate theological confusion. Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859) stated clearly humanity's mean rather than transcendent origins: animal and plant species had evolved over the centuries, adapting themselves to their environment by a process of natural selection. Fossils found in rocks provided supporting evidence for this theory, troubling to many Christians because it contradicted the Biblical account of creation. Five years after Darwin's revolutionary work, Karl Marx published *Das Kapital*, with its dialectical theory of history and its vision of capitalism's eventual decay and of the working class inevitably triumphant. In the United States, by the 1860s civil war raged, its central issue the morality of slavery—that by-product of agricultural capitalism. Neither the making of money nor the effort to fathom natural law seemed merely reassuring.

In the face of history's threats—the menace of Marx's prophecy and of Darwin's biology, the chaos of civil war—to insist on the importance of private experience offered tentative security, a standing place, a temporary source of authority. The voices of blacks as well as, in increasing numbers, those of women could now be heard: placing high value on the personal implied respecting all persons. The American Civil War made blacks for the

first time truly visible to the society that both contained and denied them. Slave narratives—sometimes wholly or partly fictionized, sometimes entirely authentic renditions of often horrifying experience—provided useful propaganda for the abolitionist cause, the ideology opposed to the institution of slavery, but they also opened a new emotional universe. In their typical emphasis, for instance, on the salvation force of reading and writing (for most slaves officially forbidden knowledge), these narratives illuminated a new area of the taken-for-granted, thus extending the enterprise of Romantic poetry.

The capacity for revelatory illumination belonged, according to the dominant nineteenth-century view, to imagination, a mysterious and virtually sacred power of individual consciousness. When Dr. Johnson, in *Rasselas*, suggested that all predominance of imagination over reason constituted a degree of insanity, he intended, to put it crudely, an antithesis of true and false. Imagination, the faculty of generating images, had no necessary anchor in the communal, historical experience that tested truth. For those who came later, imagination was a visionary and unifying force (a new incarnation of the seventeenth century's inner light or candle of the Lord) through which the gifted person discovered and communicated new truth. Thus Victor Hugo conjures up out of nowhere a Moorish village and begs for its actual appearance:

> Oh spirits, let it come to inspire and to quicken
> My songs darkened again like an autumn sky,
> Its magic reflection cast in my eyes . . .

The imagination can create the material for its own rejuvenation. The Italian poet Leopardi, in a long reflective lyric written toward the end of his life ("The Broom"), made explicit a contrast implied by many of his contemporaries in England and on the Continent, the contrast between scientific reason, perceived as deadening, and the true enlightenment of imagination. Imagination derived from the soul, the aspect of human being that links the human with the eternal. Through it, men and women can transcend earthly limitations, can express high aspiration, can escape, and help one another escape, the dreariness of mortality without necessarily positing a life beyond the present one.

A corollary of the high value attached to creative imagination was a new concern with originality. The notion of "the genius," the man or woman so gifted as to operate by principles unknown to ordinary mortals, developed only in the late eighteenth century. Previously, a person *had* rather than *was* a genius: the term designated a particular tendency or gift (a genius for cooking, say) rather than a human being with vast creative power. Now the genius was revered for his or her extraordinary difference from others, idealized as a being set apart; and the literary or artistic products of genius, it could be assumed, would correspondingly differ from everything previously produced. Newness itself became as never before a measure of value. The language, the themes, the forms of the preceding century would no longer suffice. In the early eighteenth century, literary figures wishing to congratulate themselves and their contemporaries would compare their artistic sit-

uation to that of Rome under the benevolent patronage of Augustus Caesar. A hundred years later, the note of self-congratulation would express itself in the claim of an unprecedented situation, unprecedented kinds of accomplishment. John Keats in a letter characterized Wordsworth as representing "the egotistical sublime"; the same characterization might describe Hugo. such sublimity—authority and grandeur emanating from a unique self still in touch with something beyond itself—was the nineteenth century's special achievement.

NATURE

Nature and nature's laws, the rationally ordered universe, provided the foundation for much early eighteenth-century thought. In the nineteenth century, nature's importance possibly increased—but *nature* now meant something new. *Wuthering Heights* (1847) creates a setting of windswept moors for its romantic lovers—both environment and metaphor of their love. Leopardi noted details of solidified lava and blooming weeds, and used them to comment on the nineteenth-century situation. The physical reality of the natural world, in its varied abundance, became matter of absorbing interest for poets and novelists. Nature provided an alternative to the human, a possibility for imaginative as well as literal escape. Its imagery—flowers, clouds, ocean—became the common poetic stock. Workers still hastened from the country to the city, because the city housed possibilities of wealth; yet educated men and women increasingly declared their nostalgia for rural or sylvan landscape embodying peace and beauty.

Nature, in the nineteenth-century mind, however, did not consist only in physical details. It also implied a totality, an enveloping whole greater than the sum of its parts, a vast unifying spirit. The unifying whole depends less on rational system than on emotional association. Human beings link themselves with the infinite by what Wordsworth "wise passiveness," the capacity to submit to feeling and be led by it to transcendence. Natural detail, too, acquires value by evoking and symbolizing emotion. Nature itself belongs to the realm of the nonrational, the superrational.

The idea of the natural can also imply the uncivilized, or precivilized. Philosophers have differed dramatically in their hypotheses about what humankind was like in its "natural" state. Thomas Hobbes, in the seventeenth century, argued that the natural human condition was one of conflict; society developed to curb the violent impulses human beings would manifest without its restraint. The prevailing nineteenth-century view, on the other hand, made civilization the agent of corruption. Rousseau expounded the crippling effect of institutions; the child raised with the greatest possible freedom, he maintained, would develop in more admirable ways than one subjected to system. By the second half of the eighteenth century, a French novelist could contrast the decadent life of Europe unfavorably with existence on an unspoiled island (Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, *Paul and Virginia*, 1788); Thomas Chatterton, before committing suicide in 1770 at the age of eighteen, wrote poems rich in nostalgia for a more primitive stage of social development which he tried to pass off as medieval works; the forged Ossian poems (1760–1763) of James Macpherson, purportedly ancient texts, attracted a large and enthusiastic audience. New interest manifested itself in ballads,

poetic survivals of the primitive; Romantic poets such as Heine imitated the form. The interest in a simpler past, a simpler life, manifests itself in a new concern with simple folk. Hugo dwells lovingly on mundane details of a humble dwelling and recreates simplicities of common speech; he glorifies the figure of an old man scattering grain:

> Tall, his dark silhouette
> Towers above the deep ploughing.
> The fruitfulness of fleeing days
> Forms visibly his belief.

The peasant, in this treatment, becomes larger than life, godlike, an image of power and of possibility.

The revolutionary fervor of the late eighteenth century had generated a vision of infinite human possibility, political and personal. The escapist implications of the increasing emphasis on nature, the primitive, the uncomplicated past, suggest, however, a sense of alienation. Heine and Hugo, as we have seen, wrote poems of social protest. Chateaubriand, placing René among the North American Indians, gives his hero eloquent speeches about the corruption of civilized life. Pushkin's story, on the surface a piece of romantic fantasy, expresses disgust and outrage at the social effects of the universal concern with money-getting. "Society," assumed by Molière to be a stabilizing force, now embodies powers opposed to individual development. The melancholy marking so many Romantic heroes (Werther and René only particularly conspicuous examples), tingeing nineteenth-century poetry and fiction, testifies to a continuing sense of something wrong in the world, something confronted now in new ways. The satiric spirit—that spirit of social reform—was in abeyance. Hope lay in the individual's separation from, not participation in, society. In the woods and mountains, one might feel free.

The Waste Land (1922), T. S. Eliot's twentieth-century epic, contains the line, "In the mountains, there you feel free," a line given complex ironic overtones by its context. Its occurrence, however, may remind us how powerfully ideas that came into currency in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries survive into our own time. The world of the Romantic Period specifically prefigures our own, despite all the differences dividing the two cultures. We have developed more fully important Romantic tendencies; stress on the sacredness of the individual, suspicion of social institutions, belief in expressed feeling as the sign of authenticity ("Let it all hang out"), nostalgia for simpler ways of being, faith in genius, valuing of originality and imagination, an ambivalent relation to science. Although Leopardi, Hugo, and Chateaubriand employ vocabularies and use references partly strange to us, they speak directly to twentieth-century preoccupations. By attending closely to them, we may learn more about ourselves; not only in the common humanity that we share with all our predecessors, but in our special historical situation as both direct inheritors of nineteenth-century assumptions and rebels against them.

FURTHER READING

Useful introductions to the Romantic period include L. Furst, *Romanticism in Perspective: A Comparative Study of Aspects of the Romantic Movements in England, France, and Germany* (1979); R. F. Gleckner and G. E. Enscoe, editors, *Romanticism: Points of View* (1962), a collection of essays by various contributors; R. W. Harris, *Romanticism and the Social Order, 1780–1830* (1969); and George Brandes, *Main Currents in Nineteenth Century Literature*, 6 vols. (1906), particularly vol. 2, *The Romantic School in Germany*, and vol. 5, *The Romantic School in France*.

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU

1712–1778

It would be difficult to overstate the historical importance of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions* (composed between 1765 and 1770, published 1781–8), which inaugurated a new form of autobiography and suggested new ways of thinking about the self and its relation to other selves. Even for readers two centuries after its first publication, the book's sheer audacity compels attention, demanding that we rethink easy assumptions about important and trivial, right and wrong.

The facts of Rousseau's life are not altogether clear, partly because the *Confessions*, despite its claim of absolute truthfulness, sometimes appears more concerned to create a self-justifying story than to confine itself strictly to actuality. The son of a Geneva watchmaker, Jean-Jacques left home in his teens and lived for some time with Mme. de Warens, his protector and eventually his mistress, the "mamma" of the *Confessions*. He worked at many occupations, from secretary to government official (under the king of Sardinia). In Paris, where he settled in 1745, he lived with Thérèse le Vasseur; he claims she bore him five children, all consigned to an orphanage, but the claim has never been substantiated (or, for that matter, disproved). At various times his controversial writing forced Rousseau to leave France, usually for Switzerland; in 1766 he went to England as the guest of the philosopher David Hume. He was allowed to return to Paris in 1770 only on condition that he write nothing against the government or the church.

Rousseau's social ideas, stated in his didactic novels, *Julie, or the New Heloise* (1761) and *Emile* (1762), as well as in his autobiographical writings and political treatises (e.g., *The Social Contract*, 1762), stirred much contemporary discussion. He believed in the destructiveness of institutions, the gradual corruption of humankind throughout history, the importance of nature and of feeling in individual development and consequently in society. Also knowledgeable about music (he worked for a time as music teacher), he published several works on the subject, including a musical dictionary, as well as a comic opera, *The Village Soothsayer* (1752).

The *Confessions* presents its subject as a man (and boy) striving always to express natural impulses and recurrently frustrated by society's demands and assumptions. The central figure described here rather resembles Candide in his naïveté and good feeling. Experience chastens him less than it does Candide, however, although he reports many psychic hard knocks. For Voltaire's didactic purposes, his character's experience was more important than his personality; for Rousseau, his own nature has much more significance than anything that happens to him.

To read even a few pages of the work reveals how completely Rousseau exemplifies his period's dominant values. He describes himself as a being of powerful passions but confused ideas, he makes feeling the guide of conduct, he glorifies imagination and romantic love, he believes the common people morally superior to the upper classes. The emphasis on imagination and

passion for him seems not a matter of ideology but of experience: life presents itself to him in this way. The fact emphasizes the degree to which the movement we call Romanticism involved genuine re-vision. Everything suddenly looked different in the late eighteenth century, everything demanded categories changed from those previously accepted without question. The new way of looking at the world that characterizes the Romantic Movement, inasmuch as it implies valuing the inner life of emotion and fancy for its own sake (not for the sake of any insight it might provide), always involves the danger of narcissism, a kind of concentration on the self that shuts out awareness of the reality and integrity of others. Rousseau, in the *Confessions*, vividly expresses the narcissistic side of Romanticism.

Implicit in Rousseau's ways of understanding himself and his life are new moral assumptions as well. Honesty of a particular kind becomes the highest value: however disreputable his behavior, Rousseau can feel comfortable about it because he reports it accurately. What Johnson or Pope would see as self-indulgence, care exclusively for one's own pleasure, seems acceptable to Rousseau because of the minute, exacting attention devoted to it. The autobiographer examines each nuance of his own happiness, as if to know it fully constituted moral achievement. To take the self this seriously as subject—not in relation to a progress of education or of salvation, merely in its moment-to-moment being—implies belief in self-knowledge (knowledge of feeling, thought, action) as a high moral achievement. This is not the slowly achieved, arduous discipline recommended by Socrates, but a much more indulgent form of self-contemplation. To connect it, as Rousseau does, with morality conveys the view that self-absorption without self-judgment provides valuable and sufficient insight.

The intensity of his self-concentration makes his subject compelling for others as well. However distasteful one finds Rousseau's obsessive focus, it is difficult to stop reading. The writer hints, makes us believe, that he will reveal all secrets about himself; and learning such secrets, despite Rousseau's insistence on his own uniqueness, tells us of human weakness, inconsistency, power, scope—tells us, therefore, something of ourselves.

F. C. Green, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: A Critical Study of His Life and Writings* (1955), provides biography and criticism. I. Babbitt, *Rousseau and Romanticism* (1919), examines the relation of Rousseau's assumptions to those of the Romantic Movement. A thorough modern evaluation of Rousseau's achievement is L. G. Crocker, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: A New Interpretative Analysis of His Works* (1973).

Confessions

Part I

BOOK I

[The Years 1712–1719.] I am commencing an undertaking, hitherto without precedent, and which will never find an imitator. I desire to set before my fellows the likeness of a man in all the truth of nature, and that man myself.

Myself alone! I know the feelings of my heart, and I know men. I am not made like any of those I have seen; I venture to believe that I am not made like any of those who are in existence. If I am not better, at least I am different. Whether Nature has acted rightly or wrongly in destroying the mould in which she cast me, can only be decided after I have been read.

Let the trumpet of the Day of Judgment sound when it will, I will present myself before the Sovereign Judge with this book in my hand. I will say boldly: "This is what I have done, what I have thought, what I was. I have told the good and the bad with equal frankness. I have neither omitted anything bad, nor interpolated anything good. If I have occasionally made use of some immaterial embellishments, this has only been in order to fill a gap caused by lack of memory. I may have assumed the truth of that which I knew might have been true, never of that which I knew to be false. I have shown myself as I was: mean and contemptible, good, high-minded and sublime, according as I was one or the other. I have unveiled my inmost self even as Thou hast seen it, O Eternal Being. Gather round me the countless host of my fellow-men; let them hear my confessions, lament for my unworthiness, and blush for my imperfections. Then let each of them in turn reveal, with the same frankness, the secrets of his heart at the foot of the Throne, and say, if he dare, *'I was better than that man!'* " . . .

I felt before I thought: this is the common lot of humanity. I experienced it more than others. I do not know what I did until I was five or six years old. I do not know how I learned to read; I only remember my earliest reading, and the effect it had upon me; from that time I date my uninterrupted self-consciousness. My mother had left some romances behind her, which my father and I began to read after supper. At first it was only a question of practising me in reading by the aid of amusing books; but soon the interest became so lively, that we used to read in turns without stopping, and spent whole nights in this occupation. We were unable to leave off until the volume was finished. Sometimes, my father, hearing the swallows begin to twitter in the early morning, would say, quite ashamed, "Let us go to bed; I am more of a child than yourself."

In a short time I acquired, by this dangerous method, not only extreme facility in reading and understanding what I read, but a knowledge of the passions that was unique in a child of my age. I had no idea of things in themselves, although all the feelings of actual life were already known to me. I had conceived nothing, but felt everything. These confused emotions which I felt one after the other, certainly did not warp the reasoning powers which I did not as yet possess; but they shaped them in me of a peculiar stamp, and gave me odd and romantic notions of human life, of which experi-

ence and reflection have never been able wholly to cure me. . . .

How could I become wicked, when I had nothing but examples of gentleness before my eyes, and none around me but the best people in the world? My father, my aunt, my nurse, my relations, our friends, our neighbours, all who surrounded me, did not, it is true, obey me, but they loved me; and I loved them in return. My wishes were so little excited and so little opposed, that it did not occur to me to have any. I can swear that, until I served under a master, I never knew what a fancy was. Except during the time I spent in reading or writing in my father's company, or when my nurse took me for a walk, I was always with my aunt, sitting or standing by her side, watching her at her embroidery or listening to her singing; and I was content. Her cheerfulness, her gentleness and her pleasant face have stamped so deep and lively an impression on my mind that I can still see her manner, look, and attitude; I remember her affectionate language: I could describe what clothes she wore and how her head was dressed, not forgetting the two little curls of black hair on her temples, which she wore in accordance with the fashion of the time.

I am convinced that it is to her I owe the taste, or rather passion, for music, which only became fully developed in me a long time afterwards. She knew a prodigious number of tunes and songs which she used to sing in a very thin, gentle voice. This excellent woman's cheerfulness of soul banished dreaminess and melancholy from herself and all around her. The attraction which her singing possessed for me was so great, that not only have several of her songs always remained in my memory, but even now, when I have lost her, and as I grew older, many of them, totally forgotten since the days of my childhood, return to my mind with inexpressible charm. Would anyone believe that I, an old dotard, eaten up by cares and troubles, sometimes find myself weeping like a child, when I mumble one of those little airs in a voice already broken and trembling?

. . . I have spent my life in idle longing, without saying a word, in the presence of those whom I loved most. Too bashful to declare my taste, I at least satisfied it in situations which had reference to it and kept up the idea of it. To lie at the feet of an imperious mistress, to obey her commands, to ask her forgiveness—this was for me a sweet enjoyment; and, the more my lively imagination heated my blood, the more I presented the appearance of a bashful lover. It may be easily imagined that this manner of making love does not lead to very speedy results, and is not very dangerous to the virtue of those who are its object. For this reason I have rarely possessed, but have none the less enjoyed myself in my own way—that is to say, in imagination. Thus it has happened that my senses, in harmony with my timid disposition and my romantic spirit, have kept my senti-

ments pure and my morals blameless, owing to the very tastes which, combined with a little more impudence, might have plunged me into the most brutal sensuality. . . .

I am a man of very strong passions, and, while I am stirred by them, nothing can equal my impetuosity; I forget all discretion, all feelings of respect, fear and decency; I am cynical, impudent, violent and fearless; no feeling of shame keeps me back, no danger frightens me; with the exception of the single object which occupies my thoughts, the universe is nothing to me. But all this lasts only for a moment, and the following moment plunges me into complete annihilation. In my calmer moments I am indolence and timidity itself; everything frightens and discourages me; a fly, buzzing past, alarms me; a word which I have to say, a gesture which I have to make, terrifies my idleness; fear and shame overpower me to such an extent that I would gladly hide myself from the sight of my fellow-creatures. If I have to act, I do not know what to do; if I have to speak, I do not know what to say; if anyone looks at me, I am put out of countenance. When I am strongly moved I sometimes know how to find the right words, but in ordinary conversation I can find absolutely nothing, and my condition is unbearable for the simple reason that I am obliged to speak.

Add to this, that none of my prevailing tastes centre in things that can be bought. I want nothing but unadulterated pleasures, and money poisons all. For instance, I am fond of the pleasures of the table; but, as I cannot endure either the constraint of good society or the drunkenness of the tavern, I can only enjoy them with a friend; alone, I cannot do so, for my imagination then occupies itself with other things, and eating affords me no pleasure. If my heated blood longs for women, my excited heart longs still more for affection. Women who could be bought for money would lose for me all their charms; I even doubt whether it would be in me to make use of them. I find it the same with all pleasures within my reach; unless they cost me nothing, I find them insipid. I only love those enjoyments which belong to no one but the first man who knows how to enjoy them.

. . . I worship freedom; I abhor restraint, trouble, dependence. As long as the money in my purse lasts, it assures my independence; it relieves me of the trouble of finding expedients to replenish it, a necessity which always inspired me with dread; but the fear of seeing it exhausted makes me hoard it carefully. The money which a man possesses is the instrument of freedom; that which we eagerly pursue is the instrument of slavery. Therefore I hold fast to that which I have, and desire nothing.

My disinterestedness is, therefore, nothing but idleness; the pleasure of possession is not worth the trouble of acquisition. In like

manner, my extravagance is nothing but idleness; when the opportunity of spending agreeably presents itself, it cannot be too profitably employed. Money tempts me less than things, because between money and the possession of the desired object there is always an intermediary, whereas between the thing itself and the enjoyment of it there is none. If I see the thing, it tempts me; if I only see the means of gaining possession of it, it does not. For this reason I have committed thefts, and even now I sometimes pilfer trifles which tempt me, and which I prefer to take rather than to ask for; but neither when a child nor a grown-up man do I ever remember to have robbed anyone of a farthing, except on one occasion, fifteen years ago, when I stole seven *livres* ten *sous*. . . .

BOOK II

[The Years 1728–1731.] . . . I have drawn the great moral lesson, perhaps the only one of any practical value, to avoid those situations of life which bring our duties into conflict with our interests, and which show us our own advantage in the misfortunes of others; for it is certain that, in such situations, however sincere our love of virtue, we must, sooner or later, inevitably grow weak without perceiving it, and become unjust and wicked in act, without having ceased to be just and good in our hearts.

This principle, deeply imprinted on the bottom of my heart, which, although somewhat late, in practice guided my whole conduct, is one of those which have caused me to appear a very strange and foolish creature in the eyes of the world, and, above all, amongst my acquaintances. I have been reproached with wanting to pose as an original, and different from others. In reality, I have never troubled about acting like other people or differently from them. I sincerely desired to do what was right. I withdrew, as far as it lay in my power, from situations which opposed my interests to those of others, and might, consequently, inspire me with a secret, though involuntary, desire of injuring them.

. . . I loved too sincerely, too completely, I venture to say, to be able to be happy easily. Never have passions been at once more lively and purer than mine; never has love been tenderer, truer, more disinterested. I would have sacrificed my happiness a thousand times for that of the person whom I loved; her reputation was dearer to me than my life, and I would never have wished to endanger her repose for a single moment for all the pleasures of enjoyment. This feeling has made me employ such carefulness, such secrecy, and such precaution in my undertakings, that none of them have ever been successful. My want of success with women has always been caused by my excessive love for them. . . .

BOOK III

[The Years 1731–1732.] . . . I only felt the full strength of my attachment when I no longer saw her.[1] When I saw her, I was only content; but, during her absence, my restlessness became painful. The need of living with her caused me outbreaks of tenderness which often ended in tears. I shall never forget how, on the day of a great festival, while she was at vespers, I went for a walk outside the town, my heart full of her image and a burning desire to spend my life with her. I had sense enough to see that at present this was impossible, and that the happiness which I enjoyed so deeply could only be short. This gave to my reflections a tinge of melancholy, about which, however, there was nothing gloomy, and which was tempered by flattering hopes. The sound of the bells, which always singularly affects me, the song of the birds, the beauty of the daylight, the enchanting landscape, the scattered country dwellings in which my fancy placed our common home—all these produced upon me an impression so vivid, tender, melancholy and touching, that I saw myself transported, as it were, in ecstasy, into that happy time and place, wherein my heart, possessing all the happiness it could desire, tasted it with inexpressible rapture, without even a thought of sensual pleasure. I never remember to have plunged into the future with greater force and illusion than on that occasion; and what has struck me most in the recollection of this dream after it had been realised, is that I have found things again exactly as I had imagined them. If ever the dream of a man awake resembled a prophetic vision, it was assuredly that dream of mine. I was only deceived in the imaginary duration; for the days, the years, and our whole life were spent in serene and undisturbed tranquillity, whereas in reality it lasted only for a moment. Alas! my most lasting happiness belongs to a dream, the fulfilment of which was almost immediately followed by the awakening. . . .

Two things, almost incompatible, are united in me in a manner which I am unable to understand: a very ardent temperament, lively and tumultuous passions, and, at the same time, slowly developed and confused ideas, which never present themselves until it is too late. One might say that my heart and my mind do not belong to the same person. Feeling takes possession of my soul more rapidly than a flash of lightning; but, instead of illuminating, inflames and dazzles me. I feel everything and see nothing. I am carried away by my passions, but stupid; in order to think, I must be cool. The astonishing thing is that, notwithstanding, I exhibit tolerably sound judgment, penetration, even finesse, if I am not hurried; with sufficient leisure I can compose excellent impromptus; but I have never said

1. Rousseau refers here to Mme. de Warens, whom he also calls "mamma."

or done anything worthy of notice on the spur of the moment. I could carry on a very clever conversation through the post, as the Spaniards are said to carry on a game of chess. When I read of that Duke of Savoy, who turned round on his journey, in order to cry, "At your throat, Parisian huckster," I said, "There you have myself!"

This sluggishness of thought, combined with such liveliness of feeling, not only enters into my conversation, but I feel it even when alone and at work. My ideas arrange themselves in my head with almost incredible difficulty; they circulate in it with uncertain sound, and ferment till they excite and heat me, and make my heart beat fast; and, in the midst of this excitement, I see nothing clearly and am unable to write a single word—I am obliged to wait. Imperceptibly this great agitation subsides, the confusion clears up, everything takes its proper place, but slowly, and only after a period of long and confused agitation. . . .

BOOK IV

[The Years 1731–1732.] . . . I returned, not to Nyon, but to Lausanne. I wanted to sate myself with the sight of this beautiful lake, which is there seen in its greatest extent. Few of the secret motives which have determined me to act have been more rational. Things seen at a distance are rarely powerful enough to make me act. The uncertainty of the future has always made me look upon plans, which need considerable time to carry them out, as decoys for fools. I indulge in hopes like others, provided it costs me nothing to support them; but if they require continued attention, I have done with it. The least trifling pleasure which is within my reach tempts me more than the joys of Paradise. However, I make an exception of the pleasure which is followed by pain; this has no temptation for me, because I love only pure enjoyments, and these a man never has when he knows that he is preparing for himself repentance and regret. . . .

Why is it that, having found so many good people in my youth, I find so few in my later years? Is their race extinct? No; but the class in which I am obliged to look for them now, is no longer the same as that in which I found them. Among the people, where great passions only speak at intervals, the sentiments of nature make themselves more frequently heard; in the higher ranks they are absolutely stifled, and, under the mask of sentiment, it is only interest or vanity that speaks.

. . . Whenever I approach the Canton of Vaud, I am conscious of an impression in which the remembrance of Madame de Warens, who was born there, of my father who lived there, of Mademoiselle de Vulson who enjoyed the first fruits of my youthful love, of several pleasure trips which I made there when a child and, I believe, some

other exciting cause, more mysterious and more powerful than all this, is combined. When the burning desire of this happy and peaceful life, which flees from me and for which I was born, inflames my imagination, it is always the Canton of Vaud, near the lake, in the midst of enchanting scenery, to which it draws me. I feel that I must have an orchard on the shore of this lake and no other, that I must have a loyal friend, a loving wife, a cow, and a little boat. I shall never enjoy perfect happiness on earth until I have all that. I laugh at the simplicity with which I have several times visited this country merely in search of this imaginary happiness. I was always surprised to find its inhabitants, especially the women, of quite a different character from that which I expected. How contradictory it appeared to me! The country and its inhabitants have never seemed to me made for each other.

During this journey to Vévay, walking along the beautiful shore, I abandoned myself to the sweetest melancholy. My heart eagerly flung itself into a thousand innocent raptures; I was filled with emotion, I sighed and wept like a child. How often have I stopped to weep to my heart's content, and, sitting on a large stone, amused myself with looking at my tears falling into the water! . . .

How greatly did the entrance into Paris belie the idea I had formed of it! The external decorations of Turin, the beauty of its streets, the symmetry and regularity of the houses, had made me look for something quite different in Paris. I had imagined to myself a city of most imposing aspect, as beautiful as it was large, where nothing was to be seen but splendid streets and palaces of gold and marble. Entering by the suburb of St. Marceau, I saw nothing but dirty and stinking little streets, ugly black houses, a general air of slovenliness and poverty, beggars, carters, menders of old clothes, criers of decoctions and old hats. All this, from the outset, struck me so forcibly, that all the real magnificence I have since seen in Paris has been unable to destroy this first impression, and I have always retained a secret dislike against residence in this capital. I may say that the whole time, during which I afterwards lived there, was employed solely in trying to find means to enable me to live away from it.

Such is the fruit of a too lively imagination, which exaggerates beyond human exaggeration, and is always ready to see more than it has been told to expect. I had heard Paris so much praised, that I had represented it to myself as the ancient Babylon, where, if I had ever visited it, I should, perhaps, have found as much to take off from the picture which I had drawn of it. The same thing happened to me at the Opera, whither I hastened to go the day after my arrival. The same thing happened to me later at Versailles; and again, when I saw the sea for the first time; and the same thing will always happen to me, when I see anything which has been too loudly announced;

for it is impossible for men, and difficult for Nature herself, to surpass the exuberance of my imagination.

. . . The sight of the country, a succession of pleasant views, the open air, a good appetite, the sound health which walking gives me, the free life of the inns, the absence of all that makes me conscious of my dependent position, of all that reminds me of my condition—all this sets my soul free, gives me greater boldness of thought, throws me, so to speak, into the immensity of things, so that I can combine, select, and appropriate them at pleasure, without fear or restraint. I dispose of Nature in its entirety as its lord and master; my heart, roaming from object to object, mingles and identifies itself with those which soothe it, wraps itself up in charming fancies, and is intoxicated with delicious sensations. If, in order to render them permanent, I amuse myself by describing them by myself, what vigorous outlines, what fresh colouring, what power of expression I give them!

. . . At night I lay in the open air, and, stretched on the ground or on a bench, slept as calmly as upon a bed of roses. I remember, especially, that I spent a delightful night outside the city, on a road which ran by the side of the Rhône or Saône, I do not remember which. Raised gardens, with terraces, bordered the other side of the road. It had been very hot during the day; the evening was delightful; the dew moistened the parched grass; the night was calm, without a breath of wind; the air was fresh, without being cold; the sun, having gone down, had left in the sky red vapours, the reflection of which cast a rose-red tint upon the water; the trees on the terraces were full of nightingales answering one another. I walked on in a kind of ecstasy, abandoning my heart and senses to the enjoyment of all, only regretting, with a sigh, that I was obliged to enjoy it alone. Absorbed in my delightful reverie, I continued my walk late into the night, without noticing that I was tired. At last, I noticed it. I threw myself with a feeling of delight upon the shelf of a sort of niche or false door let into a terrace wall; the canopy of my bed was formed by the tops of trees; a nightingale was perched just over my head, and lulled me to sleep with his song; my slumbers were sweet, my awaking was still sweeter. . . .

In relating my journeys, as in making them, I do not know how to stop. My heart beat with joy when I drew near to my dear mamma, but I walked no faster. I like to walk at my ease, and to stop when I like. A wandering life is what I want. To walk through a beautiful country in fine weather, without being obliged to hurry, and with a pleasant prospect at the end, is of all kinds of life the one most suited to my taste. My idea of a beautiful country is already known. No flat country, however beautiful, has ever seemed so to my eyes. I must have mountain torrents, rocks, firs, dark forests, mountains, steep roads to climb or descend, precipices at my side to frighten me. . . .

BOOK V

[The Years 1732–1736.] . . . It is sometimes said that the sword wears out the scabbard. That is my history. My passions have made me live, and my passions have killed me. What passions? will be asked. Trifles, the most childish things in the world, which, however, excited me as much as if the possession of Helen or the throne of the universe had been at stake. In the first place—women. When I possessed one, my senses were calm; my heart, never. The needs of love devoured me in the midst of enjoyment; I had a tender mother, a dear friend; but I needed a mistress. I imagined one in her place; I represented her to myself in a thousand forms, in order to deceive myself. If I had thought that I held mamma in my arms when I embraced her, these embraces would have been no less lively, but all my desires would have been extinguished; I should have sobbed from affection, but I should never have felt any enjoyment. Enjoyment! Does this ever fall to the lot of man? If I had ever, a single time in my life, tasted all the delights of love in their fulness, I do not believe that my frail existence could have endured it; I should have died on the spot.

Thus I was burning with love, without an object; and it is this state, perhaps, that is most exhausting. I was restless, tormented by the hopeless condition of poor mamma's affairs, and her imprudent conduct, which were bound to ruin her completely at no distant date. My cruel imagination, which always anticipates misfortunes, exhibited this particular one to me continually, in all its extent and in all its results. I already saw myself compelled by want to separate from her to whom I had devoted my life, and without whom I could not enjoy it. Thus my soul was ever in a state of agitation; I was devoured alternately by desires and fears. . . .

BOOK VI

[The Year 1736.] . . . At this period commences the brief happiness of my life; here approach the peaceful, but rapid moments which have given me the right to say, *I have lived*. Precious and regretted moments! begin again for me your delightful course; and, if it be possible, pass more slowly in succession through my memory, than you did in your fugitive reality. What can I do, to prolong, as I should like, this touching and simple narrative, to repeat the same things over and over again, without wearying my readers by such repetition, any more than I was wearied of them myself, when I recommenced the life again and again? If all this consisted of facts, actions, and words, I could describe, and in a manner, give an idea of them; but how is it possible to describe what was neither said nor

done, nor even thought, but enjoyed and felt, without being able to assign any other reason for my happiness than this simple feeling? I got up at sunrise, and was happy; I walked, and was happy; I saw mamma, and was happy; I left her, and was happy; I roamed the forests and hills, I wandered in the valleys, I read, I did nothing, I worked in the garden, I picked the fruit, I helped in the work of the house, and happiness followed me everywhere—happiness, which could not be referred to any definite object, but dwelt entirely within myself, and which never left me for a single instant. . . .

I should much like to know, whether the same childish ideas ever enter the hearts of other men as sometimes enter mine. In the midst of my studies, in the course of a life as blameless as a man could have led, the fear of hell still frequently troubled me. I asked myself: "In what state am I? If I were to die this moment, should I be damned?" According to my Jansenists,[2] there was no doubt about the matter; but, according to my conscience, I thought differently. Always fearful, and a prey to cruel uncertainty, I had recourse to the most laughable expedients to escape from it, for which I would unhesitatingly have anyone locked up as a madman if I saw him doing as I did. One day, while musing upon this melancholy subject, I mechanically amused myself by throwing stones against the trunks of trees with my usual good aim, that is to say, without hardly hitting one. While engaged in this useful exercise, it occurred to me to draw a prognostic from it to calm my anxiety. I said to myself: "I will throw this stone at the tree opposite; if I hit it, I am saved; if I miss it, I am damned." While speaking, I threw my stone with a trembling hand and a terrible palpitation of the heart, but with so successful an aim that it hit the tree right in the middle, which, to tell the truth, was no very difficult feat, for I had been careful to choose a tree with a thick trunk close at hand. From that time I have never had any doubt about my salvation! When I recall this characteristic incident, I do not know whether to laugh or cry at myself. You great men, who are most certainly laughing, may congratulate yourselves; but do not mock my wretchedness, for I swear to you that I feel it deeply. . . .

2. A sect of strict Catholics, named for Corneille Jansen (1585–1638).

JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE

1749–1832

Recasting the ancient legend of Faust, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe created a powerful symbol of the Romantic imagination in all its aspiration and anxiety. Faust himself, central character of the epic drama, emerges as a Romantic hero, ever testing the limits of possibility. Yet to achieve his ends he must make a contract with the devil: as if to say that giving full scope to imagination necessarily partakes of sin.

Goethe's *Faust* (Part I, 1808; Part II, 1832) constituted the crowning masterpiece of a life rich in achievement. Goethe exemplifies the nineteenth-century meaning of "genius." Accomplished as poet, dramatist, novelist, and autobiographer, he also practiced law, served as a diplomat, and pursued scientific research. He had a happy childhood in Frankfurt, after which he studied law at Leipzig and then at Strasbourg, where in 1770–71 he met Gottfried Herder, leader of a new literary movement called the Sturm und Drang (Storm and Stress) movement. Participants in this movement emphasized the importance of revolt against established standards; they interested Goethe in such newly discovered forms as the folk song and in the literary vitality of Shakespeare, as opposed to more formally constricted writers.

During the brief period when he practiced law, after an unhappy love affair, Goethe wrote *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774), a novel of immense influence in establishing the image of the introspective, self-pitying, melancholy Romantic hero. In 1775 he accepted an invitation to the court of Charles Augustus, duke of Saxe-Weimar. He remained in Weimar for the rest of his life, for ten years serving the duke as chief minister. A trip to Italy from 1786 to 1788 aroused his interest in classic sources. He wrote dramas based on classic texts, most notably *Iphigenia* (1787); novels (for example, *Elective Affinities*, 1809) that pointed the way to the psychological novel; lyric poetry; and an important autobiography, *Poetry and Truth* (1811–33). He also did significant work in botany and physiology. Increasingly famous, he became in his own lifetime a legendary figure; all Europe flocked to Weimar to visit him.

The legend of Dr. Faustus (the real Johannes Faustus, a scholar, lived from 1480 to 1540), in most versions a seeker after forbidden knowledge, had attracted other writers before Goethe. The most important previous literary embodiment of the tale was Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* (c. 1588), a drama ending in its protagonist's damnation as a result of his search for illegitimate power through learning. Goethe's Faust meets no such fate. Pursuing not knowledge but experience, he embodies the ideal of limitless aspiration in all its glamour and danger. His contract with Mephistopheles provides that he will die at the moment he declares himself satisfied, content to rest in the present; he stakes his life and his salvation on his capacity ever to yearn for something beyond.

In Part I of Goethe's play, the protagonist's vision of the impossible locates itself specifically in the figure of Gretchen, the simple, innocent girl whom

he possesses physically but with whom he can never attain total union. In a speech epitomizing Romantic attitudes toward nature and toward emotion (especially the emotion of romantic love), Faust responds to his beloved's question, "Do you believe in God?"

> Does not the Heaven vault itself above us?
> Is not the earth established fast below?
> And with their friendly glances do not
> Eternal stars rise over us?
> Do not my eyes look into yours,
> And all things thrust
> Into your head, into your heart,
> And weave in everlasting mystery
> Invisibly, visibly, around you?
> Fill your heart with *this*, great as it is,
> And when this feeling grants you perfect bliss,
> Then call it what you will—
> Happiness! Heart! Love! God!
> I have no name for it!
> Feeling is all.

The notion of "bliss," for Pope associated with respect for limitation, for Wordsworth connected with revolutionary vision, here designates an unnameable feeling, derived from experience of nature and of romantic love, possibly identical with God, but valued partly for its very vagueness.

Modern readers may feel that Faust bullies Gretchen, allowing her no reality except as instrument for his desires. In a poignant moment early in the play, interrupting Faust's rhapsody about her "simplicity" and "innocence," Gretchen suggests, "Only think of *me* one little minute." Faust seems incapable of any such awareness, too busy inventing his loved one to see her as she is. He dramatically represents the "egotistical sublime," with a kind of imaginative grandeur inseparable from his utter absorption in the wonder of his own being, his own experience.

Yet the action of Part I turns on Faust's development of just that consciousness of another's reality which seemed impossible for him, and Gretchen is the agent of his development. In the great final scene—Gretchen in prison, intermittently mad, condemned to death for murdering her illegitimate child by Faust—the woman again appeals to the man to think about her, to *know* her: "Do you know, my love, *whom* you are setting free?" Her anguish, his responsibility for it, force themselves on Faust. He wishes he had never been born: his lust for experience has eventuated in this terrible culpability, this agonizing loss. At the final moment of separation, with Gretchen's spiritual redemption proclaimed from above, Faust implicitly acknowledges the full reality of the woman he has lost and thus, even though he departs with Mephistopheles, distinguishes himself from his Satanic mentor. Mephistopheles in his nature cannot grasp a reality utterly apart from his own; he can only recognize what belongs to him. Faust, at least fleetingly, realizes the otherness of the woman and the value of what he has lost.

Mephistopheles, at the outset witty and powerful in his own imagination, gradually reveals his limitations. In the Prologue in Heaven, the devil seems

energetic, perceptive, enterprising, fearless: as the Lord says, a "joker," apparently more playful than malign. His bargain with the Lord turns on his belief in the essentially "beastly" nature of humankind: like Gulliver's Houyhnhnm master, he emphasizes the human misuse of reason. Although the scene is modeled on the interchange between God and Satan in the Book of Job, it differs significantly in that the Lord gives an explicit reason for allowing the Tempter to function. "Men make mistakes as long as they strive," He says, but He adds that Mephistopheles' value is in prodding humanity into action. The introductory scene thus suggests that Mephistopheles will function as an agent of salvation rather than damnation. The devil's subsequent exchanges with Faust, in Mephistopheles' mind predicated on his own superior knowledge and comprehension, gradually make one realize that the man in significant respects knows more than does the devil. Mephistopheles, for example, can understand Faust's desire for Gretchen only in sexual terms. His witty cynicism seems more and more inadequate to the actual situation. By the end of Part I, Faust's suffering has enlarged him; but from the beginning, his capacity for sympathy marked his potential superiority to the devil.

The pattern of Faust's moral development in Part I prepares the reader for a nontragic denouement to the drama as a whole. In Part II, which he worked on for some thirty years, completing it only the year before his death, Goethe moves from the individual to the social. Faust marries Helen of Troy, who gives birth to Euphorion, symbol of new humanity. He turns soldier to save a kingdom; he reclaims land from the sea; finally he rests contented in a vision of happy community generated by the industry of mankind. Mephistopheles thinks this his moment of victory: now Faust has declared himself satisfied. But since his satisfaction depends still on aspiration, on a dream of the future, the angels rescue him at last and take him to heaven.

One cannot read *Faust* with twentieth-century expectations of what a play should be like. This is above all *poetic* drama, to be read with pleasure in the richness of its language, the fertility and daring of its imagination. Although its cast of characters natural and supernatural and its sequence of supernaturally generated events are far from "realistic," it addresses problems still very much with us. How can individual ambition and desire be reconciled with responsibility to others? Does a powerful imagination—an artist's, say, or a scientist's—justify its possessor in ignoring social obligations? Goethe investigates such perplexing issues in symbolic terms, drawing his readers into personal involvement by playing on their emotions even as he questions the proper functions and limitations of commitment to desire—that form of emotional energy that leads to the greatest human achievements, but involves the constant danger of debilitating narcissism.

E. Ludwig, *Goethe, The History of a Man, 1749–1832* (1928) is a solid biography. Also useful are *Goethe: A Collection of Critical Essays*, edited by V. Lange (1960), and the essays contained in the critical edition of *Faust*, edited by W. Arndt and C. Hamlin (1976). See also H. Hatfield, *Goethe: A Critical Introduction* (1963), and, specifically for *Faust*, L. Dieckmann, *Goethe's Faust: A Critical Reading* (1972).

Faust[1]

PROLOGUE IN HEAVEN[2]

The LORD. *The* HEAVENLY HOSTS. MEPHISTOPHELES[3] *following.*
[*The* THREE ARCHANGELS *step forward.*]

RAPHAEL. The chanting sun, as ever, rivals
The chanting of his brother spheres
And marches round his destined circuit—
A march that thunders in our ears.
His aspect cheers the Hosts of Heaven
Though what his essence none can say;
These inconceivable creations
Keep the high state of their first day.

GABRIEL. And swift, with inconceivable swiftness,
The earth's full splendour rolls around,
Celestial radiance alternating
With a dread night too deep to sound;
The sea against the rocks' deep bases
Comes foaming up in far-flung force,
And rock and sea go whirling onward
In the swift spheres' eternal course.

MICHAEL. And storms in rivalry are raging
From sea to land, from land to sea,
In frenzy forge the world a girdle
From which no inmost part is free.
The blight of lightning flaming yonder
Marks where the thunder-bolt will play;
And yet Thine envoys, Lord, revere
The gentle movement of Thy day.

CHOIR OF ANGELS. Thine aspect cheers the Hosts of Heaven
Though what Thine essence none can say,
And all Thy loftiest creations
Keep the high state of their first day.
[*Enter* MEPHISTOPHELES.]

MEPHISTOPHELES. Since you, O Lord, once more approach and ask
If business down with us be light or heavy—
And in the past you've usually welcomed me—
That's why you see me also at your levee.
Excuse me, I can't manage lofty words—
Not though your whole court jeer and find me low;
My pathos certainly would make you laugh

1. Translated by Louis MacNeice. 2. The scene is patterned on Job 1:6–12 and 2:1–6. 3. The origin of the name is still debatable. It may come from Hebrew, Persian, or Greek, with such meanings, as "destroyer-liar," "no friend of Faust," "no friend of light."

Had you not left off laughing long ago.
Your suns and worlds mean nothing much to me;
How men torment themselves, that's all I see.
The little god of the world, one can't reshape, reshade him;
He is as strange to-day as that first day you made him.
His life would be not so bad, not quite,
Had you not granted him a gleam of Heaven's light;
He calls it Reason, uses it not the least
Except to be more beastly than any beast.
He seems to me—if your Honour does not mind—
Like a grasshopper—the long-legged kind—
That's always in flight and leaps as it flies along
And then in the grass strikes up its same old song.
I could only wish he confined himself to the grass!
He thrusts his nose into every filth, alas.

LORD. Mephistopheles, have you no other news?
Do you always come here to accuse?
Is nothing ever right in your eyes on earth?

MEPHISTOPHELES. No, Lord! I find things there as downright bad as ever.
I am sorry for men's days of dread and dearth;
Poor things, *my* wish to plague 'em isn't fervent.

LORD. Do you know Faust?

MEPHISTOPHELES. The Doctor?[4]

LORD. Aye, my servant.

MEPHISTOPHELES. Indeed! He serves you[5] oddly enough, I think.
The fool has no earthly habits in meat and drink.
The ferment in him drives him wide and far,
That he is mad he too has almost guessed;
He demands of heaven each fairest star
And of earth each highest joy and best,
And all that is new and all that is far
Can bring no calm to the deep-sea swell of his breast.

LORD. Now he may serve me only gropingly,
Soon I shall lead him into the light.
The gardener knows when the sapling first turns green
That flowers and fruit will make the future bright.

MEPHISTOPHELES. What do you wager? You will lose him yet,
Provided *you* give *me* permission
To steer him gently the course I set.

LORD. So long as he walks the earth alive,
So long you may try what enters your head;

4. I.e., doctor of philosophy. 5. In the German text, Mephistopheles shifts from *du* to *ihr*, indicating his lack of respect for God.

Men make mistakes as long as they strive.
MEPHISTOPHELES. I thank you for that; as regards the dead,
The dead have never taken my fancy.
I favour cheeks that are full and rosy-red;
No corpse is welcome to my house;
I work as the cat does with the mouse.
LORD. Very well; you have my permission.
Divert this soul from its primal source
And carry it, if you can seize it,
Down with you upon your course—
And stand ashamed when you must needs admit:
A good man with his groping intuitions
Still knows the path that is true and fit.
MEPHISTOPHELES. All right—but it won't last for long.
I'm not afraid my bet will turn out wrong.
And, if my aim prove true and strong,
Allow me to triumph wholeheartedly.
Dust shall he eat—and greedily—
Like my cousin the Snake renowned in tale and song.
LORD. That too you are free to give a trial;
I have never hated the likes of you.
Of all the spirits of denial
The joker is the last that I eschew.
Man finds relaxation too attractive—
Too fond too soon of unconditional rest;
Which is why I am pleased to give him a companion
Who lures and thrusts and must, as devil, be active.
But ye, true sons of Heaven, it is your duty
To take your joy in the living wealth of beauty.
The changing Essence which ever works and lives
Wall you around with love, serene, secure!
And that which floats in flickering appearance
Fix ye it firm in thoughts that must endure.
CHOIR OF ANGELS. Thine aspect cheers the Hosts of Heaven
Though what Thine essence none can say,
And all Thy loftiest creations
Keep the high state of their first day.
[*Heaven closes.*]
MEPHISTOPHELES. [*Alone*] I like to see the Old One now and then
And try to keep relations on the level.
It's really decent of so great a person
To talk so humanely even to the Devil.

The First Part of the Tragedy

NIGHT

In a high-vaulted narrow Gothic room FAUST, *restless, in a chair at his desk.*

FAUST. Here stand I, ach, Philosophy
Behind me and Law and Medicine too
And, to my cost, Theology—
All these I have sweated through and through
And now you see me a poor fool
As wise as when I entered school!
They call me Master, they call me Doctor,
Ten years now I have dragged my college
Along by the nose through zig and zag
Through up and down and round and round
And this is all that I have found—
The impossibility of knowledge!
It is this that burns away my heart;
Of course I am cleverer than the quacks,
Than master and doctor, than clerk and priest,
I suffer no scruple or doubt in the least,
I have no qualms about devil or burning,
Which is just why all joy is torn from me,
I cannot presume to make use of my learning,
I cannot presume I could open my mind
To proselytize and improve mankind.

Besides, I have neither goods nor gold,
Neither reputation nor rank in the world;
No dog would choose to continue so!
Which is why I have given myself to Magic
To see if the Spirit may grant me to know
Through its force and its voice full many a secret,
May spare the sour sweat that I used to pour out
In talking of what I know nothing about,
May grant me to learn what it is that girds
The world together in its inmost being,
That the seeing its whole germination, the seeing
Its workings, may end my traffic in words.

O couldst thou, light of the full moon,
Look now thy last upon my pain,
Thou for whom I have sat belated
So many midnights here and waited
Till, over books and papers, thou

Didst shine, sad friend, upon my brow!
O could I but walk to and fro
On mountain heights in thy dear glow
Or float with spirits round mountain eyries
Or weave through fields thy glances glean
And freed from all miasmal theories
Bathe in thy dew and wash me clean!

Oh! Am I still stuck in this jail?
This God-damned dreary hole in the wall
Where even the lovely light of heaven
Breaks wanly through the painted panes!
Cooped up among these heaps of books
Gnawed by worms, coated with dust,
Round which to the top of the Gothic vault
A smoke-stained paper forms a crust.
Retorts and canisters lie pell-mell
And pyramids of instruments,
The junk of centuries, dense and mat—
Your world, man! World? They call it that!

And yet you ask why your poor heart
Cramped in your breast should feel such fear,
Why an unspecified misery
Should throw your life so out of gear?
Instead of the living natural world
For which God made all men his sons
You hold a reeking mouldering court
Among assorted skeletons.

Away! There is a world outside!
And this one book of mystic art
Which Nostradamus[6] wrote himself,
Is this not adequate guard and guide?
By this you can tell the course of the stars,
By this, once Nature gives the word,
The soul begins to stir and dawn,
A spirit by a spirit heard.
In vain your barren studies here
Construe the signs of sanctity.
You Spirits, you are hovering near;
If you can hear me, answer me!
[*He opens the book and perceives the sign of the Macrocosm.*][7]

6. Latin name of the French astrologer and physician Michel de Notredame, born in 1503. His collection of rhymed prophecies, *The Centuries*, appeared in 1555. 7. Literally, "the great world"; the universe as a whole.

Ha! What a river of wonder at this vision
Bursts upon all my senses in one flood!
And I feel young, the holy joy of life
Glows new, flows fresh, through nerve and blood!
Was it a god designed this hieroglyph to calm
The storm which but now raged inside me,
To pour upon my heart such balm,
And by some secret urge to guide me
Where all the powers of Nature stand unveiled around me?
Am I a God? It grows so light!
And through the clear-cut symbol on this page
My soul comes face to face with all creating Nature.
At last I understand the dictum of the sage:
'The spiritual world is always open,
Your mind is closed, your heart is dead;
Rise, young man, and plunge undaunted
Your earthly breast in the morning red.'
[*He contemplates the sign.*]

Into one Whole how all things blend,
Function and live within each other!
Passing gold buckets to each other
How heavenly powers ascend, descend!
The odour of grace upon their wings,
They thrust from heaven through earthly things
And as all sing so *the* All sings!

What a fine show! Aye, but only a show!
Infinite Nature, where can I tap thy veins?
Where are thy breasts, those well-springs of all life
On which hang heaven and earth,
Towards which my dry breast strains?
They well up, they give drink, but I feel drought and dearth.
[*He turns the pages and perceives the sign of the* EARTH SPIRIT.]

How differently this new sign works upon me!
Thy sign, thou Spirit of the Earth,[8] 'tis thine
And thou art nearer to me.
At once I feel my powers unfurled,
At once I glow as from new wine
And feel inspired to venture into the world,
To cope with the fortunes of earth benign or malign,
To enter the ring with the storm, to grapple and clinch,
To enter the jaws of the shipwreck and never flinch.

8. The Macrocosm represented the ordered, harmonious universe in its totality; this figure seems to be a symbol for the energy of terrestrial nature—neither good nor bad, merely powerful.

Over me comes a mist,
The moon muffles her light,
The lamp goes dark.
The air goes damp. Red beams flash
Around my head. There blows
A kind of a shudder down from the vault
And seizes on me.
It is thou must be hovering round me, come at my prayers!
Spirit, unveil thyself!
My heart, oh my heart, how it tears!
And how each and all of my senses
Seem burrowing upwards towards new light, new breath!
I feel my heart as surrendered, I have no more defences.
Come then! Come! Even if it prove my death!

[*He seizes the book and solemnly pronounces the sign of the* EARTH SPIRIT. *There is a flash of red flame and the* SPIRIT *appears in it.*]

SPIRIT. Who calls upon me?

FAUST. Appalling vision!

SPIRIT. You have long been sucking at my sphere,
Now by main force you have drawn me here
And now—

FAUST. No! Not to be endured!

SPIRIT. With prayers and with pantings you have procured
The sight of my face and the sound of my voice—
Now I am here. What a pitiable shivering
Seizes the Superman. Where is the call of your soul?
Where the breast which created a world in itself
And carried and fostered it, swelling up, joyfully quivering,
Raising itself to a level with Us, the Spirits?
Where are you, Faust, whose voice rang out to me,
Who with every nerve so thrust yourself upon me?
Are you the thing that at a whiff of my breath
Trembles throughout its living frame,
A poor worm crawling off, askance, askew?

FAUST. Shall I yield to Thee, Thou shape of flame?
I am Faust, I can hold my own with Thee.

SPIRIT. In the floods of life, in the storm of work,
In ebb and flow,
In warp and weft,
Cradle and grave,
An eternal sea,
A changing patchwork,
A glowing life,
At the whirring loom of Time I weave
The living clothes of the Deity.

FAUST. Thou who dost rove the wide world round,
Busy Spirit, how near I feel to Thee!
SPIRIT. You are like that Spirit which you can grasp,
Not me!
[*The* SPIRIT *vanishes.*]
FAUST. Not thee!
Whom then?
I who am Godhead's image,
Am I not even like Thee!
[*A knocking on the door.*]
Death! I know who that is. My assistant!
So ends my happiest, fairest hour.
The crawling pedant must interrupt
My visions at their fullest flower!
[WAGNER *enters in dressing-gown and nightcap, a lamp in his hand.*]
WAGNER. Excuse me but I heard your voice declaiming—
A passage doubtless from those old Greek plays.
That is an art from which I would gladly profit,
It has its advantages nowadays.
And I've often heard folks say it's true
A preacher can learn something from an actor.
FAUST. Yes, when the preacher is an actor too;
Which is a not uncommon factor.
WAGNER. Ah, when your study binds up your whole existence
And you scarcely can see the world on a holiday
Or through a spyglass—and always from a distance—
How can your rhetoric make it walk your way?
FAUST. Unless you feel it, you cannot gallop it down,
Unless it thrust up from your soul
Forcing the hearts of all your audience
With a primal joy beyond control.
Sit there for ever with scissors and paste!
Gather men's leavings for a rehash
And blow up a little paltry flicker
Out of your own little heap of ash!
It will win you claps from apes and toddlers—
Supposing your palate welcome such—
But heart can never awaken a spark in heart
Unless your own heart keep in touch.
WAGNER. However, it is the delivery wins all ears
And I know that I am still far, too far, in arrears.
FAUST. Win your effects by honest means,
Eschew the cap and bells of the fool!
True insight and true sense will make

Their point without the rhetoric school
And, given a thought that must be heard,
Is there such need to chase a word?
Yes, your so glittering purple patches
In which you make cat's cradles of humanity
Are like the foggy wind which whispers in the autumn
Through barren leaves—a fruitless vanity.
WAGNER. Ah God, we know that art
Is long and short our life!
Often enough my analytical labours
Pester both brain and heart.
How hard it is to attain the means
By which one climbs to the fountain head;
Before a poor devil can reach the halfway house,
Like as not he is dead.
FAUST. Your manuscript, is that your holy well
A draught of which for ever quenches thirst?
You have achieved no true refreshment
Unless you can tap your own soul first.
WAGNER. Excuse me—it is considerable gratification
To transport oneself into the spirit of times past,
To observe what a wise man thought before our days
And how we now have brought his ideas to consummation.
FAUST. Oh yes, consummated in heaven!
There is a book, my friend, and its seals are seven—[9]
The times that have been put on the shelf.
Your so-called spirit of such times
Is at bottom merely the spirit of the gentry
In whom each time reflects itself,
And at that it often makes one weep
And at the first glance run away,
A lumber-room and a rubbish heap,
At best an heroic puppet play
With excellent pragmatical Buts and Yets
Such as are suitable to marionettes.
WAGNER. And yet the world! The heart and spirit of men!
We all would wish to understand the same.
FAUST. Yes, what is known as understanding—
But who dare call the child by his real name?
The few who have known anything about it,
Whose hearts unwisely overbrimmed and spake,
Who showed the mob their feelings and their visions,
Have ended on the cross or at the stake.

9. See Revelation 5:1.

My friend, I beg you, the night is now far gone;
We must break off for this occasion.
WAGNER. I'd have been happy sitting on and on
To continue such a learned conversation.
To-morrow however, as it is Easter Day,
I shall put you some further questions if I may.
Having given myself to knowledge heart and soul
I have a good share of it, now I would like the whole.
[*Exit* WAGNER.]
FAUST. [*Alone*] To think this head should still bring hope to birth
Sticking like glue to hackneyed rags and tags,
Delving with greedy hand for treasure
And glad when it finds an earthworm in the earth!

That such a human voice should here intrude
Where spiritual fulness only now enclosed me!
And yet, my God, you poorest of all the sons
Of earth, this time you have earned my gratitude.
For you have snatched me away from that despair
Which was ripe and ready to destroy my mind;
Beside that gigantic vision I could not find
My normal self; only a dwarf was there.

I, image of the Godhead, who deemed myself but now
On the brink of the mirror of eternal truth and seeing
My rapturous fill of the blaze of clearest Heaven,
Having stripped off my earthly being;
I, more than an angel, I whose boundless urge
To flow through Nature's veins and in the act of creation
To revel it like the gods—what a divination,
What an act of daring—and what an expiation!
One thundering word has swept me over the verge.

To boast myself thine equal I do not dare.
Granted I owned the power to draw thee down,
I lacked the power to hold thee there.
In that blest moment I felt myself,
Felt myself so small, so great;
Cruelly thou didst thrust me back
Into man's uncertain fate.
Who will teach me? What must I shun?
Or must I go where that impulse drives?
Alas, our very actions like our sufferings
Put a brake upon our lives.
Upon the highest concepts of the mind
There grows an alien and more alien mould;

When we have reached what in this world is good
That which is better is labelled a fraud, a blind.
What gave us life, feelings of highest worth,
Go dead amidst the madding crowds of earth.

Where once Imagination on daring wing
Reached out to the Eternal, full of hope,
Now, that the eddies of time have shipwrecked chance on chance,
She is contented with a narrow scope.
Care makes her nest forthwith in the heart's deep places,
And there contrives her secret sorrows,
Rocks herself restlessly, destroying rest and joy;
And always she is putting on new faces,
Will appear as your home, as those that you love within it,
As fire or water, poison or steel;
You tremble at every blow that you do not feel
And what you never lose you must weep for every minute.

I am not like the gods—that I too deeply feel—
No, I am like the worm that burrows through the dust
Which, as it keeps itself alive in the dust,
Is annulled and buried by some casual heel.

Is it not dust that on a thousand shelves
Narrows this high wall round me so?
The junk that with its thousandfold tawdriness
In this moth world keeps me so low?
Shall I find here what I require?
Read maybe in a thousand books how men
Have in the general run tortured themselves,
With but a lucky one now and then?
Why do you grin at me, you hollow skull?
To point out that your brain was once, like mine, confused
And looked for the easy day but in the difficult dusk,
Lusting for truth was led astray and abused?
You instruments, I know you are mocking me
With cog and crank and cylinder.
I stood at the door, you were to be the key;
A key with intricate wards—but the bolt declines to stir.
Mysterious in the light of day
Nature lets none unveil her; if she refuse
To make some revelation to your spirit
You cannot force her with levers and with screws.
You ancient gear I have never used, it is only
Because my father used you that I retain you.[1]

1. Later we find that Faust's father was a doctor of medicine.

You ancient scroll, you have been turning black
Since first the dim lamp smoked upon this desk to stain you.
Far better to have squandered the little I have
Than loaded with that little to stay sweating here.
Whatever legacy your fathers left you,
To own it you must earn it dear.
The thing that you fail to use is a load of lead;
The moment can only use what the moment itself has bred.

But why do my eyes fasten upon that spot?
Is that little bottle a magnet to my sight?
Why do I feel of a sudden this lovely illumination
As when the moon flows round us in a dark wood at night?

Bottle, unique little bottle, I salute you
As now I devoutly lift you down. In you
I honour human invention and human skill.
You, the quintessence of all sweet narcotics,
The extract of all rare and deadly powers,
I am your master—show me your good will!
I look on you, my sorrow is mitigated,
I hold you and my struggles are abated,
The flood-tide of my spirit ebbs away, away.
The mirroring waters glitter at my feet,
I am escorted forth on the high seas,
Allured towards new shores by a new day.
A fiery chariot floats on nimble wings
Down to me and I feel myself upbuoyed
To blaze a new trail through the upper air
Into new spheres of energy unalloyed.
Oh this high life, this heavenly rapture! Do *you*
Merit this, you, a moment ago a worm?
Merit it? Aye—only turn your back on the sun
Which enchants the earth, turn your back and be firm!
And brace yourself to tear asunder the gates
Which everyone longs to shuffle past if he can;
Now is the time to act and acting prove
That God's height need not lower the merit of Man;
Nor tremble at that dark pit in which our fancy
Condemns itself to torments of its own framing,
But struggle on and upwards to that passage
At the narrow mouth of which all hell is flaming.
Be calm and take this step, though you should fall
Beyond it into nothing—nothing at all.

And you, you loving-cup of shining crystal—
I have not given a thought to you for years—

Down you come now out of your ancient chest!
You glittered at my ancestors' junketings
Enlivening the serious guest
When with you in his hand he proceeded to toast his neighbour—
But to-day no neighbour will take you from my hand.
Here is a juice that makes one drunk in a wink;
It fills you full, you cup, with its brown flood.
It was I who made this, I who had it drawn;
So let my whole soul now make my last drink
A high and gala greeting, a toast to the dawn![2]
[*He raises the cup to his mouth. There is an outburst of bells and choirs.*]

CHORUS OF ANGELS. Christ is arisen![3]
Joy to mortality
Whom its own fatally
Earth-bound mortality
Bound in a prison.

FAUST. What a deep booming, what a ringing tone
Pulls back the cup from my lips—and with such power!
So soon are you announcing, you deep bells,
Easter Day's first festive hour?
You choirs, do you raise so soon the solacing hymn
That once round the night of the grave rang out from the seraphim
As man's new covenant and dower?

CHORUS OF WOMEN. With balm and with spices
'Twas we laid him out,
We who tended him,
Faithful, devout;
We wound him in linen,
Made all clean where he lay,
Alas—to discover
Christ gone away.[4]

CHORUS OF ANGELS. Christ is arisen!
The loving one! Blest
After enduring the
Grievous, the curing, the
Chastening test.

FAUST. You heavenly music, strong as you are kind,
Why do you search me out in the dust?
Better ring forth where men have open hearts!

2. See line 248. 3. First line of an old medieval Easter hymn, freely adapted by Goethe. 4. Goethe makes free use of the New Testament here. None of the Evangelists says that Christ was laid in the tomb by women. According to Mark and Luke, they came on the third day *intending* to anoint the body, but He was gone from the tomb.

I hear your message, my faith it is that lags behind;
And miracle is the favourite child of faith.
Those spheres whence peals the gospel of forgiving,
Those are beyond what I can dare,
And yet, so used am I from childhood to this sound,
It even now summons me back to living.
Once I could feel the kiss of heavenly love
Rain down through the calm and solemn Sabbath air,
Could find a prophecy in the full-toned bell,
A spasm of happiness in a prayer.
An ineffably sweet longing bound me
To quest at random through field and wood
Where among countless burning tears
I felt a world rise up around me.
This hymn announced the lively games of youth, the lovely
Freedom of Spring's own festival;
Now with its childlike feelings memory holds me back
From the last and gravest step of all.
But you, sweet songs of heaven, keep sounding forth!
My tears well up, I belong once more to earth.

CHORUS OF DISCIPLES. Now has the Buried One,
Lowliness ended,
Living in lordliness,
Lordly ascended;
He in the zest of birth
Near to creating light;
We on the breast of earth
Still in frustrating night!
He left us, his own ones,
Pining upon this spot,
Ah, and lamenting
Master, thy lot.

CHORUS OF ANGELS. Christ is arisen
From the womb of decay!
Burst from your prison,
Rejoice in the day!
Praising him actively,
Practising charity,
Giving alms brotherly,
Preaching him wanderingly,
Promising sanctity,
You have your Master near,
You have him here!

EASTER HOLIDAY

Holidaymakers of all kinds come out through the city gate.[5]

FIRST STUDENT. Lord, these strapping wenches they go a lick!
Hurry up, brother, we must give 'em an escort.
My programme for to-day is a strong ale,
A pipe of shag and a girl who's got up chic.
FIRST GIRL. Look! Will you look at the handsome boys!
Really and truly it's degrading;
They could walk out with the best of us
And they have to run round scullery-maiding!
SECOND STUDENT. Hold on, hold on! There are two coming up behind
With a very pretty taste in dress;
One of those girls is a neighbour of mine,
She appeals to me, I must confess.
You see how quietly they go
And yet in the end they'll be taking *us* in tow.
BEGGAR. [*Singing*] Good gentlemen and lovely ladies,
Rosy of cheek and neat of dress,
Be kind enough to look upon me
And see and comfort my distress.
Leave me not here a hopeless busker!
Only the giver can be gay.
A day when all the town rejoices,
Make it for me a harvest day.
FIRST BURGHER. I know nothing better on Sundays or on holidays
Than to have a chat about war and warlike pother
When far away, in Turkey say,
The peoples are socking one another.
One stands at the window, drinks one's half of mild,
And sees the painted ships glide down the waterways;
Then in the evening one goes happily home
And blesses peace and peaceful days.
SECOND BURGHER. Yes indeed, neighbour! That is all right with me.
They can break heads if they like it so
And churn up everything topsyturvy.
But at home let us keep the status quo.
OLD WOMAN. Eh, but how smart they look! Pretty young things!
Whoever saw you should adore you!
But not so haughty! It's all right—
Tell me your wish and I can get it for you.

5. It has been shown that Goethe had Frankfurt in mind for this scene, and the "gate" referred to is the Sachsenhausen Tor, or Affenthor. The translator omits a few lines here which include other local references—to a hunting lodge, or *Forsthaus*, two miles southwest of the gate; to an inn called the Gerbermühle on the Main River; and to a village, probably Oberrad.

FIRST GIRL. Come, Agatha! Such witches I avoid
In public places—it's much wiser really;
It's true, she helped me on St. Andrew's night[6]
To see my future sweetheart clearly.
SECOND GIRL Yes, mine she showed me in a crystal,
A soldier type with dashing chaps behind him;
I look around, I seek him everywhere
And yet—and yet I never find him.
SOLDIERS. [*Singing*] Castles with towering
Walls to maintain them,
Girls who have suitors
But to disdain them,
Would I could gain them!
Bold is the venture,
Lordly the pay.

Hark to the trumpets!
They may be crying
Summons to gladness,
Summons to dying.
Life is a storming!
Life is a splendour!
Maidens and castles
Have to surrender.
Bold is the venture,
Lordly the pay;
Later the soldiers
Go marching away.

[FAUST *and* WAGNER *are now walking off on the road to the village.*]

FAUST. River and brook are freed from ice
By the lovely enlivening glance of spring
And hope grows green throughout the dale;
Ancient winter, weakening,
Has fallen back on the rugged mountains
And launches thence his Parthian shafts
Which are merely impotent showers of hail
Streaking over the greening mead;
But the sun who tolerates nothing white
Amidst all this shaping and stirring of seed,
Wants to enliven the world with colour
And, flowers being lacking, in their lieu
Takes colourful crowds to mend the view.

6. Actually, St. Andrew's eve, November 29. This was the traditional time for young girls to consult fortunetellers about their future lovers or husbands.

Turn round and look back from this rise
Towards the town. From the gloomy gate
Look, can you see them surging forth—
A harlequin-coloured crowd in fête!
Sunning themselves with one accord
In homage to the risen Lord
For they themselves to-day have risen:
Out of the dismal room in the slum,
Out of each shop and factory prison,
Out of the stuffiness of the garret,
Out of the squash of the narrow streets,
Out of the churches' reverend night—
One and all have been raised to light.
Look, only look, how quickly the gardens
And fields are sprinkled with the throng,
How the river all its length and breadth
Bears so many pleasure-boats along,
And almost sinking from its load
How this last dinghy moves away.
Even on the furthest mountain tracks
Gay rags continue to look gay.
Already I hear the hum of the village,
Here is the plain man's real heaven—
Great and small in a riot of fun;
Here I'm a man—and dare be one.

WAGNER. Doctor, to take a walk with you
Is a profit and a privilege for me
But I wouldn't lose my way alone round here,
Sworn foe that I am of all vulgarity.
This fiddling, screaming, skittle-playing,
Are sounds I loathe beyond all measure;
They run amuck as if the devil were in them
And call it music, call it pleasure.

[*They have now reached the village.*]

OLD PEASANT. Doctor, it is most good of you
Not to look down on us to-day
And, pillar of learning that you are,
To mill around with folk at play.
So take this most particular jug
Which we have filled for you at the tap,
This is a pledge and I pray aloud
That it quench your thirst and more mayhap:
As many drops as this can give,
So many days extra may you live.

FAUST. Thank you for such a reviving beer

And now—good health to all men here.
[*The people collect round him.*]
OLD PEASANT. Of a truth, Doctor, you have done rightly
To appear on this day when all are glad,
Seeing how in times past you proved
Our own good friend when days were bad.
Many a man stands here alive
Whom your father found in the grip
Of a raging fever and tore him thence[7]
When he put paid to the pestilence.
You too—you were a youngster then—
Where any was ill you went your round,
Right many a corpse left home feet first
But you came out of it safe and sound,
From many a gruelling trial—Aye,
The helper got help from the Helper on high.
CROWD. Health to the trusty man. We pray
He may live to help us many a day.
FAUST. Kneel to the One on high, our friend
Who teaches us helpers, who help can send.
[FAUST *and* WAGNER *leave the* CROWD *and move on.*]
WAGNER. You great man, how your heart must leap
To be so honoured by the masses!
How happy is he who has such talents
And from them such a crop can reap!
The father points you out to his boy,
They all ask questions, run and jostle,
The fiddles and the dancers pause
And, as you pass, they stand in rows
And caps go hurtling in the sky;
They almost kneel to you as though
The eucharist were passing by.
FAUST. Only a few steps more up to that stone!
Here, after our walk, we will take a rest.
Here I have often sat, thoughtful, alone,
Torturing myself with prayer and fast.
Rich in hope and firm in faith,
With tears and sighs to seven times seven
I thought I could end that epidemic
And force the hand of the Lord of Heaven.
But now the crowd's applause sounds to me like derision.
O could you only read in my inmost heart

7. See l. 327 in the preceding scene. The old German Faust legend made Faust's father a peasant; but Nostradamus and Paracelsus (1493–1541), two physician-astrologers closely linked to the Faust myth, were famous for their plague-curing remedies.

How little father and son
Merited their great reputation!
My father was a worthy man who worked in the dark,
Who in good faith but on his own wise
Brooded on Nature and her holy circles
With laborious whimsicalities;
Who used to collect the connoisseurs
Into the kitchen and locked inside
Its black walls pour together divers
Ingredients of countless recipes;
Such was our medicine, the patients died
And no one counted the survivors.
And thus we with our hellish powders
Raged more perniciously than the plague
Throughout this district—valley and town.
Myself I have given the poison to thousands;
They drooped away, *I* must live on to sample
The brazen murderers' renown.

WAGNER. How can you let that weigh so heavily?
Does not a good man do enough
If he works at the art that he has received
Conscientiously and scrupulously?
As a young man you honour your father,
What he can teach, you take with a will;
As a man you widen the range of knowledge
And your son's range may be wider still.

FAUST. Happy the man who swamped in this sea of Error
Still hopes to struggle up through the watery wall;
What we don't know is exactly what we need
And what we know fulfils no need at all.
But let us not with such sad thoughts
Make this good hour an hour undone!
Look how the cottages on the green
Shine in the glow of the evening sun!
He backs away, gives way, the day is overspent,
He hurries off to foster life elsewhere.
Would I could press on his trail, on his trail for ever—
Alas that I have no wings to raise me into the air!
Then I should see in an everlasting sunset
The quiet world before my feet unfold,
All of its peaks on fire, all of its vales becalmed,
And the silver brook dispersed in streams of gold.
Not the wild peaks with all their chasms
Could interrupt my godlike flight;
Already the bays of the sea that the sun has warmed

Unfurl upon my marvelling sight.
But in the end the sungod seems to sink away,
Yet the new impulse sets me again in motion,
I hasten on to drink his eternal light,
With night behind me and before me day,
Above me heaven and below me ocean.
A beautiful dream—yet the sun leaves me behind.
Alas, it is not so easy for earthly wing
To fly on level terms with the wings of the mind.
Yet born with each of us is the instinct
That struggles upwards and away
When over our heads, lost in the blue,
The lark pours out her vibrant lay;
When over rugged pine-clad ranges
The eagle hangs on outspread wings
And over lake and over plain
We see the homeward-struggling crane.
WAGNER. I myself have often had moments of fancifulness
But I never experienced yet an urge like this.
Woods and fields need only a quick look
And *I* shall never envy the bird its pinions.
How differently the joys of the mind's dominions
Draw us from page to page, from book to book.
That's what makes winter nights lovely and snug—
The blissful life that warms you through your body—
And, ah, should you unroll a worthwhile manuscript,
You bring all heaven down into your study.
FAUST. You are only conscious of one impulse. Never
Seek an acquaintance with the other.
Two souls, alas, cohabit in my breast,
A contract one of them desires to sever.
The one like a rough lover clings
To the world with the tentacles of its senses;
The other lifts itself to Elysian Fields
Out of the mist on powerful wings.
Oh, if there be spirits in the air,
Princes that weave their way between heaven and earth,
Come down to me from the golden atmosphere
And carry me off to a new and colourful life.
Aye, if I only had a magic mantle
On which I could fly abroad, a-voyaging,
I would not barter it for the costliest raiment,
Not even for the mantle of a king.
WAGNER. Do not invoke the notorious host
Deployed in streams upon the wind,

Preparing danger in a thousand forms
From every quarter for mankind.
Thrusting upon you from the North
Come fanged spirits with arrow tongues;
From the lands of morning they come parching
To feed themselves upon your lungs;
The South despatches from the desert
Incendiary hordes against your brain
And the West a swarm which first refreshes,
Then drowns both you and field and plain.
They are glad to listen, adepts at doing harm,
Glad to obey and so throw dust in our eyes;
They make believe that they are sent from heaven
And lisp like angels, telling lies.
But let us move! The world has already gone grey,
The air is beginning to cool and the mist to fall.
It's in the evening one really values home—
But why do you look so astonished, standing there, staring that way?
What's there to see in the dusk that's worth the trouble?

FAUST. The black dog, do you mark him ranging through corn and stubble?

WAGNER. I noticed him long ago; he struck me as nothing much.

FAUST. Have a good look at the brute. What do you take him for?

WAGNER. For a poodle who, as is the way of such,
Is trailing his master, worrying out the scent.

FAUST. But don't you perceive how in wide spirals around us
He is getting nearer and nearer of set intent?
And, unless I'm wrong, a running fire
Eddies behind him in his wake.

WAGNER. I can see nothing but a black poodle;
It must be your eyes have caused this mistake

FAUST. He is casting, it seems to me, fine nooses of magic
About our feet as a snare.

WAGNER. *I* see him leaping round us uncertainly, timidly,
Finding instead of his master two strangers there.

FAUST. The circle narrows; now he is near.

WAGNER. Just a dog, you see; no phantoms here.
He growls and hesitates, grovels on the green
And wags his tail. Pure dog routine.

FAUST. Heel, sir, heel! Come, fellow, come!

WAGNER. He is a real poodle noodle.
Stand still and he'll sit up and beg;
Speak to him and he's all over you;
Lose something and he'll fetch it quick,

He'll jump in the water after your stick.
FAUST. I think you're right, I cannot find a trace
Of a spirit here; it is all a matter of training.
WAGNER. If a dog is well brought up, a wise man even
Can come to be fond of him in such a case.
Yes, he fully deserves your name upon his collar,
He whom the students have found so apt a scholar.

FAUST'S STUDY

He enters with the poodle.

FAUST. I have forsaken field and meadow
Which night has laid in a deep bed,
Night that wakes our better soul
With a holy and foreboding dread.
Now wild desires are wrapped in sleep
And all the deeds that burn and break,
The love of Man is waking now,
The love of God begins to wake.

Poodle! Quiet! Don't run hither and thither!
Leave my threshold! Why are you snuffling there?
Lie down behind the stove and rest.
Here's a cushion; it's my best.
Out of doors on the mountain paths
You kept us amused by running riot;
But as my protégé at home
You'll only be welcome if you're quiet.

Ah, when in our narrow cell
The lamp once more imparts good cheer,
Then in our bosom—in the heart
That knows itself—then things grow clear.
Reason once more begins to speak
And the blooms of hope once more to spread;
One hankers for the brooks of life,
Ah, and for life's fountain head.

Don't growl, you poodle! That animal sound
Is not in tune with the holy music
By which my soul is girdled round.
We are used to human beings who jeer
At what they do not understand,
Who grouse at the good and the beautiful
Which often causes them much ado;
But must a dog snarl at it too?

But, ah, already, for all my good intentions
I feel contentment ebbing away in my breast.
Why must the stream so soon run dry
And we be left once more athirst?
I have experienced this so often;
Yet this defect has its compensation,
We learn to prize the supernatural
And hanker after revelation,
Which burns most bright and wins assent
Most in the New Testament.
I feel impelled to open the master text[8]
And this once, with true dedication,
Take the sacred original
And make in my mother tongue my own translation.
[*He opens a Bible.*]

It is written: In the beginning was the Word.[9]
Here I am stuck at once. Who will help me on?
I am unable to grant the Word such merit,
I must translate it differently
If I am truly illumined by the spirit.
It is written: In the beginning was the Mind.
But why should my pen scour
So quickly ahead? Consider that first line well.
Is it the Mind that effects and creates all things?
It *should* read: In the beginning was the Power.
Yet, even as I am changing what I have writ,
Something warns me not to abide by it.
The spirit prompts me, I see in a flash what I need,
And write: In the beginning was the Deed!

Dog! If we two are to share this room,
Leave off your baying,
Leave off your barking!
I can't have such a fellow staying
Around me causing all this bother.
One of us or the other
Will have to leave the cell.
Well?
I don't really like to eject you so
But the door is open, you may go.

But what? What do I see?
Can this really happen naturally?
Is it a fact or is it a fraud?

8. I.e., the Greek. 9. John 1:1.

My dog is growing so long and broad!
He raises himself mightily,
That is not a dog's anatomy!
What a phantom have I brought to my house!
He already looks like a river horse
With fiery eyes and frightful jaws—
Aha! But I can give you pause!
For such a hybrid out of hell
Solomon's Key is a good spell.[1]
[SPIRITS *are heard in the passage.*]

SPIRITS. Captured within there is one of us!
Wait without, follow him none of us!
Like a fox in a snare
An old hell-cat's trembling there.
But on the alert!
Fly against and athwart,
To starboard and port,
And he's out with a spurt!
If help you can take him,
Do not forsake him!
For often, to earn it, he
Helped our fraternity.
FAUST. First, to confront the beast,
Be the Spell of the Four[2] released:
Salamander shall glow,
Undine shall coil,
Sylph shall vanish
And gnome shall toil.
One without sense
Of the elements,
Of their force
And proper course,
The spirits would never
Own him for master.
Vanish in flames,
Salamander!
Commingle in babble of streams,
Undine!
Shine meteor-like and majestic,
Sylph!
Bring help domestic,
Lubber-fiend! Lubber-fiend!

1. The *Clavicula Salomonis*, a standard work used by magicians for conjuring; in many medieval legends, Solomon was noted as a great magician. 2. Salamanders were spirits of fire; undines, of water; sylphs, of air; and gnomes, of earth.

Step out of him and make an end!
None of the Four
Is the creature's core.
He lies quite quiet and grins at me,
I have not yet worked him injury.
To exercise you
I'll have to chastise you.
Are you, rapscallion,
A displaced devil?
This sign can level
Each dark battalion;
Look at this sign!
He swells up already with bristling spine.
You outcast! Heed it—
This name! Can you read it?
The unbegotten one,
Unpronounceable,
Poured throughout Paradise,
Heinously wounded one?
Behind the stove, bound by my spells,
Look, like an elephant it swells,
Filling up all the space and more,
It threatens to melt away in mist.
Down from the ceiling! Down before—!
Down at your master's feet! Desist!
You see, I have not proved a liar;
I can burn you up with holy fire!
Do not await
The triply glowing light![3]
Do not await
My strongest brand of necromancy!

[*The mist subsides and* MEPHISTOPHELES *comes forward from behind the stove, dressed like a travelling scholar.*]

MEPHISTOPHELES. What is the noise about? What might the gentleman fancy?

FAUST. So that is what the poodle had inside him!
A travelling scholar? That casus makes me laugh.

MEPHISTOPHELES. My compliments to the learned gentleman.
You have put me a sweat—not half!

FAUST. What is your name?

MEPHISTOPHELES. The question strikes me as petty
For one who holds the Word[4] in such low repute,
Who, far withdrawn from all mere surface,

3. Perhaps the Trinity, or a triangle with divergent rays. 4. See l. 47 in this scene.

Aims only at the Essential Root.
FAUST. With you, you gentry, what is essential
The name more often than not supplies,
As is indeed only too patent
When they call you Fly-God,[5] Corrupter, Father of Lies.
All right, who are you then?
MEPHISTOPHELES. A part of that Power
Which always wills evil, always procures good.
FAUST. What do you mean by this conundrum?
MEPHISTOPHELES. I am the Spirit which always denies.
And quite rightly; whatever has a beginning
Deserves to have an undoing;
It would be better if nothing began at all.
Thus everything that you call
Sin, destruction, Evil in short,
Is my own element, my resort.
FAUST. You call yourself a part, yet you stand before me whole?
MEPHISTOPHELES. This is the unassuming truth.
Whereas mankind, that little world of fools,
Commonly takes itself for a whole—
I am a part of the Part which in the beginning was all,
A part of the darkness[6] which gave birth to light,
To that haughty light which is struggling now to usurp
The ancient rank and realm of its mother Night,
And yet has no success, try as it will,
Being bound and clamped by bodies still.
It streams from bodies, bodies it beautifies,
A body clogs it when it would run,
And so, I hope, it won't be long
Till, bodies and all, it is undone.
FAUST. Ah, now I know your honourable profession!
You cannot destroy on a large scale,
So you are trying it on a small.
MEPHISTOPHELES. And, candidly, not getting far at all.
That which stands over against the Nothing,
The Something, I mean this awkward world,
For all my endeavours up to date
I have failed to get it under foot
With waves, with storms, with earthquakes, fire—
Sea and land after all stay put.
And this damned stuff, the brood of beasts and men,
There is no coming to grips with them;

5. An almost literal translation of the name of the Philistine deity Beelzebub. 6. Mephistopheles here speaks as the Prince of Darkness, the role in Christianity acquired by the devil from the Persian Manichaean deity Ahriman.

I've already buried heaps of them!
And always new blood, fresh blood, circulates again.
So it goes on, it's enough to drive one crazy.
A thousand embryos extricate themselves
From air, from water and from earth
In wet and dry and hot and cold.
Had I not made a corner in fire
I should find myself without a berth.

FAUST. So you when faced with the ever stirring,
The creative force, the beneficent,
Counter with your cold devil's fist
Spitefully clenched but impotent.
You curious son of Chaos, why
Not turn your hand to something else?

MEPHISTOPHELES. We will give it our serious attention—
But more on that subject by and by.
Might I for this time take my leave?

FAUST. Why you ask I cannot see.
I have already made your acquaintance;
When you feel like it, call on me.
Here is the window, here is the door—
And a chimney too—if it comes to that.

MEPHISTOPHELES. I must confess; there's a slight impediment
That stops me making my exit pat,
The pentagram[7] upon your threshold—

FAUST. So the witch's foot[8] is giving you trouble?
Then tell me, since you're worried by that spell,
How did you ever enter, child of Hell?
How was a spirit like you betrayed?

MEPHISTOPHELES. You study that sign! It's not well made;
One of its corners, do you see,
The outside one's not quite intact.

FAUST. A happy accident in fact!
Which means you're in my custody?
I did not intend to set a gin.

MEPHISTOPHELES. The dog—he noticed nothing, jumping in;
The case has now turned round about
And I, the devil, can't get out.

FAUST. Then why not leave there by the window?

MEPHISTOPHELES. It is a law for devils and phantoms all:
By the way that we slip in by the same we must take our leave.
One's free in the first, in the second one's a thrall.

FAUST. So Hell itself has its regulations?

7. A magic five-pointed star designed to keep away evil spirits, principally the female incubus or witch. 8. The pentagram.

That's excellent; a contract in that case
Could be made with you, you gentry—and definite?
MEPHISTOPHELES. What we promise, you will enjoy with no reservations,
Nothing will be nipped off from it.
But all this needs a little explaining
And will keep till our next heart-to-heart;
But now I beg and doubly beg you:
Let me, just for now, depart.
FAUST. But wait yet a minute and consent
To tell me first some news of moment.
MEPHISTOPHELES. Let me go now! I'll soon be back
To be questioned to your heart's content.
FAUST. It was not I laid a trap for you,
You thrust your own head in the noose.
A devil in the hand's worth two in hell!
The second time he'll be longer loose.
MEPHISTOPHELES. If you so wish it, I'm prepared
To keep you company and stay;
Provided that by my arts the time
Be to your betterment whiled away.
FAUST. I am in favour, carry on—
But let your art be a pleasing one.
MEPHISTOPHELES. My friend, your senses will have more
Gratification in this hour
Than in a year's monotony.
What the delicate spirits sing to you
And the beauties that they bring to you
Are no empty, idle wizardry.
You'll have your sense of smell delighted,
Your palate in due course excited,
Your feelings rapt enchantingly.
Preparation? There's no need,
We are all here. Strike up! Proceed!
[*The* SPIRITS *sing.*]
SPIRITS. Vanish, you darkling
Arches above him,
That a more witching
Blue and enriching
Sky may look in!
If only the darkling
Clouds were unravelled!
Small stars are sparkling,
Suns are more gently
Shining within!

Spiritual beauty
Of the children of Heaven
Swaying and bowing
Floats in the air,
Leanings and longings
Follow them there;
And ribbons of raiment
The breezes have caught
Cover the country,
Cover the arbour
Where, drowning in thought,
Lovers exchange their
Pledges for life.
Arbour on arbour!
Creepers run rife!
Grapes in great wreathing
Clusters are poured into
Vats that are seething,
Wines that are foaming
Pour out in rivulets
Rippling and roaming
Through crystalline stones,
Leaving the sight of
The highlands behind them,
Widening to lakes
Amid the delight of
Green-growing foothills.
And the winged creatures
Sipping their ecstasy,
Sunwards they fly,
Fly to discover
The glittering islands
Which bob on the wave-tops
Deceiving the eye.
There we can hear
Huzzaing in chorus,
A landscape of dancers
Extending before us,
All in the open,
Free as the air.
Some of them climbing
Over the peaks,
Some of them swimming
Over the lakes,
Or floating in space—

All towards existence,
All towards the distance
Of stars that will love them
The blessing of grace.

MEPHISTOPHELES. He is asleep. That's fine, you airy, dainty youngsters
You have sung him a real cradle song.
For this performance I am in your debt.
You are not yet the man to hold the devil for long.
Play round him with your sweet dream trickeries
And sink him in a sea of untruth!
But to break the spell upon this threshold
What I need now is a rat's tooth.
And I needn't bother to wave a wand,
I can hear one rustling already, he'll soon respond.
The lord of rats, the lord of mice,
Of flies, frogs, bugs and lice,
Commands you to come out of that
And gnaw away this threshold, rat,
While he takes oil and gives it a few—
So there you come hopping? Quick on your cue!
Now get on the job! The obstructing point
Is on the edge and right in front.
One bite more and the work's done.
Now, Faust, till we meet again, dream on!

FAUST. [*Waking*] Am I defrauded then once more?
Does the throng of spirits vanish away like fog
To prove that the devil appeared to me in a dream
But what escaped was only a dog?

FAUST'S STUDY

The same room. Later.

FAUST. Who's knocking? Come in! *Now* who wants to annoy me?
MEPHISTOPHELES. [*Outside door*] It's I.
FAUST. Come in!
MEPHISTOPHELES. [*Outside door*] You must say 'Come in' three times.
FAUST. Come in then!
MEPHISTOPHELES. [*Entering*] Thank you; you overjoy me.
We two, I hope, we shall be good friends;
To chase those megrims of yours away
I am here like a fine young squire[9] to-day,

9. In the popular plays based on the Faust legend, the devil often appeared as a monk when the play catered to a Protestant audience, and as a cavalier when the audience was predominantly Catholic.

In a suit of scarlet trimmed with gold
And a little cape of stiff brocade,
With a cock's feather in my hat
And at my side a long sharp blade,
And the most succinct advice I can give
Is that you dress up just like me,
So that uninhibited and free
You may find out what it means to live.

FAUST. The pain of earth's constricted life, I fancy,
Will pierce me still, whatever my attire;
I am too old for mere amusement,
Too young to be without desire.
How can the world dispel my doubt?
You must do without, you must do without!
That is the everlasting song
Which rings in every ear, which rings,
And which to us our whole life long
Every hour hoarsely sings.
I wake in the morning only to feel appalled,
My eyes with bitter tears could run
To see the day which in its course
Will not fulfil a wish for me, not one;
The day which whittles away with obstinate carping
All pleasures—even those of anticipation,
Which makes a thousand grimaces to obstruct
My heart when it is stirring in creation.
And again, when night comes down, in anguish
I must stretch out upon my bed
And again no rest is granted me,
For wild dreams fill my mind with dread.
The God who dwells within my bosom
Can make my inmost soul react;
The God who sways my every power
Is powerless with external fact.
And so existence weighs upon my breast
And I long for death and life—life I detest.

MEPHISTOPHELES. Yet death is never a wholly welcome guest.

FAUST. O happy is he whom death in the dazzle of victory
Crowns with the bloody laurel in the battling swirl!
Or he whom after the mad and breakneck dance
He comes upon in the arms of a girl!
O to have sunk away, delighted, deleted,
Before the Spirit of the Earth, before his might!

MEPHISTOPHELES. Yet I know someone who failed to drink
A brown juice on a certain night.

FAUST. Your hobby is espionage—is it not?

MEPHISTOPHELES. Oh I'm not omniscient—but I know a lot.
FAUST. Whereas that tumult in my soul
Was stilled by sweet familiar chimes
Which cozened the child that yet was in me
With echoes of more happy times,
I now curse all things that encompass
The soul with lures and jugglery
And bind it in this dungeon of grief
With trickery and flattery.
Cursed in advance be the high opinion
That serves our spirit for a cloak!
Cursed be the dazzle of appearance
Which bows our senses to its yoke!
Cursed be the lying dreams of glory,
The illusion that our name survives!
Cursed be the flattering things we own,
Servants and ploughs, children and wives!
Cursed be Mammon[1] when with his treasures
He makes us play the adventurous man
Or when for our luxurious pleasures
He duly spreads the soft divan!
A curse on the balsam of the grape!
A curse on the love that rides for a fall!
A curse on hope! A curse on faith!
And a curse on patience most of all!
[*The invisible* SPIRITS *sing again.*]
SPIRITS. Woe! Woe!
You have destroyed it,
The beautiful world;
By your violent hand
'Tis downward hurled!
A half-god has dashed it asunder!
From under
We bear off the rubble to nowhere
And ponder
Sadly the beauty departed.
Magnipotent
One among men,
Magnificent
Build it again,
Build it again in your breast!
Let a new course of life
Begin

1. The Aramaic word for "riches," used in the New Testament; medieval writers interpreted the word as a proper noun, the name of the devil, as representing covetousness or avarice.

With vision abounding
To welcome it in!
MEPHISTOPHELES. These are the juniors
Of my faction.
Hear how precociously they counsel
Pleasure and action.
Out and away
From your lonely day
Which dries your senses and your juices
Their melody seduces.

Stop playing with your grief which battens
Like a vulture on your life, your mind!
The worst of company would make you feel
That you are a man among mankind.
Not that it's really my proposition
To shove you among the common men:
Though I'm not one of the Upper Ten,
If you would like a coalition
With me for your career through life,
I am quite ready to fit in,
I'm yours before you can say knife.
I am your comrade;
If you so crave,
I am your servant, I am your slave.
FAUST. And what have I to undertake in return?
MEPHISTOPHELES. Oh it's early days to discuss what that is.
FAUST. No, no, the devil is an egoist
And ready to do nothing gratis
Which is to benefit a stranger.
Tell me your terms and don't prevaricate!
A servant like you in the house is a danger.
MEPHISTOPHELES. I will bind myself to your service in this world,
To be at your beck and never rest nor slack;
When we meet again on the other side,
In the same coin you shall pay me back.
FAUST. The other side gives me little trouble;
First batter this present world to rubble,
Then the other may rise—if that's the plan.
This earth is where my springs of joy have started,
And this sun shines on me when broken-hearted;
If I can first from them be parted,
Then let happen what will and can!
I wish to hear no more about it—
Whether there too men hate and love

Or whether in those spheres too, in the future,
There is a Below or an Above.
MEPHISTOPHELES. With such an outlook you can risk it.
Sign on the line! In these next days you will get
Ravishing samples of my arts;
I am giving you what never man saw yet.
FAUST. Poor devil, can *you* give anything ever?
Was a human spirit in its high endeavour
Even once understood by one of your breed?
Have you got food which fails to feed?
Or red gold which, never at rest,
Like mercury runs away through the hand?
A game at which one never wins?
A girl who, even when on my breast,
Pledges herself to my neighbour with her eyes?
The divine and lovely delight of honour
Which falls like a falling star and dies?
Show me the fruits which, before they are plucked, decay
And the trees which day after day renew their green!
MEPHISTOPHELES. Such a commission doesn't alarm me,
I have such treasures to purvey.
But, my good friend, the time draws on when we
Should be glad to feast at our ease on something good.
FAUST. If ever I stretch myself on a bed of ease,
Then I am finished! Is that understood?
If ever your flatteries can coax me
To be pleased with myself, if ever you cast
A spell of pleasure that can hoax me—
Then let *that* day be my last!
That's my wager!
MEPHISTOPHELES. Done!
FAUST. Let's shake!
If ever I say to the passing moment
'Linger a while! Thou art so fair!'
Then you may cast me into fetters,
I will gladly perish then and there!
Then you may set the death-bell tolling,
Then from my service you are free,
The clock may stop, its hand may fall,
And that be the end of time for me!
MEPHISTOPHELES. Think what you're saying, we shall not forget it.
FAUST. And you are fully within your rights;
I have made no mad or outrageous claim.
If I stay as I am, I am a slave—
Whether yours or another's, it's all the same.

MEPHISTOPHELES. I shall this very day at the College Banquet[2]
Enter your service with no more ado,
But just one point—As a life-and-death insurance
I must trouble you for a line or two.
FAUST. So you, you pedant, you too like things in writing?
Have you never known a man? Or a man's word? Never?
Is it not enough that my word of mouth
Puts all my days in bond for ever?
Does not the world rage on in all its streams
And shall a promise hamper *me?*
Yet this illusion reigns within our hearts
And from it who would be gladly free?
Happy the man who can inwardly keep his word;
Whatever the cost, he will not be loath to pay!
But a parchment, duly inscribed and sealed,
Is a bogey from which all wince away.
The word dies on the tip of the pen
And wax and leather lord it then.
What do you, evil spirit, require?
Bronze, marble, parchment, paper?
Quill or chisel or pencil of slate?
You may choose whichever you desire.
MEPHISTOPHELES. How can you so exaggerate
With such a hectic rhetoric?
Any little snippet is quite good—
And you sign it with one little drop of blood.[3]
FAUST. If that is enough and is some use,
One may as well pander to your fad.
MEPHISTOPHELES. Blood is a very special juice.
FAUST. Only do not fear that I shall break this contract.
What I promise is nothing more
Than what all my powers are striving for.
I have puffed myself up too much, it is only
Your sort that really fits my case.
The great Earth Spirit has despised me
And Nature shuts the door in my face.
The thread of thoughts is snapped asunder,
I have long loathed knowledge in all its fashions.
In the depths of sensuality
Let us now quench our glowing passions!
And at once make ready every wonder
Of unpenetrated sorcery!

2. Actually the *Doctorschmaus*, or dinner given by a successful candidate for a Ph.D. degree.
3. This method of confirming an agreement with the devil is older than the Faust legend—in which it always appears—and is partly a parody of the role of blood in the Christian Sacrament.

Let us cast ourselves into the torrent of time,
Into the whirl of eventfulness,
Where disappointment and success,
Pleasure and pain may chop and change
As chop and change they will and can;
It is restless action makes the man.
MEPHISTOPHELES. No limit is fixed for you, no bound;
If you'd like to nibble at everything
Or to seize upon something flying round—
Well, may you have a run for your money!
But seize your chance and don't be funny!
FAUST. I've told you, it is no question of happiness.
The most painful joy, enamoured hate, enlivening
Disgust—I devote myself to all excess.
My breast, now cured of its appetite for knowledge,
From now is open to all and every smart,
And what is allotted to the whole of mankind
That will I sample in my inmost heart,
Grasping the highest and lowest with my spirit,
Piling men's weal and woe upon my neck,
To extend myself to embrace all human selves
And to founder in the end, like them, a wreck.
MEPHISTOPHELES. O believe *me,* who have been chewing
These iron rations many a thousand year,
No human being can digest
This stuff, from the cradle to the bier.
This universe—believe a devil—
Was made for no one but a god!
He exists in eternal light
But *us* he has brought into the darkness
While *your* sole portion is day and night.
FAUST. I will all the same!
MEPHISTOPHELES. That's very nice.
There's only one thing I find wrong;
Time is short, art is long.
You could do with a little artistic advice.
Confederate with one of the poets
And let him flog his imagination
To heap all virtues on your head,
A head with such a reputation:
Lion's bravery,
Stag's velocity,
Fire of Italy,
Northern tenacity.
Let *him* find out the secret art

Of combining craft with a noble heart
And of being in love like a young man,
Hotly, but working to a plan.
Such a person—*I'd* like to meet him;
'Mr. Microcosm'[4] is how I'd greet him.
FAUST. What am I then if fate must bar
My efforts to reach that crown of humanity
After which all my senses strive?
MEPHISTOPHELES. You are in the end . . . what you are.
You can put on full-bottomed wigs with a million locks,
You can put on stilts instead of your socks,
You remain for ever what you are.
FAUST. I feel my endeavours have not been worth a pin
When I raked together the treasures of the human mind,
If at the end I but sit down to find
No new force welling up within.
I have not a hair's breadth more of height,
I am no nearer the Infinite.
MEPHISTOPHELES. My very good sir, you look at things
Just in the way that people do;
We must be cleverer than that
Or the joys of life will escape from you.
Hell! You have surely hands and feet,
Also a head and you-know-what;
The pleasures I gather on the wing,
Are they less mine? Of course they're not!
Suppose I can afford six stallions,
I can add that horse-power to my score
And dash along and be a proper man
As if my legs were twenty-four.
So good-bye to thinking! On your toes!
The world's before us. Quick! Here goes!
I tell you, a chap who's intellectual
Is like a beast on a blasted heath
Driven in circles by a demon
While a fine green meadow lies round beneath.
FAUST. How do we start?
MEPHISTOPHELES. We just say go—and skip.
But please get ready for this pleasure trip.
[*Exit* FAUST.]
Only look down on knowledge and reason,
The highest gifts that men can prize,
Only allow the spirit of lies

4. I.e., man viewed as the epitome of the universe.

To confirm you in magic and illusion,
And then I have you body and soul.
Fate has given this man a spirit
Which is always pressing onwards, beyond control,
And whose mad striving overleaps
All joys of the earth between pole and pole.
Him shall I drag through the wilds of life
And through the flats of meaninglessness,
I shall make him flounder and gape and stick
And to tease his insatiableness
Hang meat and drink in the air before his watering lips;
In vain he will pray to slake his inner thirst,
And even had he not sold himself to the devil
He would be equally accursed.[5]

[*Re-enter* FAUST.]

FAUST. And now, where are we going?

MEPHISTOPHELES. Wherever you please.
The small world, then the great for us.
With what pleasure and what profit
You will roister through the syllabus!

FAUST. But I, with this long beard of mine,
I lack the easy social touch,
I know the experiment is doomed;
Out in the world I never could fit in much.
I feel so small in company
I'll be embarrassed constantly.

MEPHISTOPHELES. My friend, it will solve itself, any such misgiving;
Just trust yourself and you'll learn the art of living.

FAUST. Well, then, how do we leave home?
Where are your grooms? Your coach and horses?

MEPHISTOPHELES. We merely spread this mantle wide,
It will bear us off on airy courses.
But do not on this noble voyage
Cumber yourself with heavy baggage.
A little inflammable gas[6] which I'll prepare
Will lift us quickly into the air.
If we travel light we shall cleave the sky like a knife.
Congratulations on your new course of life![7]

5. Between Faust's exit and entrance, the translator omits a scene in which Mephistopheles cynically interviews one of Faust's students. 6. Indicative of Goethe's scientific interests. The first hydrogen balloon was sent aloft in Paris in 1783, and several letters by Goethe refer to this new experiment. 7. The translator omits the next scene, in Auerbach's Cellar, where Faust and Mephistopheles join a group of genial drinking companions and Mephistopheles performs the trick—traditional in early Faust stories—of making wine flow from the table.

THE WITCH'S KITCHEN[8]

Every sort of witch prop. A large cauldron hangs over the fire. MONKEYS *sit around it, seen through the fumes.*

MEPHISTOPHELES. Look, what a pretty species of monkey!
She is the kitchen-maid, he is the flunkey.
It seems your mistress isn't at home?
MONKEYS. Out at a rout!
Out and about!
By the chimney spout!
MEPHISTOPHELES. How long does she keep it up at night?
MONKEYS. As long as we warm our paws at this fire.
MEPHISTOPHELES. How do you like these delicate animals?
FAUST. I never saw such an outré sight.
I find it nauseating, this crazy witchcraft![9]
Do you promise me that I shall improve
In this cesspit of insanity?
Do I need advice from an old hag?
And can this filthy brew remove
Thirty years from my age? O vanity,
If you know nothing better than this!
My hope has already vanished away.
Surely Nature, surely a noble spirit
Has brought some better balm to the light of day?
MEPHISTOPHELES. My friend, you once more talk to the point.
There is also a natural means of rejuvenation;
But that is written in another book
And is a chapter that needs some explanation.
FAUST. I want to know it.
MEPHISTOPHELES. Right. There is a means requires
No money, no physician, and no witch:
Away with you this moment back to the land,
And there begin to dig and ditch,
Confine yourself, confine your mind,
In a narrow round, ever repeating,
Let your diet be of the simplest kind,
Live with the beasts like a beast and do not think it cheating
To use your own manure to insure your crops are weighty!
Believe me, that is the best means
To keep you young till you are eighty.
FAUST. I am not used to it, I cannot change

8. Certain transpositions have been made in this scene. [Translator's note.] 9. In composing this scene, Goethe may have had in mind certain paintings by the Flemish artists David Teniers the Younger (1610–1690) and Pieter Breughel the Younger (1564?–1638).

My nature and take the spade in hand.
The narrow life is not my style at all.
MEPHISTOPHELES. Then it's a job for the witch to arrange.
FAUST. The hag—but why do we need just her?
Can you yourself not brew the drink?
MEPHISTOPHELES. A pretty pastime! I'd prefer
To build a thousand bridges[1] in that time.
It is not only art and science
That this work needs but patience too.
A quiet spirit is busy at it for years
And time but fortifies the subtle brew.
And the most wonderful ingredients
Go into it—you couldn't fake it!
The devil taught it her, I admit;
The devil, however, cannot make it.
Tell me, you monkeys, you damned puppets,
What are you doing with that great globe?
HE-MONKEY. This is the world:
It rises and falls
And rolls every minute;
It rings like glass—
But how soon it breaks!
And there's nothing in it.
It glitters here
And here still more:
I am alive!
O my son, my dear,
Keep away, keep away!
You are bound to die!
The shards are sharp,
It was made of clay.
[FAUST *has meanwhile been gazing in a mirror.*]

FAUST. What do I see in this magic mirror?
What a heavenly image to appear!
Oh Love, lend me the swiftest of your wings
And waft me away into her sphere!
But, alas, when I do not keep this distance,
If to go nearer I but dare
I can see her only as if there were mist in the air—
The fairest image of a woman!
But can Woman be so fair?
In that shape in the mirror must I see the quintessence

1. The folk legend existed that the devil built bridges at the request of men. As a reward, he caught either the first or the thirteenth soul to cross each new bridge.

Of all the heavens—reclining there?
Can such a thing be found on earth?
MEPHISTOPHELES. Naturally, when a God works six days like a black
And at the end of it slaps himself on the back,
Something should come of it of some worth.
For this occasion look your fill.
I can smell you out a sweetheart as good as this,
And happy the man who has the luck
To bear her home to wedded bliss.
[*The* WITCH *enters down the chimney—violently.*]
WITCH. What goes on here?
Who are you two?
What d'you want here?
Who has sneaked through?
May the fever of fire
Harrow your marrow!
MEPHISTOPHELES. Don't you know me, you bag of bones? You monster, you!
Don't you know your lord and master?
What prevents me striking you
And your monkey spirits, smashing you up like plaster?
Has my red doublet no more claim to fame?
Can you not recognize the cock's feather?
Have I concealed my countenance?
Must I myself announce my name?
WITCH. My lord, excuse this rude reception.
It is only I miss your cloven foot.
And where is your usual brace of ravens?[2]
MEPHISTOPHELES. I'll forgive you this once, as an exception;
Admittedly some time has pass't
Since we two saw each other last.
Culture too, which is licking the whole world level,
Has latterly even reached the devil.
The Nordic spook no longer commands a sale;
Where can you see horns, claws or tail?
And as regards the foot, which is my *sine qua non*,
It would prejudice me in the social sphere;
Accordingly, as many young men have done,
I have worn false calves this many a year.
WITCH. Really and truly I'm knocked flat
To see Lord Satan here again!
MEPHISTOPHELES. Woman, you must not call me that!
WITCH. Why! What harm is there in the name?

2. Perhaps Goethe was thinking of the Norse god Odin, who owned two such birds: Hugin (Thought) and Munin (Memory).

MEPHISTOPHELES. Satan has long been a myth without sense or sinew;
Not that it helps humanity all the same,
They are quit of the Evil One but the evil ones continue.
You may call me the Noble Baron, that should do;
I am a cavalier among other cavaliers,
You needn't doubt my blood is blue—
[*He makes an indecent gesture.*]
WITCH. Ha! Ha! Always true to type!
You still have the humour of a guttersnipe!
MEPHISTOPHELES. Observe my technique, my friend—not a single hitch;
This is the way to get round a witch.
WITCH. Now tell me, gentlemen, what do you want?
MEPHISTOPHELES. A good glass of your well-known juice.
And please let us have your oldest vintage;
When it's been kept it's twice the use.
WITCH. Delighted! Why, there's some here on the shelf—
I now and then take a nip myself—
And, besides, this bottle no longer stinks;
You're welcome while I've a drop to give.
[*Aside*] But, if this man is unprepared when he drinks,
You very well know he has not an hour to live.
MEPHISTOPHELES. He's a good friend and it should set him up;
I'd gladly grant him the best of your kitchen,
So draw your circle and do your witching
And give the man a decent cup.
[*The* WITCH *begins her conjuration.*]
FAUST. But, tell me, how will this mend my status?
These lunatic gestures, this absurd apparatus,
This most distasteful conjuring trick—
I've known it all, it makes me sick.
MEPHISTOPHELES. Pooh, that's just fooling, get it in focus,
And don't be such a prig for goodness' sake!
As a doctor she must do her hocus-pocus
So that when you have drunk your medicine it will take.
WITCH. The lofty power
That is wisdom's dower,
Concealed from great and clever,
Don't use your brain
And that's your gain—
No trouble whatsoever.
FAUST. What nonsense is she saying to us?
My head is splitting; I've the sensation

Of listening to a hundred thousand
Idiots giving a mass recitation.
MEPHISTOPHELES. Enough, enough, you excellent Sibyl!
Give us your drink and fill the cup
Full to the brim and don't delay!
This draught will do my friend no injury;
He is a man of more than one degree
And has drunk plenty in his day.
[*The* WITCH *gives* FAUST *the cup.*]
Now lower it quickly. Bottoms up!
And your heart will begin to glow and perk.
Now out of the circle! You mustn't rest.
WITCH. I hope the little drink will work.
MEPHISTOPHELES. [*To* WITCH] And you, if there's anything you want, all right;
Just mention it to me on Walpurgis Night.[3]
[*To* FAUST] Come now, follow me instantly!
You've got to perspire, it's necessary,
That the drug may pervade you inside and out.
I can teach you later to value lordly leisure
And you soon will learn with intensest pleasure
How Cupid stirs within and bounds about.
FAUST. Just one more look, one quick look, in the mirror!
That woman was too fair to be true.
MEPHISTOPHELES. No, no! The paragon of womanhood
Will soon be revealed in the flesh to you.
[*Aside*] With a drink like this in you, take care—
You'll soon see Helens[4] everywhere.

IN THE STREET

FAUST *accosts* GRETCHEN *as she passes.*

FAUST. My pretty young lady, might I venture
To offer you my arm and my escort too?
GRETCHEN. I'm not a young lady nor am I pretty
And I can get home without help from you.
[*She releases herself and goes off.*]
FAUST. By Heaven, she's beautiful, this child!
I have never seen her parallel.
So decorous, so virtuous,
And just a little pert as well.
The light of her cheek, her lip so red,

3. The eve of May Day (May 1), when witches are supposed to assemble on the Brocken, a peak in the Harz Mountains. 4. Faust marries Helen of Troy in the second part of *Faust*.

I shall remember till I'm dead!
The way that she cast down her eye
Is stamped on my heart as with a die;
And the way that she got rid of me
Was a most ravishing thing to see!
[*Enter* MEPHISTOPHELES.]
Listen to me! Get me that girl!
MEPHISTOPHELES. Which one?
FAUST. The one that just went past.
MEPHISTOPHELES. She? She was coming from her priest,
Absolved from her sins one and all;
I'd crept up near the confessional.
An innocent thing. Innocent? Yes!
At church with nothing to confess!
Over that girl I have no power.
FAUST. Yet she's fourteen if she's an hour.
MEPHISTOPHELES. Why, you're talking like Randy Dick[5]
Who covets every lovely flower
And all the favours, all the laurels,
He fancies are for him to pick;
But it doesn't always work out like that.
FAUST. My dear Professor[6] of Ancient Morals,
Spare me your trite morality!
I tell you straight—and hear me right—
Unless this object of delight
Lies in my arms this very night,
At midnight we part company.
MEPHISTOPHELES. Haven't you heard: more haste less speed?
A fortnight is the least I need
Even to work up an occasion.
FAUST. If I had only seven hours clear,
I should not need the devil here
To bring *this* quest to consummation.
MEPHISTOPHELES. It's almost French, your line of talk;
I only ask you not to worry.
Why make your conquest in a hurry?
The pleasure is less by a long chalk
Than when you first by hook and by crook
Have squeezed your doll and moulded her,
Using all manner of poppycock
That foreign novels keep in stock.
FAUST. I am keen enough without all that.

5. In the original German, "Hans Liederlich"—i.e., a profligate, since *liederlich* means "careless" or "dissolute." 6. In the original German, Herr Magister Lobeasan ("Master Worshipful")—stuffed shirt, or academic prig.

MEPHISTOPHELES. Now, joking apart and without aspersion,
You cannot expect, I tell you flat,
This beautiful child in quick reversion.
Immune to all direct attack—
We must lay our plots behind her back.
FAUST. Get me something of my angel's!
Carry me to her place of rest!
Get me a garter of my love's!
Get me a kerchief from her breast!
MEPHISTOPHELES. That you may see the diligent fashion
In which I shall abet your passion,
We won't let a moment waste away,
I will take you to her room to-day.
FAUST. And shall I see her? Have her?
MEPHISTOPHELES. No!
She will be visiting a neighbour.
But you in the meanwhile, quite alone,
Can stay in her aura in her room
And feast your fill on joys to come.
FAUST. Can we go now?
MEPHISTOPHELES. It is still too soon.
FAUST. Then a present for her! Get me one!
[*Exit* FAUST.]
MEPHISTOPHELES. Presents already? Fine. A certain hit!
I know plenty of pretty places
And of long-buried jewel-cases;
I must take stock of them a bit.

GRETCHEN'S ROOM

GRETCHEN. [*Alone, doing her hair*] I'd give a lot to be able to say
Who the gentleman was to-day.
He cut a fine figure certainly
And is sprung from nobility;
His face showed that—Besides, you see,
He'd otherwise not have behaved so forwardly.
[*She goes out; then* MEPHISTOPHELES *and* FAUST *enter.*]
MEPHISTOPHELES. Come in—very quietly—Only come in!
FAUST. [*After a silence*] I ask you: please leave me alone!
MEPHISTOPHELES. Not all girls keep their room so clean.
FAUST. [*Looking around*] Welcome, sweet gleaming of the gloaming
That through this sanctuary falls aslope!
Seize on my heart, sweet fever of love
That lives and languishes on the dews of hope!

What a feeling of quiet breathes around me,
Of order, of contentedness!
What fulness in this poverty,
And in this cell what blessedness!

Here I could while away hour after hour.
It was here, O Nature, that your fleeting dreams
Brought this born angel to full flower.
Here lay the child and the warm life
Filled and grew in her gentle breast,
And here the pure and holy threads
Wove a shape of the heavenliest.

And you! What brought you here to-day?
Why do I feel this deep dismay?
What do you want here? Why is your heart so sore?
Unhappy Faust! You are Faust no more.

Is this an enchanted atmosphere?
To have her at once was all my aim,
Yet I feel my will dissolve in a lovesick dream.
Are we the sport of every current of air?
And were she this moment to walk in,
You would pay for this outrage, how you would pay!
The big man, now, alas, so small,
Would lie at her feet melted away.

MEPHISTOPHELES. Quick! I can see her coming below.

FAUST. Out, yes out! I'll never come back!

MEPHISTOPHELES. Here is a casket, it's middling heavy,
I picked it up in a place I know.
Only put it at once here in the cupboard,
I swear she won't believe her eyes;
I put some nice little trinkets in it
In order to win a different prize.
Still child is child and a game's a game.

FAUST. I don't know; shall I?

MEPHISTOPHELES. You ask? For shame!
Do you perhaps intend to keep the spoil?
Then I advise Your Lustfulness
To save these hours that are so precious
And save me any further toil.
I hope you aren't avaricious.
After scratching my head so much and twisting my hands—
[*He puts the casket in the cupboard.*]

Now quick! We depart!
In order to sway the dear young thing

To meet the dearest wish of your heart;
And *you* assume
A look that belongs to the lecture room,
As if Physics and Metaphysics too
Stood grey as life in front of you!
Come on!
[*They go out; then* GRETCHEN *reappears.*]

GRETCHEN. It is so sultry, so fusty here,
And it's not even so warm outside.
I feel as if I don't know what—
I wish my mother would appear.
I'm trembling all over from top to toe—
I'm a silly girl to get frightened so.
[*She sings as she undresses.*]
There was a king in Thule[7]
Was faithful to the grave,
To whom his dying lady
A golden winecup gave.

He drained it at every banquet—
A treasure none could buy;
Whenever he filled and drank it
The tears o'erflowed his eye.

And when his days were numbered
He numbered land and pelf;
He left his heir his kingdom,
The cup he kept himself.

He sat at the royal table
With his knights of high degree
In the lofty hall of his fathers
In the castle on the sea.

There stood the old man drinking
The last of the living glow,
Then threw the sacred winecup
Into the waves below.

He saw it fall and falter
And founder in the main;
His eyelids fell, thereafter

7. The fabled *ultima Thule* of Latin literature—those distant lands just beyond the reach of every explorer. In Roman times, the phrase probably denoted the Shetland Islands. Goethe wrote this ballad in 1774; it was published and set to music in 1782. The poem also served as the inspiration for the slow movement of Mendelssohn's *Italian Symphony*.

He never drank again.
[*She opens the cupboard to put away her clothes and sees the casket.*]
How did this lovely casket get in here?
I locked the cupboard, I'm quite sure.
But what can be in it? It's very queer.
Perhaps someone left it here in pawn
And my mother gave him a loan on it.
Here's a little key tied on with tape—
I've a good mind to open it.
What is all this? My God! But see!
I have never come across such things.
Jewels—that would suit a countess
At a really grand festivity.
To whom can these splendid things belong?
[*She tries on the jewels and looks in the looking glass.*]
If only the ear-rings belonged to me!
They make one look quite differently.
What is the use of looks and youth?
That's all very well and fine in truth
But people leave it all alone,
They praise you and pity you in one;
Gold is their sole
Concern and goal.
Alas for us who have none!

A WALK

Elsewhere and later. MEPHISTOPHELES *joins* FAUST.

MEPHISTOPHELES. By every despised love! By the elements of hell!
I wish I knew something worse to provide a curse as well!
FAUST. What's the trouble? What's biting you?
I never saw such a face in my life.
MEPHISTOPHELES. I would sell myself to the devil this minute
If only I weren't a devil too.
FAUST. What is it? Are you mad? Or sick?
It suits you to rage like a lunatic!
MEPHISTOPHELES. Imagine! The jewels that Gretchen got,
A priest has gone and scooped the lot!
Her mother got wind of it and she
At once had the horrors secretly.
That woman has a nose beyond compare,
She's always snuffling in the Book of Prayer,
And can tell by how each object smells

If it is sacred or something else;
So the scent of the jewels tells her clear
There's nothing very blessed here.
'My child,' she cries, 'unrighteous wealth
Invests the soul, infects the health.
We'll dedicate it to the Virgin
And *she'll* make heavenly manna burgeon!'
Gretchen's face, you could see it fall;
She thought: 'It's a gift-horse after all,
And he *can't* be lacking in sanctity
Who brought it here so handsomely!'
The mother had a priest along
And had hardly started up her song
Before he thought things looked all right
And said: 'Very proper and above board!
Self-control is its own reward.
The Church has an excellent appetite,
She has swallowed whole countries and the question
Has never arisen of indigestion.
Only the Church, my dears, can take
Ill-gotten goods without stomach-ache!'

FAUST. That is a custom the world through,
A Jew and a king observe it too.

MEPHISTOPHELES. So brooch, ring, chain he swipes at speed
As if they were merely chicken-feed,
Thanks them no more and no less for the casket
Than for a pound of nuts in a basket,
Promises Heaven will provide
And leaves them extremely edified.

FAUST. And Gretchen?

MEPHISTOPHELES. Sits and worries there,
Doesn't know what to do and doesn't care,
Thinks day and night on gold and gem,
Still more on the man who presented them.

FAUST. My sweetheart's grief distresses me.
Get her more jewels instantly!
The first lot barely deserved the name.

MEPHISTOPHELES. So the gentleman thinks it all a nursery game!

FAUST. Do what I tell you and get it right;
Don't let her neighbour out of your sight.
And don't be a sloppy devil; contrive
A new set of jewels. Look alive!
[*Exit* FAUST.]

MEPHISTOPHELES. Yes, my dear sir, with all my heart.
This is the way that a fool in love

Puffs away to amuse his lady
Sun and moon and the stars above.

MARTHA'S HOUSE

MARTHA. [*Alone*] My dear husband, God forgive him,
His behaviour has *not* been without a flaw!
Careers away out into the world
And leaves me alone to sleep on straw.
And yet I never trod on his toes,
I loved him with all my heart, God knows. [*Sobs.*]
Perhaps he is even dead—O fate!
If I'd only a death certificate!
[GRETCHEN *enters.*]
GRETCHEN. Frau Martha!
MARTHA. Gretelchen! What's up?
GRETCHEN. My legs are sinking under me,
I've just discovered in my cupboard
Another casket—of ebony,
And things inside it, such a store,
Far richer than the lot before.
MARTHA. You mustn't mention it to your mother;
She'd take it straight to the priest—like the other.
GRETCHEN. But only look! Just look at this!
MARTHA. O you lucky little Miss!
GRETCHEN. I daren't appear in the street, I'm afraid,
Or in church either, thus arrayed.
MARTHA. Just you visit me often here
And put on the jewels secretly!
Walk up and down for an hour in front of my glass
And that will be fun for you and me;
And then an occasion may offer, a holiday,
Where one can let them be seen in a gradual way;
A necklace to start with, then a pearl ear-ring; your mother
Most likely won't see; if she does one can think up something or other.
GRETCHEN. But who brought these two cases, who could it be?
It doesn't seem quite right to me.
[*Knocking.*]
My God! My mother? Is that her?
MARTHA. It is a stranger. Come in, sir!
[*Enter* MEPHISTOPHELES.]
MEPHISTOPHELES. I have made so free as to walk straight in;
The ladies will pardon me? May I begin

By inquiring for a Frau Martha Schwerdtlein?[8]
MARTHA. That's me. What might the gentleman want?
MEPHISTOPHELES. [*Aside to* MARTHA] Now I know who you are, that's enough for me;
You have very distinguished company.
Forgive my bursting in so soon;
I will call again in the afternoon.
MARTHA. Imagine, child, in the name of Piety!
The gentleman takes you for society.
GRETCHEN. I'm a poor young thing, not at all refined;
My God, the gentleman is too kind.
These jewels and ornaments aren't my own.
MEPHISTOPHELES. Oh, it's not the jewellery alone;
She has a presence, a look so keen—
How delighted I am that I may remain.
MARTHA. What is your news? I cannot wait—
MEPHISTOPHELES. I wish I'd a better tale to relate.
I trust this will not earn me a beating:
Your husband is dead and sends his greeting.
MARTHA. Dead? The good soul? Oh why! Oh why!
My husband is dead! Oh I shall die!
GRETCHEN. Oh don't, dear woman, despair so.
MEPHISTOPHELES. Listen to my tale of woe!
GRETCHEN. Now, while I live, may I never love;
Such a loss would bring me to my grave.
MEPHISTOPHELES. Joy must have grief, grief must have joy.
MARTHA. How was his end? Oh tell it me.
MEPHISTOPHELES. He lies buried in Padua
At the church of Holy Anthony,[9]
In properly consecrated ground
Where he sleeps for ever cool and sound.
MARTHA. Have you nothing else for me? Is that all?
MEPHISTOPHELES. Yes, a request; it's heavy and fat.
You must have three hundred masses said for his soul.
My pockets are empty apart from that.
MARTHA. What! Not a trinket? Not a token?
What every prentice keeps at the bottom of his bag
And saves it up as a souvenir
And would sooner starve and sooner beg—
MEPHISTOPHELES. Madam, you make me quite heart-broken.
But, really and truly, he didn't squander his money.

8. Literally "little sword." Her husband is a soldier. 9. Mephistopheles' lie acquires added irony from the fact that this is one of Padua's most famous churches, its basilica holding the bones of St. Anthony.

And, besides, he repented his mistakes,
Yes, and lamented still more his unlucky breaks.
GRETCHEN. Alas that men should be so unlucky!
Be assured I shall often pray that he may find rest above.
MEPHISTOPHELES. *You* deserve to be taken straight to the altar;
You are a child a man could love.
GRETCHEN. No, no, it's not yet time for that.
MEPHISTOPHELES. Then, if not a husband, a lover will do.
It's one of the greatest gifts of Heaven
To hold in one's arms a thing like you.
GRETCHEN. That is not the custom of our race.
MEPHISTOPHELES. Custom or not, it's what takes place.
MARTHA. But tell me!
MEPHISTOPHELES. His deathbed, where I stood,
Was something better than a dungheap—
Half-rotten straw; however, he died like a Christian
And found he had still a great many debts to make good.
How thoroughly, he cried, I must hate myself
To leave my job and my wife like that on the shelf!
When I remember it, I die!
If only she would forgive me here below!
MARTHA. Good man! I have forgiven him long ago.
MEPHISTOPHELES. All the same, God knows, she was more at fault than I.
MARTHA. That's a lie! To think he lied at the point of death!
MEPHISTOPHELES. He certainly fibbed a bit with his last breath,
If I'm half a judge of the situation.
I had no need, said he, to gape for recreation;
First getting children, then getting bread to feed 'em—
And bread in the widest sense, you know—
And I couldn't even eat my share in peace.
MARTHA. So all my love, my loyalty, went for naught,
My toiling and moiling without cease!
MEPHISTOPHELES. Not at all; he gave it profoundest thought.
When I left Malta—that was how he began—
I prayed for my wife and children like one demented
And Heaven heard me and consented
To let us capture a Turkish merchantman,
With a treasure for the Sultan himself on board.
Well, bravery got its due reward
And I myself, as was only fit,
I got a decent cut of it.
MARTHA. Eh! Eh! How? Where? Has he perhaps buried it?
MEPHISTOPHELES. Who knows where the four winds now have carried it?

As he lounged round Naples, quite unknown,
A pretty lady made him her friend,
She was so fond of him, so devoted,
He wore her colours at his blessed end.
MARTHA. The crook! The robber of his children!
Could no misery, no poverty,
Check the scandalous life he led!
MEPHISTOPHELES. You see! That is just why he's dead.
However, if I were placed like you,
I would mourn him modestly for a year
While looking round for someone new.
MARTHA. Ah God! My first one was so dear,
His like in this world will be hard to discover.
There could hardly be a more sweet little fool than mine.
It was only he was too fond of playing the rover,
And of foreign women and foreign wine,
And of the God-damned gaming-table.
MEPHISTOPHELES. Now, now, he might have still got by
If he on his part had been able
To follow your suit and wink an eye.
With that proviso, I swear, I too
Would give an engagement ring to you.
MARTHA. The gentleman is pleased to be witty.
MEPHISTOPHELES. [*Aside*] I had better go while the going's good;
She'd hold the devil to his word, she would!
And how is it with *your* heart, my pretty?
GRETCHEN. What does the gentleman mean?
MEPHISTOPHELES. [*Aside*] Good, innocent child!
Farewell, ladies!
GRETCHEN. Farewell!
MARTHA. O quickly! Tell me;
I'd like to have the evidence filed
Where, how and when my treasure died and was buried.
I have always liked things orderly and decent
And to read of his death in the weeklies would be pleasant.
MEPHISTOPHELES. Yes, Madam, when two witnesses are agreed,
The truth, as we all know, is guaranteed;
And I have a friend, an excellent sort,
I'll get him to swear you this in court.
I'll bring him here.
MARTHA. O yes! Please do!
MEPHISTOPHELES. And the young lady will be here too?
He's an honest lad. He's been around,
His politeness to ladies is profound.
GRETCHEN. I'll be all blushes in his presence.

MEPHISTOPHELES. No king on earth should so affect you.
MARTHA. Behind the house there—in my garden—
This evening—both of you—we'll expect you.

IN THE STREET

FAUST. How is it? Going ahead? Will it soon come right?
MEPHISTOPHELES. Excellent! Do I find you all on fire?
Gretchen is yours before many days expire.
You will see her at Martha's, her neighbour's house to-night
And that's a woman with a special vocation,
As it were, for the bawd-cum-gipsy occupation.
FAUST. Good!
MEPHISTOPHELES. But there is something *we* must do.
FAUST. One good turn deserves another. True.
MEPHISTOPHELES. It only means the legal attesting
That her husband's played-out limbs are resting
At Padua in consecrated ground.
FAUST. Very smart! I suppose we begin by going to Padua!
MEPHISTOPHELES. There's no need for that. What a simple lad you are!
Only bear witness and don't ask questions.
FAUST. The scheme's at an end if you have no better suggestions.
MEPHISTOPHELES. Oh there you go! What sanctity!
Is this the first time in your life
You have committed perjury?
God and the world and all that moves therein,
Man and the way his emotions and thoughts take place,
Have you not given downright definitions
Of these with an iron breast and a brazen face?
And if you will only look below the surface,
You must confess you knew as much of these
As you know to-day of Herr Schwerdtlein's late decease.
FAUST. You are and remain a sophist and a liar.
MEPHISTOPHELES. Quite so—if that is as deep as you'll inquire.
Won't you to-morrow on your honour
Befool poor Gretchen and swear before her
That all your soul is set upon her?
FAUST. And from my heart.
MEPHISTOPHELES. That's nice of you!
And your talk of eternal faith and love,
Of one single passion enthroned above
All others—will that be heartfelt too?
FAUST. Stop! It will! If I have feeling, if I
Feel this emotion, this commotion,

And can find no name to call it by;
If then I sweep the world with all my senses casting
Around for words and all the highest titles
And call this flame which burns my vitals
Endless, everlasting, everlasting,
Is that a devilish game of lies?

MEPHISTOPHELES. I'm right all the same.

FAUST. Listen! Mark this well,
I beg you, and spare me talking till I'm hoarse:
The man who *will* be right, provided he has a tongue,
Why, he'll be right of course.
But come, I'm tired of listening to your voice;
You're right, the more so since I have no choice.

MARTHA'S GARDEN

They are walking in pairs: MARTHA *with* MEPHISTOPHELES, GRETCHEN *on* FAUST'S *arm.*

GRETCHEN. The gentleman's only indulging me, I feel,
And condescending, to put me to shame.
You travellers are all the same,
You put up with things out of sheer good will.
I know too well that my poor conversation
Can't entertain a person of your station.

FAUST. One glance from you, one word, entertains me more
Than all this world's wisdom and lore.
[*He kisses her hand.*]

GRETCHEN. Don't go to such inconvenience! How could you kiss my hand?
It is so ugly, it is so rough.
I have had to work at Heaven knows what!
My mother's exacting, true enough.
[*They pass on.*]

MARTHA. And you, sir, do you always move round like this?

MEPHISTOPHELES. Oh, business[1] and duty keep us up to the minute!
With what regret one often leaves a place
And yet one cannot ever linger in it.

MARTHA. That may go in one's salad days—
To rush all over the world at random;
But the evil time comes on apace
And to drag oneself to the grave a lonely bachelor
Is never much good in any case.

MEPHISTOPHELES. The prospect alarms me at a distant glance.

1. Mephistopheles speaks as a traveling salesman.

MARTHA. Then, worthy sir, be wise while you have the chance.
[*They pass on.*]
GRETCHEN. Yes, out of sight, out of mind!
You are polite to your finger-ends
But you have lots of clever friends
Who must leave me so far behind.
FAUST. Believe me, dearest, what the world calls clever
More often is vanity and narrowness.
GRETCHEN. What?
FAUST. Alas that simplicity, that innocence,
Cannot assess itself and its sacred value ever!
That humility, lowliness, the highest gifts
That living Nature has shared out to men—
GRETCHEN. Only think of *me* one little minute,
I shall have time enough to think of you again.
FAUST. You are much alone, I suppose?
GRETCHEN. Yes, our household's only small
But it needs running after all.
We have no maid; I must cook and sweep and knit
And sew and be always on the run,
And my mother looks into every detail—
Each single one.
Not that she has such need to keep expenses down;
We could spread ourselves more than some others do;
My father left us a decent property,
A little house with a garden outside town.
However, my days at the present are pretty quiet;
My brother's in the army,
My little sister is dead.
The child indeed had worn me to a thread;
Still, all that trouble, I'd have it again, I'd try it,
I loved her so.
FAUST. An angel, if she was like you!
GRETCHEN. I brought her up, she was very fond of me.
She was born after my father died,
We gave my mother up for lost,
Her life was at such a low, low tide,
And she only got better slowly, bit by bit;
The poor little creature, she could not even
Think for a minute of suckling it;
And so I brought her up quite alone
On milk and water; so she became my own.
On my own arm, on my own knee,
She smiled and kicked, grew fair to see.
FAUST. You felt, I am sure, the purest happiness.
GRETCHEN. Yes; and—be sure—many an hour of distress.

The little one's cradle stood at night
Beside my bed; she could hardly stir
But I was awake,
Now having to give her milk, now into my bed with her,
Now, if she went on crying, try to stop her
By getting up and dangling her up and down the room,
And then first thing in the morning stand at the copper;
Then off to the market and attend to the range,
And so on day after day, never a change.
Living like that, one can't always feel one's best;
But food tastes better for it, so does rest.
[*They pass on.*]

MARTHA. No, the poor women don't come out of it well,
A *vieux garçon* is a hard nut to crack.

MEPHISTOPHELES. It only rests with you and your like
To put me on a better tack.

MARTHA. Tell me, sir: have you never met someone you fancy?
Has your heart been nowhere involved among the girls?

MEPHISTOPHELES. The proverb says: A man's own fireside
And a good wife are gold and pearls.

MARTHA. I mean, have you never felt any inclination?

MEPHISTOPHELES. I've generally been received with all consideration.

MARTHA. What I wanted to say: has your heart never been serious?

MEPHISTOPHELES. To make a joke to a woman is always precarious.

MARTHA. Oh you don't understand me!

MEPHISTOPHELES. Now *that* I really mind!
But I do understand—that you are very kind.
[*They pass on.*]

FAUST. You knew me again, you little angel,
As soon as you saw me enter the garden?

GRETCHEN. Didn't you see me cast down my eyes?

FAUST. And the liberty that I took you pardon?
The impudence that reared its head
When you lately left the cathedral door.

GRETCHEN. I was upset; it had never happened before;
No one could ever say anything bad of me—
Oh can he, I thought, have seen in my behaviour
Any cheekiness, any impropriety?
The idea, it seemed, had come to you pat:
'I can treat this woman just like that.'
I must admit I did not know what it was
In my heart that began to make me change my view,
But indeed I was angry with myself because
I could not be angrier with you.

FAUST. Sweet love!

GRETCHEN. Wait a moment!
[*She plucks a flower and starts picking off the petals.*]
FAUST. What is that? A bouquet?
GRETCHEN. No, only a game.
FAUST. A what?
GRETCHEN. You will laugh at me. Go away!
[GRETCHEN *murmurs.*]
FAUST. What are you murmuring?
GRETCHEN. Loves me—Loves me not—
FAUST. You flower from Heaven's garden plot!
GRETCHEN. Loves me—Not—Loves me—Not—
Loves me!
FAUST. Yes, child. What this flower has told you
Regard it as God's oracle. He loves you!
Do you know the meaning of that? He loves you!
[*He takes her hands.*]
GRETCHEN. Oh I feel so strange.
FAUST. Don't shudder. Let this look,
Let this clasp of the hand tell you
What mouth can never express:
To give oneself up utterly and feel
A rapture which must be everlasting.
Everlasting! Its end would be despair.
No; no end! No end!
[*She breaks away from him and runs off. After a moment's thought he follows her.*]
MARTHA. [*Approaching*] The night's coming on.
MEPHISTOPHELES. Yes—and we must go.
MARTHA. I would ask you to remain here longer
But this is a terrible place, you know.
It's as if no one were able to shape at
Any vocation or recreation
But must have his neighbour's comings and goings to gape at
And, whatever one does, the talk is unleashed, unfurled.
And our little couple?
MEPHISTOPHELES. Carefree birds of summer!
Flown to the summerhouse.
MARTHA. He seems to like her.
MEPHISTOPHELES. And vice versa. That is the way of the world.

A SUMMERHOUSE

GRETCHEN *runs in and hides behind the door.*

GRETCHEN. He comes!
FAUST. [*Entering*] You rogue! Teasing me so!
I've caught you!

[*He kisses her.*]

GRETCHEN. Dearest! I love you so!

[MEPHISTOPHELES *knocks.*]

FAUST. Who's there?

MEPHISTOPHELES. A friend.

FAUST. A brute!

MEPHISTOPHELES. It is time to part, you know.

MARTHA. [*Joining them*] Yes, it is late, sir.

FAUST. May I not see you home?

GRETCHEN. My mother would—Farewell!

FAUST. I must go then?
Farewell:

MARTHA. Adieu!

GRETCHEN. Let us soon meet again!

[FAUST *and* MEPHISTOPHELES *leave.*]

Dear God! A man of such a kind,
What things must go on in his mind!
I can only blush when he talks to me;
Whatever he says, I must agree.
Poor silly child, I cannot see
What it is he finds in me.

FOREST AND CAVERN

FAUST. [*Alone*] Exalted Spirit, you gave me, gave me all
I prayed for. Aye, and it is not in vain
That you have turned your face in fire upon me.
You gave me glorious Nature for my kingdom
With power to feel her and enjoy her. Nor
Is it a mere cold wondering glance you grant me
But you allow me to gaze into her depths
Even as into the bosom of a friend.
Aye, you parade the ranks of living things
Before me and you teach me to know my brothers
In the quiet copse, in the water, in the air.
And when the storm growls and snarls in the forest
And the giant pine falls headlong, bearing away
And crushing its neighbours, bough and bole and all,
With whose dull fall the hollow hill resounds,
Then do you carry me off to a sheltered cave
And show me myself, and wonders of my own breast
Unveil themselves in their deep mystery.
And now that the clear moon rises on my eyes
To soften things, now floating up before me
From walls of rocks and from the dripping covert

Come silver forms of the past which soothe and temper
The dour delight I find in contemplation.

That nothing perfect falls to men, oh now
I feel that true. In addition to the rapture
Which brings me near and nearer to the gods
You gave me that companion whom already
I cannot do without, though cold and brazen
He lowers me in my own eyes and with
One whispered word can turn your gifts to nothing.
He is always busily fanning in my breast
A fire of longing for that lovely image.
So do I stagger from desire to enjoyment
And in enjoyment languish for desire.
[MEPHISTOPHELES *enters.*]

MEPHISTOPHELES. Haven't you yet had enough of this kind of life?
How can it still appeal to you?
It is all very well to try it once,
Then one should switch to something new.

FAUST. I wish you had something else to do
On my better days than come plaguing me.

MEPHISTOPHELES. Now, now! I'd gladly leave you alone;
You needn't suggest it seriously.
So rude and farouche and mad a friend
Would certainly be little loss.
One has one's hands full without end!
One can never read in the gentleman's face
What he likes or what should be left alone.

FAUST. That is exactly the right tone!
He must be thanked for causing me ennui.

MEPHISTOPHELES. Poor son of earth, what sort of life
Would you have led were it not for me?
The flim-flams of imagination,
I have cured you of those for many a day
But for me, this terrestrial ball
Would already have seen you flounce away.
Why behave as an owl behaves
Moping in rocky clefts and caves?
Why do you nourish yourself like a toad that sips
From moss that oozes, stone that drips?
A pretty pastime to contrive!
The doctor[2] in you is still alive.

FAUST. Do you comprehend what a new and vital power
This wandering in the wilderness has given me?

2. I.e., the doctor of philosophy.

Aye, with even an inkling of such joy,
You would be devil enough to grudge it me.
MEPHISTOPHELES. A supernatural gratification!
To lie on the mountain tops in the dark and dew
Rapturously embracing earth and heaven,
Swelling yourself to a godhead, ferreting through
The marrow of the earth with divination,
To feel in your breast the whole six days of creation,
To enjoy I know not what in arrogant might
And then, with the Old Adam discarded quite,
To overflow into all things in ecstasy;
After all which your lofty intuition
[*He makes a gesture.*]
Will end—hm—unmentionably.
FAUST. Shame on you!
MEPHISTOPHELES. Am I to blame?
You have the right to be moral and cry shame!
One must not mention to the modest ear
What the modest heart is ever agog to hear.
And, in a word, you are welcome to the pleasure
Of lying to yourself in measure;
But this deception will not last.
Already overdriven again,
If this goes on you must collapse,
Mad or tormented or aghast.
Enough of this! Back there your love is sitting
And all her world seems sad and small;
You are never absent from her mind,
Her love for you is more than all.
At first your passion came overflowing
Like a brook that the melted snows have bolstered high;
You have poured your passion into her heart
And now your brook once more is dry.
I think, instead of lording it here above
In the woods, the great man might think fit
In view of that poor ninny's love
To make her some return for it.
She finds the time wretchedly long;
She stands at the window, watches the clouds
As over the old town walls they roll away.
'If I had the wings of a dove'—so runs her song
Half the night and all the day.
Now she is cheerful, mostly low,
Now has spent all her tears,
Now calm again, it appears,

But always loves you so.
FAUST. You snake! You snake!
MEPHISTOPHELES. [*Aside*] Ha! It begins to take!
FAUST. You outcast! Take yourself away
And do not name that lovely woman.
Do not bring back the desire for her sweet body
Upon my senses that are half astray.
MEPHISTOPHELES. Where's this to end? She thinks you have run off,
And so you have—about half and half.
FAUST. I am still near her, though far removed,
Her image must be always in my head;
I already envy the body of the Lord
When her lips rest upon the holy bread.
MEPHISTOPHELES. Very well, my friend. I have often envied you
Those two young roes that are twins, I mean her two—
FAUST. Pimp! Get away!
MEPHISTOPHELES. Fine! So you scold? I must laugh.
The God who created girl and boy
Knew very well the high vocation
Which facilitates their joy.
But come, this is a fine excuse for gloom!
You should take the road to your sweetheart's room,
Rather than that to death, you know.
FAUST. What is the joy of heaven in her arms?
Even when I catch fire upon her breast
Do I not always sense her woe?
Am I not the runaway? The man without a home?
The monster restless and purposeless
Who roared like a waterfall from rock to rock in foam
Greedily raging towards the precipice?
And she on the bank in childlike innocence
In a little hut on the little alpine plot
And all her little household world
Concentrated in that spot.
And I, the loathed of God,
I was not satisfied
To seize and crush to powder
The rocks on the river side!
Her too, her peace, I must undermine as well!
This was the sacrifice I owed to Hell!
Help, Devil, to shorten my time of torment!
What must be, must be; hasten it!
Let her fate hurtle down with mine,

Let us go together to the pit!

MEPHISTOPHELES. How it glows again, how it boils again!
Go in and comfort her, my foolish friend!
When such a blockhead sees no outlet
He thinks at once it is the end.
Long live the man who does not flinch!
But you've a devil in you, somewhere there.
I know of nothing on earth more unattractive
Than your devil who feels despair.

GRETCHEN'S ROOM

GRETCHEN *is alone, singing at the spinning-wheel.*

GRETCHEN. My peace is gone,
My heart is sore,
I shall find it never
And never more.

He has left my room
An empty tomb,
He has gone and all
My world is gall.

My poor head
Is all astray,
My poor mind
Fallen away.

My peace is gone,
My heart is sore,
I shall find it never
And never more.

'Tis he that I look through
The window to see,
He that I open
The door for—he!

His gait, his figure,
So grand, so high!
The smile of his mouth,
The power of his eye,

And the magic stream
Of his words—what bliss!
The clasp of his hand
And, ah, his kiss!

My peace is gone,
My heart is sore,
I shall find it never
And never more.

My heart's desire
Is so strong, so vast;
Ah, could I seize him
And hold him fast

And kiss him for ever
Night and day—
And on his kisses
Pass away!

MARTHA'S GARDEN

GRETCHEN. Promise me, Heinrich![3]
FAUST. If I can!
GRETCHEN. Tell me: how do you stand in regard to religion?
You are indeed a good, good man
But I think you give it scant attention.
FAUST. Leave that, my child! You feel what I feel for you;
For those I love I would give my life and none
Will I deprive of his sentiments and his church.
GRETCHEN. That is not right; one must believe thereon.
FAUST. Must one?
GRETCHEN. If only I had some influence!
Nor do you honour the holy sacraments.
FAUST. I honour them.
GRETCHEN. Yes, but not with any zest.
When were you last at mass, when were you last confessed?
Do you believe in God?
FAUST. My darling, who dare say:
I believe in God?
Ask professor or priest,
Their answers will make an odd
Mockery of you.
GRETCHEN. You don't believe, you mean?
FAUST. Do not misunderstand me, my love, my queen!
Who can name him?
Admit on the spot:
I believe in him?
And who can dare

3. I.e., Faust. In the legend, Faust's first name was generally Johann (John). Goethe changed it to Heinrich (Henry).

To perceive and declare:
I believe in him not?
The All-Embracing One,
All-Upholding One,
Does he not embrace, uphold,
You, me, Himself?
Does not the Heaven vault itself above us?
Is not the earth established fast below?
And with their friendly glances do not
Eternal stars rise over us?
Do not my eyes look into yours,
And all things thrust
Into your head, into your heart,
And weave in everlasting mystery
Invisibly, visibly, around you?
Fill your heart with *this*, great as it is,
And when this feeling grants you perfect bliss,
Then call it what you will—
Happiness! Heart! Love! God!
I have no name for it!
Feeling is all;
Name is mere sound and reek
Clouding Heaven's light.

GRETCHEN. That sounds quite good and right;
And much as the priest might speak,
Only not word for word.

FAUST. It is what all hearts have heard
In all the places heavenly day can reach,
Each in his own speech;
Why not I in mine?

GRETCHEN. I could almost accept it, you make it sound so fine,
Still there is something in it that shouldn't be;
For you have no Christianity.

FAUST. Dear child!

GRETCHEN. It has long been a grief to me
To see you in such company.

FAUST. You mean?

GRETCHEN. The man who goes about with you,
I hate him in my soul, right through and through.
And nothing has given my heart
In my whole life so keen a smart
As that man's face, so dire, so grim.

FAUST. Dear poppet, don't be afraid of him!

GRETCHEN. My blood is troubled by his presence.
All other people, I wish them well;

But much as I may long to see you,
He gives me a horror I cannot tell,
And I think he's a man too none can trust.
God forgive me if I'm unjust.
FAUST. Such queer fish too must have room to swim.
GRETCHEN. I wouldn't live with the like of him!
Whenever that man comes to the door,
He looks in so sarcastically,
Half angrily,
One can see he feels no sympathy;
It is written on his face so clear
There is not a soul he can hold dear.
I feel so cosy in your arms,
So warm and free from all restraint,
And his presence ties me up inside.
FAUST. You angel, with your wild alarms!
GRETCHEN. It makes me feel so ill, so faint,
That, if he merely happens to join us,
I even think I have no more love for you.
Besides, when he's there, I could never pray,
And that is eating my heart away;
You, Heinrich, you must feel it too.
FAUST. You suffer from an antipathy.
GRETCHEN. Now I must go.
FAUST. Oh, can I never rest
One little hour hanging upon your breast,
Pressing both breast on breast and soul on soul?
GRETCHEN. Ah, if I only slept alone!
I'd gladly leave the door unlatched for you to-night;
My mother, however, sleeps so light
And if she found us there, I own
I should fall dead upon the spot.
FAUST. You angel, there is no fear of that.
Here's a little flask. Three drops are all
It needs—in her drink—to cover nature
In a deep sleep, a gentle pall.
GRETCHEN. What would I not do for your sake!
I hope it will do her no injury.
FAUST. My love, do you think that of me?
GRETCHEN. Dearest, I've only to look at you
And I do not know what drives me to meet your will
I have already done so much for you
That little more is left me to fulfil.

[*She goes out—and* MEPHISTOPHELES *enters.*]

MEPHISTOPHELES. The monkey! Is she gone?

FAUST. Have you been spying again?
MEPHISTOPHELES. I have taken pretty good note of it,
The doctor has been catechised—
And much, I hope, to his benefit;
The girls are really keen to be advised
If a man belongs to the old simple-and-pious school.
'If he stand that,' they think, 'he'll stand *our* rule.'
FAUST. You, you monster, cannot see
How this true and loving soul
For whom faith is her whole
Being and the only road
To beatitude, must feel a holy horror
Having to count her beloved lost for good.
MEPHISTOPHELES. You supersensual, sensual buck,
Led by the nose by the girl you court!
FAUST. O you abortion of fire and muck!
MEPHISTOPHELES. And she also has skill in physiognomy;
In my presence she feels she doesn't know what,
She reads some hidden sense behind my little mask,
She feels that I am assuredly a genius—
Maybe the devil if she dared to ask.
Now: to-night—
FAUST. What is to-night to you?
MEPHISTOPHELES. I have my pleasure in it too.

AT THE WELL

GRETCHEN *and* LIESCHEN *with pitchers.*

LIESCHEN. Haven't you heard about Barbara? Not what's passed?
GRETCHEN. Not a word. I go out very little.
LIESCHEN. It's true, Sibylla[4] told me to-day:
She has made a fool of herself at last.
So much for her fine airs!
GRETCHEN. Why?
LIESCHEN. It stinks!
Now she feeds two when she eats and drinks.
GRETCHEN. Ah!
LIESCHEN. Yes; she has got her deserts in the end.
What a time she's been hanging on her friend!
Going the rounds
To the dances and the amusement grounds,
She had to be always the first in the line,
He was always standing her cakes and wine;

4. A friend of Gretchen's; not to be confused with the "Sibyl" named in l. 162 of the scene in the witch's kitchen.

She thought her looks so mighty fine,
She was so brazen she didn't waver
To take the presents that he gave her.
Such cuddlings and such carryings on—
But now the pretty flower is gone.
GRETCHEN. Poor thing!
LIESCHEN. Is that the way you feel?
When we were at the spinning-wheel
And mother kept us upstairs at night,
She was below with her heart's delight;
On the bench or in the shady alley
They never had long enough to dally.
But now she must grovel in the dirt,
Do penance in church in a hair shirt.
GRETCHEN. But surely he will marry her.
LIESCHEN. He'd be a fool! A smart young chap
Has plenty of other casks to tap.
Besides he's gone.
GRETCHEN. That's not right.
LIESCHEN. If she hooks him she won't get off light!
The boys will tear her wreath in half
And we shall strew her door with chaff.[5]
[LIESCHEN *goes off.*]
GRETCHEN. [*Going home*] What scorn I used to pour upon her
When a poor maiden lost her honour!
My tongue could never find a name
Bad enough for another's shame!
I thought it black and I blackened it,
It was never black enough to fit,
And I blessed myself and acted proud—
And now I too am under a cloud.
Yet, God! What drove me to this pass,
It was all so good, so dear, alas!

RAMPARTS

In a niche in the wall is an image of the Mater Dolorosa.[6] *In front of it* GRETCHEN *is putting fresh flowers in the pots.*

GRETCHEN. Mary, bow down,
Beneath thy woeful crown,
Thy gracious face on me undone!

5. In contrast to the bridal bouquet. In Germany this treatment was reserved for girls who had "fallen." 6. Literally, "sorrowful mother"; i.e., the Virgin Mary.

The sword in thy heart,
Smart upon smart,
Thou lookest up to thy dear son;

Sending up sighs
To the Father which rise
For his grief and for thine own.

Who can gauge
What torments rage
Through the whole of me and how—
How my poor heart is troubled in me,
How fears and longings undermine me?
Only thou knowest, only thou

Wherever I may go,
What woe, what woe, what woe
Is growing beneath my heart!
Alas, I am hardly alone,
I moan, I moan, I moan
And my heart falls apart.

The flower-pots in my window
I watered with tears, ah me,
When in the early morning
I picked these flowers for thee.

Not sooner in my bedroom
The sun's first rays were shed
Than I in deepest sorrow
Sat waking on my bed.

Save me from shame and death in one!
Ah, bow down
Thou of the woeful crown,
Thy gracious face on me undone.

NIGHT SCENE AT GRETCHEN'S DOOR

VALENTINE. When I was at some drinking bout
Where big talk tends to blossom out,
And my companions raised their voice
To praise the maidens of their choice
And drowned their praises in their drink,
Then I would sit and never blink,
Propped on my elbow listening
To all their brags and blustering.
Then smiling I would stroke my beard

And raise the bumper in my hand
And say: 'Each fellow to his taste!
But is there one in all the land
To hold a candle to my own
Dear sister, Gretchen? No, there's none!'
Hear! Hear! Kling! Kling! It went around;
Some cried: 'His judgment is quite sound,
She is the pearl of womanhood!'
That shut those boasters up for good.
And now! It would make one tear one's hair
And run up walls in one's despair!
Each filthy fellow in the place
Can sneer and jeer at my disgrace!
And I, like a man who's deep in debt,
Every chance word must make me sweat.
I could smash their heads for them if I tried—
I could not tell them that they lied.

[FAUST *and* MEPHISTOPHELES *enter.*]

VALENTINE. Who comes there, slinking? Who comes there?
If I mistake not, they're a pair.
If it's he, I'll scrag him on the spot;
He'll be dead before he knows what's what!

FAUST. How from the window of the sacristy there
The undying lamp sends up its little flicker
Which glimmers sideways weak and weaker
And round it presses the dark air.
My heart too feels its night, its noose.

MEPHISTOPHELES. And I feel like a tom-cat on the loose,
Brushing along the fire escape
And round the walls, a stealthy shape;
Moreover I feel quite virtuous,
Just a bit burglarious, a bit lecherous.
You see, I'm already haunted to the marrow
By the glorious Walpurgis Night.
It returns to us the day after to-morrow,
Then one knows why one's awake all right.

FAUST. I'd like some ornament, some ring,
For my dear mistress. I feel sad
To visit her without anything.

MEPHISTOPHELES. It's really nothing to regret—
That you needn't pay for what you get.
Now that the stars are gems on heaven's brocade,
You shall hear a real masterpiece.
I will sing her a moral serenade
That her folly may increase.

[*He sings to the guitar.*]

MEPHISTOPHELES. Catherine, my dear,
What? Waiting here
At your lover's door
When the stars of the night are fading?
Oh don't begin!
When he lifts the pin,
A maid goes in—
But she won't come out a maiden.

So think aright!
Grant him delight
And it's good night,
You poor, poor things— Don't linger!
A girl who's wise
Will hide her prize
From robber's eyes—
Unless she's a ring on her finger.[7]

[VALENTINE *comes forward.*]

VALENTINE. Damn you! Who're you seducing here?
You damned pied piper! You magician!
First to the devil with your guitar!
Then to the devil with the musician!

MEPHISTOPHELES. The guitar is finished. Look, it's broken in two.

VALENTINE. Now then, to break your heads for you!

MEPHISTOPHELES. Doctor! Courage! All you can muster!
Stick by me and do as I say!
Quick now, draw your feather duster!
I'll parry his blows, so thrust away!

VALENTINE. Then parry that!

MEPHISTOPHELES. Why not, why not?

VALENTINE. And that!

MEPHISTOPHELES. Of course.

VALENTINE. Is he the devil or what?
What's this? My hand's already lamed.

MEPHISTOPHELES. Strike, you!

VALENTINE. Oh!

[VALENTINE *falls.*]

MEPHISTOPHELES. Now the lout is tamed!
But we must go! Vanish in the wink of an eye!
They're already raising a murderous hue and cry.

MARTHA. [*At the window*] Come out! Come out!

GRETCHEN. [*At the window*] Bring a light!

7. Lines 54–69 are adapted by Goethe from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* IV, 5.

MARTHA. [*As before*] There's a row and a scuffle, they're having a fight.
MAN. Here's one on the ground; he's dead.
MARTHA. [*Coming out*] The murderers, have they gone?
GRETCHEN. [*Coming out*] Who's here?
MAN. Your mother's son.
GRETCHEN. O God! What pain! O God!
VALENTINE. I am dying—that's soon said
And sooner done, no doubt.
Why do you women stand howling and wailing?
Come round and hear me out.
[*They all gather round him.*]
Look, my Gretchen, you're young still,
You have not yet sufficient skill,
You bungle things a bit.
Here is a tip—you need no more—
Since you are once for all a whore,
Then make a job of it!
GRETCHEN. My brother? O God! Is it I you blame!
VALENTINE. Leave our Lord God out of the game!
What is done I'm afraid is done,
As one starts one must carry on.
You began with one man on the sly,
There will be more of them by and by,
And when a dozen have done with you
The whole town will have you too.

When Shame is born, she first appears
In this world in secrecy,
And the veil of night is drawn so tight
Over her head and ears;
Yes, people would kill her and forget her.
But she grows still more and more
And brazenly roams from door to door
And yet her appearance grows no better.
The more her face creates dismay,
The more she seeks the light of day.

Indeed I see the time draw on
When all good people in this town
Will turn aside from you, you tart,
As from a corpse in the plague cart.
Then your heart will sink within you,
When they look you in the eye!
It's good-bye to your golden chains!
And church-going and mass—good-bye!

No nice lace collars any more
To make you proud on the dancing floor!
No, in some dark and filthy nook
You'll hide with beggars and crippled folk
And, if God pardon you, he may;
You are cursed on earth till your dying day.
MARTHA. Commend your soul to the mercy of God!
Will you add slander to your load?
VALENTINE. If I could get at your withered body,
You bawd, you sinner born and hardened!
Then I should hope that all my sins
And in full measure might be pardoned.
GRETCHEN. My brother! O hell's misery!
VALENTINE. I tell you: let your weeping be.
When you and your honour came to part,
It was you that stabbed me to the heart.
I go to God through the sleep of death,
A soldier—brave to his last breath.
[*He dies.*]

CATHEDRAL

Organ and anthem. GRETCHEN *in the congregation. An* EVIL SPIRIT *whispers to her over her shoulder.*

EVIL SPIRIT. How different it all was
Gretchen, when you came here
All innocent to the altar,
Out of the worn-out little book
Lisping your prayers,
Half a child's game,
Half God in the heart!
Gretchen!
How is your head?
And your heart—
What are its crimes?
Do you pray for your mother's soul, who thanks to you
And your sleeping draught overslept into a long, long pain?
And whose blood stains your threshold?
Yes, and already under your heart
Does it now grow and quicken
And torture itself and you
With its foreboding presence?
GRETCHEN. Alas! Alas!
If I could get rid of the thoughts

Which course through my head hither and thither
Despite me!

CHOIR. Dies irae, dies illa
Solvet saeclum in favilla.[8]

[*The organ plays.*]

EVIL SPIRIT. Agony seizes you!
The trumpet sounds!
The graves tremble
And your heart
From its ashen rest
To fiery torment
Comes up recreated
Trembling too!

GRETCHEN. Oh to escape from here!
I feel as if the organ
Were stifling me,
And the music dissolving
My heart in its depths.

CHOIR. Judex ergo cum sedebit,
Quidquid latet adparebit,
Nil inultum remanebit.[9]

GRETCHEN. I cannot breathe!
The pillars of the walls
Are round my throat!
The vaulted roof
Chokes me!—Air!

EVIL SPIRIT. Hide yourself! Nor sin nor shame
Remains hidden.
Air? Light?
Woe to you!

CHOIR. Quid sum miser tunc dicturus?
Quem patronum rogaturus?
Cum vix justus sit securus.[1]

EVIL SPIRIT. The blessed turn
Their faces from you.
The pure shudder
To reach out their hands to you.
Woe!

CHOIR. Quid sum miser tunc dicturus?

GRETCHEN. Neighbour! Help! Your smelling bottle!

[*She faints.*]

8. Day of wrath, that day that dissolves the world into ashes. (The choir is singing the famous thirteenth-century hymn by Thomas Celano.) 9. When the judge shall be seated, what is hidden shall appear, nothing shall remain unavenged. 1. What shall I say in my wretchedness? To whom shall I appeal when scarcely the righteous man is safe?

WALPURGIS NIGHT

FAUST *and* MEPHISTOPHELES *making their way through the Hartz Mountains.*

MEPHISTOPHELES. A broomstick—don't you long for such a conveyance?
I'd find the coarsest he-goat some assistance.
Taking this road, our goal is still in the distance.
FAUST. No, so long as my legs are not in abeyance,
I can make do with this knotted stick.
What is the use of going too quick?
To creep along each labyrinthine valley,
Then climb this scarp, downwards from which
The bubbling spring makes its eternal sally,
This is the spice that makes such journeys rich.
Already the spring is weaving through the birches,
Even the pine already feels the spring;
Should not our bodies too give it some purchase?
MEPHISTOPHELES. Candidly—*I* don't feel a thing.
In my body all is winter,
I would prefer a route through frost and snow.
How sadly the imperfect disc
Of the red moon rises with belated glow
And the light it gives is bad, at every step
One runs into some rock or tree!
Permit me to ask a will o' the wisp.[2]
I see one there, he's burning heartily.
Ahoy, my friend! Might I call on you to help us?
Why do you blaze away there to no purpose?
Be so good as to light us along our road.
WILL O' THE WISP. I only hope my sense of your mightiness
Will control my natural flightiness;
A zigzag course is our accustomed mode.
MEPHISTOPHELES. Ha! Ha! So it's men you want to imitate.
In the name of the Devil you go straight
Or I'll blow out your flickering, dickering light!
WILL O' THE WISP. You're the head of the house, I can see that all right,
You are welcome to use me at your convenience.
But remember, the mountain is magic-mad to-day
And if a will o' the wisp is to show you the way,
You too must show a little lenience.
FAUST, MEPHISTOPHELES, WILL O' THE WISP. [*Singing successively*]

2. The Jack o' lantern, or ignis fatuus. In German folklore, this was thought of as leading travelers to their destruction.

Into realms of dreams and witchcraft
We, it seems, have found an ingress.
Lead us well and show your woodcraft,
That we may make rapid progress
Through these wide and desert spaces.

Trees on trees—how each one races,
Pushing past—how each one hastens!
And the crags that make obeisance!
And the rocks with long-nosed faces—
Hear them snorting, hear them blowing!

Through the stones and lawns are flowing
Brook and brooklet, downward hustling.
Is that song—or is it rustling?
Sweet, sad notes of love—a relic—
Voices from those days angelic?
Thus we hope, we love—how vainly!
Echo like an ancient rumour
Calls again, yes, calls back plainly.

Now—Tu-whit!—we near the purlieu
Of—Tu-whoo!—owl, jay and curlew;
Are they all in waking humour?
In the bushes are those lizards—
Straggling legs and bloated gizzards?
And the roots like snakes around us
Coil from crag and sandy cranny,
Stretch their mad and strange antennae
Grasping at us to confound us;
Stretch from gnarled and living timber
Towards the passer-by their limber
Polyp-suckers!
And in legions
Through these mossy, heathy regions
Mice, all colours, come cavorting!
And above, a serried cohort,
Fly the glow-worms as our escort—
More confusing than escorting.

Tell me what our real case is!
Are we stuck or are we going?
Rocks and trees, they all seem flying
Round and round and making faces,
And the will o' the wisps are blowing
Up so big and multiplying.

MEPHISTOPHELES. Hold my coat-tails, hold on tight!
Standing on this central height
Marvelling see how far and wide
Mammon[3] lights the peaks inside.
FAUST. How strangely through the mountain hollows
A sad light gleams as of morning-red
And like a hound upon the scent
Probes the gorges' deepest bed!
Here fumes arise, there vapours float,
Here veils of mist catch sudden fire
Which creeps along, a flimsy threat,
Then fountains up, a towering spire.
Here a whole stretch it winds its way
With a hundred veins throughout the glen,
And here in the narrow neck of the pass
Is suddenly one strand again.
There, near by, are dancing sparks
Sprinkled around like golden sand.
But look! The conflagration climbs
The crags' full height, hand over hand.
MEPHISTOPHELES. Does not Sir Mammon light his palace
In splendid style for this occasion?
You are lucky to have seen it;
Already I sense the noisy guests' invasion.
FAUST. How the Wind Hag rages through the air!
What blows she rains upon the nape of my neck!
MEPHISTOPHELES. You must clamp yourself to the ancient ribs of the rock
Or she'll hurl you into this gorge, to find your grave down there.
A mist is thickening the night.
Hark to the crashing of the trees!
The owls are flying off in fright.
And the ever-green palaces—
Hark to their pillars sundering!
Branches moaning and breaking!
Tree-trunks mightily thundering!
Roots creaking and yawning!
Tree upon tree in appalling
Confusion crashing and falling,
And through the wreckage on the scarps
The winds are hissing and howling.
Do you hear those voices in the air?
Far-off voices? Voices near?

3. Mammon is portrayed as leading a group of fallen angels in digging out gold and gems from the ground of Hell, presumably for Satan's palace in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Book I, ll. 678ff.

Aye, the whole length of the mountain side
The witch-song streams in a crazy tide.
WITCHES. [*In chorus*]. The witches enter the Brocken scene,
The stubble is yellow, the corn is green.
There assembles the mighty horde,
Urian[4] sits aloft as lord.
So we go—over stock and stone—
Farting witch on stinking goat.
A VOICE. But ancient Baubo[5] comes alone,
She rides on a mother sow—take note.
CHORUS. So honour to whom honour is due!
Let Mother Baubo head the queue!
A strapping sow and Mother on top
And we'll come after, neck and crop.

The way is broad, the way is long,
How is this for a crazy throng?
The pitchfork pricks, the broomstick pokes,
The mother bursts and the child chokes.
VOICE FROM ABOVE. Come along, come along, from Felsensee!
VOICES FROM BELOW. We'd like to mount with you straight away.
We wash ourselves clean behind and before
But we are barren for evermore.
CHORUS. The wind is silent, the star's in flight,
The sad moon hides herself from sight.
The soughing of the magic choir
Scatters a thousand sparks of fire.
VOICE FROM BELOW. Wait! Wait!
VOICE FROM ABOVE. Who calls there from the cleft in the rock?
VOICE FROM BELOW. Don't leave me behind! Don't leave me behind!
Three hundred years I've been struggling up
And I can never reach the top;
I want to be with my own kind.
CHORUS. Ride on a broom or ride on a stick,
Ride on a fork or a goat—but quick!
Who cannot to-night achieve the climb
Is lost and damned till the end of time.
HALF-WITCH. So long, so long, I've been on the trot;
How far ahead the rest have got!
At home I have neither peace nor cheer
And yet I do not find it here.
CHORUS. Their ointment makes the witches hale,
A rag will make a decent sail

4. A name for the devil. 5. In Greek mythology, the nurse of Demeter, noted for her obscenity and bestiality.

And any trough a ship for flight;
You'll never fly, if not to-night.
Once at the peak, you circle round
And then you sweep along the ground
And cover the heath far and wide—
Witchhood in swarms on every side.

[*The* WITCHES *land.*]

MEPHISTOPHELES. What a push and a crush and a rush and a clatter!
How they sizzle and whisk, how they babble and batter!
Kindle and sparkle and blaze and stink!
A true witch-element, I think.
Only stick to me or we shall be swept apart!
Where are you?

FAUST. Here!

MEPHISTOPHELES. What! Carried so far already!
I must show myself the master on this ground.
Room! Here comes Voland![6] Room, sweet rabble! Steady!
Here, Doctor, catch hold of me. Let's make one bound
Out of this milling crowd and so get clear.
Even for the likes of me it's *too* mad here.
There's something yonder casting a peculiar glare,
Something attracts me towards those bushes.
Come with me! We will slip in there.

FAUST. You spirit of contradiction! Go on though! I'll follow.
You have shown yourself a clever fellow. Quite!
We visit the Brocken on Walpurgis Night
To shut ourselves away in this lonely hollow!

MEPHISTOPHELES. Only look—what motley flames!
It's a little club for fun and games
One's not alone with a few, you know.

FAUST. I'd rather be above there though.
Already there's fire and whorls of smoke.
The Prince of Evil is drawing the folk;
Many a riddle must there be solved.

MEPHISTOPHELES. And many a new one too evolved.
Let the great world, if it likes, run riot;
We will set up here in quiet.
It is a custom of old date
To make one's own small worlds within the great.
I see young witches here, bare to the buff,
And old ones dressed—wisely enough.
If only for my sake, do come on;
It's little trouble and great fun.

6. One of Mephistopheles' names for himself. *Voland*, or *Valand*, is an old German word for "evil fiend."

I hear some music being let loose too.
What a damned clack! It's what one must get used to.
Come along! Come along! You have no choice.
I'll lead the way and sponsor you
And you'll be obliged to me anew.
What do you say? This milieu isn't small
Just look! You can see no end to it at all.
A hundred fires are blazing in a row;
They dance and gossip and cook and drink and court—
Tell me where there is better sport!

FAUST. Do you intend, to introduce us here,
To play the devil or the sorcerer?

MEPHISTOPHELES. I am quite accustomed to go incognito
But one wears one's orders on gala days, you know.
I have no garter[7] for identification
But my cloven foot has here some reputation.
See that snail? Creeping up slow and steady?
Her sensitive feelers have already
Sensed out something odd in me.
Here I could *not* hide my identity.
But come! Let us go the round of the fires
And I'll play go-between to your desires.

COSTER-WITCH.[8] Gentlemen, don't pass me by!
Don't miss your opportunity!
Inspect my wares with careful eye;
I have a great variety.
And yet there is nothing on my stall
Whose like on earth you could not find,
That in its time has done no small
Harm to the world and to mankind.
No dagger which has not drunk of blood,
No goblet which has not poured its hot and searing
Poison into some healthy frame,
No gewgaw which has not ruined some endearing
Woman, no sword which has not been used to hack
A bond in two and stab a partner in the back.

MEPHISTOPHELES. Auntie! You are behind the times.
Past and done with! Past and done!
You must go in for novelties!
You'll lose our custom if you've none.

FAUST. I mustn't go crazy unawares!
This is a fair to end all fairs.

MEPHISTOPHELES. The whole crowd's forcing its way above;

7. I.e., he has no decoration of nobility, such as the Order of the Garter. 8. The original *Trödelhexe*, literally means "a witch (dealing in) old rags and clothes."

You find you're shoved though you may think you shove.
FAUST. Who then is that?
MEPHISTOPHELES. Look well at Madam;
That's Lilith.[9]
FAUST. Who?
MEPHISTOPHELES. First wife of Adam.
Be on your guard against her lovely hair,
That shining ornament which has no match;
Any young man whom those fair toils can catch,
She will not quickly loose him from her snare.
FAUST. Look, an old and a young one, there they sit.
They have already frisked a bit.
MEPHISTOPHELES. No rest to-night for 'em, not a chance.
They're starting again. Come on! Let's join the dance.
[FAUST *dances with a* YOUNG WITCH.]
FAUST. A lovely dream once came to me
In which I saw an apple tree,
On which two lovely apples shine,
They beckon me, I start to climb.
YOUNG WITCH. Those little fruit you long for so
Just as in Eden long ago.
Joy runs through me, through and through;
My garden bears its apples too.
[FAUST *breaks away from the dance.*]
MEPHISTOPHELES. Why did you let that lovely maiden go
Who danced with you and so sweetly sang?
FAUST. Ugh, in the middle of it there sprang
Out of her mouth a little red mouse.
MEPHISTOPHELES. Why complain? That's nothing out of the way;
You should be thankful it wasn't grey.
In an hour of love! What a senseless grouse!
FAUST. And then I saw—
MEPHISTOPHELES. What?
FAUST. Mephisto, look over there!
Do you see a girl in the distance, pale and fair?
Who drags herself, only slowly, from the place?
And seems to walk with fetters on her feet?
I must tell you that I think I see
Something of dear Gretchen in her face.
MEPHISTOPHELES. That can do no good! Let it alone! Beware!
It is a lifeless phantom, an image of air.
It is a bad thing to behold;

9. According to an old rabbinical legend, Adam's first wife (the "female" mentioned in Genesis 1:27) was Lilith. After Eve was created, Lilith became a ghost who seduced men and inflicted evil upon children.

Its cold look makes the blood of man run cold,
One turns to stone almost upon the spot;
You have heard of Medusa,[1] have you not?

FAUST. Indeed, they are the eyes of one who is dead,
Unclosed by loving hands, left open, void.
That is the breast which Gretchen offered me,
And that is the sweet body I enjoyed.

MEPHISTOPHELES. That is mere magic, you gullible fool! She can
Appear in the shape of his love to every man.

FAUST. What ravishment! What pain! Oh stay!
That look! I cannot turn away!
How strange that that adorable neck
In one red thread should be arrayed
As thin as the back of a knife-blade.

MEPHISTOPHELES. You are quite correct! I see it too.
She can also carry her head under her arm,
Perseus has cut it off for her.
Always this love of things untrue![2]

[*A* CHOIR *is heard, pianissimo.*]

CHOIR. Drifting cloud and gauzy mist
Brighten and dissever.
Breeze on the leaf and wind in the reeds
And all is gone for ever.

DREARY DAY—OPEN COUNTRY

FAUST. In misery! In despair! Long on the earth a wretched wanderer, now a prisoner! A criminal cooped in a dungeon for horrible torments, that dear and luckless creature! To end so! So! Perfidious, worthless spirit—and this you have kept from me!

Stand, just stand there! Roll your devilish eyes spitefully round in your head! Stand and brave me with your unbearable presence! A prisoner! In irremediable misery! Abandoned to evil spirits, to judging, unfeeling man! And I in the meantime—you lull me with stale diversions, you hide her worsening plight from me, you abandon her to perdition!

MEPHISTOPHELES. She is not the first.

FAUST. Dog! Loathsome monster! Change him, Thou eternal Spirit! Change this serpent back to his shape of a dog, in which he often delighted to trot before me at night—to roll about at the feet of

1. The Gorgon, with hair made of serpents, whose glance turned men to stone. She was finally killed by Perseus, and her head was given to Athene. 2. The Walpurgis Night's Dream, which is always cut from performances of *Faust*, is omitted. It occurs between l. 305 and l. 306 of our text.

the harmless wanderer and, as he tripped, to sink his teeth in his shoulders. Change him back to his fancy-shape that he may crouch in the sand on his belly before me, that I may trample over his vileness!

Not the first, you say! O the pity of it! What human soul can grasp that more than one creature has sunk to the depth of this misery, that the first did not pay off the guilt of all the rest, writhing and racked in death before the eyes of the Ever-Pardoning! It pierces me to my marrow and core, the torment of this one girl—and you grin calmly at the fate of thousands!

MEPHISTOPHELES. Now we're already back at our wits' end—the point where your human intelligence snaps. Why do you enter our company, if you can't carry it through? So you want to fly—and have no head for heights? Did we force ourselves on you—or you on us?

FAUST. Do not bare at me so those greedy fangs of yours! You sicken me! O great and glorious Spirit, Thou who didst deign to appear to me, Thou who knowest my heart and my soul, why fetter me to this odious partner who grazes on mischief and laps up destruction?

MEPHISTOPHELES. Have you finished?

FAUST. Save her! Or woe to you! The most withering curse upon you for thousands of years!

MEPHISTOPHELES. I cannot undo the avenger's bonds, his bolts I cannot open. Save her! Who was it plunged her into ruin? I or you?

[FAUST *looks wildly around.*]

MEPHISTOPHELES. Are you snatching at the thunder? Luckily, that is forbidden you wretched mortals. To smash to pieces his innocent critic, that is the way the tyrant relieves himself when in difficulties.

FAUST. Bring me to her! She shall be free!

MEPHISTOPHELES. And what of the risk you will run? Let me tell you; the town is still tainted with blood-guilt from your hand. Over the site of the murder there float avenging spirits who await the returning murderer.

FAUST. That too from *you?* Murder and death of a world on your monstrous head! Take me to her, I tell you; set her free!

MEPHISTOPHELES. I will take you, and what I *can* do—listen! Am I omnipotent in heaven and earth? I will cast a cloud on the gaoler's senses; do you get hold of the keys and carry her out with your own human hands. I meanwhile wait, my magic horses are ready, I carry you off. That much I can manage.

FAUST. Away! Away!

NIGHT

FAUST *and* MEPHISTOPHELES *fly past on black horses.*

FAUST. What do they weave round the Gallows Rock?[3]
MEPHISTOPHELES. Can't tell what they're cooking and hatching.
FAUST. Floating up, floating down, bending, descending.
MEPHISTOPHELES. A witch corporation.
FAUST. Black mass, black water.
MEPHISTOPHELES. Come on! Come on!

DUNGEON

FAUST *with a bunch of keys and a lamp, in front of an iron door.*

FAUST. A long unwonted trembling seizes me,
The woe of all mankind seizes me fast.
It is here she lives, behind these dripping walls,
Her crime was but a dream too good to last!
And *you,* Faust, waver at the door?
You fear to see your love once more?
Go in at once—or her hope of life is past.
[*He tries the key.* GRETCHEN *starts singing inside.*]
GRETCHEN. My mother, the whore,
Who took my life!
My father, the rogue,
Who ate my flesh!
My little sister
My bones did lay
In a cool, cool glen;
And there I turned to a pretty little wren;
Fly away! Fly away!
[FAUST *opens the lock.*]
FAUST. She does not suspect that her lover is listening—
To the chains clanking, the straw rustling.
[*He enters.*]
GRETCHEN. Oh! They come! O death! It's hard! Hard!
FAUST. Quiet! I come to set you free.
[*She throws herself at his feet.*]
GRETCHEN. If you are human, feel my misery.
FAUST. Do not cry out—you will wake the guard.
[*He takes hold of the chains to unlock them.*]
GRETCHEN. [*On her knees*] Who has given you this power,
Hangman, so to grieve me?
To fetch me at this midnight hour!

3. The masonry supporting a gallows.

Have pity! O reprieve me!
Will to-morrow not serve when the bells are rung?
[*She gets up.*]
I am still so young, I am still so young!
Is my death so near?
I was pretty too, that was what brought me here.
My lover was by, he's far to-day;
My wreath lies torn, my flowers have been thrown away.
Don't seize on me so violently!
What have I done to you? Let me be!
Let me not vainly beg and implore;
You know I have never seen you before.

FAUST. Can I survive this misery?

GRETCHEN. I am now completely in your power.
Only let me first suckle my child.
This night I cherished it, hour by hour;
To torture me they took it away
And now I murdered it, so they say.
And I shall never be happy again.
People make ballads about me—the heartless crew!
An old story ends like this—
Must mine too?
[FAUST *throws himself on the ground.*]

FAUST. Look! At your feet a lover lies
To loose you from your miseries.
[GRETCHEN *throws herself beside him.*]

GRETCHEN. O, let us call on the saints on bended knee!
Beneath these steps—but see—
Beneath this sill
The cauldron of Hell!
And within,
The Evil One in his fury
Raising a din!

FAUST. Gretchen! Gretchen!

GRETCHEN. That was my lover's voice!
[*She springs up: the chains fall off.*]
I heard him calling. Where can he be?
No one shall stop me. I am free!
Quick! My arms round his neck!
And lie upon his bosom! Quick!
He called 'Gretchen!' He stood at the door.
Through the whole of Hell's racket and roar,
Through the threats and jeers and from far beyond
I heard that voice so sweet, so fond.

FAUST. It is I!

GRETCHEN. It's you? Oh say so once again!
[*She clasps him.*]
It is! It is! Where now is all my pain?
And where the anguish of my captivity?
It's you; you have come to rescue me!
I am saved!
The street is back with me straight away
Where I saw you that first day,
And the happy garden too
Where Martha and I awaited you.
FAUST. Come! Come!
GRETCHEN. Oh stay with me, oh do!
Where *you* stay, I would like to, too.
FAUST. Hurry!
If you don't,
The penalty will be sore.
GRETCHEN. What! Can you kiss no more?
So short an absence, dear, as this
And you've forgotten how to kiss!
Why do I feel so afraid, clasping your neck?
In the old days your words, your looks,
Were a heavenly flood I could not check
And you kissed me as if you would smother me—
Kiss me now!
Or I'll kiss you!
[*She kisses him.*]
Oh your lips are cold as stone!
And dumb!
What has become
Of your love?
Who has robbed me of my own?
[*She turns away from him.*]
FAUST. Come! Follow me, my love! Be bold!
I will cherish you after a thousandfold.
Only follow me now! That is all I ask of you.
GRETCHEN. And is it you then? Really? Is it true?
FAUST. It is! But come!
GRETCHEN. You are undoing each chain,
You take me to your arms again.
How comes it you are not afraid of me?
Do you know, my love, *whom* you are setting free?
FAUST. Come! The deep night is passing by and beyond.
GRETCHEN. My mother, I have murdererd her;
I drowned my child in the pond.
Was it not a gift to you and me?

To you too—You! Are you what you seem?
Give me your hand! It is not a dream!
Your dear hand—but, oh, it's wet!
Wipe it off! I think
There is blood on it.
Oh God! What have you done?
Put up your sword,
I beg you to.

FAUST. Let what is gone be gone!
You are killing me.

GRETCHEN. No! *You* must live on!
I will tell you about the graves—
You must get them put right
At morning light;
Give the best place to my mother,
The one next door to my brother,
Me a shade to the side—
A gap, but not too wide.
And the little one on my right breast.
No one else shall share my rest.
When it was you, when I could clasp you,
That was a sweet, a lovely day!
But I no longer can attain it,
I feel I must use force to grasp you,
As if you were thrusting me away.
And yet it's you and you look so kind, so just.

FAUST. If you feel it's I, then come with me? You must!

GRETCHEN. Outside there?

FAUST. Into the air!

GRETCHEN. If the grave is there
And death on the watch, then come!
Hence to the final rest of the tomb
And not a step beyond—
You are going now? O Heinrich, if *I* could too!

FAUST. You can! The door is open. Only respond!

GRETCHEN. I dare not go out; for me there is no more hope.
They are lying in wait for me; what use is flight?
To have to beg, it is so pitiable
And that with a conscience black as night!
So pitiable to tramp through foreign lands—
And in the end I must fall into their hands!

FAUST. I shall stay by you.

GRETCHEN. Be quick! Be quick!
Save your poor child!
Go! Straight up the path—

Along by the brook—
Over the bridge—
Into the wood—
Left where the plank is—
In the pond!
Catch hold of it quickly!
It's trying to rise,
It's kicking still!
Save it! Save it!

FAUST. Collect yourself!
One step—just one—and you are free.

GRETCHEN. If only we were past the hill!
There sits my mother on a stone—
My brain goes cold and dead—
There sits my mother on a stone—
And wags and wags her head.
No sign, no nod, her head is such a weight
She'll wake no more, she slept so late.
She slept that we might sport and play.
What a time that was of holiday!

FAUST. If prayer and argument are no resource,
I will risk saving you by force.

GRETCHEN. No! I will have no violence! Let me go!
Don't seize me in that murderous grip!
I have done everything else for you, you know.

FAUST. My love! My love! The day is dawning!

GRETCHEN. Day! Yes, it's growing day! The last day breaks on me!
My wedding day it was to be!
Tell no one you had been before with Gretchen.
Alas for my garland!
There's no more chance!
We shall meet again—
But not at the dance.
The people are thronging—but silently;
Street and square
Cannot hold them there.
The bell tolls—it tolls for *me*.
How they seize me, bind me, like a slave!
Already I'm swept away to the block.
Already there jabs at every neck,
The sharp blade which jabs at mine.
The world lies mute as the grave.

FAUST. I wish I had never been born!

[MEPHISTOPHELES *appears outside.*]

MEPHISTOPHELES. Away! Or you are lost.

Futile wavering! Waiting and prating!
My horses are shivering,
The dawn's at the door.
GRETCHEN. What rises up from the floor?
It's he! Send him away! It's he!
What does he want in the holy place?
It is I he wants!
FAUST. You shall live!
GRETCHEN. Judgment of God! I have given myself to Thee!
MEPHISTOPHELES. [*To* FAUST] Come! Or I'll leave you both in the lurch.
GRETCHEN. O Father, save me! I am Thine!
You angels! Hosts of the Heavenly Church,
Guard me, stand round in serried line!
Heinrich! I shudder to look at you.
MEPHISTOPHELES. She is condemned!
VOICE FROM ABOVE. Redeemed!
MEPHISTOPHELES. Follow me!
[*He vanishes with* FAUST.]
VOICE [*From within, dying away*] Heinrich! Heinrich!

FRANÇOIS RENÉ, VICOMTE DE CHATEAUBRIAND
1768–1848

In the fictional character René, the Vicomte de Chateaubriand created one of his period's most eloquent—and most popular—representations of the solitary, melancholy Romantic hero. His own career had involved him directly in important public events; he served as a diplomat (in positions including minister of the interior, foreign minister, and ambassador to Berlin, to London, and to Rome) both under Napoleon and under France's subsequent kings, giving up politics only after the fall of the Bourbons in 1830. Much earlier (1791), he had spent five months in North America, where he may have acquired background data for *René*. His royalist sympathies sent him into self-exile in England from 1793 to 1800; he survived there as a teacher and translator. After his retirement from politics, he spent his time in writing and traveling.

The death of Chateaubriand's mother in 1798 apparently precipitated him into an intense commitment to Catholicism. He conceived a work that would defend Christianity by providing fictional stories to illustrate the importance of faith. In 1801, he published *Atala*, one such story, to see what kind of reception it would win. Encouraged by the enthusiastic popular response, a year later he published *The Genius of Christianity*, containing both *Atala*

and its narrative sequel, *René*, in which the title character explains to his friends the autobiographical causes of his pervasive melancholy.

Like Candide, René has traveled through the world without finding satisfaction. "I had discovered nothing stable among the ancients and nothing beautiful among the moderns." His response to life's difficulties, however, differs dramatically from Candide's; nor do the narratives containing the two travelers have much in common besides their use of the conventional journey in search of knowledge. Voltaire generates both satire and black comedy from the discrepancy between Candide's ever-optimistic expectations and his dire discoveries; Chateaubriand depicts René as finding only confirmation for his profound sense of misery, and the writer uses his tale to remind the reader not of the need to reform existing social institutions but of the luxury of melancholy.

René's account of his life experience includes little in the way of event, a fact emphasizing the high value accorded to feeling in Chateaubriand's writing. The narrative's most titillating happening consists in the discovery of an emotion: René's realization of his sister's incestuous passion and consequently of his own. Neither sister nor brother acts out such feeling directly. Instead, the sister enters a convent where she dies in the practice of virtue; the brother flees to the wilds of North America, where he finds mentors in a blind Indian and a missionary whose direct narrative function consists mainly in listening to his account of his unhappiness. René thinks about suicide but does not perform it; after the missionary tells him to end his commitment to self-indulgence, "it is said that . . . René returned to his wife, but still found no happiness." All meaning, in short, inheres in the internal life; action has little interest in comparison with passion.

Indeed, at the point when René discovers the cause of his sister's hidden sorrow he discovers also the psychic value of pain. "I even felt a kind of unexpected satisfaction in the fullness of my anguish, and I became aware, with a sense of hidden joy, that sorrow is not a feeling which consumes itself like pleasure." You can count on sorrow, it keeps you busy: "My grief had become an immediate concern occupying my every moment, so thoroughly is my heart molded of weariness and misery!" In delineating and glorifying such a heart, Chateaubriand articulates a central preoccupation of his historical moment: the interest in defining the nature of the sensitive, isolated soul, precursor of twentieth-century alienation.

René's patronizing account of the Indians' emotional life ("you have reached wisdom's goal through your play and your sleep—like children") suggests with particular clarity his sense of his own specialness. The Indians, he says, may have felt "the melancholy of extreme happiness," but any sadness they experienced would have been only "fleeting." The depth and persistence of his own unhappiness serve as the sign of uniqueness. Like Rousseau in his *Confessions*, though less overtly, René suggests that no one else has experienced what he has felt. His responsiveness to the natural world, his awareness of the corruption of "civilized" life, his relative contentment among primitive people—such attitudes, characteristic of early Romanticism, appear oddly linked with his capacity for self-pity, also the mark of his special sensitivity. "Happiness can be found only in the common paths," the blind Indian sage finally observes, responding to the missionary's rebuke of René

for spending his time "inflaming" his own passions and neglecting all his duties. But the story as a whole does not enforce such eighteenth-century doctrines. On the contrary, it strongly hints the superiority of uncommon unhappiness to its more mundane opposite.

André Maurois's biography, *Chateaubriand* (1938), remains a good introduction. Students may also wish to consult J. Evans, *Chateaubriand* (1939), and, for a critical approach, T. C. Walker, *Chateaubriand's Nature Scenery* (1946).

René[1]

On arriving among the Natchez René[2] was obliged to take a wife in order to conform to the Indian customs; but he did not live with her. His melancholy nature drew him constantly away into the depths of the woods. There he would spend entire days in solitude, a savage among the savages. Aside from Chactas, his foster father, and Father Souël, a missionary at Fort Rosalie, he had given up all fellowship with men. These two elders had acquired a powerful influence over his heart, Chactas, through his kindly indulgence, and Father Souël, on the contrary, through his extreme severity. Since the beaver hunt, when the blind sachem[3] had told his adventures to René, the young man had consistently refused to talk about his own. And yet both Chactas and the missionary keenly desired to know what sorrow had driven this well-born European to the strange decision of retiring into the wildernesses of Louisiana. René had always claimed that he would not tell his story because it was too insignificant, limited as it was to his thoughts and feelings. "As for the circumstance which induced me to leave for America," he added, "that must forever be buried in oblivion."

Thus several years went by, and the two elders were unable to draw his secret from him. One day, however, he received a letter from Europe, through the Office of Foreign Missions, which so increased his sadness that he felt he had to flee even from his old friends. Now more than ever they exhorted him to open his heart to them. And so great was their tact, so gentle their manner, and so deep the respect they commanded, that he finally felt obliged to yield. He therefore set a day to tell them, not the adventures of his life, for he had never had any, but the innermost feelings of his soul.

On the twenty-first day of the month the Indians call the "moon of flowers," René went to the cabin of Chactas. Giving his arm to the sachem, he led him to a spot under a sassafras tree on the bank of the Meschacebe.[4] Soon afterwards Father Souël arrived at the

1. Translated by Irving Putter. 2. He appears in *Atala* as the melancholy youth who has fled Europe for Louisiana in 1725, and to whom the Indian sage tells the sad tale of his love for Atala. 3. Chief. 4. Mississippi.

meeting place. Day was breaking. Off on the plain, some distance away, the Natchez village could be seen with its grove of mulberry trees and its cabins which looked like beehives. The French colony and Fort Rosalie were visible on the river bank at the right. Tents, half-built houses, fortresses just begun, hosts of negroes clearing tracts of land, groups of white men and Indians, all offered a striking contrast of social and primitive ways in this limited space. Towards the east, in the background of this setting, the sun was just beginning to show behind the jagged peaks of the Appalachians, which stood forth like azure symbols against the golden reaches of the sky. In the west, the Meschacebe rolled its waves in majestic stillness, forming for the picture a border of indescribable grandeur.

For some time the young man and the missionary stood marveling at this splendid scene and pitying the sachem who could no longer enjoy it. Then Father Souël and Chactas sat down on the grass at the foot of the tree. René took his place between them, hesitated a moment, and then began speaking in the following manner.

As I open my story, I cannot stifle a feeling of shame. The peace in your hearts, respected elders, and the calm of nature all about me make me blush for the disorder and turmoil of my soul.

How you will pity me! How wretched my perpetual anxieties will seem to you! You who have passed through all the hardships of life, what will you think of a young man with neither strength nor moral courage, who finds the source of his torments within himself, and can hardly lament any misfortunes save those he has brought on himself? Alas! Do not condemn him too severely; he has already been harshly punished!

I cost my mother her life as I came into this world and had to be drawn from her womb with an instrument. My father gave his blessing to my brother because he saw in him his elder son; as for me, I was soon abandoned to strange hands and brought up far from my father's roof.

I was spirited in temper and erratic by nature. As I alternated turbulence and joy with silence and sadness, I would gather my young friends around me, then leave them suddenly and go off to sit by myself watching the swift clouds or listening to the rain falling among the leaves.

Each autumn I would return to the family château, off in the midst of the forests, near a lake in a remote province.

I was timid and inhibited in my father's presence, and found freedom and contentment only with my sister Amelia. We were closely bound together by our tender affinities in mood and taste; my sister was only slightly older than I. We loved to climb the hillside together or go sailing on the lake or wander through the woods under the

falling leaves, and even now memories of those rambles fill my soul with delight. O illusions of childhood and homeland, can your sweetness ever fade away?

Sometimes we strolled in silence hearkening to the muffled rumbling of the autumn or the crackling of the dry leaves trailing sadly under our feet. In our innocent games we ran after the swallow in the meadows or the rainbow on the storm-swept hills. At other times we would whisper poetry inspired in us by the spectacle of nature. In my youth I courted the Muses. Nothing is more poetic than a heart of sixteen in all the pristine freshness of its passions. The morning of life is like the morning of the day, pure, picturesque, and harmonious.

On Sundays and holidays I often stood in the deep woods as the sound of the distant bell drifted through the trees, calling from the temple to the man of the fields. Leaning against the trunk of an elm, I would listen in rapt silence to the devout tolling. Each tremor of the resounding bronze would waft into my guileless soul the innocence of country ways, the calm of solitude, the beauty of religion, and the cherished melancholy of memories out of my early childhood! Oh! What churlish heart has never started at the sound of the bells in his birthplace, those bells which trembled with joy over his cradle, which rang out the dawn of his life, which signaled his first heartbeat, announcing to all surrounding places the reverent gladness of his father, the ineffable anguish and supreme joy of his mother! All is embraced in that magical revery which engulfs us at the sound of our native bell-faith, family, homeland, the cradle and the grave, the past and the future.

True enough, Amelia and I enjoyed these solemn, tender thoughts far more than did others, for in the depths of our heart we both had a strain of sadness, given us by God or our mother.

Meanwhile my father was attacked by a disease which brought him to his grave in a short time. He passed away in my arms, and I learned to know death from the lips of the very person who had given me life. The impression was profound; it is vivid still. It was the first time that the immortality of the soul was clearly present before my eyes. I could not believe that this lifeless body was the creator of my thought; I felt it had to come from some other source, and, in my religious sorrow, close akin to joy, I hoped one day to join the spirit of my father.

Another circumstance fixed this lofty idea even more firmly in my mind. My father's features had taken on a sublime quality in his coffin. Why should this astonishing mystery not be an indication of our immortality? Could not all-knowing death have stamped the secrets of another universe on the brow of its victim? And why could the tomb not have some great vision of eternity?

Overcome with grief Amelia had withdrawn to the seclusion of a tower from which she could hear the chanting of the priests in the funeral procession and the death knell reverberating under the vaults of the Gothic château.

I accompanied my father to his last abode, and the earth closed over his remains. Eternity and oblivion pressed down on him with all their weight, and that very evening the indifferent passer-by trod over his grave. Aside from his daughter and son, it was already as though he had never existed.

Then I had to leave the family shelter, which my brother had inherited. Amelia and I went to live with some aged relatives.

Pausing before the deceptive paths of life, I considered them one by one, but dared not set out along any of them. Amelia would frequently speak of the joy of the religious life, adding that I was the only bond still holding her to the outside world; and her eyes would fix themselves upon me sadly.

With my heart stirred by these devout talks, I would often make my way toward a monastery close by my new dwelling. Once I was even tempted to retire within its walls forever. Happy are they who reach the end of their travels without ever leaving the harbor and have never, as have I, dragged their barren days out over the face of the earth!

In our endless agitation we Europeans are obliged to erect lonely retreats for ourselves. The greater the turmoil and din in our hearts, the more we are drawn to calmness and silence. These shelters in my country are always open to the sad and weak. Often they are hidden in little valleys, which seem to harbor in their bosom a vague feeling of sorrow and a hope for a future refuge. Sometimes, too, they are found in high places where the religious soul, like some mountain plant, seems to rise toward heaven, offering up its perfumes.

I can still see the majestic mingling of waters and forests around that ancient abbey, where I hoped to shelter my life from the whims of fate; I still wander at eventide in those reverberating, solitary cloisters. When the moon cast its wan light on the pillars of the arcades and outlined their shadow on the opposite wall, I would stop to contemplate the cross marking the burial ground and the tall grass growing among the tombstones. O men who once lived far removed from the world and have passed from the silence of life to the silence of death, how your tombs filled my soul with disgust for this earth!

Whether it was my natural instability or a dislike of the monastic life, I do not know, but I changed my plans and decided to go abroad. As I bade my sister farewell, she clasped me in her arms in an almost joyful gesture, as though she were happy to see me leave, and I could

not repress a bitter thought about the inconstancy of human affections.

Nevertheless, I set forth all alone and full of spirit on the stormy ocean of the world, though I knew neither its safe ports nor its perilous reefs. First I visited people who exist no more. I went and sat among the ruins of Rome and Greece, those countries of virile and brilliant memory, where palaces are buried in the dust and royal mausoleums hidden beneath the brambles. O power of nature and weakness of man! A blade of grass will pierce through the hardest marble of these tombs, while their weight can never be lifted by all these mighty dead!

Sometimes a tall column rose up solitary in a waste land, as a great thought may spring from a soul ravaged by time and sorrow.

I meditated on these monuments at every hour and through all the incidents of the day. Sometimes, I watched the same sun which had shone down on the foundation of these cities now setting majestically over their ruins; soon afterwards, the moon rose between crumbling funeral urns into a cloudless sky, bathing the tombs in pallid light. Often in the faint, dream-wafting rays of that planet, I thought I saw the Spirit of Memory sitting pensive by my side.

But I grew weary of searching through graveyards, where too often I stirred up only the dust of a crime-ridden past.

I was anxious to see if living races had more virtue and less suffering to offer than those which had vanished. One day, as I was walking in a large city, I passed through a secluded and deserted courtyard behind a palace. There I noticed a statue pointing to a spot made famous by a certain sacrifice. I was struck by the stillness of the surroundings; only the wind moaned weakly around the tragic marble. Workmen were lying about indifferently at the foot of the statue or whistled as they hewed out stones. I asked them what the monument meant; some knew little indeed, while the others were totally oblivious of the catastrophe it commemorated. Nothing could indicate so vividly the true import of human events and the vanity of our existence. What has become of those figures whose fame was so widespread? Time has taken a step and the face of the earth has been made over.

In my travels I especially sought out artists and those inspired poets whose lyres glorify the gods and the joy of peoples who honor their laws, their religion, and their dead. These singers come of a divine race and possess the only sure power which heaven has granted earth. Their life is at once innocent and sublime. They speak like immortals or little children. They explain the laws of the universe and cannot themselves understand the most elementary concerns of life. They have marvelous intuitions of death and die with no consciousness of it, like new-born infants.

On the mountain peaks of Caledonia, the last bard[5] ever heard in those wildernesses sang me poems which had once consoled a hero in his old age. We were sitting on four stones overgrown with moss; at our feet ran a brook, and in the distance the roebuck strayed among the ruins of a tower, while from the seas the wind whistled in over the waste land of Cona. The Christian faith, itself a daughter of the lofty mountains, has now placed crosses over the monuments of Morven heroes and plucked the harp of David on the banks of the very stream where once the harp of Ossian sighed. Loving peace even as the divinities of Selma loved war, it now shepherds flocks where Fingal once joined battle and has strewn angels of peace amongst clouds once occupied by murderous phantoms.

Ancient, lovely Italy offered me its host of masterworks. With what reverent and poetic awe I wandered through those vast edifices consecrated to religion by the arts! What a labyrinth of columns! What a sequence of arches and vaults! How beautiful are the echoes circling round those domes like the rolling of waves in the ocean, like the murmur of winds in the forest or the voice of God in his temple! The architect seems to build the poet's thoughts and make them accessible to the senses.

And yet with all my effort what had I learned until then? I had discovered nothing stable among the ancients and nothing beautiful among the moderns. The past and present are imperfect statues—one, quite disfigured, drawn from the ruins of the ages, and the other still devoid of its future perfection.

But, my old friends, you who have lived so long in the wilderness, you especially will be surprised that I have not once spoken of the glories of nature in this story of my travels.

One day I climbed to the summit of Etna, that great volcano burning in the middle of an island. Above me, I saw the sun rising in the vast reaches of the horizon, while at my feet Sicily shrank to a point and the sea retreated into the distant spaces. In this vertical view of the picture the rivers seemed little more than lines traced on a map. But while on one side I observed this sight, on the other my eye plunged into the depths of Etna's crater, whose bowels I saw blazing between billows of black smoke.

A young man full of passion, sitting at the mouth of a volcano and weeping over mortal men whose dwellings he could barely distinguish far off below him—O revered elders! Such a creature is doubtless worthy only of your pity! But think what you may, such a

5. All references in this paragraph are to MacPherson's *Poems of Ossian* (1760–1763), which Chateaubriand knew in the Letourneur translation. MacPherson claimed to have discovered Gaelic (Erse) poems, including an epic *Fingal*, by a third-century blind bard Ossian, which MacPherson published in English translation. Though spurious, their popularity was immense throughout Europe. Caledonia here is Scotland; Cona and Morven are in that country; Selma is northern Ireland (near modern Belfast), where the fighting in *Fingal* takes place.

picture reveals my character and my whole being. Just so, throughout my life, I have had before my eyes an immense creation which I could barely discern, while a chasm yawned at my side.

As he uttered these last words René grew silent and soon sank into revery. Father Souël looked at him in surprise, while the blind and aged sachem, not hearing the young man's voice any more, did not know what to make of this silence.

René had fixed his eyes on a group of Indians gaily passing through the plain. Suddenly his countenance softened, and tears fell from his eyes.

"Happy Indians," he exclaimed, "oh, why can I not enjoy the peace which always goes with you! While my fruitless wanderings led me through so many lands, you, sitting quietly under your oaks, let the days slip by without counting them. Your needs were your only guide, and, far better than I, you have reached wisdom's goal through your play and your sleep—like children. Your soul may sometimes have been touched by the melancholy of extreme happiness, but you emerged soon enough from this fleeting sadness, and your eyes rose toward heaven, tenderly seeking the mysterious presence which takes pity on the poor Indian."

Here René's voice broke again, and the young man bowed his head. Chactas held his hands out in the shadows, and, touching his son's arm, he exclaimed, deeply moved, "My son! My dear son!" The ring of his voice drew René from his revery, and, blushing at his weakness, he begged his father to forgive him.

Then the aged Indian spoke thus: "My young friend, a heart such as yours cannot be placid; but you must try to temper your character, which has already brought you so much grief. Do not be surprised that you suffer more than others from the experiences of life; a great soul necessarily holds more sorrow than a little one. Go on with your story. You have taken us through part of Europe; now tell us about your own country. As you know, I have seen France and am deeply attached to it. I would like to hear of the great chief who has now passed on, and whose magnificent cabin[6] I once visited. My child, I live only for the past. An old man with his memories is like a decrepit oak in our woods; no longer able to adorn itself with its own foliage, it is obliged to cover its nakedness with foreign plants which have taken root on its ancient boughs."

Calmed by these words, René once more took up the story of his heart.

Alas, father, I cannot tell you about that great century, for I saw only the end of it as a child; it had already drawn to a close when I

6. Louis XIV and Versailles.

returned to my land. Never has a more astonishing, nor a more sudden change taken place in a people. From the loftiness of genius, from respect for religion and dignity in manners everything suddenly degenerated to cleverness and godlessness and corruption.

So it had been useless indeed to try to find something in my own country to calm this anxiety, this burning desire which pursues me everywhere. Studying the world had taught me nothing, and yet I had lost the freshness of innocence.

By her strange behavior, my sister seemed bent on increasing my gloom. She had left Paris a few days before my arrival, and when I wrote that I expected to join her, she hastened to dissuade me, claiming she did not know where her business might take her. How sadly I reflected on human affection. It cools in our presence and vanishes in our absence; in adversity it grows weak and in good fortune weaker still.

Soon I found myself lonelier in my native land than I had been on foreign soil. I was tempted to plunge for a time into a totally new environment which I could not understand and which did not understand me. My heart was not yet wasted by any kind of passion, and I sought to find someone to whom I could become attached. But I soon discovered that I was giving more of myself than I was receiving of others. It was neither lofty language nor deep feeling which the world asked of me. I was simply reducing my being to the level of society. Everywhere I was taken for an impractical dreamer. Ashamed of the role I was playing and increasingly repulsed by men and things, I finally decided to retire to some smaller community where I could live completely by myself.

At first I was happy enough in this secluded, independent life. Unknown by everyone, I could mingle with the crowd—that vast desert of men! Often I would sit in some lonely church, where I could spend hour after hour in meditation. I saw poor women prostrating themselves before the Almighty or sinners kneeling at the seat of penitence. None emerged from this retreat without a more serene expression, and the muffled noises drifting in from outside seemed like waves of passion or storms of the world subsiding at the foot of the Lord's temple. Mighty God, who from Thy solitude couldst see my tears falling in that holy shelter, Thou knowest how many times I threw myself at Thy feet, imploring Thee to relieve me of the weight of my existence or make over the old man within me! Ah, who has never felt a need of regeneration, of growing young in the waters of the spring and refreshing his soul in the fountain of life? Who does not sometimes feel himself crushed by the burden of his own corruption and incapable of anything great or noble or just!

When night had closed in I would start back to my retreat, pausing on the bridges to watch the sunset. As the great star kindled the mists

of the city, it seemed to swing slowly in a golden fluid like the pendulum of some clock of the ages. Then I retired with the night through a labyrinth of solitary streets. As I passed lights shining in the dwellings of men, I imagined myself among the scenes of sorrow and joy which they revealed, and I reflected that under all those roofs sheltering so many people, I had not a single friend. In the midst of these thoughts, the hour began tolling in measured cadence from the tower of the Gothic cathedral, and its message was taken up from church to church in a wide range of tones and distances. Alas!! Every hour in society lays open a grave and draws fresh tears.

But this life, which at first was so delightful, soon became intolerable. I grew weary of constantly repeating the same scenes and the same thoughts, and I began to search my soul to discover what I really sought. I did not know; but suddenly it occurred to me that I might be happy in the woods. Immediately I resolved to adopt a country exile where I could spend the rest of my days, for, though scarcely begun, my life had already consumed centuries.

I adopted this plan with the ardor typical of all my projects and left at once to retire into seclusion in some rustic cabin, just as previously I had left to travel around the world.

People accuse me of being unpredictable in my tastes, of being unable for long to cherish any single illusion. They consider me the victim of an imagination which plunges toward the end of all pleasures as though it suffered from their duration. They accuse me of forever overreaching the goal I can achieve. Alas! I am only in search of some unknown good, whose intuition pursues me relentessly. Am I to blame if everywhere I find limitations, if all that is finite I consider worthless? And yet, I feel that I love the monotony in the feelings of life, and, if I were still foolish enough to believe in happiness, I would seek it in an orderly existence.

Total solitude and the spectacle of nature soon brought me to a state almost impossible to describe. Practically bereft of relatives and friends on earth, and never having been in love, I was furiously driven by an excess of life. Sometimes I blushed suddenly and felt torrents of burning lava surging through my heart. Sometimes I would cry out involuntarily, and the night was disturbed both by my dreams and by sleepless cares. I felt I needed something to fill the vast emptiness of my existence. I went down into the valley and up on the mountain, calling, with all the strength of my desire, for the ideal creature of some future passion. I embraced her in the winds and thought I heard her in the river's moaning. Everything became this vision of my imagination—the stars in the skies and the very principle of life in the universe.

Nevertheless, this state of calm and anxiety, of poverty and wealth was not wholly without charm. One day I amused myself by strip-

ping the leaves from a willow branch, one by one, and throwing them into the stream, attaching a thought to each leaf as the current carried it off. A king in fear of losing his crown in a sudden revolution does not feel sharper pangs of anguish than did I, as I watched each peril threatening the remains of my bough, O frailty of mortal man! O childishness of the human heart, which never grows old! How infantile our haughty reason can become! And yet how many men attach their existence to such petty things as my willow leaves!

How can I describe the host of fleeting sensations I felt in my rambles? The echoes of passion in the emptiness of a lonely heart are like the murmurings of wind and water in the silence of the wilderness—they offer their joy, but cannot be portrayed.

Autumn came upon me in the midst of this uncertainty, and I welcomed the stormy months with exhilaration. Sometimes I wished I were one of those warriors who wander amongst winds, clouds, and phantoms, while at other times I was envious even of the shepherd's lot, as I watched him warming his hands by the humble brushwood fire he had built in a corner of the woods, I listened to his melancholy airs and remembered that in every land the natural song of man is sad, even when it renders happiness. Our heart is a defective instrument, a lyre with several chords missing, which forces us to express our joyful moods in notes meant for lamentation.

During the day I roamed the great heath with its forests in the distance. How little I needed to wander off in revery—a dry leaf blown before me by the wind, a cabin with smoke drifting up through the bare tree tops, the moss trembling in the north wind on the trunk of an oak, an isolated rock, or a lonely pond where the withered reed whispered . . . The solitary steeple far off in the valley often drew my attention. Many times, too, my eyes followed birds of passage as they flew overhead. I imagined the unknown shores and distant climes for which they were bound—and how I would have loved to be on their wings! A deep intuition tormented me; I felt that I was no more than a traveler myself, but a voice from heaven seemed to be telling me, "Man, the season for thy migration is not yet come; wait for the wind of death to spring up, then wilt thou spread thy wings and fly toward those unexplored realms for which thy heart longs."

Rise swiftly, coveted storms, coming to bear me off to the spaces of another life! This was my plea, as I plunged ahead with great strides, my face all aflame and the wind whistling through my hair, feeling neither rain nor frost, bewitched, tormented, and virtually possessed by the demon of my heart.

At night, when the fierce wind shook my hut and the rain fell in torrents on my roof, as I looked out through my window and saw the moon furrowing the thick clouds like a pallid vessel ploughing through the waves, it seemed to me that life grew so strong in the depths of

my heart that I had the power to create worlds. Ah, if only I could have shared with someone else the delight I felt! O Lord, if only Thou hadst given me a woman after my heart's desire, if Thou hadst drawn from my side an Eve, as Thou didst once for our first father, and brought her to me by the hand . . . Heavenly beauty! I would have knelt down before you, and then, clasping you in my arms, I would have begged the Eternal Being to grant you the rest of my life!

Alas! I was alone, alone in the world! A mysterious apathy gradually took hold of my body. My aversion for life, which I had felt as a child, was returning with renewed intensity. Soon my heart supplied no more nourishment for my thought, and I was aware of my existence only in a deep sense of weariness.

For some time I struggled against my malady, but only halfheartedly, with no firm will to conquer it. Finally, unable to find any cure for this strange wound of my heart, which was nowhere and everywhere, I resolved to give up my life.

Priest of the Almighty, now listening to my story, forgive this poor creature whom Heaven had almost stripped of his reason. I was imbued with faith, and I reasoned like a sinner; my heart loved God, and my mind knew Him not. My actions, my words, my feelings, my thoughts were nothing but contradictions, enigmas, and lies. But does man always know what he wishes, and is he always sure of what he thinks?

Affection, society, and seclusion, everything was slipping away from me at once. I had tried everything, and everything had proved disastrous. Rejected by the world and abandoned by Amelia, what had I left now that solitude had failed me? It was the last support which I had hoped could save me, and now I felt it too giving way and dropping into the abyss!

Having decided to rid myself of life's burden, I now resolved to use the full consciousness of my mind in committing this desperate act. Nothing made it necessary to take action quickly. I did not set a definite time for my death, so that I might savor the final moments of my existence in long, full draughts and gather all my strength, like the men of antiquity, to feel my soul escaping.

I felt obliged, however, to make arrangements about my worldly goods and had to write to Amelia. A few complaints escaped me concerning her neglect, and doubtless I let her sense the tenderness which overcame my heart as I wrote. Nevertheless, I thought I had succeeded in concealing my secret; but my sister was accustomed to reading into the recesses of my heart, and she guessed it at once. She was alarmed at the restrained tone of my letter and at my questions about business matters, which had never before concerned me. Instead of answering she came to see me at once with no advance warning.

To realize how bitter my sorrow was later to be and how delighted I was now to see Amelia again, you must understand that she was

the only person in the world I had ever loved, and all my feelings coverged in her with the sweetness of my childhood memories. And so I welcomed Amelia with a kind of ecstasy in my heart. It had been so long since I had found someone who could understand me and to whom I could reveal my soul!

Throwing herself in my arms, Amelia said to me: "How ungrateful! You want to die and your sister is still alive! You doubt her heart! Don't explain and don't apologize, I know everything; I guessed your intention as though I had been with you. Do you suppose I can be misled, I who watched the first stirrings of your heart? So this is your unhappy character, your dislikes and injustices! Swear to me, while I press you to my heart, swear that this is the last time you will give in to your foolishness; make an oath never to try to take your life again."

As she uttered these words, Amelia looked at me compassionately, tenderly, covering my brow with kisses, she was almost a mother, she was something more tender. Alas! Once again my heart opened out to life's every joy. Like a child, I had only to be consoled, and I quickly surrendered to Amelia's influence. She insisted on a solemn oath, and I readily swore it, not suspecting that I could ever again be unhappy.

Thus we spent more than a month getting used to the delight of being together again. When, instead of finding myself alone in the morning. I heard my sister's voice, I felt a thrill of joy and contentment. Amelia had received some divine attribute from nature. Her soul had the same innocent grace as her body; her feelings were surpassingly gentle, and in her manner there was nothing but softness and a certain dreamy quality. It seemed as though her heart, her thought, and her voice were all sighing in harmony. From her womanly side came her shyness and love, while her purity and melody were angelic.

But the time had come when I was to atone for all my erratic ways. In my madness I had gone so far as to hope some calamity would strike me, so that I might at least have some real reason for suffering—it was a terrible wish, which God in His anger has granted all too well.

O my friends, what am I about to reveal to you! See how these tears flow from my eyes. Can I even . . . Only a few days ago nothing could have torn this secret from me . . . But now, it is all over!

Still, O revered elders, let this story be buried in silence forever; remember that it was meant to be told only under this tree in the wilderness.

Winter was drawing to a close, when I became aware that Amelia was losing her health and repose, even as she was beginning to restore them to me. She was growing thin, her eyes became hollow, her

manner listless, and her voice unsteady. People or solitude, my absence or presence, night or day—everything frightened her. Involuntary sighs would die on her lips. Sometimes long distances would not tire her out, and at other times she could barely move about. She would take up her work and set it down, open a book and find it impossible to read, begin a sentence and not finish it, and then she would suddenly burst into tears and go off to pray.

I tried vainly to discover her secret. When I pressed her in my arms and questioned her, she smilingly answered that she was like myself—she did not know what was wrong with her.

Thus three months went by, and each day her state grew worse. The source of her tears seemed to be a mysterious correspondence she was having, for she appeared calmer or more disturbed according to the letters she received. Finally one morning as the time for breakfast had passed, I went up to her rooms. I knocked, but received no answer. I pushed the door ajar; no one was in the room. On the mantel there was an envelope addressed to me. Snatching it up with trembling fingers, I tore it open and read this letter, which will remain with me forever to discourage any possible feeling of joy.

TO RENÉ:

"My brother, Heaven bears me witness that I would give up my life a thousand times to spare you one moment's grief. But miserable as I am, I can do nothing to make you happy. Forgive me, then, for stealing away from you as though I were guilty. I could never have resisted your pleas, and yet I had to leave. . . . Lord, have pity on me!

"You know, René, that the religious life has always attracted me. Now the time has come to heed Heaven's call. Only why have I waited so long? God is punishing me for it. It was for you alone that I remained in the world . . . But forgive me; I am upset by the sadness of having to leave you.

"Dear brother, it is only now that I feel the full need of those retreats which I have heard you condemn so often. There are certain sorrows which separate us from men forever; were it not for such shelters, what would become of some unfortunate women! . . . I am convinced that you, too, would find rest in these religious havens, for the world has nothing to offer which is worthy of you.

"I shall not remind you of your oath; I know how reliable your word is. You have sworn it, and you will go on living for my sake. Is there anything more pitiful than thinking constantly of suicide? For a man of your character it is easy to die. Believe me, it is far more difficult to live.

"But, my brother, you must give up this solitude at once; it is not good for you. Try to find some kind of occupation. I realize that you

bitterly despise the usual necessity of 'becoming established' in France. But you must not scorn all the experience and wisdom of our fathers. Dear René, it is better to resemble ordinary men a little more and be a little less miserable.

"Perhaps you will find relief from your cares in marriage. A wife and children would take up your days. And what woman would not try to make you happy! The ardor of your soul, the beauty of your thought, your noble, passionate air, that proud and tender expression in your eyes, everything would assure you of her love and loyalty. Ah, how joyfully she would clasp you in her arms and press you to her heart! How her eyes and her thoughts would always be fixed on you to shield you from the slightest pain! In your presence she would become all love and innocence; you would feel that you had found a sister again.

"I am leaving for the convent of B——. It is a cloister built by the edge of the sea and wholly suited to the state of my soul. At night, from within my cell, I shall hear the murmur of the waves as they lap against the convent walls, I shall dream of those walks we once took through the woods, when we fancied we heard the sound of the sea in the tops of the waving pines. Beloved childhood friend, will I ever see you again? Though hardly older than you, I once rocked you in your cradle. Many times we used to sleep together. Ah, if we might one day be together again in the same tomb! But no, I must sleep alone beneath the icy marble of that sanctuary where girls who have never known love rest in eternal peace.

"I do not know whether you will succeed in reading these lines, blurred as they are by my tears. After all, sweet friend, a little sooner or a little later, would we not have had to part? Need I speak of the uncertainty and emptiness of life? You remember young M—— whose ship was lost off the island of Mauritius.[7] When you received his last letter a few months after his death, his earthly remains did not even exist any more, and just when you began to mourn for him in Europe, others in the Indies were ending their mourning. What can man be, then, when his memory perishes so quickly! When some of his friends learn of his death, others are already consoled! Tell me, dear, beloved René, will my memory, too, vanish so quickly from your heart? O my brother, I tear myself away from you in earthly time only that we may not be parted in eternity.

AMELIA

"P.S. I am enclosing the deed of my worldly goods. I hope you will not reject this token of my affection."

Had lightning struck at my feet I could not have been seized by greater panic. What secret was Amelia hiding from me? Who was

7. In the Indian Ocean.

forcing her into the religious life so suddenly? And had she reconciled me to life through her tender affection only to abandon me now so abruptly? Oh, why had she come back to turn me aside from my plan? A feeling of pity had brought her back to me, but now, tired of her disagreeable duty, she was impatiently leaving me to my misery, though I had no one but her in all the world. People imagine they have done something wonderful when they have kept a man from death! Such were my sad reflections. Then, examining my own feelings, I said, "Ungrateful Amelia, if you were in my place, if, like myself, you were lost in the void of your existence, ah, you would not be forsaken by your brother!"

And yet, as I reread the letter, I felt in its tone something so sad, so tender, that my heart melted completely. Suddenly I had a thought which gave me hope. It occurred to me that Amelia might have fallen in love with a man, and dared not admit it. This suspicion seemed to explain her melancholy, her mysterious correspondence, and the passionate tone pervading her letter. I wrote to her at once, begging her to open her heart to me. Her answer was not long in coming, but revealed nothing about her secret. She wrote only that she had obtained dispensation from the novitiate and was about to pronounce her vows.

I was exasperated by Amelia's stubbornness, by the emigma of her words, and her lack of confidence in my affection. After hesitating a little about what I would do next, I decided to go to B—— to attempt one last effort to win back my sister. On my way I had to pass through the region where I was brought up. When I caught sight of the woods where I had spent the only happy moments of my life I could not hold back my tears, and I found it impossible to resist the temptation of bidding them a last farewell.

My elder brother had sold the family heritage, and the new owner did not live on the estate. I went up to the château through a long lane of pines. Walking across the deserted courtyard I stopped to gaze at the closed or partly broken windows, the thistle growing at the foot of the walls, the leaves strewn over the threshold of the doors, and that lonely stone stairway where so often I had seen my father and his faithful servants. The steps were already covered with moss, and yellow stock grew between the loose, shaky stones. A new caretaker brusquely opened the doors for me. When I hesitated in crossing the threshold, the fellow exclaimed: "Well, are you going to do what that strange woman did who was here a few days ago? She fainted as she was about to come in, and I had to carry her back to her carriage." It was easy enough for me to recognize the "strange woman" who, like myself, had come back to this spot to find memories and tears!

Drying my eyes with a handkerchief I entered the dwelling of my ancestors. I paced through the resounding halls where nothing could

be heard but the beat of my foosteps. The chambers were barely lit by a faint glimmer filtering in through the closed shutters. First I went to see the room where my mother had given her life to bring me into the world, then the room to which my father used to retire, after that the one where I had slept in my cradle, and finally the one where my sister had received my first confessions into the bosom of her love. Everywhere the rooms were neglected, and spiders spun their webs in the abandoned beds. I left the château abruptly and strode quickly away, never daring to turn my head. How sweet, but how fleeting, are those moments spent together by brothers and sisters in their younger years under the wing of their aged parents! The family of man endures but a day, and then God's breath scatters it away like smoke. The son barely knows the father or the father the son, the brother the sister or the sister the brother! The oak sees its acorns take root all around it; it is not so with the children of men!

Arriving at B—— I was taken to the convent, where I asked for an opportunity to speak with my sister. I was told she could not see anybody. I wrote to her, and she replied that, as she was about to be consecrated to God, she was not permitted to turn her thought to the world, and if I loved her, I would avoid burdening her with my sorrow. To this she added: "However, if you plan to appear at the altar on the day of my profession, be pleased to serve as my father. It is the only role worthy of your courage, and the only fitting one for our affection and my peace of mind."

This cold determination resisting my burning affection threw me into a violent rage. There were times when I was about to return where I had come from; then, again, I wanted to stay for the sole purpose of disturbing the sacrifice. Hell even goaded me on with the thought of stabbing myself in the church and mingling my last sighs with the vows tearing my sister away from me. The mother superior of the convent sent word that a bench had been prepared for me in the sanctuary and invited me to attend the ceremony, which was to take place the very next day.

At daybreak I heard the first sounds of the bells . . . About ten o'clock I dragged myself to the convent in a deathlike stupor. Nothing can ever again be tragic to a man who has witnessed such a spectacle, nor can anything ever again be painful for one who has lived through it. The church was filled with a huge throng. I was led to the bench in the sanctuary, and immediately I fell on my knees, practically unconscious of where I was or what I intended to do. The priest was already at the altar. Suddenly the mysterious grille swung open and Amelia came forward resplendent in all the finery of the world. So beautiful was she, so divinely radiant her countenance, that she brought a gasp of surprise and admiration from the onlookers. Overcome by the glorious sorrow of her saintly figure and crushed

by the grandeur of religion, I saw all my plans of violence crumbling. My strength left me. I felt myself bound by an all-powerful hand, and, instead of blasphemy and threats, I could find in my heart only profound adoration and sighs of humility.

Amelia took her place beneath a canopy, and the sacrifice began by the light of torches amid flowers and aromas which lent their charm to this great renunciation. At the offertory the priest put off all his ornaments, keeping only a linen tunic; then, mounting the pulpit, he described in a simple, moving discourse the joy of the virgin who is consecrated to the Lord. As he pronounced the words, "She appeared like the incense consumed in the fire," deep calm and heavenly fragrances seemed to spread through the audience. It was as if the mystic dove had spread its wings to offer its shelter, while angels seemed to hover over the altar and fly back toward heaven with crowns and perfumes.

Ending his discourse, the priest donned his vestments once more and went on with the sacrifice. Sustained by two young sisters, Amelia knelt down on the bottom step of the altar. Then someone came to get me in order that I might fulfill my role as a father. At the sound of my faltering steps in the sanctuary Amelia was about to collapse. I was placed beside the priest for I was to offer him the scissors. At the moment once again I suddenly felt my passion flame up within me. I was about to burst out in fury, when Amelia recovered her courage and darted such a sad and reproachful glance at me that I was transfixed. Religion was triumphant. Taking advantage of my confusion, Amelia boldly brought her head forward; under the holy blades her magnificent tresses fell in every direction. Her worldly ornaments were replaced by a long muslin robe, which sacrificed none of her appeal. The cares of her brow vanished under a linen headband, and the mysterious veil, that two-fold symbol of virginity and religion, was placed on her shorn head. Never had she appeared so beautiful. The penitent's eye was fixed on the dust of the world, while her soul was already in heaven.

However, Amelia had not yet pronounced her vows, and in order to die for the world she had to pass through the tomb. She therefore lay down on the marble slab, and over her was spread a pall, while a torch burned at each of the four corners. With his stole round his neck and his book in his hand, the priest began the service for the dead. The young virgins took it up. O joys of religion, you are powerful indeed, but oh, how terrible! I was obliged to kneel beside this mournful sight. Suddenly a confused murmur emerged from under the shroud, and as I leaned over, my ears were struck by these dreadful words, audible only to myself: "Merciful God, let me never again rise from this deathbed, and may Thy blessings be lavished on my brother, who has never shared my forbidden passion!"

With these words escaping from the bier the horrible truth suddenly grew clear, and I lost control of my senses. Falling across the death sheet I pressed my sister in my arms and cried out: "Chaste spouse of Christ, receive this last embrace through the chill of death and the depths of eternity which already have parted you from your brother!"

This impulse, this cry, and these tears disturbed the ceremony. The priest interrupted himself, the sisters shut the grille, the crowd pushed forward toward the altar, and I was carried away unconscious. Surely I was not grateful to those who revived me! Opening my eyes, I learned that the sacrifice had been consummated, and my sister had been taken with a violent fever. She sent word begging me not to try to see her again. O misery of my life—a sister fearing to talk to her brother, and a brother afraid of having his sister hear his voice! I left the convent as though it were the place of atonement which prepares us in flames for the blessed life, and where all has been lost, as it is in hell—save hope.

There is strength in our soul to sustain us in our own misfortunes, but to become the involuntary cause of someone else's misfortune is completely unbearable. Now that I understood my sister's grief, I imagined how she must have suffered. Several things which I had been unable to understand now became clear—the joy tinged with sadness which my sister had felt when I was leaving on my travels, the efforts she made to avoid me when I had returned, and at the same time, the weakness which kept her from entering a convent for so long. In her sorrow she must have tried to convince herself that she could yet be cured! As for the secret correspondence which had so deceived me—that was apparently made up of her plans to retire from the world and her arrangements for dispensation from the novitiate, as well as the transfer of her property to me.

O my friends, now I knew what it meant to shed tears for grief which was far from imaginary! My emotions, which had been vague for so long, now seized avidly upon this, its first prey. I even felt a kind of unexpected satisfaction in the fullness of my anguish, and I became aware, with a sense of hidden joy, that sorrow is not a feeling which consumes itself like pleasure.

I had wanted to withdraw from the world before receiving the Almighty's command—that was a great crime. God had sent me Amelia both to save and to punish me. Thus does every guilty thought and forbidden act bring on disorder and sorrow. Amelia had begged me to continue living, and I owed it to her not to aggravate her woes. Besides—how strange it seems!—now that my sorrows were real, I no longer wished to die. My grief had become an immediate concern occupying my every moment, so thoroughly is my heart molded of weariness and misery!

And so I suddenly settled on another plan of action; I determined to leave Europe and go to America. At that very time, in the port of B——, they were fitting out a fleet of ships bound for Louisiana. I made arrangements with one of the captains, wrote to Amelia about my plan, and prepared to leave.

My sister had been at the gates of death, but God had reserved for her the supreme crown of virgins and chose not to call her to Him so soon. Her trials on earth were prolonged. Coming down once again into life's painful path she went courageously forward as a heroine in the face of affliction; bent under the cross she saw in her struggles the certainty of triumph and overwhelming glory in her overwhelming woe.

The sale to my brother of what little property I still had, the long preparations of the convoy, and unfavorable winds, all held me in port a long time. Each morning I would go for news of Amelia, and always I returned with new reasons for weeping and admiring.

I wandered endlessly about the convent at the edge of the sea. Often I would notice, in a little grilled window overlooking the deserted beach, a nun sitting in a pensive attitude. She was meditating as she gazed out over the broad ocean, where some vessel could be seen sailing toward the ends of the earth. Several times, in the moonlight, I again saw the nun at the bars of the same window. With the star of night shining down upon her, she was contemplating the sea, listening, it seemed, to the sound of the waves breaking sadly on the lonely shores.

I can still hear the bell in the silence of the night calling the sisters to vigils and prayer. As it tolled in slow rhythm and the virgins moved silently toward the altar of the Almighty, I hastened to the convent. There, alone at the foot of the walls, I would listen in reverent rapture to the last strains of the hymns, as they blended beneath the temple vaults with the gentle murmur of the waves.

I do not know why all these things, which should have intensified my anguish, served instead to soften its sting. My tears were less bitter when I shed them out there on those rocks in the wind. My very grief, which was so rare, bore within itself some remedy; for there is joy in the uncommon, even if it is an uncommon calamity. This almost gave me hope that my sister too might become less miserable.

A letter I received from her before my departure seemed to confirm this feeling. Amelia pitied me tenderly for my sorrow, and assured me that time was healing her wound. "I have not given up hoping for happiness," she wrote. "The very immensity of my sacrifice calms me somewhat, now that it is all over. The simplicity of my companions, the purity of their vows, the regularity of their life, everything spreads its healing balm over my days. When I hear the storms rag-

ing and the sea bird beating its wings at my window, I, poor dove of heaven, reflect on my joy in finding a shelter from the tempest. Here is the holy mountain, the lofty summit where we hear the last faint murmurs of the earth and the opening harmonies of heaven. It is here that religion gently beguiles a tender soul. For the most violent passion it substitutes a kind of burning chastity in which lover and virgin are at one. It purifies every sigh, it makes the ephemeral flame inviolate, and it blends its divine calm and innocence with the remains of confusion and worldly joy in a heart seeking rest and a life seeking solitude."

I do not know what heaven still holds in store for me, or whether it meant to warn me that everywhere my steps would be harried by storms. The order was given for our fleet to set sail; as the sun began sinking, several vessels had already weighed anchor. I made arrangements to spend the last night on shore writing my farewell letter to Amelia. Around midnight, as my attention was absorbed in my thoughts and tears moistened my paper, my ear was suddenly drawn to the wailing of the winds. As I listened, cannon shots of alarm could be heard through the storm, together with the knell tolling in the convent. I plunged out to the shore where all was deserted and nothing could be heard but the roar of the surf. I sat down on a rock. On one side I could see the vast expanse of shimmering waves, and on the other the somber walls of the convent vaguely reaching up and fading away in the skies. A dim light shone out from the grilled window. O my Amelia! Was it you, on your knees at the foot of the cross, praying to the God of Tempests to spare your unhappy brother? Storm on the waves, and calm in your retreat; men shattered on the reefs before an unshakeable haven; infinity on the other side of a cell wall; the tossing lights of ships, and the motionless beacon of the convent; the uncertain lot of the seaman, and the vestal's vision in a single day of all the days of her life; and yet, O Amelia, a soul such as yours, stormy as the ocean; a catastrophe more dreadful than the mariner's—this whole picture is still deeply engraved in my memory.

Sun of this new sky, now witness to my tears, echoes of American shores repeating these accents, it was on the morrow of that terrible night that I leaned over the ship's stern and watched my native land disappearing forever! Long I stood there and gazed for the last time at the trees of my country swaying on the shore and the height of the convent sinking over the horizon.

As René came to the end of his story he drew a sheet of paper from his breast and gave it to Father Souël, then, throwing himself into the arms of Chactas and stifling his sobs, he waited as the missionary read through the letter.

It came from the mother superior of B——, and described the last

hours in the life of Sister Amelia of Mercy, who had died a victim of her zeal and charity, while caring for companions stricken by a contagious disease. The entire community was inconsolable, and Amelia was regarded as a saint. The mother superior added that in her thirty years as head of the house she had never seen a sister so gentle and calm in disposition and none so happy to be relieved of the world's tribulations.

Chactas clasped René in his arms; the old man was weeping. "My child," he said to his son, "how I wish Father Aubry[8] were here. He could draw from the depths of his heart a strange calm which could pacify storms and yet seemed akin to them. He was the moon on a stormy night. The moving clouds are powerless to carry it along in their flight; pure and unperturbed, it advances serenely above them. Alas, as for me, everything disturbs me and carries me away!"

Until now Father Souël had listened to René's story with a severe countenance and without uttering a word. Although inwardly warm-hearted, he presented to the world an inflexible character. It was the sachem's tenderness which made him break his silence.

"Nothing," he began, "nothing in your story deserves the pity you are now being shown. I see a young man infatuated with illusions, satisfied with nothing, withdrawn from the burdens of society, and wrapped up in idle dreams. A man is not superior, sir, because he sees the world in a dismal light. Only those of limited vision can hate men and life. Look a little farther and you will soon be convinced that all those griefs about which you complain are absolutely nothing. Why, what a shame not to be able to think of the only real misfortune in your life without having a blush! All the purity, all the virtue and faith, and all the crowns of a saint can scarcely make the very idea of your troubles tolerable. Your sister has atoned for her sin, but if I must speak frankly, I fear that through some terrible justice, that confession, emerging from the depths of the tomb, has in turn stirred up your own soul. What do you do all alone in the woods using up your days and neglecting all your duties? You will tell me that saints have retired to the wilderness. Yes, but they were there weeping and subduing their passions, while you seem to be wasting your time inflaming your own. Presumptuous youth, you thought man sufficient unto himself. Know now that solitude is bad for the man who does not live with God. It increases the soul's power while robbing it at the same time of every opportunity to find expression. Whoever has been endowed with talent must devote it to serving his fellow men, for if he does not make use of it, he is first punished by an inner misery, and sooner or later Heaven visits on him a fearful retribution."

Disturbed and humiliated by these words, René raised his head

8. The missionary in *Atala*, who shelters the two Indian lovers. It is Aubry who with Chactas buries Atala, after she commits suicide.

from the bosom of Chactas. The blind sachem began to smile, and this smile of the lips, unrelated as it was to the expression in his eye, seemed to possess some mysterious heavenly quality. "My son," said the old man who had once loved Atala, "he speaks severely to both of us; he is reprimanding the old man and the young, and he is right. Yes, you must give up this strange life, which holds nothing but care. Happiness can be found only in the common paths.

"One day the Meschacebe, while yet rather close to its source, grew weary of being only a limpid stream. It called for snows from the mountains, waters from the rivers, and rains from the tempests, and it overran its banks and laid waste its lovely forests. At first the haughty stream applauded its own power. But soon, seeing how everything grew barren along its path and how it now flowed abandoned in its solitude with its waters always troubled, it longed once again for the humble bed which nature had prepared for it, and it pined for the birds and the flowers, the trees and the streams which were once its modest companions along its peaceful course."

Chactas grew silent, and off in the reeds of the Meschacebe the flamingo's call could be heard announcing a storm for the middle of the day. The three friends started back toward their cabins. René walked silently between the missionary, who was praying, and the blind sachem, who kept feeling his way. It is said that, encouraged by the two elders, René returned to his wife, but still found no happiness. Soon afterwards, along with Chactas and Father Souël, he perished in the massacres of the French and Natchez in Louisiana. They still point out a rock where he would go off and sit in the setting sun.

HEINRICH HEINE

1797–1856

In his haunting lyrics of love and longing, Heinrich Heine brought to near-perfection a poetic mode based importantly on the power of the unstated. Born to German parents in Düsseldorf, at the time occupied by the French, Heine was from his early manhood largely dependent on his rich banker uncle Salomon, who lived in Hamburg. He proposed to and was rejected by two of Salomon's daughters; he failed in the business that Salomon financed for him; after studying law at Salomon's expense (and receiving a degree in 1825), he found it impossible to make a career as a lawyer. His university studies, at Bonn, Göttingen, and Berlin, had interested him in literature; in the late 1820s, he decided to pursue a career as a writer. Disillusionment with German nationalism and enthusiasm for the July Revolution of 1830 in France caused him to move to Paris (1831), where he worked as correspondent for German newspapers. Beginning in 1834, he lived with Eugenie Mirat (referred to in his poetry as "Mathilde"), an uneducated French-

woman whom he married in 1841. His uncle died in 1844, leaving him a small pension on condition that Heine suppress a large portion of his memoirs. After 1848, he remained bedridden as a result of spinal paralysis, but he continued to write until the very end of his life.

Most famous as a lyric poet, Heine also wrote drama, narrative poetry, political commentary, and literary criticism. Many of his lyrics were set to music, becoming extremely well-known as songs. Typically, these lyrics adopt simple diction and metrical patterns often taken from traditional ballads. They do not announce grandly important themes; they work largely by the power of suggestion. Frequently they reiterate the characteristic Romantic desire for an unattainable Other: the northern spruce tree's dream of a tropical palm; the young man's love for a maiden who, more or less at random, marries someone else; the bondsman pining toward death as he gazes at the Sultan's daughter; the boatman lured to destruction by "turbulent love" for the "wondrous fair" Loreley. The poet conveys the emotional ambiguity of love: physical union duplicates the snake's embrace of Laocoön; delight in a maiden implies rejection of all else—"The rose, the lily, the sun and the dove."

Dark undertones thus echo in even the most deceptively naïve of Heine's poems, and his later work becomes increasingly somber. He takes up directly the actual and potential political upheavals of nineteenth-century Europe, envisioning a horde of hungry rats that sweeps over bourgeois society or creating a myth of supernatural weavers weaving Germany's doom. He writes of death—of the longing for death as ultimate escape, of the horror of death conceived as the end to all life's possibilities. He expresses his sense of alienation as an exile in France, imagining the pain of leaving his wife to make her way in a corrupt society more dreadful than any of nature's violence. Always, whether he writes of politics or of his personal situation or of imagined happenings, he conveys, like so many of his European and English contemporaries, the high importance of the emotional life. Although his political awareness reminds him—and he reminds his readers—that actions have consequences, he insists always that feelings provide the richest mode of insight into the meanings of action. His fable of the rats exemplifies his capacity to generate complicated emotional responses in his readers (the hungry rats are scary, the well-fed rats contemptible in their obtuseness; we are left with no easy target for sympathy), a capacity equally manifest in the love lyrics.

Heine has been the subject of a good deal of criticism in English, notably including S. S. Prawer, *Heine the Tragic Satirist* (1961), and Jeffrey L. Sammons, *Heinrich Heine, The Elusive Poet* (1969). An accessible biography for the general reader is Louis Untermeyer, *Heine* (1937).

The Rose, the Lily, the Sun and the Dove[1]

The rose, the lily, the sun and the dove,
I loved them all once in the rapture of love.
I love them no more, for my sole delight
Is a maiden so slight, so bright and so white,
Who, being herself the source of love,
Is rose and lily and sun and dove.

A Spruce Is Standing Lonely[2]

A spruce is standing lonely
in the North on a barren height.
He drowses; ice and snowflakes
wrap him in a blanket of white.

He dreams about a palm tree
in a distant, eastern land,
that languishes lonely and silent
upon the scorching sand.

A Young Man Loves a Maiden[3]

A young man loves a maiden
Whose heart for another sighed;
This other loves another
Who then becomes his bride.

The maiden takes the first man
Who happens to come her way
Just out of spite and anger;
The youth is left in dismay.

It is an old old story
And yet it's always new;
And to whomever it happens
't will break his heart in two.

1. Translated by P. G. L. Webb. 2. Translated by Max Knight and Joseph Fabry.
3. Translated by Ernst Feise.

Loreley[4]

I do not know what haunts me,
What saddened my mind all day;
An age-old tale confounds me,
A spell I cannot allay.

The air is cool and in twilight
The Rhine's dark waters flow;
The peak of the mountain in highlight
Reflects the evening glow.

There sits a lovely maiden
Above, so wondrous fair,
With shining jewels laden,
She combs her golden hair.

It falls through her comb in a shower,
And over the valley rings
A song of mysterious power
That lovely maiden sings.

The boatman in his small skiff is
Seized by turbulent love,
No longer he marks where the cliff is,
He looks to the mountain above.

I think the waves must fling him
Against the reefs nearby,
And that did with her singing
The lovely Loreley.

My Beauty, My Love, You Have Bound Me[5]

My beauty, my love, you have bound me
As only you can do.
Wrap your arms and legs around me,
And your agile body too.

And now in mighty embraces
Entwining and holding on
The most beautiful serpent faces
The happiest Laocoön.[6]

4. Translated by Ernst Feise. The Loreley was a siren of the river Rhine who was believed to have lured many boatsmen to their destruction. As set to music by Silcher in 1837, this has become one of the most popular of German songs. 5. Translated by Meno Spann. 6. A Greek mythological figure (See, in our selections, *Aeneid* II 55ff, 265ff.), best known through an ancient statue which shows him entangled in a desperate struggle with two monstrous serpents.

The Silesian Weavers[7]

In gloomy eyes there wells no tear.
Grinding their teeth, they are sitting here:
"Germany, your shroud's on our loom;
And in it we weave the threefold doom.
We weave; we weave.

"Doomed be the God who was deaf to our prayer
In Winter's cold and hunger's despair.
All in vain we hoped and bided;
He only mocked us, hoaxed, derided—
We weave; we weave.

"Doomed be the king, the rich man's king,[8]
Who would not be moved by our suffering,
Who tore the last coin out of our hands,
And let us be shot by his blood-thirsty bands—
We weave; we weave.

"Doomed be the fatherland, false name,
Where nothing thrives but disgrace and shame,
Where flowers are crushed before they unfold,
Where the worm is quickened by rot and mold—
We weave; we weave.

"The loom is creaking, the shuttle flies;
Nor night nor day do we close our eyes.
Old Germany, your shroud's on our loom,
And in it we weave the threefold doom;
We weave; we weave!"

The Asra[9]

Daily went the Sultan's beauteous
Daughter walking for her pleasure
In the evening at the fountain
Where the splashing waters whiten.

7. Translated by Aaron Kramer. Silesia was a province of the kingdom of Prussia in northeast Germany, and is now divided between Poland and Czechoslovakia. This poem was occasioned by violent uprisings of weavers protesting intolerable working conditions in the province of Silesia during June 1844. 8. Friedrich Wilhelm IV (1795–1861). Heine's poem is prophetic: in 1848 the king, though not deposed, was forced by revolution to grant a constitution to Prussia.
9. Translated by Ernst Feise.

Daily stood the youthful bondsman
In the evening at the fountain
Where the splashing waters whiten,
Daily he grew pale and paler.

Then one evening stepped the princess
Up to him with sudden questions:
"You must tell me what your name is,
What your country is, your kinfolk."

And the bondsman said: "Mohamet
Is my name, I am from Yemen,
And my kinsmen are the Asra,
They who die when love befalls them."

Babylonian Sorrows[1]

Death calls me—Sweet, it might be good
If I could leave you in some wood,
Some forest where the firs are high,
Where vultures nest, and wild wolves cry,
And the savage sow, with dreadful roar,
Calls to her mate, the great blonde boar.

Death calls—still better would it be
To leave you on the open sea,
My wife—my child—it would be kind,
Although the maniac Northpole wind
Lashes the waves there, and out of the deep
The monstrous things that lay asleep,
The shark and crocodile, arise
With open jaws and murderous eyes—
Believe me, Mathild, my wife, my child,
Not half so fearful is the wild,
Avenging sea, or the sulking wood,
As this our present neighborhood!
Fierce though the wolf and the vulture be,
The shark, and other beasts of the sea:
There are monsters of far less virtue and pity
In Paris, the world's bright capital-city,
City of Loveliness, laughter and revels,

1. Translated by Aaron Kramer. The title alludes to the Babylonian captivity of the Old Testament Israelites; Paris is implicitly compared to the corrupt city of Babylon.

The Hell of angels, Paradise of devils—
To think that you'll be left behind
In Paris, is driving me out of my mind!
Black flies are buzzing around my bed;
They seat themselves on top of my head,
On my nose and brow. That pesky race—
There's more than one with a human face,
But some of them are especially odd:
They've elephant-trunks like the Hindu god . . .
Inside my brain there's a tumult and cracking;
I think it is a box they're packing,
And my reason journeys off—alr woe!—
Before it is time for me to go.

How Slowly Time, the Loathsome Snail[2]

How slowly Time, the loathsome snail,
Keeps crawling in its slimy trace!
But I, meanwhile, quite motionless,
Must bide here in this selfsame place.

No ray of sun, no gleam of hope
Will fall into my darkened room;
I know I'll trade this baneful cell
For nothing but the churchyard tomb.

Perhaps I have died long ago;
And only spooks may be those vain
Phantasms, pageants, which at night
In wild array storm through my brain.

Or afterwalkers they could be,
Old pagan gods, an ilk of Hell;
They love to choose their rousting place
In a dead poet's empty skull.—

Then sometimes would seek to record
At dawn the poet's mummied hand
Those awesome lurid orgia[3]
Of specters in nocturnal band.

2. Translated by Ernst Feise. From the cycle of poems *To Lazarus*, named for the man whom Christ raised from the dead (John 11:1–44). 3. Orgies.

The Migratory Rats[4]

There are two kinds of rat,
The hungry and the fat;
The fat ones happily stay at home,
But the hungry ones set out to roam.

They wander thousands of miles,
They have no domiciles;
Straight on they move in a furious run,
They cannot be stopped by rain or sun.

No mountains they cannot skim,
No lakes too broad for their swim!
Many get drowned or break their necks,
But those who survive pass over the wrecks.

These queer peculiar louts
Grow whiskers above their snouts;
As radical egalitarians they wear
In ratty fashion close-cropped their hair.

This fierce and radical squad
Knows no eternal God;
Unbaptized they leave their numerous broods,
They keep their women as common goods.

A sensuous mob, they think
Only of food and drink;
They ignore, since food is their only goal,
The immortality of the soul.

For such a brutal rat
Fears neither hell nor cat;
No goods, nor money they ever acquire,
To redivide the world they desire.

Approaching I see the foe
Of wandering rats, oh woe!
They come, already they are at our heels,
Their number is legion, I hear their squeals.

O woe! now we are lost!
At our portal their awful host!

4. Translated by Ernst Feise.

The council and mayor shake their heads,
They despair of warding off those reds.

The burghers take up arms,
The blackfrocks ring the alarms;
The palladium of public morality,
Property, is in jeopardy.

No ringing of bells, no priestly pleas,
No wise and august council decrees,
Not even cannons of wildest gage
Will help you, my children, against their rage.

No help you will find in verbal trick
Of worn political rhetoric;
You can't catch rats with syllogisms,
They nimbly jump your finest sophisms.

Soup-logic only and reason-dumplings
Will silence their hungry stomach rumblings,
Or arguments of soup donations
Together with Göttingen[5] sausage quotations.

A silent codfish in butter fat
Will satisfy such a radical rat
Much better than any Mirabeau[6]
And all the orations since Cicero.[7]

At Parting[8]

Vain worldly yearnings in my breast
Are dead and leave me unobsessed.
Hatred of evils, stilled, no more
Perturbs me—no, nor sorrow for
My own or others' pain-drawn breath.
Within me lives yet only death.
The curtain falls, the play now ends;
And, yawning, my dear German friends,
My public, wend their homeward way.
They're far from stupid, I must say.
They're dining gaily, quaffing beer,

5. Prussian university city, also a center of commerce. 6. Honoré Gabriel Riqueti Mirabeau (1749–1791), French statesman and famous orator. 7. Who died in 43 B.C. For centuries his writings on rhetoric and his collected speeches were guides for public speakers. 8. Translated by Dwight Durling.

With songs and laughter, pleasant cheer.
Right was Pelides,[9] famous prince,
Who said in Homer's book long since:
A Philistine, the silliest bore
In Stuttgart[1] on the Neckar shore,
Alive, has happiness far more
Than I, dead hero, in the host
Of Hades now the foremost ghost.

Morphine[2]

Great is the likeness of those beauteous two,
The youthful brothers, though the one appears
Much paler than the other, also much
More stern, yes, I might almost say much more
Aristocratic than that one who clasped me
Tenderly in his arm—How sweetly gentle
Was then his smile, his glance so full of bliss!
Thus it would happen that his wreath of poppies,
His head encircling, grazed my forehead also
And with strange fragrance banished all the pain
Out of my soul—Yet such a kind reprieve
It lasts but a short while, because completely
Restored can I be only when his brother,
The stern and pallid one, inverts his torch.—[3]
Oh, sleep is good, death better—to be sure,
The best of all were not to have been born.

9. Achilles, son of Peleus. *Homer's book*: The *Odyssey* (see XI, 544–46, in our selections).
1. The capital of the kingdom of Baden-Württemberg, whose denizens remain stock figures of fun in Germany today as dull and materialistic. 2. Translated by Ernst Feise. 3. That is, snuffs it out.

GIACOMO LEOPARDI

1798–1837

In his lyric, "The Broom," written in the final year of his short and tragic life, Giacomo Leopardi, the greatest Italian poet of his time, expressed definitively his sense of despair over what, in the early nineteenth century, man had made of man, as well as his belief in the possibility of a world governed by more humane values. A beautiful and enormously gifted child, Leopardi had grown to manhood with his health destroyed as a result of his upbringing by pathologically rigid parents—or so he believed. His father, Count Monaldo Leopardi, the last nobleman in Italy to wear a sword, had

brought himself by his extravagances to the verge of bankruptcy and had turned over the management of his affairs to an agent of his clever wife, Adelaide. Determined to restore the family fortunes, the countess instituted a severe regime. Her children, for instance, never received any spending money: she could not imagine how they might want to use it. Nor were they allowed to spend a night away from home until well into their adult years.

From the beginning, Giacomo Leopardi was intended for the church, dressed always in black (like his father) from the age of six. When he began to display his remarkable intellectual powers, his parents encouraged him to spend all his time in study, forbidding him to associated with other children. By the time he was seventeen or eighteen, he had developed into a hunchback, plagued by many ailments, with failing eyesight. (A few years later, he spent some months of total blindness.) Proud of his intellectual accomplishment, his parents, although warned of danger to his health, refused to allow him to leave home. Not until he was twenty-four did he escape the family mansion.

Leopardi had early begun writing poetry; after he left his family (to which he was forced, for reasons of economy or health, periodically to return), he soon developed a high reputation as scholar, poet, and translator. But his life remained unhappy. Cursed, as he sometimes felt, with great emotional capacity, yearning for love, he could not, because of his physical deformities, attract women. He did, however, find devoted friends. For the last four years of his life, he survived only by the care of Antonio Ranieri, who dedicated himself completely to the poet. Leopardi died of dropsy, a few weeks short of his thirty-ninth birthday.

In mid-April 1836, Leopardi and Ranieri moved into the villa Ferrigni on the slopes of Vesuvius, about fifteen miles from Naples near Torre del Greco. The doctors thought country air might benefit him. Bushes of broom, a plant with yellow flowers that grows in waste places, surrounded the villa; here the poet composed his poem, "The Broom," in which he meditates on the setting (Vesuvius had erupted only the year before) and on humankind's position in the natural world. He wrote in a kind of free verse which he had slowly perfected (the present translation approximates it), with occasional rhymes, internal or at the ends of lines. Believing in organic form, form evolved in response to the demands of subject and of feeling, Leopardi had long before rejected regular stanzaic organization; he maintained that regular forms had evolved only because of the ancient association between poetry and music and that they were far too likely to become mechanical. The freedom of the poem's lyrical movement embodies the imaginative openness which the text advocates as the means to secular salvation.

The theme of humanity's insignificance in the natural scheme attracted many nineteenth-century poets. Leopardi's mode of handling it avoids complete pessimism, although "The Broom" acknowledges the possibility of total destruction for humankind—annihilation not by nuclear energy, the late twentieth-century terror, but by earthquake, flood, eruption. The third of the poem's long irregular stanzas, though, announces another possibility: that of a kind of human dignity to be gained by full recognition and acceptance of common vulnerability. Rejecting "the higher flights / Of faith in the greatness of man," the poet outlines a more specific faith in the moral

grandeur of "One who reveals his strength / And greatness in suffering, refusing to add to / The angers and hates of his brothers." Such a person, believing in "the brotherhood of men," in effect reclaims the human condition. No such belief, no fineness of action or feeling, lessens the human susceptibility to mortal shocks, yet it can redeem, the poem suggests, our piteous condition.

In its emotional range—from anger at human self-delusion to exaltation over the vision of imaginatively conceived human unity—this remarkable poem exemplifies the intensity and the power of the nineteenth-century lyric at its best.

A useful biographical study is Iris Origo, *Leopardi: A Biography* (1935). The Cambridge edition of *The Poems of Leopardi*, ed. Geoffrey L. Bickersteth (1923; rep. 1973), contains a long and valuable introductory essay on the poet's life, art, and thought. Geoffrey Bickersteth is also the author of a separately published and suggestive lecture entitled *Leopardi and Wordsworth* (1927).

The Broom[1]

OR THE DESERT FLOWER

And men loved darkness rather than light. John III, 19

Here on the barren spine
Of the stupendous mountain,
That destructor, Vesuvius,
Which takes joy from no other tree or flower,
You scatter tufts of loneliness around,
Sweet-smelling broom,
Patient in the wastelands. As indeed I saw you
Where your stems added beauty to the solitude
Of the dead tracts that brood
Round Rome:[2] that she was queen of cities once,
Set in an empire gone,
Your stalks with their grave silent presence seemed
To witness to the traveller, out of oblivion.
Now I see you again upon this ground,
Lover of sad unpeopled places, unfailing
Comforter of fortunes overthrown.
These fields that are strewn
With unbreeding ashes, sealed down with lava
Turned hard as stone

1. Translated by Edwin Morgan. 2. The Roman Campagna, in the early nineteenth century a desolate tract, although it had once been thickly populated. Leopardi had traveled through this region in 1833.

And echoing to each visiting foot:
Where the snake hides and wriggles, snug in the sun,
And where the rabbit returns
To its well-trodden warren underground:
The plough, and villas, and laughter
Were here once, and the yellowing grain, and music
Of the deep lowing herds;
And gardens and great mansions,
Retreats, establishments
For stately leisure; and those famous cities[3]
Which the insolent mountain from its mouth of fire
Roared down on, struck like lightning, crushed
With all their people. Now one desolation
Transfixes everything,
And in it you sit, gentle flower, as if
Commiserating others' grief, and send
Upwards a breath so very dearly sweet
It must console the desert wastes. These slopes
Should be seen by any man who loves to praise
And exalt our human state: let him see here
How much of human kind
Stands in the care of loving nature. Here also
He can exactly find
The measure of man's living power, a force
In instant jeopardy to his hard nurse,
The earth that with the lightest tremor cancels
A part of it, and with
Others hardly less light can suddenly always
Annihilate it all.
These are excellent slopes
For viewing the human soul
With its "grand destinies and progressive hopes."[4]

Here, here see your face,
Century of empty pride,
Abandoner of the path
Renascence thought marked forward to our days,
Turning your steps into the past again,
Giving the retreat your praise,
Calling your failure advance!
Your prattling voice has drawn the brilliant, born
Under your bad star, to flatter you

3. Pompeii and Herculaneum, both destroyed by the eruption of Vesuvius in A.D. 79. 4. A quotation from a letter of dedication by Leopardi's cousin, Count Terenzio Mamiani della Roveri, which envisioned a glorious future for Italy and for humanity in general.

As father, though they mock
You sometimes as they talk
Behind your back. But I
Shall not go down to the grave with shame like theirs;
I hope I can still release the scorn that flares
For you in my heart, and try
To make it felt—or some of it although
I know how history
Crowds out those who over-offend their age.
Well, that is an evil
I must share with you;[5] I have laughed at it before.
Liberty is your great dream, yet you'd make thought
An era's slave again—[6]
Thought, which was our only
Tentative step out of chaos, which alone
Moves us to culture and manners, best, sole
Guide of our general fate!
It seems that the lot of men
Was harsh, the truth displeased you, the narrow place
Which nature gave us. Therefore you miserably
Turned your back upon the light that made
It clear: and you run from that light, calling
Its followers cowards, and only
Those who are foolish or clever
In mocking themselves or others and can extol
The human condition above the stars have "soul"!

A man who lives poor and in poor health
Yet is well-thinking and generous of spirit
Will call and count himself
Neither wealthy nor hardy,
Nor does he put on a ridiculous show
Of setting up as beau
Or being a prince of men,
But rather lets his state appear, not shamed
By penury of strength or savings, speaks
Openly of what he is, rates what he has
At its unflattered price.
And so the higher flights
Of faith in the greatness of man I decline as witless:
A creature born to perish, schooled by hardships,
Saying "I was made for happiness,"
Filling volume on volume

5. I.e., the speaker expects that he and his age will be alike forgotten. 6. Leopardi felt that his contemporaries overvalued scientific thought, at the expense of imagination.

With the stench of his boasting, his earthly promises
Of new high destinies and pleasures known
Neither on this globe nor in the whole of heaven—
And this to people whom
A wave of the disturbed sea,
A puff of malignant wind, a shift of the crust
Destroys so thoroughly
The later ages wonder where they lie!
It is a noble nature
That ventures to look up
Through mortal eyes upon
Our common fate, and tell with a frank tongue
That hides no grain of truth
How frailties, evils, low estate are ours
By reason of being born:
One reveals his strength
And greatness in suffering, refusing to add to
The angers and hates of his brothers
(Worst harm of all within
Our human miseries!) but rather transferring
The blame of grief from man and placing it
In the true seat of guilt, the mother of men[7]
With the stepmother heart. She is the one
He calls his enemy! And since he believes
The brotherhood of men
To be, as indeed they are, united and set
Against this enemy yet,
He takes all men to be confederates
Among themselves, embraces
Them all with a true love,
Extends and expects a ready, meaningful help
As agonies and hazards strike and pass
In the common war of man. And to be armed
Offensively against one's kind, to strew
A neighbor's path with spike
And block he sees as utter madness—like
A man hard pressed upon the battlefield
Who at the crucial assault
Forgets his enemies and begins a sharp
Contest with his own friends,
Spreading the panic of a whistling blade
That cuts its own troops down.
When thoughts like these are known

7. Nature, here alleged to be an unfriendly rather than a "maternal" force.

To ordinary folk, as once they were,
And when that terror which first
Drew mortal men so close
In social links against unpitying nature
Has been won back in part
By true recognition, then will justice, mercy,
Fair and honorable dealing
In the dialogue of cities, find another root
Than the presumptuous idle fables which
Have had to prop the common probity
Of men—if one can call
Error a prop of what is bound to fall.

I often sit at night
Upon these desolate slopes:
Draped in the dark and solid fall of lava
They seem rippling still; and above the joyless
Waste, in purest blue,
I watch the far-off flashing of the stars
Whose fires are mirrored in
The sea, and the whole world is shimmering
With sparks that circle through the empty spaces.
And when I fix my eyes upon these lights,
Mere points to human sight
Yet truly so immense
That all this land and sea in fact is but
A point to them: to them
Not only man but this globe
Where man himself is nothing
Is utterly unknown; and when I see
Still farther off in boundless distances
What looks like knots of stars
Shining to us like mist,[8] and think that to them
Not only man, not only earth, but the whole
System of our stars infinite in number
And mass, together with our own gold sun,
Is either unknown or must appear as they do
To the earth, a point, a node
Of nebular light: how then do you appear
As I sit thinking there,
O seed of man? And recalling
Your poor and worldly state which the mere soil
I press on testifies: and then again

8. The Milky Way.

Your own belief that you crown
All things with mastery, finality,
And what a favorite tale you cherish still,
How the creators of the cosmic scene
Came down onto this murky grain of sand
Called earth, on your behalf, and often held
Sweet talk with you:[9] and when I see these myths
In their absurdity refurbished to insult
Wise men even today, in an epoch
That seems ahead of all
In knowledge and in culture: what feeling then,
O luckless seed of man, what thought for you
Knocks on my heart when all is said? Laughter?
Pity? Which comes first and which comes after?

A little apple drops down from its tree,
Pulled to the natural earth
By simple ripeness in late autumn days,
And crushes at a single stroke, lays waste
And buries the trim colony
Of ants whose homes were hollowed
Out of that yielding clay
With such hard labor to them, their works and wealth
Amassed with long exertions all that summer,
Trials of diligence followed
By a provident folk: so also, plummeting down,
Hurled from a thundering womb
Up to the fathomless sky,
A night and ruin of rocks
And ash and pumice mingled
With boiling streams, or the vast
Torrent of metals and molten
Boulders and sizzling sand
Falling along the hill-flank,
Raging down unrepulsed
Through the grass, smashed and convulsed
And covered over in a few moments of time
These cities which the sea
Washed at the edge of the shore:
And now above the cities the goat browses,
And on the other slope
New cities rise, they stand upon the stool

9. Leopardi here alludes to stories current in many religions about the direct intervention of deities in human affairs. God's conversations with Adam in the Garden of Eden are a Judeo-Christian example.

Of the entombed ones and the prostrate walls
The bitter mountain seems to tramp to dust.
Nature has no more care
Or praise for human souls
Than for the ants: and if she slaughters men
Less terribly than them,
This is no great wonder,
For man's fecundity and ants' are worlds asunder.

Eighteen hundred years
And more have passed since those great populated
Places vanished, crushed by the power of fire,
And still the peasant's fears,
As he watches his vines struggle in these fields
To nourish life on sterile cindery clods,
Cause him to keep one eye
Warily on the fatal peak
Which never yet was moved to become gentle
But still sits awe-inspiring there, still threatens
Destruction to him and his children and their
Pitiful handful of possessions.
And often the wretched man
Stretched on the rustic roof
Of his home, lying there all night sleepless
In the wandering breeze, and time and again
Jumping to his feet, gazes along the course
Of the dreaded flux which waits to boil and pour
From unimpoverished cells
Along that gritty crest and raise its glow
On Margellina and
The port of Naples, on Capri and its sand.
And if he sees it coming down, or if
He ever hears a gurgling ferment in
The depths of his garden well, he hurriedly
Wakens his children, rouses his wife, and runs
With them, taking what things they can, far off
Till looking back he sees
His nest and home, his field—
His tiny, only shield against starvation—
Caught by the red-hot flood
Which crackles as it comes and over these
Victims settles, relentless, without appeal.
After long forgetfulness
Extinct Pompeii returns to daylight like
A buried skeleton

Brought out into the air
By worldly greed or pity;[1] and the traveller,
Paused in the empty forum,
Looks through the stricken rows
Of colonnades and gazes with intentness
Up to the mass of the divided summit[2]
With its smoking crater-ridge
Still menacing the ruins scattered there.
And in the secrecy and horror of the dark
Through vacant theatres,
Through mutilated temples and through stark
Shells of houses where bats hide their young,
The glow of the deadly lava
Like terror wandering with a sinister
Torch through empty palaces, runs on
And reddens in the shadows
Of the distance and paints every place it meets.
So nature, unaware of man and eras
Man calls ancient, unaware of links
From ancestors to sons,
Stands always green, or rather sets her feet
On such a lengthy road
She seems to stand. Meanwhile kingdoms decay,
Peoples and tongues die out: she does not see it:
And man presumes on his eternity.

And you, yielding broom,
Decking these ravaged fields
With your sweet-smelling groves, you too
Will soon go down before the cruel fires
Of that great subterranean dominion:
They will return to their station
As before, their hungry hems will crawl
Over your soft thickets. And you will bend
Your innocent head with unreluctant nod
Under that deadly load:
But not a head you bent till then in vain
With cowardly entreaty praying for
Your future killer's grace: not lifted up
In frantic vanity towards the stars,
Or over this wasteland where
Your birth and growing-place
Were yours not by your choice but that of fate:

1. I.e., greed for buried treasure; pity for the dead denied Christian burial. 2. At this time, Vesuvius had two cones at its summit; subsequent eruptions have eliminated one of them.

But wiser and less weak, 315
So much less weak than man, since you could rate
Your truly fragile race
With no self-won, no destined deathless state.[3]

3. The broom, unlike man, has no illusions about its own mortality.

ALEXANDER SERGEYEVICH PUSHKIN

1799–1837

In his best-known story, "The Queen of Spades," Alexander Pushkin combines familiar elements of Romantic fiction—the penniless young girl; the ambitious, passionate young man; the decayed beauty; the ghost—in a tale with intense ironic overtones, a tale destined to be a favorite of the great Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky. Pushkin's own life story sounds like a Romantic novel. Born into an aristocratic Russian family, neglected by his parents, he early began an extensive amatory and poetic career, publishing his first poem at the age of fifteen and becoming notorious about the same time for his multitudinous erotic involvements. At eighteen he graduated from a distinguished boarding school and accepted appointment in the Foreign Service; six years later, his various defiances of authority resulted in expulsion from the service and confinement, under police surveillance, on a paternal estate. After the assassination of Tsar Alexander I and the abortive military uprising that followed (an uprising involving several of Pushkin's friends, five of whom were subsequently hanged), Pushkin—by then a well-known poet—was befriended (1826) by the new tsar Nicholas. He moved back to Moscow, then to Petersburg, leading a gay bachelor existence. In 1831, however, he married a beautiful and frivolous nineteen-year-old, whose flirtatious behavior embittered his subsequent life. He died after a duel with his wife's putative lover.

Producing short lyrics, narrative poems, a great novel in verse (*Eugene Onegin*), lyrical drama (notably *Boris Gudonov*), versified folk tales, and prose fiction, Pushkin established himself as one of Russia's greatest writers. His interest in his nation's past, his tendency to challenge authority, his fascination with the situation of strong individuals: such obsessive concerns link his work with that of his Romantic contemporaries elsewhere in Europe. Goethe, Byron, and early nineteenth-century French novelists had marked influence on him. He retained also, however, the kind of clarity, discipline, and ironic distance more often associated with the literature of the preceding century.

The treatment of love and sexuality in "The Queen of Spades" exemplifies the complexity of Pushkin's approach. First of all we hear the story of the "Muscovite Venus," the beautiful young gambler who pays her debts by learning the secret of three infallible cards. Then we encounter a lovely girl suffering in her dependent position and longing for a "deliverer." Hermann, the immediate object of Lisaveta's dreams, has his own sexual fantasies: a

young man himself, he imagines becoming the lover of the eighty-seven-year-old Countess. At this point, if not before, the reader begins to realize that something's wrong here: this is not the kind of romantic tale we're used to. Describing Hermann's first glimpse of Lisaveta, Pushkin writes, "Hermann saw a small, fresh face and a pair of dark eyes. That moment decided his fate." A romantic cliché—except that the young man sees Lisaveta not as an object of devotion but as a means to an end. He sends her a love letter; it's copied word for word from a German novel. His rapidly developing passion focuses on financial, not erotic, gain.

Lisaveta's character remains somewhat more ambiguous. The narrator invokes sympathy for her plight, at the mercy of a tyrannical employer who makes endless irrational demands and who never pays her. Her situation prohibits her from enjoying the kinds of amorous gratification other young women can expect. We can understand, therefore, why her dreams should concentrate specifically on a deliverer. Like Hermann, although far less unscrupulous, she may indulge in intrigues as a means to an end: in her case, not money but liberty.

"The Queen of Spades" contains no attractive characters. If Lisaveta's victimized situation arouses compassion, her lack of moral force or determination may provoke irritation. Hermann's will to succeed, on the other hand, makes him a potential protagonist, but his monetary obsession and his meanspirited expediency alienate most readers. The Countess, old and approaching death, uses the power of her money and rank with utter disregard for the needs or feelings of others. Even such a minor figure as the Countess's grandson, Tomsky, playing with Lisaveta's feelings, going through his ritualized flirtation with Princess Polina, seems thoroughly contaminated by the values of the world he inhabits.

Indeed, the values of that world provide the central subject of this tale. Pushkin employs conventions of the kind of ghost story common in folk tales to convey serious criticism of a social structure corrupted by universal concentration on money. Gambling provides not only the chief male activity but the central metaphor of the story. Everyone is out for what he or she can get. The Countess, whose days at the card table are past, utilizes her money to buy subservience; Lisaveta is willing to risk her reputation, possibly even her chastity, for the possibility of escaping servitude; Hermann frightens someone to death in an effort to make his fortune; Tomsky plays elaborate social games of advance and retreat, trying to get his princess. The queen of spades is a conventional symbol of death; the kind of death most important in Pushkin's story is not literal—not the Countess's demise—but figurative: the spiritual death suffered by the other characters, over whose world the Countess-Queen of Spades metaphorically presides.

The "Conclusion" of "The Queen of Spades," a deadpan summary of the characters' future careers, epitomizes the story's central concerns. Hermann's madness dramatizes the financial obsession he has displayed from the beginning; Lisaveta's marriage, to an anonymous "very agreeable young man" with a good position "somewhere," emphasizes the degree to which she has always wished for marriage as rescue, not as attachment to a particular beloved other. In her married state, Lisaveta, ironically, "is bringing up a poor relative," recapitulating the structure of exploitation from which she

herself suffered. Tomsky, relatively unimportant in the plot line, supplies the subject for the story's final sentence: his promotion and his "good" marriage remind us that everyone in the society here described seeks personal advantage at all costs. Hermann has simply paid the cost in the most dramatic way.

Henri Troyat's *Pushkin* (1971) is an excellent biography. For biography and criticism, the student might also consult Walter Arndt, *Pushkin Threefold: Narrative, Lyric, Polemic and Ribald Verse* (1972); John Bayley, *Pushkin: A Comparative Commentary* (1971), and D. S. Mirsky, *Pushkin* (1926).

The Queen of Spades[1]

CHAPTER ONE

And on rainy days
They gathered
Often;
Their stakes—God help them!—
Wavered from fifty
To a hundred,
And they won
And marked up their winnings
With chalk.
Thus on rainy days
Were they
Busy.[2]

There was a card party one day in the rooms of Narumov, an officer of the Horse Guards. The long winter evening slipped by unnoticed; it was five o'clock in the morning before the assembly sat down to supper. Those who had won ate with a big appetite; the others sat distractedly before their empty plates. But champagne was brought in, the conversation became more lively, and everyone took a part in it.

"And how did you get on, Surin?" asked the host.

"As usual, I lost. I must confess, I have no luck: I never vary my stake, never get heated, never lose my head, and yet I always lose!"

"And weren't you tempted even once to back[3] on a series . . . ? Your strength of mind astonishes me."

"What about Hermann then," said one of the guests, pointing at the young Engineer.[4] "He's never held a card in his hand, never doubled a single stake in his life, and yet he sits up until five in the morning watching us play."

1. Translated by Gillon R. Aitken. 2. Like most of the chapter epigraphs, this was presumably written by Pushkin himself. 3. Bet. 4. A member of the Corps of Engineers, concerned with fortifications.

"The game fascinates me," said Hermann, "but I am not in the position to sacrifice the essentials of life in the hope of acquiring the luxuries."

"Hermann's a German: he's cautious—that's all," Tomsky observed. "But if there's one person I can't understand, it's my grandmother, the Countess Anna Fedotovna."

"How? Why?" the guests inquired noisily.

"I can't understand why it is," Tomsky continued, "that my grandmother doesn't gamble."

"But what's so astonishing about an old lady of eighty not gambling?" asked Narumov.

"Then you don't know . . . ?"

"No, indeed; I know nothing."

"Oh well, listen then:

"You must know that about sixty years ago my grandmother went to Paris, where she made something of a hit. People used to chase after her to catch a glimpse of *la vénus moscovite;*[5] Richelieu[6] paid court to her, and my grandmother vouches that he almost shot himself on account of her cruelty. At that time ladies used to play faro.[7] On one occasion at the Court, my grandmother lost a very great deal of money on credit to the Duke of Orleans. Returning home, she removed the patches[8] from her face, took off her hooped petticoat, announced her loss to my grandfather and ordered him to pay back the money. My late grandfather, as far as I can remember, was a sort of lackey to my grandmother. He feared her like fire; on hearing of such a disgraceful loss, however, he completely lost his temper; he produced his accounts, showed her that she had spent half a million francs in six months, pointed out that neither their Moscow nor their Saratov estates were in Paris, and refused point-blank to pay the debt. My grandmother gave him a box on the ear and went off to sleep on her own as an indication of her displeasure. In the hope that this domestic infliction would have had some effect on him, she sent for her husband the next day; she found him unshakeable. For the first time in her life she approached him with argument and explanation, thinking that she could bring him to reason by pointing out that there are debts and debts, that there is a big difference between a Prince and a coachmaker. But my grandfather remained adamant, and flatly refused to discuss the subject any further. My grandmother did not know what to do. A little while before, she had become acquainted with a very remarkable man. You have heard of Count St-Germain,[9] about whom so many marvellous stories are related.

5. The Venus [goddess of love] of Moscow. 6. Louis-Francois-Armand De Vignerod Du Plessis, Duc de Richelieu, (1696–1788), French aristocrat reknowned throughout the eighteenth century for both his military and his sexual exploits. 7. A card game much used for gambling. 8. I.e., beauty patches, artificial "beauty marks" made of black silk or court plaster and worn on the face or neck. 9. (c. 1710–1784?), celebrated adventurer who frequented the French, German, and Russian courts.

You know that he held himself out to be the Wandering Jew, and the inventor of the elixir of life, the philosopher's stone and so forth. Some ridiculed him as a charlatan and in his memoirs Casanova declares that he was a spy. However, St-Germain, in spite of the mystery which surrounded him, was a person of venerable appearance and much in demand in society. My grandmother is still quite infatuated with him and becomes quite angry if anyone speaks of him with disrespect. My grandmother knew that he had large sums of money at his disposal. She decided to have recourse to him, and wrote asking him to visit her without delay. The eccentric old man at once called on her and found her in a state of terrible grief. She depicted her husband's barbarity in the blackest light, and ended by saying that she pinned all her hopes on his friendship and kindness.

"St-Germain reflected. 'I could let you have this sum,' he said, 'but I know that you would not be at peace while in my debt, and I have no wish to bring fresh troubles upon your head. There is another solution—you can win back the money.'

" 'But, my dear Count,' my grandmother replied, 'I tell you—we have no money at all.'

" 'In this case money is not essential,' St-Germain replied. 'Be good enough to hear me out.'

"And at this point he revealed to her the secret for which any one of us here would give a very great deal . . ."

The young gamblers listened with still great attention. Tomsky lit his pipe, drew on it and continued:

"That same evening my grandmother went to Versailles, *au jeu de la Reine*.[1] The Duke of Orleans kept the bank; inventing some small tale, my grandmother lightly excused herself for not having brought her debt, and began to play against him. She chose three cards and played them one after the other: all three won and my grandmother recouped herself completely."

"Pure luck!" said one of the guests.

"A fairy-tale," observed Hermann.

"Perhaps the cards were marked!" said a third.

"I don't think so," Tomsky replied gravely.

"What!" cried Narumov. "You have a grandmother who can guess three cards in succession, and you haven't yet contrived to learn her secret."

"No, not much hope of that!" replied Tomsky. "She had four sons, including my father; all four were desperate gamblers, and yet she did not reveal her secret to a single one of them, although it would have been a good thing if she had told them—told me, even. But this is what I heard from my uncle, Count Ivan Ilyitch, and he

1. To the Queen's game.

gave me his word for its truth. The late Chaplitsky—the same who died a pauper after squandering millions—in his youth once lost nearly 300,000 roubles—to Zoritch, if I remember rightly. He was in despair. My grandmother, who was most strict in her attitude towards the extravagances of young men, for some reason took pity on Chaplitsky. She told him the three cards on condition that he played them in order; and at the same time she exacted his solemn promise that he would never play again as long as he lived. Chaplitsky appeared before his victor; they sat down to play. On the first card Chaplitsky staked 50,000 roubles and won straight off; he doubled his stake, redoubled—and won back more than he had lost. . . .

"But it's time to go to bed; it's already a quarter to six."

Indeed, the day was already beginning to break. The young men drained their glasses and dispersed.

CHAPTER TWO

"Il paraît que monsieur est décidément
pour les suivantes."
"Que voulez-vous, madame? Elles sont
plus fraîches."
FASHIONABLE CONVERSATION[2]

The old Countess *** was seated before the looking-glass in her dressing-room. Three lady's maids stood by her. One held a jar of rouge, another a box of hairpins, and the third a tall bonnet with flame-coloured ribbons. The Countess no longer had the slightest pretensions to beauty, which had long since faded from her face, but she still preserved all the habits of her youth, paid strict regard to the fashions of the seventies, and devoted to her dress the same time and attention as she had done sixty years before. At an embroidery frame by the window sat a young lady, her ward.

"Good morning, *grand'maman*!" said a young officer as he entered the room. "*Bonjour, mademoiselle Lise. Grand'maman,*[3] I have a request to make of you."

"What is it, Paúl?"

"I want you to let me introduce one of my friends to you, and to allow me to bring him to the ball on Friday."

"Bring him straight to the ball and introduce him to me there. Were you at ***'s yesterday?"

"Of course. It was very gay; we danced until five in the morning. How charming Eletskaya was!"

2. "It appears that the gentleman is decidedly in favor of servant girls." "What would you have me do, Madam? They are fresher [than upper-class women]." 3. Russian aristocrats often spoke French; Lisaveta is here called by the French name Lise, and Pavel, Paul.

"But, my dear, what's charming about her? Isn't she like her grandmother, the Princess Darya Petrovna . . . ? By the way, I dare say she's grown very old now, the Princess Darya Petrovna?"

"What do you mean, 'grown old'?" asked Tomsky thoughtlessly. "She's been dead for seven years."

The young lady raised her head and made a sign to the young man. He remembered then that the death of any of her contemporaries was kept secret from the old Countess, and he bit his lip. But the Countess heard the news, previously unknown to her, with the greatest indifference.

"Dead!" she said. "And I didn't know it. We were maids of honour together, and when we were presented, the Empress . . ."

And for the hundredth time the Countess related the anecdote to her grandson.

"Come, Paul," she said when she had finished her story, "help me to stand up. Lisanka, where's my snuff-box?"

And with her three maids the Countess went behind a screen to complete her dress. Tomsky was left alone with the young lady.

"Whom do you wish to introduce?" Lisaveta Ivanovna asked softly.

"Narumov. Do you know him?"

"No. Is he a soldier or a civilian?"

"A soldier."

"An Engineer?"

"No, he's in the Cavalry. What made you think he was an Engineer?"

The young lady smiled but made no reply.

"Paul!" cried the Countess from behind the screen. "Bring along a new novel with you some time, will you, only please not one of those modern ones."

"What do you mean, *grand'maman*?"

"I mean not the sort of novel in which the hero strangles either of his parents or in which someone is drowned.[4] I have a great horror of drowned people."

"Such novels don't exist nowadays. Wouldn't you like a Russian one?"

"Are there such things? Send me one, my dear, please send me one."

"Will you excuse me now, *grand'maman*, I'm in a hurry. Goodbye, Lisaveta Ivanovna. What made you think that Narumov was in the Engineers?"

And Tomsky left the dressing-room.

Lisaveta Ivanovna was left on her own; she put aside her work and began to look out of the window. Presently a young officer appeared

4. Novels of the sort the Countess does not wish to read were typical of the current decadent movement in French literature.

from behind the corner house on the other side of the street. A flush spread over her cheeks; she took up her work again and lowered her head over the frame. At this moment, the Countess returned, fully dressed.

"Order the carriage, Lisanka," she said, "and we'll go for a drive."

Lisanka got up from behind her frame and began to put away her work.

"What's the matter with you, my child? Are you deaf?" shouted the Countess. "Order the carriage this minute."

"I'll do so at once," the young lady replied softly and hastened into the ante-room.

A servant entered the room and handed the Countess some books from the Prince Pavel Alexandrovitch.

"Good, thank him," said the Countess. "Lisanka, Lisanka, where are you running to?"

"To get dressed."

"Plenty of time for that, my dear. Sit down. Open the first volume and read to me."

The young lady took up the book and read a few lines.

"Louder!" said the Countess. "What's the matter with you, my child? Have you lost your voice, or what . . . ? Wait . . . move that footstool up to me . . . nearer . . . that's right!"

Lisaveta Ivanovna read a further two pages. The Countess yawned.

"Put the book down," she said; "what rubbish! Have it returned to Prince Pavel with my thanks. . . . But where is the carriage?"

"The carriage is ready," said Lisaveta Ivanovna, looking out into the street.

"Then why aren't you dressed?" asked the Countess. "I'm always having to wait for you—it's intolerable, my dear!"

Lisa ran up to her room. Not two minutes elapsed before the Countess began to ring with all her might. The three lady's maids came running in through one door and the valet through another.

"Why don't you come when you're called?" the Countess asked them. "Tell Lisaveta Ivanovna that I'm waiting for her."

Lisaveta Ivanovna entered the room wearing her hat and cloak.

"At last, my child!" said the Countess. "But what clothes you're wearing . . . ! Whom are you hoping to catch? What's the weather like? It seems windy."

"There's not a breath of wind, your Ladyship," replied the valet.

"You never know what you're talking about! Open that small window. There; as I thought: windy and bitterly cold. Unharness the horses. Lisaveta, we're not going out—there was no need to dress up like that."

"And this is my life," thought Lisaveta Ivanovna.

And indeed Lisaveta Ivanovna was a most unfortunate creature.

As Dante says: "You shall learn the salt taste of another's bread, and the hard path up and down his stairs";[5] and who better to know the bitterness of dependence than the poor ward of a well-born old lady? The Countess *** was far from being wicked, but she had the capriciousness of a woman who has been spoiled by the world, and the miserliness and cold-hearted egotism of all old people who have done with loving and whose thoughts lie with the past. She took part in all the vanities of the *haut-monde*;[6] she dragged herself to balls, where she sat in a corner, rouged and dressed in old-fashioned style, like some misshapen but essential ornament of the ball-room; on arrival, the guests would approach her with low bows, as if in accordance with an established rite, but after that, they would pay no further attention to her. She received the whole town at her house, and although no longer able to recognise the faces of her guests, she observed the strictest etiquette. Her numerous servants, grown fat and grey in her hall and servants' room, did exactly as they pleased, vying with one another in stealing from the dying old lady. Lisaveta Ivanovna was the household martyr. She poured out the tea, and was reprimanded for putting in too much sugar; she read novels aloud, and was held guilty of all the faults of the authors; she accompanied the Countess on her walks, and was made responsible for the state of the weather and the pavement. There was a salary attached to her position, but it was never paid; meanwhile, it was demanded of her to be dressed like everybody else—that is, like the very few who could afford to dress well. In society she played the most pitiable role. Everybody knew her, but nobody took any notice of her; at balls she danced only when there was a partner short, and ladies only took her arm when they needed to go to the dressing-room to make some adjustment to their dress. She was proud and felt her position keenly, and looked around her in impatient expectation of a deliverer; but the young men, calculating in their flightiness, did not honour her with their attention, despite the fact that Lisaveta Ivanovna was a hundred times prettier than the cold, arrogant but more eligible young ladies on whom they danced attendance. Many a time did she creep softly away from the bright but wearisome drawing-room to go and cry in her own poor room, where stood a papered screen, a chest of drawers, a small looking-glass and a painted bedstead, and where a tallow candle burned dimly in its copper candle-stick.

One day—two days after the evening described at the beginning of this story, and about a week previous to the events just recorded—Lisaveta Ivanovna was sitting at her embroidery frame by the window, when, happening to glance out into the street, she saw a young Engineer, standing motionless with his eyes fixed upon her window.

5. *Paradiso* 17.59. 6. High society.

She lowered her head and continued with her work; five minutes later she looked out again—the young officer was still standing in the same place. Not being in the habit of flirting with passing officers, she ceased to look out of the window, and sewed for about two hours without raising her head. Dinner was announced. She got up and began to put away her frame, and, glancing casually out into the street, she saw the officer again. She was considerably puzzled by this. After dinner, she approached the window with a feeling of some disquiet, but the officer was no longer outside, and she thought no more of him.

Two days later, while preparing to enter the carriage with the Countess, she saw him again. He was standing just by the front-door, his face concealed by a beaver collar; his dark eyes shone from beneath his cap. Without knowing why, Lisaveta Ivanovna felt afraid, and an unaccountable trembling came over her as she sat down in the carriage.

On her return home, she hastened to the window—the officer was standing in the same place as before, his eyes fixed upon her; she drew back, tormented by curiosity and agitated by a feeling that was quite new to her.

Since then, not a day had passed without the young man appearing at the customary hour beneath the windows of their house. A sort of mute acquaintance grew up between them. At work in her seat, she used to feel him approaching, and would raise her head to look at him—for longer and longer each day. The young man seemed to be grateful to her for this: she saw, with the sharp eye of youth, how a sudden flush would spread across his pale cheeks on each occasion that their glances met. After a week she smiled at him. . . .

When Tomsky asked leave of the Countess to introduce one of his friends to her; the poor girl's heart beat fast. But on learning that Narumov was in the Horse Guards, and not in the Engineers, she was sorry that, by an indiscreet question, she had betrayed her secret to the light-hearted Tomsky.

Hermann was the son of a Russianised German, from whom he had inherited a small amount of money. Being firmly convinced of the necessity of ensuring his independence, Hermann did not draw on the income that this yielded, but lived on his pay, forbidding himself the slightest extravagance. Moreover, he was secretive and ambitious, and his companions rarely had occasion to laugh at his excessive thrift. He had strong passions and a fiery imagination, but his tenacity of spirit saved him from the usual errors of youth. Thus, for example, although at heart a gambler, he never took a card in his hand, for he reckoned that his position did not allow him (as he put

it) "to sacrifice the essentials of life in the hope of acquiring the luxuries"—and meanwhile, he would sit up at the card table for whole nights at a time, and follow the different turns of the game with feverish anxiety.

The story of the three cards had made a strong impression on his imagination, and he could think of nothing else all night.

"What if the old Countess should reveal her secret to me?" he thought the following evening as he wandered through the streets of Petersburg. "What if she should tell me the names of those three winning cards? Why not try my luck . . . ? Become introduced to her, try to win her favour, perhaps become her lover . . . ? But all that demands time, and she's eighty-seven; she might die in a week, in two days . . . ! And the story itself . . . ? Can one really believe it . . . ? No! Economy, moderation and industry; these are my three winning cards, these will treble my capital, increase it sevenfold, and earn for me ease and independence!"

Reasoning thus, he found himself in one of the principal streets of Petersburg, before a house of old-fashioned architecture. The street was crowded with vehicles; one after another, carriages rolled up to the lighted entrance. From them there emerged, now the shapely little foot of some beautiful young woman, now a rattling jack-boot, now the striped stocking and elegant shoe of a diplomat. Furs and capes flitted past the majestic hall-porter. Hermann stopped.

"Whose house is this?" he asked the watchman at the corner.

"The Countess ***'s," the watchman replied.

Hermann started. His imagination was again fired by the amazing story of the three cards. He began to walk around near the house, thinking of its owner and her mysterious faculty. It was late when he returned to his humble rooms; for a long time he could not sleep; and when at last he did drop off, cards, a green table,[7] heaps of banknotes and piles of golden coins appeared to him in his dreams. He played one card after the other, doubled his stake decisively, won unceasingly, and raked in the golden coins and stuffed his pockets with the banknotes. Waking up late, he sighed at the loss of his imaginary fortune, again went out to wander about the town and again found himself outside the house of the Countess ***. Some unknown power seemed to have attracted him to it. He stopped and began to look at the windows. At one he saw a head with long black hair, probably bent down over a book or a piece of work. The head was raised. Hermann saw a small, fresh face and a pair of dark eyes. That moment decided his fate.

7. Tables on which gambling took place were typically covered with green baize.

CHAPTER THREE

Vous m'écrivez, mon ange, des lettres de quatre pages plus vite que je ne puis les lire.

CORRESPONDENCE[8]

Scarcely had Lisaveta Ivanovna taken off her hat and cloak when the Countess sent for her and again ordered her to have the horses harnessed. They went out to take their seats in the carriage. At the same moment as the old lady was being helped through the carriage doors by two footmen, Lisaveta Ivanovna saw her Engineer standing close by the wheel; he seized her hand; before she could recover from her fright, the young man had disappeared—leaving a letter in her hand. She hid it in her glove and throughout the whole of the drive neither heard nor saw a thing. As was her custom when riding in her carriage, the Countess kept up a ceaseless flow of questions: "Who was it who met us just now? What's this bridge called? What's written on that signboard?" This time Lisaveta Ivanovna's answers were so vague and inappropriate that the Countess became angry.

"What's the matter with you, my child? Are you in a trance or something? Don't you hear me or understand what I'm saying . . . ? Heaven be thanked that I'm still sane enough to speak clearly."

Lisaveta Ivanovna did not listen to her. On returning home, she ran up to her room and drew the letter out of her glove; it was unsealed. Lisaveta Ivanovna read it through. The letter contained a confession of love; it was tender, respectful and taken word for word from a German novel. But Lisaveta Ivanovna had no knowledge of German and was most pleased by it.

Nevertheless, the letter made her feel extremely uneasy. For the first time in her life she was entering into a secret and confidential relationship with a young man. His audacity shocked her. She reproached herself for her imprudent behaviour, and did not know what to do. Should she stop sitting at the window and by a show of indifference cool off the young man's desire for further acquaintance? Should she send the letter back to him? Or answer it with cold-hearted finality? There was nobody to whom she could turn for advice: she had no friend or preceptress. Lisaveta Ivanovna resolved to answer the letter.

She sat down at her small writing-table, took a pen and some paper, and lost herself in thought. Several times she began her letter—and then tore it up; her manner of expression seemed to her to be either too condescending or too heartless. At last she succeeded in writing a few lines that satisfied her:

8. "My angel, you write me letters four pages long faster than I can read them."

I am sure that your intentions are honourable, and that you did not wish to offend me by your rash behaviour, but our acquaintance must not begin in this way. I return your letter to you and hope that in the future I shall have no cause to complain of undeserved disrespect.

The next day, as soon as she saw Hermann approach, Lisaveta Ivanovna rose from behind her frame, went into the ante-room, opened a small window, and threw her letter into the street, trusting to the agility of the young officer to pick it up. Hermann ran forward, took hold of the letter and went into a confectioner's shop. Breaking the seal of the envelope, he found his own letter and Lisaveta Ivanovna's answer. It was as he had expected, and he returned home, deeply preoccupied with his intrigue.

Three days afterwards, a bright-eyed young girl brought Lisaveta Ivanovna a letter from a milliner's shop. Lisaveta Ivanovna opened it uneasily, envisaging a demand for money, but she suddenly recognised Hermann's handwriting.

"You have made a mistake, my dear," she said; "this letter is not for me."

"Oh, but it is!" the girl answered cheekily and without concealing a sly smile. "Read it."

Lisaveta Ivanovna ran her eyes over the note. Hermann demanded a meeting.

"It cannot be," said Lisaveta Ivanovna, frightened at the haste of his demand and the way in which it was made: "this is certainly not for me."

And she tore the letter up into tiny pieces.

"If the letter wasn't for you, why did you tear it up?" asked the girl. "I would have returned it to the person who sent it."

"Please, my dear," Lisaveta Ivanovna said, flushing at the remark, "don't bring me any more letters in future. And tell the person who sent you that he should be ashamed of . . ."

But Hermann was not put off. By some means or other, he sent a letter to Lisaveta Ivanovna every day. The letters were no longer translated from the German. Hermann wrote them inspired by passion, and used a language true to his character; these letters were the expression of his obsessive desires and the disorder of his unfettered imagination. Lisaveta Ivanovna no longer thought of returning them to him: she revelled in them, began to answer them, and with each day, her replies became longer and more tender. Finally, she threw out of the window the following letter:

*This evening there is a ball at the *** Embassy. The Countess will be there. We will stay until about two o'clock. Here is your chance to see me alone. As soon as the Countess has left the house, the servants will probably go to their quarters—with the exception of the hall-porter,*

who normally goes out to his closet anyway. Come at half-past eleven. Walk straight upstairs. If you meet anybody in the ante-room, ask whether the Countess is at home. You will be told 'No'—and there will be nothing you can do but go away. But it is unlikely that you will meet anybody. The lady's maids sit by themselves, all in the one room. On leaving the hall, turn to the left and walk straight on until you come to the Countess' bedroom. In the bedroom, behind a screen, you will see two small doors: the one on the right leads into the study, which the Countess never goes into; the one on the left leads into a corridor and thence to a narrow winding staircase: this staircase leads to my bedroom.

Hermann quivered like a tiger as he awaited the appointed hour. He was already outside the Countess' house at ten o'clock. The weather was terrible; the wind howled, and a wet snow fell in large flakes upon the deserted streets, where the lamps shone dimly. Occasionally a passing cab-driver leaned forward over his scrawny nag, on the look-out for a late passenger. Feeling neither wind nor snow, Hermann waited, dressed only in his frock-coat. At last the Countess' carriage was brought round. Hermann saw two footmen carry out in their arms the bent old lady, wrapped in a sable fur, and immediately following her, the figure of Lisaveta Ivanovna, clad in a light cloak, and with her head adorned with fresh flowers. The doors were slammed and the carriage rolled heavily away along the soft snow. The hall-porter closed the front door. The windows became dark. Hermann began to walk about near the deserted house; he went up to a lamp and looked at his watch; it was twenty minutes past eleven. He remained beneath the lamp; his eyes fixed upon the hands of his watch, waiting for the remaining minutes to pass. At exactly half-past eleven, Hermann ascended the steps of the Countess' house and reached the brightly-lit porch. The hall-porter was not there. Hermann ran up the stairs, opened the door into the ante-room and saw a servant asleep by the lamp in a soiled antique armchair. With a light, firm tread Hermann stepped past him. The drawing-room and reception-room were in darkness, but the lamp in the ante-room sent through a feeble light. Hermann passed through into the bedroom. Before an icon-case, filled with old-fashioned images,[9] glowed a gold sanctuary lamp. Faded brocade armchairs and dull gilt divans with soft cushions were ranged in sad symmetry around the room, the walls of which were hung with Chinese silk. Two portraits, painted in Paris by Madame Lebrun,[1] were hung from one of the walls. One of these featured a plump, red-faced man of about forty, in a light-green uniform and with a star pinned to his breast; the other—a beautiful young woman with an aquiline nose and powdered hair, brushed back at the temples and adorned with a rose. In the corners

9. I.e., religious images. 1. Marie Anne Elizabeth Vigée-Lebrun (1755–1842), French portrait painter, particularly of the aristocracy and royalty.

of the room stood porcelain shepherdesses, table clocks from the workshop of the celebrated Leroy,[2] little boxes, roulettes, fans and the various lady's playthings which had been popular at the end of the last century, when the Montgolfiers' balloon and Mesmer's magnetism[3] were invented. Hermann went behind the screen, where stood a small iron bedstead; on the right was the door leading to the study; on the left the one which led to the corridor. Hermann opened the latter, and saw the narrow, winding staircase which led to the poor ward's room. . . . But he turned back and stepped into the dark study.

The time passed slowly. Everything was quiet. The clock in the drawing-room struck twelve; one by one the clocks in all the other rooms sounded the same hour, and then all was quiet again. Hermann stood leaning against the cold stove. He was calm; his heart beat evenly, like that of a man who has decided upon some dangerous but necessary action. One o'clock sounded; two o'clock; he heard the distant rattle of the carriage. He was seized by an involuntary agitation. The carriage drew near and stopped. He heard the sound of the carriage-steps being let down. The house suddenly came alive. Servants ran here and there, voices echoed through the house and the rooms were lit. Three old maid-servants hastened into the bedroom, followed by the Countess, who, tired to death, lowered herself into a Voltairean armchair.[4] Hermann peeped through a crack. Lisaveta Ivanovna went past him. Hermann heard her hurried steps as she went up the narrow staircase. In his heart there echoed something like the voice of conscience, but it grew silent, and his heart once more turned to stone.

The Countess began to undress before the looking-glass. Her rose-bedecked cap was unfastened; her powdered wig was removed from her grey, closely-cropped hair. Pins fell in showers around her. Her yellow dress, embroidered with silver, fell at her swollen feet. Hermann witnessed all the loathsome mysteries of her dress; at last the Countess stood in her dressing-gown and night-cap; in this attire, more suitable to her age, she seemed less hideous and revolting.

Like most old people, the Countess suffered from insomnia. Having undressed, she sat down by the window in the Voltairean armchair and dismissed her maidservants. The candles were carried out; once again the room was lit by a single sanctuary lamp. Looking quite yellow, the Countess sat rocking to and fro in her chair, her flabby lips moving. Her dim eyes reflected a complete absence of

2. Julien Leroy (1686–1759), famous French clockmaker. *Roulettes:* little balls; or possibly portable devices for playing the gambling game of roulette. 3. Franz Anton Mesmer (1734–1815) argued that a person can transmit personal force to others in the form of "animal magnetism." Joseph-Michel (1740–1810) and Jacques-Etienne (1745–1799) Montgolfier, French brothers, helped to develop the hot-air balloon and conducted the first untethered flights. 4. A large armchair with a high back.

thought and, looking at her, one would have thought that the awful old woman's rocking came not of her own volition, but by the action of some hidden galvanism.

Suddenly, an indescribable change came over her death-like face. Her lips ceased to move, her eyes came to life: before the Countess stood an unknown man.

"Don't be alarmed, for God's sake, don't be alarmed," he said in a clear, low voice. "I have no intention of harming you; I have come to beseech a favour of you."

The old woman looked at him in silence, as if she had not heard him. Hermann imagined that she was deaf, and bending right down over her ear, he repeated what he had said. The old woman kept silent as before.

"You can ensure the happiness of my life," Hermann continued, "and it will cost you nothing: I know that you can guess three cards in succession. . . ."

Hermann stopped. The Countess appeared to understand what was demanded of her; she seemed to be seeking words for her reply.

"It was a joke," she said at last. "I swear to you, it was a joke."

"There's no joking about it," Hermann retorted angrily. "Remember Chaplitsky whom you helped to win."

The Countess was visibly disconcerted, and her features expressed strong emotion; but she quickly resumed her former impassivity.

"Can you name these three winning cards?" Hermann continued.

The Countess was silent. Hermann went on:

"For whom do you keep your secret? For your grandsons? They are rich and they can do without it; they don't know the value of money. Your three cards will not help a spendthrift. He who cannot keep his paternal inheritance will die in want, even if he has the devil at his side. I am not a spendthrift; I know the value of money. Your three cards will not be lost on me. Come . . . !"

He stopped and awaited her answer with trepidation. The Countess was silent. Hermann fell upon his knees.

"If your heart has ever known the feeling of love," he said, "if you remember its ecstasies, if you ever smiled at the wailing of your newborn son, if ever any human feeling has run through your breast, I entreat you by the feelings of a wife, a lover, a mother, by everything that is sacred in life, not to deny my request! Reveal your secret to me! What is it to you . . . ? Perhaps it is bound up with some dreadful sin, with the loss of eternal bliss, with some contract made with the devil . . . Consider: you are old; you have not long to live—I am prepared to take your sins on my own soul. Only reveal to me your secret. Realise that the happiness of a man is in your hands, that not only I, but my children, my grandchildren, my great-grandchildren

will bless your memory and will revere it as something sacred. . . ."

The old woman answered not a word.

Hermann stood up.

"You old witch!" he said, clenching his teeth. "I'll force you to answer. . . ."

With these words he drew a pistol from his pocket. At the sight of the pistol, the Countess, for the second time, exhibited signs of strong emotion. She shook her head and raising her hand as though to shield herself from the shot, she rolled over on her back and remained motionless.

"Stop this childish behaviour now," Hermann said, taking her hand. "I ask you for the last time: will you name your three cards or won't you?"

The Countess made no reply. Hermann saw that she was dead.

CHAPTER FOUR

*7 Mai 18***
Homme sans moeurs et sans religion![5]
CORRESPONDENCE

Still in her ball dress, Lisaveta Ivanovna sat in her room, lost in thought. On her arrival home, she had quickly dismissed the sleepy maid who had reluctantly offered her services, had said that she would undress herself, and with a tremulous heart had gone up to her room, expecting to find Hermann there and yet hoping not to find him. Her first glance assured her of his absence and she thanked her fate for the obstacle that had prevented their meeting. She sat down, without undressing, and began to recall all the circumstances which had lured her so far in so short a time. It was not three weeks since she had first seen the young man from the window—and yet she was already in correspondence with him, and already he had managed to persuade her to grant him a nocturnal meeting! She knew his name only because some of his letters had been signed; she had never spoken to him, nor heard his voice, nor heard anything about him . . . until that very evening. Strange thing! That very evening, Tomsky, vexed with the Princess Polina *** for not flirting with him as she usually did, had wished to revenge himself by a show of indifference: he had therefore summoned Lisaveta Ivanovna and together they had danced an endless mazurka. All the time they were dancing, he had teased her about her partiality to officers of the Engineers, had assured her that he knew far more than she would have

5. "A man without morals and without religion!"

supposed possible, and indeed, some of his jests were so successfully aimed that on several occasions Lisaveta Ivanovna had thought that her secret was known to him.

"From whom have you discovered all this?" she asked, laughing.

"From a friend of the person whom you know so well," Tomsky answered; "from a most remarkable man!"

"Who is this remarkable man?"

"He is called Hermann."

Lisaveta made no reply, but her hands and feet turned quite numb.

"This Hermann," Tomsky continued, "is a truly romantic figure: he has the profile of a Napoleon, and the soul of a Mephistopheles. I should think that he has at least three crimes on his conscience. . . . How pale you have turned. . . . !"

"I have a headache. . . . What did this Hermann—or whatever his name is—tell you?"

"Hermann is most displeased with his friend: he says that he would act quite differently in his place . . . I even think that Hermann himself has designs on you; at any rate he listens to the exclamations of his enamoured friend with anything but indifference."

"But where has he seen me?"

"At church, perhaps; on a walk—God only knows! Perhaps in your room, whilst you were asleep: he's quite capable of it . . ."

Three ladies approaching him with the question: "*oublie ou regret?*"[6] interrupted the conversation which had become so agonisingly interesting to Lisaveta Ivanovna.

The lady chosen by Tomsky was the Princess Polina *** herself. She succeeded in clearing up the misunderstanding between them during the many turns and movements of the dance, after which he conducted her to her chair. Tomsky returned to his own place. He no longer had any thoughts for Hermann or Lisaveta Ivanovna, who desperately wanted to renew her interrupted conversation; but the mazurka came to an end and shortly afterwards the old Countess left.

Tomsky's words were nothing but ball-room chatter, but they made a deep impression upon the mind of the young dreamer. The portrait, sketched by Tomsky, resembled the image she herself had formed of Hermann, and thanks to the latest romantic novels, Hermann's quite commonplace face took on attributes that both frightened and captivated her imagination. Now she sat, her uncovered arms crossed, her head, still adorned with flowers, bent over her bare shoulders. . . . Suddenly the door opened, and Hermann entered. She shuddered.

"Where have you been?" she asked in a frightened whisper.

6. The ladies cut in, offering the man a choice: *oublie* (forgetting) or *regret*. He does not know which lady is which. He chooses correctly the one with whom he wants to dance.

"In the old Countess' bedroom," Hermann answered: "I have just left it. The Countess is dead."

"Good God! What are you saying?"

"And it seems," Hermann continued, "that I am the cause of her death."

Lisaveta Ivanovna looked at him, and the words of Tomsky echoed in her mind: "he has at least three crimes on his conscience"! Hermann sat down beside her on the window sill and told her everything.

Lisaveta Ivanovna listened to him with horror. So those passionate letters, those ardent demands,the whole impertinent and obstinate pursuit—all that was not love! Money—that was what his soul craved for! It was not she who could satisfy his desire and make him happy! The poor ward had been nothing but the unknowing assistant of a brigand, of the murderer of her aged benefactress! . . . She wept bitterly, in an agony of belated repentance. Hermann looked at her in silence; his heart was also tormented; but neither the tears of the poor girl nor the astounding charm of her grief disturbed his hardened soul. He felt no remorse at the thought of the dead old lady. He felt dismay for only one thing: the irretrievable loss of the secret upon which he had relied for enrichment.

"You are a monster!" Lisaveta Ivanovna said at last.

"I did not wish for her death," Hermann answered. "My pistol wasn't loaded."

They were silent.

The day began to break. Lisaveta Ivanovna extinguished the flickering candle. A pale light lit up her room. She wiped her tear-stained eyes and raised them to Hermann: he sat by the window, his arms folded and with a grim frown on his face. In this position he bore an astonishing resemblance to a portrait of Napoleon. Even Lisaveta Ivanovna was struck by the likeness.

"How am I going to get you out of the house?" Lisaveta Ivanovna said at last. "I had thought of leading you along the secret staircase, but that would mean going past the Countess' bedroom, and I am afraid."

"Tell me how to find this secret staircase; I'll go on my own."

Lisaveta Ivanovna stood up, took a key from her chest of drawers, handed it to Hermann, and gave him detailed instructions. Hermann pressed her cold, unresponsive hand, kissed her bowed head and left.

He descended the winding staircase and once more entered the Countess' bedroom. The dead old lady sat as if turned to stone; her face expressed a deep calm. Hermann stopped before her and gazed at her for a long time, as if wishing to assure himself of the dreadful truth; finally, he went into the study, felt for the door behind the silk

wall hangings, and, agitated by strange feelings, he began to descend the dark staircase.

"Along this very staircase," he thought, "perhaps at this same hour sixty years ago, in an embroidered coat, his hair dressed *à l'oiseau royal*,[7] his three-cornered hat pressed to his heart, there may have crept into this very bedroom a young and happy man now long since turned to dust in his grave—and to-day the aged heart of his mistress ceased to beat."

At the bottom of the staircase Hermann found a door, which he opened with the key Lisaveta Ivanovna had given him, and he found himself in a corridor which led into the street.

CHAPTER FIVE

That evening there appeared before me
*the figure of the late Baroness von V***
She was all in white and she said to me:
"How are you, Mr. Councillor!"

SWEDENBORG[8]

Three days after the fateful night, at nine o'clock in the morning, Hermann set out for the *** monastery, where a funeral service for the dead Countess was going to be held. Although unrepentant, he could not altogether silence the voice of conscience, which kept on repeating: "You are the murderer of the old woman!" Having little true religious belief, he was extremely superstitious. He believed that the dead Countess could exercise a harmful influence on his life, and he had therefore resolved to be present at the funeral, in order to ask her forgiveness.

The church was full. Hermann could scarcely make his way through the crowd of people. The coffin stood on a rich catafalque beneath a velvet canopy. Within it lay the dead woman, her arms folded upon her chest, and dressed in a white satin robe, with a lace cap on her head. Around her stood the members of her household: servants in black coats, with armorial ribbons upon their shoulders and candles in their hands; the relatives—children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren—in deep mourning. Nobody cried; tears would have been *une affectation*. The Countess was so old that her death could have surprised nobody, and her relatives had long considered her as having outlived herself. A young bishop pronounced the funeral sermon. In simple, moving words, he described the peaceful end of the righteous woman, who for many years had been in quiet and touch-

7. Literally, "in the style of the royal bird": an antiquated and elaborate hair style. 8. Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772), Swedish theologian, believed that he had several experiences of divine revelation, some involving appearances to him of the dead.

ing preparation for a Christian end. "The angel of death found her," the speaker said, "waiting for the midnight bridegroom, vigilant in godly meditation." The service was completed with sad decorum. The relatives were the first to take leave of the body. Then the numerous guests went up to pay final homage to her who had so long participated in their frivolous amusements. They were followed by all the members of the Countess' household, the last of whom was an old housekeeper of the same age as the Countess. She was supported by two young girls who led her up to the coffin. She had not the strength to bow down to the ground—and merely shed a few tears as she kissed the cold hand of her mistress. After that, Hermann decided to approach the coffin. He knelt down and for several minutes lay on the cold floor, which was strewn with fir branches; at last he got up, as pale as the dead woman herself; he went up the steps of the catafalque and bent his head over the body of the Countess. . . . At that very moment it seemed to him that the dead woman gave him a mocking glance, and winked at him. Hermann, hurriedly stepping back, missed his footing, and crashed on his back against the ground. He was helped to his feet. At the same moment, Lisaveta Ivanovna was carried out in a faint to the porch of the church. These events disturbed the solemnity of the gloomy ceremony for a few moments. A subdued murmur rose among the congregation, and a tall, thin chamberlain, a near relative of the dead woman, whispered in the ear of an Englishman standing by him that the young officer was the Countess' illegitimate son, to which the Englishman replied coldly: "Oh?"

For the whole of that day Hermann was exceedingly troubled. He went to a secluded inn for dinner and, contrary to his usual custom and in the hope of silencing his inward agitation, he drank heavily. But the wine fired his imagination still more. Returning home, he threw himself on to his bed without undressing, and fell into a heavy sleep.

It was already night when he awoke: the moon lit up his room. He glanced at his watch; it was a quarter to three. He found he could not go back to sleep; he sat down on his bed and thought about the funeral of the old Countess.

At that moment somebody in the street glanced in at his window, and immediately went away again. Hermann paid no attention to the incident. A minute or so later, he heard the door into the front room being opened. Hermann imagined that it was his orderly, drunk as usual, returning from some nocturnal outing. But he heard unfamiliar footsteps and the soft shuffling of slippers. The door opened: a woman in a white dress entered. Hermann mistook her for his old wet-nurse and wondered what could have brought her out at that time of the night. But the woman in white glided across the room

and suddenly appeared before him—and Hermann recognised the Countess!

"I have come to you against my will," she said in a firm voice, "but I have been ordered to fulfill your request. Three, seven, ace, played in that order, will win for you, but only on condition that you play not more than one card in twenty-four hours, and that you never play again for the rest of your life. I'll forgive you my death if you marry my ward, Lisaveta Ivanovna. . . ."

With these words, she turned round quietly, walked towards the door and disappeared, her slippers shuffling. Herman heard the door in the hall bang, and again saw somebody look in at him through the window.

For a long time Hermann could not collect his senses. He went out into the next room. His orderly was lying asleep on the floor; Hermann could scarcely wake him. The orderly was, as usual, drunk, and it was impossible to get any sense out of him. The door into the hall was locked. Hermann returned to his room, lit a candle, and recorded the details of his vision.

CHAPTER SIX

"Attendez!"
"How dare you say to me: 'Attendez'?"
"Your Excellency, I said: 'Attendez, sir'!"[9]

Two fixed ideas can no more exist in one mind than, in the physical sense, two bodies can occupy one and the same place. "Three, seven, ace" soon eclipsed from Hermann's mind the form of the dead old lady. "Three, seven, ace" never left his thoughts, were constantly on his lips. At the sight of a young girl, he would say: "How shapely she is! Just like the three of hearts." When asked the time, he would reply: "About seven." Every pot-bellied man he saw reminded him of an ace. "Three, seven, ace," assumed all possible shapes, persecuted him in his sleep: the three bloomed before him in the shape of some luxuriant flower, the seven took on the appearance of a Gothic gateway, the ace—of an enormous spider. To the exclusion of all others, one thought alone occupied his mind—making use of the secret which had cost him so much. He began to think of retirement and of travel. He wanted to try his luck in the public gaming-houses of Paris. Chance spared him the trouble.

There was in Moscow a society of rich gamblers, presided over by the celebrated Chekalinsky, a man whose whole life had been spent at the card-table, and who had amassed millions long ago, accepting

9. Attendants at the gaming table called "Attendez" ["Wait"] to indicate the end of the period to place bets. 1. Betting against the dealer.

his winnings in the form of promissory notes and paying his losses with ready money. His long experience had earned him the confidence of his companions, and his open house, his famous cook and his friendliness and gaiety had won him great public respect. He arrived in Petersburg. The younger generation flocked to his house, forgetting balls for cards, and preferring the enticements of faro to the fascinations of courtship. Narumov took Hermann to meet him.

They passed through a succession of magnificent rooms, full of polite and attentive waiters. Several generals and privy councillors were playing whist; young men, sprawled out on brocade divans, were eating ices and smoking their pipes. In the drawing-room, seated at the head of a long table, around which were crowded about twenty players, the host kept bank. He was a most respectable-looking man of about sixty; his head was covered with silvery grey hair, and his full, fresh face expressed good nature; his eyes, enlivened by a perpetual smile, shone brightly. Narumov introduced Hermann to him. Chekalinsky shook his hand warmly, requested him not to stand on ceremony, and went on dealing.

The game lasted a long time. More than thirty cards lay on the table. Chekalinsky paused after each round in order to give the players time to arrange their cards, wrote down their losses, listened politely to their demands, and more politely still allowed them to retract any stake accidentally left on the table. At last the game finished. Chekalinsky shuffled the cards and prepared to deal again.

"Allow me to place a stake," Hermann said, stretching out his hand from behind a fat gentleman who was punting[1] there.

Chekalinsky smiled and nodded silently, as a sign of his consent. Narumov laughingly congratulated Hermann on forswearing a long-standing principle and wished him a lucky beginning.

"I've staked," Hermann said, as he chalked up the amount, which was very considerable, on the back of his card.

"How much is it?" asked the banker, screwing up his eyes. "Forgive me, but I can't make it out."

"47,000 roubles," Hermann replied.

At these words every head in the room turned, and all eyes were fixed on Hermann.

"He's gone out of his mind!" Narumov thought.

"Allow me to observe to you," Chekalinsky said with his invariable smile, "that your stake is extremely high: nobody here has ever put more than 275 roubles on any single card."

"What of it?" retorted Hermann. "Do you take me or not?"

Chekalinsky, bowing, humbly accepted the stake.

"However, I would like to say," he said, "that, being judged wor-

1. Betting against the dealer.

thy of the confidence of my friends, I can only bank against ready money. For my own part, of course, I am sure that your word is enough, but for the sake of the order of the game and of the accounts, I must ask you to place your money on the card."

Hermann drew a banknote from his pocket and handed it to Chekalinsky who, giving it a cursory glance, put it on Hermann's card.

He began to deal. On the right a nine turned up, on the left a three.[2]

"The three wins," said Hermann, showing his card.

A murmur arose among the players. Chekalinsky frowned, but instantly the smile returned to his face.

"Do you wish to take the money now?" he asked Hermann.

"If you would be so kind."

Chekalinsky drew a number of banknotes from his pocket and settled up immediately. Hermann took up his money and left the table. Narumov was too astounded even to think. Hermann drank a glass of lemonade and went home.

The next evening he again appeared at Chekalinsky's. The host was dealing. Hermann walked up to the table; the players already there immediately gave way to him. Chekalinsky bowed graciously.

Hermann waited for the next deal, took a card and placed on it his 47,000 roubles together with the winnings of the previous evening.

Chekalinsky began to deal. A knave turned up on the right, a seven on the left.

Hermann showed his seven.

There was a general cry of surprise, and Chekalinsky was clearly disconcerted. He counted out 94,000 roubles and handed them to Hermann, who pocketed them coolly and immediately withdrew.

The following evening Hermann again appeared at the table. Everyone was expecting him; the generals and privy councillors abandoned their whist in order to watch such unusual play. The young officers jumped up from their divans; all the waiters gathered in the drawing-room. Hermann was surrounded by a crowd of people. The other players held back their cards, impatient to see how Hermann would get on. Hermann stood at the table and prepared to play alone against the pale but still smiling Chekalinsky. Each unsealed a pack of cards. Chekalinsky shuffled. Hermann drew and placed his card, covering it with a heap of banknotes. It was like a duel. A deep silence reigned all around.

His hands shaking, Chekalinsky began to deal. On the right lay a queen, on the left an ace.

2. Bets in faro are made on the positions of cards. A player selects a card and places it face down in front of him; if the card turns up on the dealer's left, the player wins; if on his right, the dealer wins.

"The ace wins," said Hermann and showed his card.

"Your queen has lost," Chekalinsky said kindly.

Hermann started: indeed, instead of an ace, before him lay the queen of spades. He could not believe his eyes, could not understand how he could have slipped up.

At that moment it seemed to him that the queen of spades winked at him and smiled. He was struck by an unusual likeness . . .

"The old woman!" he shouted in terror.

Chekalinsky gathered up his winnings. Hermann stood motionless. When he left the table, people began to converse noisily.

"Famously punted!" the players said.

Chekalinsky shuffled the cards afresh; play went on as usual.

CONCLUSION

Hermann went mad. He is now installed in Room 17 at the Obukhov Hospital; he answers no questions, but merely mutters with unusual rapidity: "Three, seven, ace! Three, seven, queen!"

Lisaveta Ivanovna has married a very agreeable young man, who has a good position in the service somewhere; he is the son of the former steward of the old Countess. Lisaveta Ivanovna is bringing up a poor relative.

Tomsky has been promoted to the rank of Captain, and is going to marry Princess Polina.

VICTOR HUGO
1802–1885

Combining a vivid sense of the value of the concrete particular with his period's faith in the transformative force of imagination, Victor Hugo was fully aware of his role as his generation's most powerful representative of French Romanticism. Born in Besançon, to parents at odds with one another in politics as in other respects (his mother was a royalist, his father a Napoleonic army officer), the child moved with his family to Paris at the age of two. He began in early adolescence to write poetry and verse tragedies and he then defined his literary purpose: "I want to be Chateaubriand or nothing." By the time he was twenty, he had received a royal pension as a reward for a book of poetry. He continued to write in virtually every available genre: poetry, literary criticism, essays on religion and on politics, novels (best-known among them, at least to American audiences, *Les Misérables* and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*). Over some of these genres, he indeed exercised transformative power: his preface to *Cromwell* (1827) provided a manifesto for a new Romantic drama; three years later, *Hernani*, which provoked

battles on opening night between "classicists" and "romantics," embodied the theories there articulated.

Hugo felt different kinds of political allegiance at different times of his life. His father had taught him to admire Napoleon as a hero; he later became a royalist and was made a peer in 1845. On the other hand, after the 1848 revolution he was elected to the Constitutional Assembly. In 1851, however, after President Louis Napoléon seized power, Hugo exiled himself to the island of Guernsey in the English Channel, where he wrote voluminously for the next twenty years. Returning to Paris in 1871, he spent most of his time there for the rest of his life, increasingly honored as a national figure, finally buried in the Pantheon after a splendid state funeral.

The poetry here printed, including pieces as diverse as the lyrical "Reverie" and the epic "Et nox facta est," conveys some sense of Hugo's enormous range of subject and of feeling. He writes in the role of poet ("Reverie"), begging for enlivening force in the landscape, demonstrating his own imaginative energy in the act of conjuring up on the page images that might inspire him in the world outside; or he writes as grieving father, poignantly evoking the psychic desolation that prevents him from responding to natural beauty; or as helpless onlooker to human misery caused by the arbitrary destructiveness of a despot. He imagines the emotion of a Satan ("Et nox facta est") as he imagines the human meaning of an old man sowing grain ("Sowing Season. Evening"). He can make the reader see the exact color of woods in autumn and understand the relation between that color and the movement toward winter's bleakness: "You might say in these days of autumn's decline / The sun and rain turned the forest to rust." With equal precision and clarity, he evokes the "boxwood spinning-top" in a dead child's pocket and the gesture of a grandmother bending to remove the corpse's stockings.

Most obviously ambitious of the pieces in this selection is the study of Satan's fall, which exemplifies Hugo's psychological acuity as well as his imaginative involvement with the figure of a supernatural rebel. If Milton was, as Blake maintained, a true poet and hence of the devil's party without knowing it, Hugo obviously knows quite well what it means to take the devil's side. He does not do so in any simple way: he evokes the full horror of Satan as God's defier, "Opening his atrocious wing far from the heavens, / This bat flying from his eternal prison!" But if he makes us feel the terror and the ugliness of Satan's nay-saying, he also suggests the splendor of that refusal. The last star, the star on which Satan blows in a vain effort to prevent its expiration, becomes a kind of image for Satan himself, as it "refused to die without insulting the night," spitting out lava and sulphur. Like God's Word, Satan's word has creative potential—dark potential, to be sure, but still, a power of making. "Death!" he cries: "Later this word was man and was named Cain."

Hugo generates excitement in his verse: the excitement of narrative, or that of imagery, or the thrill of his imaginative intensity. Precisely as he had hoped to do, he led France—indeed, all Europe—toward richer and fuller commitment to the values of Romanticism.

Hugo's long life has attracted considerable biographical attention. Of special interest are Matthew Josephson, *Victor Hugo, a Realistic Biography* (1942), and André Maurois, *Victor Hugo and His World* (1965, tr. Oliver

Bernard, 1966). Other useful studies include John P. Houston, *Victor Hugo* (1975), and Joanna Richardson, *Victor Hugo* (1976).

Reverie[1]

Lo giorno se n' andava, e l'aer bruno
Toglieva gli animai che sono 'n terra,
Dalle fatiche loro.

DANTE[2]

Oh, leave me! It's time for the horizon to
Hide in smoke a rough forehead under a circle of mist,
Time for the giant star[3] to grow red and fade away.
Alone the great yellowing wood makes gold the hill:
You might say in these days of autumn's decline
The sun and rain turned the forest to rust.

Oh! Who will suddenly bring to life,
Appearing over there—while I alone dream at the window
And the shadow darkens in the corridor deep—
Some Moorish village, in its dazzle unique
Like the rocket splayed out in a sheaf
Piercing this fog with arrows of gold.

Oh spirits, let it come to inspire and to quicken,
My songs darkened again like an autumn sky,
Its magic reflection cast in my eyes,
Lengthily, subsiding in stifled sounds,
Notching the thousand towers of its fairy palaces
In the horizon of violet, in haze and in mist.

Tomorrow, At Daybreak[4]

Tomorrow, at daybreak, when the countryside whitens
I shall set out. You wait for me, I know.
I shall go through the forest, shall go by the mountain:
I cannot stay far from you any more.

I shall walk, eyes fixed upon my thoughts,
Seeing nothing outside me, hearing no sound,

1. All selections translated by Mary Ann Caws. 2. "The light was departing. The brown air drew down / all the earth's creatures, calling them to rest / from their day-roving." Inferno II, 1–3: the end of Dante's first day in Hell. 3. The sun. 4. Written on September 4, 1847, the anniversary of the death by drowning four years earlier of Hugo's beloved daughter, Léopoldine.

Alone, unrecognized, my back bent, hands clasped,
Sorrowing, and day for me will be as night.

I shall not look on the gold of evening falling
Nor on the sails descending distant towards Harfleur,[5]
And when I come, shall lay upon your grave
A bouquet of green holly and of flowering briar.[6]

Memory of the Night of the Fourth[7]

The child had been struck by two bullets in the head.
The dwelling was clean and modest, peaceful and good.
Above a picture, a blessed branch,[8] and in the room
An old grandmother—weeping.
We undressed him in silence. His pale mouth open.
Death was clouding over his vivid eye
His arms hanging down seemed a cry for help.
In his pocket, a boxwood spinning-top.
You could have put your fingers in the slash of his wounds.
Have you ever seen blackberries bleeding in the hedges?
His skull was split open like a log.
The old woman watched them undress him.
Saying: "How white he is! bring the lamp closer.
Oh God! How his poor hair sticks to his forehead!"
And when it was over, took him on her knees.
The night was mournful; you could hear shots
In the street where others were being killed.
"We have to bury the child," some of us said.
And we took a white sheet from the walnut chest.
Then the grandmother carried him to the hearth
As if to warm his stiffened limbs.
Alas! what death touches with its cold hands
Can no longer be warmed at the hearths of this world.
She bent her head over and removed his stockings
And her old hands clasped the dead child's feet.
"Isn't this enough to break your heart,"
She cried. "Sir, he was scarcely eight!
His teachers—for he went to school—were pleased with him.
If I had a letter to send, Sir,
It was he who wrote it. Are they going

5. City near the north coast of France, where Léopoldine was buried. 6. Evergreen plants (symbols of immortality), one growing in the woods and the other on the mountains. 7. On December 4, 1851, soldiers of Louis Napoléon Bonaparte (who had overthrown the French Republic two days before) marched through Paris shooting at will to discourage any opposition from the populace. 8. A palm branch hung above a religious picture.

To start killing children now? Oh then
They are really villains! Look,
This morning he was playing right here by the window!
Can you imagine their killing my little one, can you?
Just walking in the street, and they shot at him.
He was gentle and kind, Sir, just like little Jesus.
As for me, I'm old and it would be easy for me to go;
How could it have hurt Mr. Bonaparte
To have killed me instead of my child!"
She stopped speaking, sobs stifling her,
Then said, and everyone was weeping around her:
"What will become of me now I'm all alone?
Why don't you tell me that?
Alas! I had nothing else left from his mother.
Why did they kill him! Someone has to explain.
The child didn't shout 'Long live the Republic!' "
We kept quiet, standing there solemn, hats off,
Trembling before this inconsolable grief.
Ah mother, you don't understand politics.
Monsieur Napoleon, that's his real name,[9]
Is poor and a prince; loves palaces;
Likes to have horses, valets, money
For his gaming, his table, his bedroom,
His hunts, and he maintains
Family, church and society,
He wants Saint-Cloud,[1] rose-carpeted in summer,
So prefects and mayors can respect him.
That's why it has to be this way: old grandmothers
With their poor gray fingers shaking with age
Must sew in winding-sheets children of seven.

Et nox facta est[2]

I

He[3] had been falling in the abyss some four thousand years.

Never had he yet managed to grasp a peak,
Nor lift even once his towering forehead.
He sank deeper in the dark and the mist, aghast,

9. Louis Napoléon rose to power by emphasizing his relationship to Emperor Napoléon I (the "great" Napoléon); he crowned himself Napoléon III and did not wish to be called by the family name of Bonaparte. 1. The summer residence of French rulers. 2. Written as part of *The End of Satan*, an epic poem never completed. The Latin title, "And There Was Night," suggests the Biblical "And there was light" (Genesis 1:3). 3. Satan, formerly the rebellious archangel Lucifer, thrown out of heaven by God. (Revelation 12:7–9 and Isaiah 14:12)

Alone, and behind him, in the eternal nights,
His wing feathers fell more slowly still.

He fell dumbfounded, grim, and silent,
Sad, his mouth open and his feet towards the heavens,
The horror of the chasm imprinted on his livid face.
He cried: "Death!" his fists stretched out in the empty dark.
Later this word was man and was named Cain.[4]

He was falling. A rock struck his hand quite suddenly;
He held on to it, as a dead man holds on to his tomb,
And stopped. Someone, from on high, cried out to him: "Fall!
The suns will go out around you, accursed!"
And the voice was lost in the immensity of horror.
And pale, he looked toward the eternal dawn.
The suns were far off, but shone still.
Satan raised his head and spoke, his arms in the air:
"You lie!" This word was later the soul of Judas.[5]

Like the gods of bronze erect upon their pilasters,
He waited a thousand years, eyes fixed upon the stars.
The suns were far off, but were still shining.
The thunder then rumbled in the skies unhearing, cold.
Satan laughed, and spat towards the thunder.
Filled by the visionary shadow, the immensity
Shivered. This spitting out was later Barabbas.[6]

A passing breath made him fall lower still.

II

The fall of the damned one began once again.—Terrible,
Somber, and pierced with holes luminous as a sieve,
The sky full of suns withdrew, brightness
Trembled, and in the night the great fallen one,
Naked, sinister, and pulled by the weight of his crime,
Fell, and his head wedging the abyss apart.
Lower! Lower, and still lower! Everything presently
Fled from him; no obstacle to seize in passing,
No mountain, no crumbling rock, no stone,
Nothing, shadow! and from fright he closed his eyes.

4. The first murderer, Son of Adam and brother of Abel, the victim (Genesis 4:1–15). 5. Judas Iscariot, the apostle who betrayed Christ (Matthew 26:47–50, 27:35). 6. The condemned criminal who was freed instead of Christ (Mark 15:6–15).

And when they opened, three suns only
Shone, and shadow had eaten away the firmament.
All the other suns had perished.

III

A rock
Emerged from blackest mist like some arm approaching.
He grasped it, and his feet touched summits.

Then the dreadful being called Never
Dreamed. His forehead sank between his guilty hands.
The three suns, far off, like three great eyes,
Watched him, and he watched them not.
Space resembled our earthly plains,
At evening, when the horizon sinking, retreating,
Blackens under the white eyes of the ghostly twilight.
Long rays entwined the feet of the great exile.
Behind him his shadow filled the infinite.
The peaks of chaos mingled in themselves.
In an instant he felt some horrendous growth of wings;
He felt himself become a monster, and that the angel in him
Was dying, and the rebel then knew regret.
He let his shoulder, so bright before,
Quiver in the hideous cold of membraned wing,
And folding his arms with his head lifted high,
This bandit, as if grown greater through affront,
Alone in these depths that only ruin inhabits,
Looked steadily at the shadow's cave.
The noiseless darkness grew in the nothingness.
Obscure opacity closed off the gaping sky;
And making beyond the last promontory
A triple crack in the black pane,
The three suns mingled their three lights.
You would have thought them three wheels of a chariot of fire,
Broken after some battle in the high firmament.
Like prows, the mountains from the mist emerged.
"So," cried Satan, "so be it! still I can see!
He shall have the blue sky, the black sky is mine.
Does he think I will come weeping to his door?
I hate him. Three suns suffice. What do I care?
I hate the day, the blueness, fragrance and the light."

Suddenly he shivered; there remained only one.

IV

The abyss was fading. Nothing kept its shape.
Darkness seemed to swell its giant wave.
Something nameless and submerged, something
That is no longer, takes it leave, falls silent;
And no one could have said, in this deep horror,
If this frightful remnant of a mystery or a world,
Like the vague mist where the dream takes flight,
Was called shipwreck or was called night;
And the archangel felt himself become a phantom.
He shouted: "Hell!" This word later made Sodom.[7]

And the voice repeated slowly on his forehead:
"Accursed! all about you the stars will go dark."

And already the sun was only a star.

V

And all disappeared slowly under a veil.
Then the archangel quaked; Satan learned to shiver.
Toward the star trembling livid on the horizon
He hurled himself, leaping from peak to peak.
Then, although with horror at the wings of a beast,
Although it was the clothing of emprisonment,
Like a bird going from bush to bush,
Horrendous he took his flight from mount to mount,
And this convict began running in his cell.

He ran, he flew, he shouted: "Star of gold! Brother![8]
Wait for me! I'm running! Don't go out yet!
Don't leave me alone!"

Thus the monster
Crossed the first lakes of the dead immensity,
Former chaos, emptied and already stagnant,
And into the lugubrious depths he plunged.

Now the star was only a spark.

He went down further in universal shadow,
Sank further, cast himself wallowing in the night,
Climbed the filthy mountains, their damp gleaming front,

7. Biblical city, with Gomorrah a symbol of corruption and decadence. Both were destroyed by God (Genesis 18:20–19:28). 8. Satan's original name, Lucifer, means Light-bearer.

Whose base is unsteady in the cesspool deeps,
And trembling stared before him.

The spark
Was only a red dot in the depth of the dark abyss.

VI

As between two battlements the archer leans
On the wall, when twilight has reached his keep,
Wild he leaned from the mountain top,
And upon the star, hoping to arouse its flame,
He started to blow as upon some ember.
And anguish caused his fierce nostrils to swell.
The breath rushing from his chest
Is now upon earth and called hurricane.

With his breath a great noise stirred the shadow, an ocean
No being dwells in and no fires illumine.
The mountains found nearby took their flight,
The monstrous chaos full of fright arose
And began to shriek: Jehovah Jehovah!
The infinite opened, rent apart like a cloth,
But nothing moved in the lugubrious star;
And the damned one, crying: "Don't go out yet! I'll go on!
I'll get there!" resumed again his desperate flight.
And the glaciers mingled with the nights resembling them
Turned on their backs like frightened beasts,
And the black tornadoes and the hideous chasms
Bent in terror, while above them,
Flying toward the star like some arrow to the goal,
There passed, wild and haggard, this terrible supplicant.

And ever since it has seen this frightening flight,
This bitter abyss, aghast like a fleeing man
Retains forever the horror and the craze,
So monstrous was it to see, in the shadow immense,
Opening his atrocious wing far from the heavens,
This bat flying from his eternal prison!

VII

He flew for ten thousand years.

For ten thousand years,
Stretching forth his livid neck and his frenzied hands,

He flew without finding a peak on which to rest.
The star seemed sometimes to fade and to go out,
And the horror of the tomb caused the angel to shiver;
Then a pale brightness, vague, strange, uncertain,
Reappeared: and in joy, he cried: "Onward!"
Around him hovered the north wind birds.
He was flying. The infinite never ceases to start again.
His flight circled immense in that sea.
The night watched his horrible talons fleeing.
As a cloud feels its whirlwinds fall,
He felt his strength crumble in the chasm.
The winter murmured: tremble! and the shadow said: suffer!

Finally he perceived a black peak far off
Which a fearsome reflection in the shadow inflamed.
Satan, like a swimmer in his effort supreme,
Stretched out his wing, with claws and bald, and specter-pale,
Panting, broken, tired, and smoking with sweat,
He sank down on the edge of the abrupt descent.[9]

VIII

There was the sun dying in the abyss.
The star, in the deepest fog had no air to revive it,
Grew cold, dim, and was slowly destroyed.
Its sinister round was seen in the night;
And in this somber silence its fiery ulcers were seen
Subsiding under a leprosy of dark.
Coal of a world put out! torch blown out by God!
Its crevices still showed a trace of fire,
As if the soul could be seen through holes in the skull.
At the center there quivered and flickered a flame
Now and then licking the outermost edge,
And from each crater flashes came
Shivering like flaming swords,
And fading noiselessly as dreams.
The star was almost black. The archangel was tired
Beyond voice or breath, a pity to see.
And the star in death throes under his savage glance,
Was dying, doing battle. With its somber apertures
Into the cold darkness it spewed now and again
Burning streams, crimson lumps, and smoking hills,
Rocks foaming with initial brightness:
As if this giant of life and light

9. Literally, *escarpment*, the steep wall before a fortification or cliff.

Engulfed by the mist where all is fading,
Had refused to die without insulting the night
And spitting its lava in the shadow's face.
About it time and space and number,
Form, and noise expired, making
The forbidding and black oneness of void.
Then the specter Nothing[1] raised its head from the abyss.

Suddenly, from the heart of the star, a jet of sulphur
Sharp, clamorous like one dying in delirium,
Burst sudden, shining, splendid with surprise,
And lighting from far a thousand deathly forms,
Massive, pierced to the shadow's depths
The monstrous porches of endless deep.
Night and immensity formed
Their angels. Satan, wild and out of breath,
His vision dazzled and full of this flashing,
Beat with his wing, opened his hands and then shivered
And cried: "Despair! see it growing pale!"

The archangel understood, as does the mast in its sinking,
That he was the drowned man of the shadows' flood;
He furled once more his wing with its granite nails,
And wrung his hands. And the star went out.

IX

Now, near the skies, at chasm's edge where nothing changes,
One feather escaped from the archangel's wing
Remained and quivered, pure and white.
The angel on whose forehead the dazzling dawn is born
Saw and grasped it, observing the sublime sky:
"Lord, must it too fall into the abyss?"
God turned about, absorbed in being and in Life,
And said "Do not discard what has not fallen."[2]

* * *

Black caves of the past, porches of time passed
With no date and no radiance, somber, unmeasured,
Cycles previous to man, chaos, heavens,
World terrible and rich in prodigious beings,
Oh fearful fog where the preadamites

1. Satan. 2. In the second part of *The End of Satan*, "Satan's Feather", the feather is brought to life by a divine glance, and becomes the female spirit Liberty. She wins God's permission to plunge into Hell in an attempt to redeem her father (Part III), and in Part IV the repentant archangel is released and recreated as Lucifer.

Appeared, standing in limitless shadow.
Who could fathom you, oh chasms, oh unknown times.
The thinker barefoot like the poor,
Through respect for the One unseen, the sage,
Digs in the depths of origin and age,
Fathoms and seeks beyond the colossi,[3] further
Than the facts witnessed by the present sky,
Reaches with pale visage suspected things,
And finds, lifting the darkness of years
And the layers of days, worlds, voids,
Gigantic centuries dead beneath giants of centuries.
And thus the wise man dreams in the deep of the night
His face illumined by glints of the abyss.

Sowing Season. Evening

It is the moment of twilight.
Seated under a portal, I admire
This end of day illuminating
The last hours of labor.

In the fields bathed by night,
Deeply moved, I gaze on the rags
Of an old man scattering fistfuls
Of future harvest in the furrows.

Tall, his dark silhouette
Towers above the deep ploughing.
The fruitfulness of fleeing days
Forms visibly his belief.

He walks along the endless plain,
Going, coming, casting seeds afar,
Opens his hand once more and begins afresh,
And, a hidden witness, I meditate

While unfolding its veils
The shadow where sound mixes in
Seems to stretch up to the very stars
The august gesture of his sowing.

3. Giants of preadamic time.

Masterpieces of the Nineteenth Century: Realism, Naturalism, and the New Poetry

As was indicated in the preceding introduction, the nineteenth century is (apart from our own) the century of greatest change in the history of Western civilization. The upheavals following the French Revolution broke up the old order of Europe. The Holy Roman Empire and the Papal States were dissolved. Nationalism, nourished by the political and social aspirations of the middle classes, grew by leaps and bounds. "Liberty" became the main political slogan of the century. In different countries and different decades it meant different things: here liberation from the rule of the foreigner, there the emancipation of the serf; here the removal of economic restrictions on trade and manufacturing, there the introduction of a constitution, free speech, parliamentary institutions. Almost all over Europe, the middle classes established their effective rule, though monarchs often remained in more or less nominal power. Two large European countries, Germany and Italy, achieved their centuries-old dreams of political unification. The predominance of France, still marked at the beginning of the century, was broken, and England—or rather Great Britain—ruled the sea throughout the century. The smaller European nations, especially in the Balkans, began to emancipate themselves from foreign rule.

These major political changes were caused by, and in their turn caused, great social and economic changes. The Industrial Revolution which had begun in England in the eighteenth century spread over the Continent and transformed living conditions radically. The enormous increase in the speed and availability of transportation due to the development of railroads and steamships, the greatly increased urbanization following from the establishment of industries, changed the whole pattern of human life in most countries, and made possible, within a century, an unprecedented increase in the population (as much as threefold in most European countries), which was also fostered by the advances of medicine and hygiene. The increase of widespread wealth and prosperity is, in spite of the wretched living conditions and other hardships of the early factory workers, an undeniable fact. The barriers between the social classes diminished appreciably almost every-

where: both the social and the political power of the aristocracy declined. The industrial laborer began to be felt as a political force.

These social and economic changes were closely bound up with shifts in the prevailing outlooks and philosophies. Technological innovation is impossible without the discoveries of science. The scientific outlook, hitherto dominant only in a comparatively limited area, spread widely and permeated almost all fields of human thought and endeavor. It raised enormous hopes for the future betterment of man's condition on earth, especially when Darwin's evolutionary theories fortified the earlier, vaguer faith in unlimited progress. "Liberty," "science," "progress," "evolution" are the concepts which define the mental atmosphere of the nineteenth century.

But tendencies hostile to these were by no means absent. Feudal or Catholic conservatism succeeded, especially in Austria-Hungary, in Russia, and in much of the south of Europe, in preserving old regimes, and the philosophies of a conservative and religious society were reformulated in modern terms. At the same time, in England the very assumptions of the new industrial middle-class society were powerfully attacked by writers such as Carlyle and Ruskin who recommended a return to medieval forms of social cooperation and handicraft. The industrial civilization of the nineteenth century was also opposed by the fierce individualism of many artists and thinkers who were unhappy in the ugly commercial "Philistine" society of the age. The writings of Nietzsche, toward the end of the century, and the whole movement of "art for art's sake," which asserted the independence of the artist from society, are the most obvious symptoms of this revolt. The free-enterprise system and the liberalism of the ruling middle classes also early clashed with the rising proletariat, which was won over to diverse forms of socialism, preaching a new collectivism with the stress on equality. Socialism could have Christian or romantic motivations, or it could become "scientific" and revolutionary, as Marx's brand of socialism (a certain stage of which he called "communism") claimed to be.

While up through the eighteenth century religion was, at least in name, a major force in European civilization, in the nineteenth century there was a marked decrease in its influence on both the intellectual leaders and the masses. Local intense revivals of religious consciousness, such as the Oxford Movement in England, did occur, and the traditional religious institutions were preserved everywhere, but the impact of science on religion was such that many tenets of the old faiths crumbled. The discoveries of astronomy, geology, evolutionary biology, archaeology, and biblical criticism forced, almost everywhere, a restatement of the old creeds. Religion, especially in the Protestant countries, was frequently confined to an inner feeling of religiosity or to a system of morality which preserved the ancient Christian virtues. During the early nineteenth century, in Germany, Hegel and his predecessors and followers tried to interpret the world in spiritual terms outside the bounds of traditional religion. There were many attempts even late in the century to restate this view, but the methods and discoveries of science seemed to invalidate it, and various formulas which took science as their base in building new lay religions of hope in humanity gained popularity. French Positivism, English utilitarianism, the evolutionism of Herbert Spencer, are some of the best-known examples. Meanwhile, for the first

time in history, at least in Europe, profoundly pessimistic and atheistic philosophies arose, of which Schopenhauer's was the most subtle, while a purely physical materialism was the most widespread. Thus the whole gamut of views of the universe was represented during the century in new and impressive formulations.

The plastic arts did not show a similar vitality. For a long time, in most countries, painting and architecture floundered in a sterile eclecticism, in a bewildering variety of historical masquerades in which the neo-Gothic style was replaced by the neo-Renaissance and that by the neo-Baroque and other decorative revivals of past forms. Only in France, painting, with the impressionists, found a new style which was genuinely original. In music the highly romantic art of Richard Wagner attracted most attention, but the individual national schools either continued in their tradition, like Italian opera (Verdi) or founded an idiom of their own, often based on a revival of folklore, as in Russia (Tchaikovsky), Poland (Chopin), Bohemia (Dvořák), and Norway (Grieg).

But literature was the most representative and the most widely influential art of the nineteenth century. It found new forms and methods and expressed the social and intellectual situation of the time most fully and memorably.

REALISM AND NATURALISM

After the great wave of the international romantic movement had spent its force in the fourth decade of the nineteenth century, European literature moved in the direction of what is usually called *realism*. Realism was not a coherent general movement which established itself unchallenged for a long period of time, as classicism had succeeded in doing during the eighteenth century. Exceptions and reservations there were, but still in retrospect the nineteenth century appears as the period of the great realistic writers: Flaubert in France, Dostoevsky and Tolstoy in Russia, Dickens in England, Henry James in America, Ibsen in Norway.

What is meant by realism? The term, in literary use (there is a much older philosophical use), apparently dates back to the Germans at the turn of the century—to Schiller and the Schlegels. It cropped up in France as early as 1826 but became a commonly accepted literary and artistic slogan only in the 1850s. (A review called *Réalisme* began publication in 1856, and a critic, Champfleury, published a volume of critical articles with the title *Le Réalisme* in the following year.) Since then the word has been bandied about, discussed, analyzed, and abused as all slogans are. It is frequently confused with naturalism, an ancient philosophical term for materialism, epicureanism, or any secularism. As a specifically literary term, it crystallized only in France. In French, as in English, naturalist means, of course, simply student of nature, and the analogy between the writer and the naturalist, specifically the botanist and zoologist, was ready at hand. Emile Zola, in the Preface to a new edition of his early novel, *Thérèse Raquin* (1866), proclaimed the naturalist creed most boldly. His book, he claims, is "an analytical labor on two living bodies like that of a surgeon on corpses." He proudly counts himself among the group of "naturalist writers."

The program of the groups of writers and critics who used these terms can be easily summarized. The realists wanted a truthful representation in liter-

ature of reality—that is, of contemporary life and manners. They thought of their method as inductive, observational, and hence "objective." The personality of the author was to be suppressed, or was at least to recede into the background, since reality was to be seen "as it is." The naturalistic program, as formulated by Zola, was substantially the same except that Zola put greater stress on the analogies to science, considering the procedure of the novelist as identical with that of the experimenting scientist. He also more definitely and exclusively embraced the philosophy of scientific materialism, with its deterministic implications, its stress on heredity and environment, while the older realists were not always so clear in drawing the philosophical consequences. These French theories were anticipated, paralleled, or imitated all over the world of Western literature. In Germany, the movement called Young Germany, with which Heine was associated, had propounded a substantially antiromantic realistic program as early as the thirties, but versions of the French theories definitely triumphed there only in the 1880s. In Russia, as early as the forties, the most prominent critic of the time, Vissarion Belinsky, praised the "natural" school of Russian fiction, which described contemporary Russia with fidelity. Italy also, from the late seventies on, produced an analogous movement, which called itself *verismo*. The English-speaking countries were the last to adopt the critical programs and slogans of the Continent: George Moore and George Gissing brought the French theories to England in the late eighties, and in the United States William Dean Howells began his campaign for realism in 1886, when he became editor of *Harper's Magazine*. Realistic and naturalistic theories of literature have since been widely accepted in spite of many twentieth-century criticisms and the whole general trend of twentieth-century literature. Especially in the United States, the contemporary novel is usually considered naturalistic and judged by standards of nature and truth. The officially promoted doctrine in Russia is called "Socialist Realism."

The slogans "realism" and "naturalism" were thus new in the nineteenth century. They served as effective formulas directed against the romantic creed. Truth, contemporaneity, and objectivity were the obvious counterparts of romantic imagination, of romantic historicism and its glorification of the past, and of romantic subjectivity, the exaltation of the ego and the individual. But, of course, the emphasis on truth and objectivity was not really new: these qualities had been demanded by many older, classical theories of imitation, and in the eighteenth century there were great writers such as Diderot who wanted a literal "imitation of life" even on the stage.

The practice of realism, it could be argued, is very old indeed. There are realistic scenes in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and there is plenty of realism in ancient comedy and satire, in medieval stories (fabliaux) like some of Chaucer's and Boccaccio's, in many Elizabethan plays, in the Spanish rogue novels, in the English eighteenth-century novel beginning with Defoe, and so on almost ad infinitum. But while it would be easy to find in early literature anticipations of almost every single element of modern realism, still the systematic description of contemporary society, with a serious purpose, often even with a tragic tone as well, and with sympathy for heroes drawn from the middle and lower classes, was a real innovation of the nineteenth century.

It is usually rash to explain a literary movement in social and political terms. But the new realistic art surely has something to do with the triumph of the middle classes in France after the July revolution in 1830, and in England after the passage of the Reform Bill in 1832, and with the increasing influence of the middle classes in almost every country. Russia is somewhat of an exception as no large middle class could develop there during the nineteenth century. An absolute feudal regime continued in power and the special character of most of Russian literature must be due to this distinction, but even in Russia there emerged an "intelligentsia" (the term comes from Russia) which was open to Western ideas and was highly critical of the czarist regime and its official "ideology."

But while much nineteenth-century literature reflects the triumph of the middle classes, it would be an error to think of the great realistic writers as spokesmen or mouthpieces of the society they described. Balzac was politically a Catholic monarchist who applauded the Bourbon restoration after the fall of Napoleon, but he had an extraordinary imaginative insight into the processes leading to the victory of the middle classes. Flaubert despised the middle-class society of the Third Empire with an intense hatred and the pride of a self-conscious artist. Dickens became increasingly critical of the middle classes and the assumptions of industrial civilization. Dostoevsky, though he took part in a conspiracy against the Russian government early in his life and spent ten years in exile in Siberia, became the propounder of an extremely conservative nationalistic and religious creed which was definitely directed against the revolutionary forces in Russia. Tolstoy, himself a count and a landowner, was violent in his criticism of the czarist regime, especially later in his life, but he cannot be described as friendly to the middle classes, to the aims of the democratic movements in Western Europe, or to the science of the time. Ibsen's political attitude is that of a proud individualist who condemns the "compact majority" and its tyranny. Possibly all art is critical of its society, but in the nineteenth century this criticism became much more explicit, as social and political issues became much more urgent or, at least, were regarded as more urgent by the writing groups. To a far greater degree than in earlier centuries, writers felt their isolation from society, viewed the structure and problems of the prevailing order as debatable and reformable, and in spite of all demands for objectivity became, in many cases, social propagandists and reformers in their own right.

The program of realism, while defensible enough as a reaction against romanticism, raises critical questions which were not answered theoretically by its defenders. What is meant by "truth" of representation? Photographic copying? This seems the implication of many famous pronouncements. "A novel is a mirror walking along the road," said Stendhal as early as 1830. But such statements can hardly be taken literally. All art must select and represent; it cannot be and has never been a simple transcript of reality. What such analogies are intended to convey is rather a claim for an all-inclusiveness of subject matter, a protest against the exclusion of themes which before were considered "low," "sordid," or "trivial" (like the puddles along the road the mirror walks). Chekhov formulated this protest with the usual parallel between the scientist and the writer: "To a chemist nothing on earth is unclean. A writer must be as objective as a chemist; he must

abandon the subjective line: he must know that dungheaps play a very respectable part in a landscape, and that evil passions are as inherent in life as good ones." Thus the "truth" of realistic art includes the sordid, the low, the disgusting, and the evil; and, the implication is, the subject is treated objectively, without interference and falsification by the artist's personality and his own desires.

But in practice, while the realistic artist succeeded in expanding the themes of art, he could not fulfill the demand for total objectivity. Works of art are written by human beings and inevitably express their personalities and their points of view. As Conrad admitted, "even the most artful of writers will give himself (and his morality) away in about every third sentence." Objectivity, in the sense which Zola had in mind when he proposed a scientific method in the writing of novels and conceived of the novelist as a sociologist collecting human documents, is impossible in practice. When it has been attempted, it has led only to bad art, to dullness and the display of inert materials, to the confusion between the art of the novel and reporting, "documentation." The demand for "objectivity" can be understood only as a demand for a specific method of narration, in which the author does not interfere explicitly, in his own name, and as a rejection of personal themes of introspection and reverie.

The realistic program, while it has made innumerable new subjects available to art, also implies a narrowing of its themes and methods—a condemnation of the fantastic, the historical, the remote, the idealized, the "unsullied," the idyllic. Realism professes to present us with a "slice of life." But one should recognize that it is an artistic method and convention like any other. Romantic art could, without offending its readers, use coincidences, improbabilities, and even impossibilities, which were not, theoretically at least, tolerated in realistic art. Ibsen, for instance, avoided many older conventions of the stage: asides, soliloquies, eavesdropping, sudden unmotivated appearances of new characters, and so on; but his dramas have their own marked conventions, which seem today almost as "unnatural" as those of the romantics. Realistic theories of literature cannot be upheld in their literal sense; objective and impersonal truth is unobtainable, at least in art, since all art is a "making," a creating of a world of symbols which differs radically from the world which we call reality. The value of realism lies in its negation of the conventions of romanticism, its expansion of the themes of art, and its new demonstration (never forgotten by artists) that literature has to deal also with its time and society and has, at its best, an insight into reality (not only social reality) which is not necessarily identical with that of science. Many of the great writers make us "realize" the world of their time, evoke an imaginative picture of it which seems truer and will last longer than that of historians and sociologists. But this achievement is due to their imagination and their art, or craft, two requisites which realistic theory tended to forget or minimize.

When we observe the actual practice of the great realistic writers of the nineteenth century, we notice a sharp contradiction between theory and practice, and an independent evolution of the art of the novel which is obscured for us if we pay too much attention to the theories and slogans of the time, even those that the authors themselves propounded. Flaubert, the

high priest of a cult of "art for art's sake," the most consistent advocate of absolute objectivity, was actually, at least in a good half of his work, a writer of romantic fantasies of blood and gold, flesh and jewels. There is some truth in his saying that Madame Bovary is himself, for in the drab story of a provincial adulteress he castigated his own romanticism and romantic dreams.

So too with Dostoevsky. Although some of his settings resemble those of the "crime novel," he is actually a writer of high tragedy, of a drama of ideas in which ordinary reality is transformed into a symbol of the spiritual world. His technique is closely associated with Balzac's (it is significant that his first publication was a translation of Balzac's *Eugénie Grandet*) and thus with many devices of the sensational melodramatic novel of French romanticism. Tolstoy's art is more concretely real than that of any of the other great masters mentioned, yet he is, at the same time, the most personal and even literally autobiographical author in the history of the novel—a writer, besides, who knows nothing of detachment toward social and religious problems, but frankly preaches his own very peculiar religion. And if we turn to Ibsen, we find essentially the same situation. Ibsen began as a writer of historical and fantastic dramas and slowly returned to a style which is fundamentally symbolist. All his later plays are organized by symbols, from the duck of *The Wild Duck* (1884) to the white horses in *Rosmersholm* (1886), the burned manuscript in *Hedda Gabler* (1890), and the tower in *The Master Builder* (1892). Even Zola, the propounder of the most scientific theory, was in practice a novelist who used the most extreme devices of melodrama and symbolism. In *Germinal* (1885), his novel of mining, the mine is the central symbol, alive as an animal, heaving, breathing. It would be an odd reader who could find literal truth in the final catastrophe of the cave-in or even in such "naturalistic" scenes as a dance where the beer oozes from the nostrils of the drinkers.

One could assert, in short, that all the great realists were at bottom romanticists, but it is probably wiser to conclude that they were simply artists who created worlds of imagination and knew (at least instinctively) that in art one can say something about reality only through symbols. The attempts at documentary art, at mere reporting and transcribing, are today forgotten.

THE NEW POETRY

The later nineteenth century cannot, however, be considered simply an age of realism and naturalism. The great exception is poetry. Some poets continued to practice a substantially romantic art, Tennyson, for instance, and Victor Hugo. There were even movements which upheld a definitely romantic, escapist, antirealist program, such as that of the Pre-Raphaelites in England and the Parnassians in France. In France moreover one poet, Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867), was a completely new voice. He deeply influenced the later course of poetry, not in France only, and he remains even today the one French poet read widely outside France. He stimulated the later Symbolist movement which continued to dominate the early twentieth century.

Baudelaire deeply influenced two very different poets: Mallarmé and Rimbaud. Stéphane Mallarmé (1842–1898), an austere figure, a "hermetic" poet who cultivated obscurity, allusiveness, suggestion, was one of the first poets discontent with ordinary language. He attempted to create a separate

poetic language, a language as "magic, words as things." He wanted the personality of the artist to disappear completely behind the work and went so far as to say: "All earthly existence exists to be contained in a book." In his poems he tried to express the mystery of the universe, which he felt to be insoluble and finally empty, Nothingness itself.

Arthur Rimbaud (1854–1891), quite differently, proposed in a famous letter written at the age of sixteen that "the poet should make himself a seer by a long, immense, deliberate disorder of all the senses," all forms of love (homosexual in particular), suffering, and madness. Alcohol and drugs were to encourage hallucination, which led to supernatural illuminations. The disorder of the mind seemed to him sacred. His verse and his prose-poems are a series of vivid images, linked by association, of childhood, nature, city, culminating in a utopia of innocence that he himself never achieved. He led a wandering Bohemian life; at the age of nineteen, he quit writing poetry. He finally came to Ethiopia making his living as a trader in ivory, contracted a disease, and died on a return trip to France in Marseilles in 1891. Rimbaud became a cult figure, his life a myth. He is the quintessential "cursed poet" *(poète maudit)*, the rebellious tramp who renounced poetry and in his misanthropy turned to the most sordid trade in Africa, despising European civilization and bourgeois morality.

As a doctrine, Symbolism was proclaimed only in 1886 by a group headed by a Greek settled in France, Jean Moréas (actually Joannes Papadiamantopoulos, 1856–1910). The group disintegrated quickly, but the name survived and also spread abroad. Symbolism as a term is vague and ambiguous. If it means symbols in religion and art, it permeates all history. In the French movement it means little more than a recommendation of musicality, suggestion, vagueness, and mystery. Often one can recognize Symbolist poetry by its reversal of the relation between thing and image. In most older poetry the thing is the theme and the image illustrates it, while in Symbolism the image assumes materiality and thing remains either hidden or is merely hinted at. The concrete situation is played down with the result that Symbolism lost its local flavor and became a genuinely international movement. Except for the language, poets in very different national traditions sound astonishingly alike. The later stages of Symbolism are best exemplified in the poetry of W. B. Yeats and T. S. Eliot; in prose its influence is marked in Marcel Proust, all represented in this anthology.

FURTHER READING

E. Auerbach, *Mimésis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (1953), is a wide-ranging book (from Homer to Proust), with chapters on nineteenth-century realism. G. J. Becker, ed., *Documents of Literary Realism*, is a useful anthology. H. Levin, *The Gates of Horn. A Study of Five French Realists* (1963), contains much on realism in general, including Stendhal, Balzac, Flaubert, Zola, and Proust. Also helpful is R. Wellek, "The Concept of Realism in Literary Scholarship" in *Concepts of Criticism* (1963).

GUSTAVE FLAUBERT

1821–1880

Gustave Flaubert is rightly considered the exemplary realist novelist. He displays the objectivity, the detachment from his characters demanded by the theory and is a great virtuoso of the art of composition and of style while giving a clear picture of the society of his time. It is likewise a picture in which we can see much of ourselves.

Flaubert was born at Rouen, Normandy, on December 12, 1821, to the chief surgeon of the Hôtel Dieu. He was extremely precocious: by the age of sixteen he was writing stories in the romantic taste, which were published only after his death. In 1840 he went to Paris to study law (he had received his baccalaureate from the local *lycée*), but he failed in his examinations, and in 1843 suffered a sudden nervous breakdown which kept him at home. In 1846 he moved to Croisset, just outside of Rouen on the Seine, where he made his home for the rest of his life, devoting himself to writing. The same year, in Paris, Flaubert met Louise Colet, a minor poet and lady about town, who became his mistress. In 1849–1851 he visited the Levant, traveling extensively in Greece, Syria, and Egypt. After his return he settled down to the writing of *Madame Bovary*, which took him five full years and which was a great popular success. The remainder of his life was uneventful. He made occasional trips to Paris, and one trip, in 1860, to Tunisia to see the ruins of Carthage in preparation for the writing of his novel *Salammbô*. Three more novels followed: *The Sentimental Education* (1869), *The Temptation of St. Anthony* (1874), and the unfinished *Bouvard and Pecuchet* (1881), as well as *Three Tales* (1877), consisting of "A Simple Heart," "The Legend of St. Julian the Hospitaler," and "Herodias." Flaubert died at Croisset on May 8, 1880.

Flaubert's novel *Madame Bovary* (1856) is deservedly considered the showpiece of French realism. It would be impossible to find a novel, certainly before Flaubert, in which humble persons in a humble setting (the story concerns the adulteries and final suicide of the wife of a simple country doctor) are treated with such seriousness, restraint, verisimilitude, and imaginative clarity. There is nothing of Balzac's lurid melodrama, high-pitched tone, and passionate eloquence in Flaubert's masterpiece. At first sight, *Madame Bovary* is the prosaic description of a prosaic life, set in its daily surroundings, the French province of Normandy about the middle of the nineteenth century. Everything is told soberly, objectively. The author hides his feelings completely behind his personages. All the light falls on Emma Bovary, as we follow the story of her romantic dreams, disillusionment, despair. Every scene is superbly realized, with an extraordinary accuracy of observation, and details which at times are based on scientific information. The topography of the two villages, the interior of the houses, great scenes—such as those of the ball, the cattle show, the operation for clubfoot, the opera in Rouen, the arsenic poisoning—imprint themselves vividly on our memory. Early readers were puzzled by Flaubert's attitude toward Emma

Bovary, so accustomed were they to the usual commentary of an author, approving or condemning every action of his characters. But today, when we know the early unpublished writings of Flaubert and his revealing correspondence, there cannot be any doubt about the tone of the book. Behind all the detachment there is a victory of art over temperament, a self-imposed discipline and restraint. It is, in part, the result of a theory of the objectivity, the complete impersonality of art. According to this view, the artist has to disappear behind his creation as God does behind his. Future ages should hardly believe that he lived.

If we listen more carefully, however, we become aware of the author's savage satiric attitude toward the romantic illusions of poor Emma, his hatred for the complacent freethinking apothecary Homais, his contempt for the stupid husband and the callous, weak lovers. The pity of it all comes through only because the author lets the facts speak for themselves.

The story of the composition of *Madame Bovary*, which we know from Flaubert's letters, is one of self-inflicted martyrdom, of an artist perversely clinging to an uncongenial and even repulsive subject because he believes that the subject itself is of no importance and that the artist should, by his art, purge himself of personal indulgences and preferences. It is also the story of a struggle for style, for the "right word" *(mot juste)*, for which Flaubert worked with the suppressed fury of a galley slave.

"A Simple Heart," a late story published in the collection *Three Tales*, is clearly related to *Madame Bovary*. It has the same setting of the Norman countryside, the same houses and farms, some of the same kind of people. And it has the same theme of disillusionment. Félicité is anticipated in *Madame Bovary* by the figure of Catherine Leroux, who at the great agricultural show receives a silver medal, worth twenty-five francs, for fifty-four years of service at one farm. The little old woman, with the "monastic rigidity" of her face, the dumbness and calm of her animal look, has to be almost pushed by the audience to receive her prize. When she walks away with the medal, she is heard muttering, "I'll give it to our *curé* up home, to say some masses for me."

"A Simple Heart," like *Madame Bovary*, treats the life of a humble person with complete objectivity, with vivid concrete imagination, clear in every detail. We see and smell the interiors of the houses and farms, and can visualize the scenes of almost Dutch simplicity. But the story is also connected with the two other stories in the collection, "The Legend of St. Julian the Hospitaler" and "Hérodias." Like these it is a saint's legend: like a saint, Félicité undergoes a Calvary of suffering—the betrayal of her lover, the death of the little girl Virginie, the loss of her nephew, the loss of the parrot. Like a saint, too, she meets savage beasts (a bull in the fields), is lashed by a whip on the road, tends the running ulcer of a dying old man, and finally sees a beatific vision, during the Corpus Christi procession, in which the Holy Ghost and the parrot fuse into one.

But one would miss the implications of Flaubert's sophisticated art if one thought of the story merely as a realistic picture of a servant girl's plight or even as a serious legend of a modern saint. It is no doubt a combination of these two apparently very different types: we can see a social purpose in the picture of the poor oppressed woman, her devotion to a selfish mistress, her

frustration, resignation, and final dying happiness; and we can sense the author's restraint as a device of simplicity to make the tone of the tale approach that of a legend. But such a reading would not capture all the undertones of Flaubert's style. There are disturbing elements in the story, which show that a simple interpretation is insufficient. We have glimpses, for instance, of Flaubert's predilection for the exotic and strange, for the deliberately decorative mosaic: the exotic pictures that constitute "the whole of [Félicité's] literary education," the curious color combinations of the scene at Virginie's deathbed (the spots of red of the candles, the white mist, the yellow face, the blue lips), and the gorgeous Corpus Christi wayside altar—all these clash with the otherwise sober and gray tone of the narrative. More disturbingly, there is an undertone of satire and contemptuous mockery of this humble world. In a letter to a woman correspondent (Mme. Roger de Genettes; June 19, 1876) Flaubert denied that "there is anything ironical as you suppose," and went on to declare that "on the contrary, it is very serious and very sad. I want to excite pity, I want to make sensitive souls weep, as I am one of them myself." But surely this professed intention (which could be interpreted as another instance of irony) cannot refute the evidence of the passages about the parrot, who is shown as grotesque and absurd. He is "almost a son and a lover" to the poor woman. The Holy Ghost on the stained-glass window seems to her to have something of the parrot in him, and Félicité reflects, somewhat surprisingly, that the Holy Ghost must have taken the form of one of her beloved Loulou's ancestors rather than of a dove. In saying her prayers she swerves a little from time to time from the picture of the Holy Ghost toward the stuffed parrot. It is both pathetic and grotesque, but also (though this would be difficult to prove with certainty) blasphemous and mocking, when Félicité dies thinking that "she saw an opening in the heavens, and a gigantic parrot hovering above her head." The Holy Ghost and the parrot are identified not only in the vision of the poor ignorant woman, but also in Flaubert's satire on religion as primitive magic, in his dark picture of ignorance and superstition illuminated only by the faint and futile glow of "a simple heart."

Victor Brombert, *The Novels of Flaubert* (1966), is the best general book in English. Raymond D. Giraud, *Flaubert: A Collection of Critical Essays*, contains selections of essays from modern criticism.

A Simple Heart[1]

I

Madame Aubain's servant Félicité was the envy of the ladies of Pont-l'Évêque[2] for half a century.

She received a hundred francs a year. For that she was cook and general servant, and did the sewing, washing, and ironing; she could bridle a horse, fatten poultry, and churn butter—and she remained faithful to her mistress, unamiable as the latter was.

1. Translated by Arthur McDowall. 2. A village in Normandy on the Toucques River, 25 miles from Caen.

Mme. Aubain had married a gay bachelor without money who died at the beginning of 1809, leaving her with two small children and a quantity of debts. She then sold all her property except the farms of Toucques and Geffosses, which brought in five thousand francs a year at most, and left her house in Saint-Melaine for a less expensive one that had belonged to her family and was situated behind the market.

This house had a slate roof and stood between an alley and a lane that went down to the river. There was an unevenness in the levels of the rooms which made you stumble. A narrow hall divided the kitchen from the "parlour" where Mme. Aubain spent her day, sitting in a wicker easy chair by the window. Against the panels, which were painted white, was a row of eight mahogany chairs. On an old piano under the barometer a heap of wooden and cardboard boxes rose like a pyramid. A stuffed armchair stood on either side of the Louis-Quinze chimney-piece, which was in yellow marble with a clock in the middle of it modelled like a temple of Vesta.[3] The whole room was a little musty, as the floor was lower than the garden.

The first floor began with "Madame's" room: very large, with a pale-flowered wall-paper and a portrait of "Monsieur" as a dandy of the period. It led to a smaller room, where there were two children's cots without mattresses. Next came the drawing-room, which was always shut up and full of furniture covered with sheets. Then there was a corridor leading to a study. The shelves of a large bookcase were respectably lined with books and papers, and its three wings surrounded a broad writing-table in darkwood. The two panels at the end of the room were covered with pen-drawings, water-colour landscapes, and engravings by Audran,[4] all relics of better days and vanished splendour. Félicité's room on the top floor got its light from a dormer-window, which looked over the meadows.

She rose at daybreak to be in time for Mass, and worked till evening without stopping. Then, when dinner was over, the plates and dishes in order, and the door shut fast, she thrust the log under the ashes and went to sleep in front of the hearth with her rosary in her hand. Félicité was the stubbornest of all bargainers; and as for cleanness, the polish on her saucepans was the despair of other servants. Thrifty in all things, she ate slowly, gathering off the table in her fingers the crumbs of her loaf—a twelve-pound loaf expressly baked for her, which lasted for three weeks.

At all times of year she wore a print handkerchief fastened with a pin behind, a bonnet that covered her hair, grey stockings, a red

3. Temple of the Roman goddess of the hearth; it was round and enclosed by columns.
4. Gérard Audran (1640–1703) made engravings of many paintings by Poussin, Mignard, and others.

skirt, and a bibbed apron—such as hospital nurses wear—over her jacket.

Her face was thin and her voice sharp. At twenty-five she looked like forty. From fifty onwards she seemed of no particular age; and with her silence, straight figure, and precise movements she was like a woman made of wood, and going by clockwork.

II

She had had her love-story like another.

Her father, a mason, had been killed by falling off some scaffolding. Then her mother died, her sisters scattered, and a farmer took her in and employed her, while she was still quite little, to herd the cows at pasture. She shivered in rags and would lie flat on the ground to drink water from the ponds; she was beaten for nothing, and finally turned out for the theft of thirty sous which she did not steal. She went to another farm, where she became dairy-maid; and as she was liked by her employers her companions were jealous of her.

One evening in August (she was then eighteen) they took her to the assembly at Colleville. She was dazed and stupefied in an instant by the noise of the fiddlers, the lights in the trees, the gay medley of dresses, the lace, the gold crosses, and the throng of people jigging all together. While she kept shyly apart a young man with a well-to-do air, who was leaning on the shaft of a cart and smoking his pipe, came up to ask her to dance. He treated her to cider, coffee, and cake, and bought her a silk handkerchief; and then, imagining she had guessed his meaning, offered to see her home. At the edge of a field of oats he pushed her roughly down. She was frightened and began to cry out; and he went off.

One evening later she was on the Beaumont road. A big haywagon was moving slowly along; she wanted to get in front of it, and as she brushed past the wheels she recognized Theodore. He greeted her quite calmly, saying she must excuse it all because it was "the fault of the drink." She could not think of any answer and wanted to run away.

He began at once to talk about the harvest and the worthies of the commune, for his father had left Colleville for the farm at Les Écots, so that now he and she were neighbours. "Ah!" she said. He added that they thought of settling him in life. Well, he was in no hurry; he was waiting for a wife to his fancy. She dropped her head; and then he asked her if she thought of marrying. She answered with a smile that it was mean to make fun of her.

"But I am not, I swear!"—and he passed his left hand round her waist. She walked in the support of his embrace; their steps grew slower. The wind was soft, the stars glittered, the huge wagon-load

of hay swayed in front of them, and dust rose from the dragging steps of the four horses. Then, without a word of command, they turned to the right. He clasped her once more in his arms, and she disappeared into the shadow.

The week after Theodore secured some assignations with her.

They met at the end of farmyards, behind a wall, or under a solitary tree. She was not innocent as young ladies are—she had learned knowledge from the animals—but her reason and the instinct of her honour would not let her fall. Her resistance exasperated Theodore's passion; so much so that to satisfy it—or perhaps quite artlessly—he made her an offer of marriage. She was in doubt whether to trust him, but he swore great oaths of fidelity.

Soon he confessed to something troublesome; the year before his parents had bought him a substitute for the army, but any day he might be taken again, and the idea of serving was a terror to him. Félicité took this cowardice of his as a sign of affection, and it redoubled hers. She stole away at night to see him, and when she reached their meeting-place Theodore racked her with his anxieties and urgings.

At last he declared that he would go himself to the prefecture for information, and would tell her the result on the following Sunday, between eleven and midnight.

When the moment came she sped towards her lover. Instead of him she found one of his friends.

He told her that she would not see Theodore any more. To ensure himself against conscription he had married an old woman, Madame Lehoussais, of Toucques, who was very rich.

There was an uncontrollable burst of grief. She threw herself on the ground, screamed, called to the God of mercy, and moaned by herself in the fields till daylight came. Then she came back to the farm and announced that she was going to leave; and at the end of the month she received her wages, tied all her small belongings with a handkerchief, and went to Pont-l'Évêque.

In front of the inn there she made inquiries of a woman in a widow's cap, who, as it happened, was just looking for a cook. The girl did not know much, but her willingness seemed so great and her demands so small that Mme. Aubain ended by saying:

"Very well, then, I will take you."

A quarter of an hour afterwards Félicité was installed in her house.

She lived there at first in a tremble, as it were, at "the style of the house" and the memory of "Monsieur" floating over it all. Paul and Virginie, the first aged seven and the other hardly four, seemed to her beings of a precious substance; she carried them on her back like a horse; it was a sorrow to her that Mme. Aubain would not let her

kiss them every minute. And yet she was happy there. Her grief had melted in the pleasantness of things all round.

Every Thursday regular visitors came in for a game of boston, and Félicité got the cards and foot-warmers ready beforehand. They arrived punctually at eight and left before the stroke of eleven.

On Monday mornings the dealer who lodged in the covered passage spread out all his old iron on the ground. Then a hum of voices began to fill the town, mingled with the neighing of horses, bleating of lambs, grunting of pigs, and the sharp rattle of carts along the street. About noon, when the market was at its height, you might see a tall, hook-nosed old countryman with his cap pushed back making his appearance at the door. It was Robelin, the farmer of Geffosses. A little later came Liébard, the farmer from Toucques—short, red, and corpulent—in a grey jacket and gaiters shod with spurs.

Both had poultry or cheese to offer their landlord. Félicité was invariably a match for their cunning, and they went away filled with respect for her.

At vague intervals Mme. Aubain had a visit from the Marquis de Gremanville, one of her uncles, who had ruined himself by debauchery and now lived at Falaise on his last remaining morsel of land. He invariably came at the luncheon hour, with a dreadful poodle whose paws left all the furniture in a mess. In spite of efforts to show his breeding, which he carried to the point of raising his hat every time he mentioned "my late father," habit was too strong for him, he poured himself out glass after glass and fired off improper remarks. Félicité edged him politely out of the house—"You have had enough, Monsieur de Gremanville! Another time!"—and she shut the door on him.

She opened it with pleasure to M. Bourais, who had been a lawyer. His baldness, his white stock, frilled shirt, and roomy brown coat, his way of rounding the arm as he took snuff—his whole person, in fact, created that disturbance of mind which overtakes us at the sight of extraordinary men.

As he looked after the property of "Madame" he remained shut up with her for hours in "Monsieur's" study, though all the time he was afraid of compromising himself. He respected the magistracy immensely, and had some pretensions to Latin.

To combine instruction and amusement he gave the children a geography book made up of a series of prints. They represented scenes in different parts of the world: cannibals with feathers on their heads, a monkey carrying off a young lady, Bedouins in the desert, the harpooning of a whale, and so on. Paul explained these engravings to Félicité; and that, in fact, was the whole of her literary education.

The children's education was undertaken by Guyot, a poor creature employed at the town hall, who was famous for his beautiful hand and sharpened his penknife on his boots.

When the weather was bright the household set off early for a day at Geffosses Farm.

Its courtyard is on a slope, with the farmhouse in the middle, and the sea looks like a grey streak in the distance.

Félicité brought slices of cold meat out of her basket, and they breakfasted in a room adjoining the dairy. It was the only surviving fragment of a country house which was now no more. The wallpaper hung in tatters, and quivered in the draughts. Mme. Aubain sat with bowed head, overcome by her memories; the children became afraid to speak. "Why don't you play, then?" she would say, and off they went.

Paul climbed into the barn, caught birds, played at ducks and drakes over the pond, or hammered with his stick on the big casks which boomed like drums. Virginie fed the rabbits or dashed off to pick cornflowers, her quick legs showing their embroidered little drawers.

One autumn evening they went home by the fields. The moon was in its first quarter, lighting part of the sky; and mist floated like a scarf over the windings of the Toucques. Cattle, lying out in the middle of the grass, looked quietly at the four people as they passed. In the third meadow some of them got up and made a half-circle in front of the walkers. "There's nothing to be afraid of," said Félicité, as she stroked the nearest on the back with a kind of crooning song; he wheeled round and the others did the same. But when they crossed the next pasture there was a formidable bellow. It was a bull, hidden by the mist. Mme. Aubain was about to run. "No! no! don't go so fast!" They mended their pace, however, and heard a loud breathing behind them which came nearer. His hoofs thudded on the meadow grass like hammers; why, he was galloping now! Félicité turned round, and tore up clods of earth with both hands and threw them in his eyes. He lowered his muzzle, waved his horns, and quivered with fury, bellowing terribly. Mme. Aubain, now at the end of the pasture with her two little ones, was looking wildly for a place to get over the high bank. Félicité was retreating, still with her face to the bull, keeping up a shower of clods which blinded him, and crying all the time, "Be quick! be quick!"

Mme. Aubain went down into the ditch, pushed Virginie first and then Paul, fell several times as she tried to climb the bank, and managed it at last by dint of courage.

The bull had driven Félicité to bay against a rail-fence; his slaver was streaming into her face; another second, and he would have

gored her. She had just time to slip between two of the rails, and the big animal stopped short in amazement.

This adventure was talked of at Pont-l'Évêque for many a year. Félicité did not pride herself on it in the least, not having the barest suspicion that she had done anything heroic.

Virginie was the sole object of her thoughts, for the child developed a nervous complaint as a result of her fright, and M. Poupart, the doctor, advised sea-bathing at Trouville.[5] It was not a frequented place then. Mme. Aubain collected information, consulted Bourais, and made preparations as though for a long journey.

Her luggage started a day in advance, in Liébard's cart. The next day he brought round two horses, one of which had a lady's saddle with a velvet back to it, while a cloak was rolled up to make a kind of seat on the crupper of the other. Mme. Aubain rode on that, behind the farmer. Félicité took charge of Virginie, and Paul mounted M. Lechaptois' donkey, lent on condition that great care was taken of it.

The road was so bad that its five miles took two hours. The horses sank in the mud up to their pasterns, and their haunches jerked abruptly in the effort to get out; or else they stumbled in the ruts, and at other moments had to jump. In some places Liébard's mare came suddenly to a halt. He waited patiently until she went on again, talking about the people who had properties along the road, and adding moral reflections to their history. So it was that as they were in the middle of Toucques, and passed under some windows bowered with nasturtiums, he shrugged his shoulders and said: "There's a Mme. Lehoussais lives there; instead of taking a young man she . . ." Félicité did not hear the rest; the horses were trotting and the donkey galloping. They all turned down a bypath; a gate swung open and two boys appeared; and the party dismounted in front of a manure-heap at the very threshold of the farmhouse door.

When Mme. Liébard saw her mistress she gave lavish signs of joy. She served her a luncheon with a sirloin of beef, tripe, black-pudding, a fricasse of chicken, sparkling cider, a fruit tart, and brandied plums; seasoning it all with compliments to Madame, who seemed in better health; Mademoiselle, who was "splendid" now; and Monsieur Paul, who had "filled out" wonderfully. Nor did she forget their deceased grandparents, whom the Liébards had known, as they had been in the service of the family for several generations. The farm, like them, had the stamp of antiquity. The beams on the ceiling were worm-eaten, the walls blackened with smoke, and the window-panes grey with dust. There was an oak dresser laden with every

5. A town on the English Channel, now a popular resort, some 5 miles from Pont-L'Évêque.

sort of useful article—jugs, plates, pewter bowls, wolf-traps, and sheep-shears; and a huge syringe made the children laugh. There was not a tree in the three courtyards without mushrooms growing at the bottom of it or a tuft of mistletoe on its boughs. Several of them had been thrown down by the wind. They had taken root again at the middle; and all were bending under their wealth of apples. The thatched roofs, like brown velvet and of varying thickness, withstood the heaviest squalls. The cart-shed, however, was falling into ruin. Mme. Aubain said she would see about it, and ordered the animals to be saddled again.

It was another half-hour before they reached Trouville. The little caravan dismounted to pass Écores—it was an overhanging cliff with boats below it—and three minutes later they were at the end of the quay and entered the courtyard of the Golden Lamb, kept by good Mme. David.

From the first days of their stay Virginie began to feel less weak, thanks to the change of air and the effect of the sea-baths. These, for want of a bathing-dress, she took in her chemise; and her nurse dressed her afterwards in a coastguard's cabin which was used by the bathers.

In the afternoons they took the donkey and went off beyond the Black Rocks, in the direction of Hennequeville. The path climbed at first through ground with dells in it like the green sward of a park, and then reached a plateau where grass fields and arable lay side by side. Hollies rose stiffly out of the briary tangle at the edge of the road; and here and there a great withered tree made zigzags in the blue air with its branches.

They nearly always rested in a meadow, with Deauville on their left, Havre on their right, and the open sea in front. It glittered in the sunshine, smooth as a mirror and so quiet that its murmur was scarcely to be heard; sparrows chirped in hiding and the immense sky arched over it all. Mme. Aubain sat doing her needlework; Virginie plaited rushes by her side; Félicité pulled up lavender, and Paul was bored and anxious to start home.

Other days they crossed the Toucques in a boat and looked for shells. When the tide went out sea-urchins, starfish, and jelly-fish were left exposed; and the children ran in pursuit of the foam-flakes which scudded in the wind. The sleepy waves broke on the sand and unrolled all along the beach; it stretched away out of sight, bounded on the land-side by the dunes which parted it from the Marsh, a wide meadow shaped like an arena. As they came home that way, Trouville, on the hill-slope in the background, grew bigger at every step, and its miscellaneous throng of houses seemed to break into a gay disorder.

On days when it was too hot they did not leave their room. From the dazzling brilliance outside light fell in streaks between the laths

of the blinds. There were no sounds in the village; and on the pavement below not a soul. This silence round them deepened the quietness of things. In the distance, where men were caulking, there was a tap of hammers as they plugged the hulls, and a sluggish breeze wafted up the smell of tar.

The chief amusement was the return of the fishing-boats. They began to tack as soon as they had passed the buoys. The sails came down on two of the three masts; and they drew on with the foresail swelling like a balloon, gliding through the splash of the waves, and when they had reached the middle of the harbour suddenly dropped anchor. Then the boats drew up against the quay. The sailors threw quivering fish over the side; a row of carts was waiting, and women in cotton bonnets darted out to take the baskets and give their men a kiss.

One of them came up to Félicité one day, and she entered the lodgings a little later in a state of delight. She had found a sister again—and then Nastasie Barette, "wife of Leroux," appeared, holding an infant at her breast and another child with her right hand, while on her left was a little cabin boy with his hands on his hips and a cap over his ear.

After a quarter of an hour Mme. Aubain sent them off; but they were always to be found hanging about the kitchen, or encountered in the course of a walk. The husband never appeared.

Félicité was seized with affection for them. She bought them a blanket, some shirts, and a stove; it was clear that they were making a good thing out of her. Mme. Aubain was annoyed by this weakness of hers, and she did not like the liberties taken by the nephew, who said "thee" and "thou"[6] to Paul. So as Virginie was coughing and the fine weather gone, she returned to Pont-l'Évêque.

There M. Bourais enlightened her on the choice of a boys' school. The one at Caen was reputed to be the best, and Paul was sent to it. He said his good-byes bravely, content enough at going to live in a house where he would have companions.

Mme. Aubain resigned herself to her son's absence as a thing that had to be. Virginie thought about it less and less. Félicité missed the noise he made. But she found an occupation to distract her; from Christmas onward she took the little girl to catechism every day.

III

After making a genuflexion at the door she walked up between the double rows of chairs under the lofty nave, opened Mme. Aubain's pew, sat down, and began to look about her. The choir stalls were filled with the boys on the right and the girls on the left, and the

6. That is, used the familiar *tu* and *toi* rather than the more respectful *vous*.

curé stood by the lectern. On a painted window in the apse the Holy Ghost looked down upon the Virgin. Another window showed her on her knees before the child Jesus, and a group carved in wood behind the altar-shrine represented St. Michael overthrowing the dragon.

The priest began with a sketch of sacred history. The Garden, the Flood, the Tower of Babel, cities in flames, dying nations, and overturned idols passed like a dream before her eyes; and the dizzying vision left her with reverence for the Most High and fear of his wrath. Then she wept at the story of the Passion. Why had they crucified Him, when He loved the children, fed the multitudes, healed the blind, and had willed, in His meekness, to be born among the poor, on the dung-heap of a stable? The sowings, harvests, wine-presses, all the familiar things that the Gospel speaks of, were a part of her life. They had been made holy by God's passing; and she loved the lambs more tenderly for her love of the Lamb, and the doves because of the Holy Ghost.

She found it hard to imagine Him in person, for He was not merely a bird, but a flame as well, and a breath at other times. It may be His light, she thought, which flits at night about the edge of the marshes, His breathing which drives on the clouds, His voice which gives harmony to the bells; and she would sit rapt in adoration, enjoying the cool walls and the quiet of the church.

Of doctrines she understood nothing—did not even try to understand. The curé discoursed, the children repeated their lesson, and finally she went to sleep, waking up with a start when their wooden shoes clattered on the flagstones as they went away.

It was thus that Félicité, whose religious education had been neglected in her youth, learned the catechism by dint of hearing it; and from that time she copied all Virginie's observances, fasting as she did and confessing with her. On Corpus Christi Day[7] they made a festal altar together.

The first communion loomed distractingly ahead. She fussed over the shoes, the rosary, the book and gloves; and how she trembled as she helped Virginie's mother to dress her!

All through the mass she was racked with anxiety. She could not see one side of the choir because of M. Bourais but straight in front of her was the flock of maidens, with white crowns above their hanging veils, making the impression of a field of snow; and she knew her dear child at a distance by her dainty neck and thoughtful air. The bell tinkled. The heads bowed, and there was silence. As the organ pealed, singers and congregation took up the "Agnus Dei"[8]; then the

7. Feast day commemorating the founding of the sacrament of the Eucharist (Corpus Christi is Latin for body of Christ). 8. "Lamb of God" (i.e., Jesus), a part of the Roman Catholic Mass.

procession of the boys began, and after them the girls rose. Step by step, with their hands joined in prayer, they went towards the lighted altar, knelt on the first step, received the sacrament in turn, and came back in the same order to their places. When Virginie's turn came Félicité leaned forward to see her; and with the imaginativeness of deep and tender feeling it seemed to her that she actually was the child; Virginie's face became hers, she was dressed in her clothes, it was her heart beating in her breast. As the moment came to open her mouth she closed her eyes and nearly fainted.

She appeared early in the sacristy next morning for Monsieur the curé to give her the communion. She took it with devotion, but it did not give her the same exquisite delight.

Mme. Aubain wanted to make her daughter into an accomplished person; and as Guyot could not teach her music or English she decided to place her in the Ursuline Convent at Honfleur[9] as a boarder. The child made no objection. Félicité sighed and thought that Madame lacked feeling. Then she reflected that her mistress might be right; matters of this kind were beyond her.

So one day an old spring-van drew up at the door, and out of it stepped a nun to fetch the young lady. Félicité hoisted the luggage on to the top, admonished the driver, and put six pots of preserves, a dozen pears, and a bunch of violets under the seat.

At the last moment Virginie broke into a fit of sobbing; she threw her arms round her mother, who kissed her on the forehead, saying over and over "Come be brave! be brave!" The step was raised, and the carriage drove off.

Then Mme. Aubain's strength gave way; and in the evening all her friends—the Lormeau family, Mme. Lechaptois, the Rochefeuille ladies, M. de Houppeville, and Bourais—came in to console her.

To be without her daughter was very painful for her at first. But she heard from Virginie three times a week, wrote to her on the other days, walked in the garden, and so filled up the empty hours.

From sheer habit Félicité went into Virginie's room in the mornings and gazed at the walls. It was boredom to her not to have to comb the child's hair now, lace up her boots, tuck her into bed—and not to see her charming face perpetually and hold her hand when they went out together. In this idle condition she tried making lace. But her fingers were too heavy and broke the threads; she could not attend to anything, she had lost her sleep, and was, in her own words, "destroyed."

To "divert herself" she asked leave to have visits from her nephew Victor.

9. At the mouth of the Seine River, 12 miles from Pont-l'Evêque.

He arrived on Sundays after mass, rosy-cheeked, bare-chested, with the scent of the country he had walked through still about him. She laid her table promptly and they had lunch, sitting opposite each other. She ate as little as possible herself to save expense, but stuffed him with food so generous that at last he went to sleep. At the first stroke of vespers she woke him up, brushed his trousers, fastened his tie, and went to church, leaning on his arm with maternal pride.

Victor was always instructed by his parents to get something out of her—a packet of moist sugar, it might be, a cake of soap, spirits, or even money at times. He brought his things for her to mend and she took over the task, only too glad to have a reason for making him come back.

In August his father took him off on a coasting voyage. It was holiday time, and she was consoled by the arrival of the children. Paul, however, was getting selfish, and Virginie was too old to be called "thou" any longer; this put a constraint and barrier between them.

Victor went to Morlaix, Dunkirk, and Brighton[1] in succession and made Félicité a present on his return from each voyage. It was a box made of shells the first time, a coffee cup the next, and on the third occasion a large gingerbread man. Victor was growing handsome. He was well made, had a hint of a moustache, good honest eyes, and a small leather hat pushed backwards like a pilot's. He entertained her by telling stories embroidered with nautical terms.

On a Monday, July 14, 1819 (she never forgot the date), he told her that he had signed on for the big voyage and next night but one he would take the Honfleur boat and join his schooner, which was to weigh anchor from Havre before long. Perhaps he would be gone two years.

The prospect of this long absence threw Félicité into deep distress; one more good-bye she must have, and on the Wednesday evening, when Madame's dinner was finished, she put on her clogs and made short work of the twelve miles between Pont-l'Évêque and Honfleur.

When she arrived in front of the Calvary she took the turn to the right instead of the left, got lost in the timber-yards, and retraced her steps; some people to whom she spoke advised her to be quick. She went all round the harbour basin, full of ships, and knocked against hawsers; then the ground fell away, lights flashed across each other, and she thought her wits had left her, for she saw horses up in the sky.

Others were neighing by the quay-side, frightened at the sea. They were lifted by a tackle and deposited in a boat, where passengers jostled each other among cider casks, cheese baskets, and sacks of

1. Towns in Brittany, Flanders, and across the channel in England.

grain; fowls could be heard clucking, the captain swore; and a cabin-boy stood leaning over the bows, indifferent to it all. Félicité, who had not recognized him, called "Victor!" and he raised his head; all at once, as she was darting forwards, the gangway was drawn back.

The Honfleur packet, women singing as they hauled it, passed out of harbour. Its framework creaked and the heavy waves whipped its bows. The canvas had swung round, no one could be seen on board now; and on the moon-silvered sea the boat made a black speck which paled gradually, dipped, and vanished.

As Félicité passed by the Calvary she had a wish to commend to God what she cherished most, and she stood there praying a long time with her face bathed in tears and her eyes towards the clouds. The town was asleep, coastguards were walking to and fro; and water poured without cessation through the holes in the sluice, with the noise of a torrent. The clocks struck two.

The convent parlour would not be open before day. If Félicité were late Madame would most certainly be annoyed; and in spite of her desire to kiss the other child she turned home. The maids at the inn were waking up as she came in to Pont-l'Évêque.

So the poor slip of a boy was going to toss for months and months at sea! She had not been frightened by his previous voyages. From England or Brittany you came back safe enough; but America, the colonies, the islands—these were lost in a dim region at the other end of the world.

Félicité's thoughts from that moment ran entirely on her nephew. On sunny days she was harassed by the idea of thirst; when there was a storm she was afraid of the lightning on his account. As she listened to the wind growling in the chimney or carrying off the slates she pictured him lashed by that same tempest, at the top of a shattered mast, with his body thrown backwards under a sheet of foam; or else (with a reminiscence of the illustrated geography) he was being eaten by savages, captured in a wood by monkeys, or dying on a desert shore. And never did she mention her anxieties.

Mme. Aubain had anxieties of her own, about her daughter. The good sisters found her an affectionate but delicate child. The slightest emotion unnerved her. She had to give up the piano.

Her mother stipulated for regular letters from the convent. She lost patience one morning when the postman did not come, and walked to and fro in the parlour from her armchair to the window. It was really amazing; not a word for four days!

To console Mme. Aubain by her own example Félicité remarked:

"As for me, Madame, it's six months since I heard . . ."

"From whom, pray?"

"Why . . . from my nephew," the servant answered gently.

"Oh! your nephew!" And Mme. Aubain resumed her walk with a

shrug of the shoulders, as much as to say: "I was not thinking of him! And what is more, it's absurd! A scamp of a cabin-boy—what does he matter? . . . whereas my daughter . . . why, just think!"

Félicité, though she had been brought up on harshness, felt indignant with Madame—and then forgot. It seemed the simplest thing in the world to her to lose one's head over the little girl. For her the two children were equally important; a bond in her heart made them one, and their destinies must be the same.

She heard from the chemist that Victor's ship had arrived at Havana. He had read this piece of news in a gazette.

Cigars—they made her imagine Havana as a place where no one does anything but smoke,and there was Victor moving among the negroes in a cloud of tobacco. Could you, she wondered, "in case you needed," return by land? What was the distance from Pont-l'Évêque? She questioned M. Bourais to find out.

He reached for his atlas and began explaining the longitudes; Félicité's consternation provoked a fine pedantic smile. Finally, he marked with his pencil a black, imperceptible point in the indentations of an oval spot, and said as he did so, "Here it is." She bent over the map; the maze of coloured lines wearied her eyes without conveying anything; and on an invitation from Bourais to tell him her difficulty she begged him to show her the house where Victor was living. Bourais threw up his arms, sneezed, and laughed immensely: a simplicity like hers was a positive joy. And Félicité did not understand the reason; how could she when she expected, very likely to see the actual image of her nephew—so stunted was her mind!

A fortnight afterwards Liébard came into the kitchen at market-time as usual and handed her a letter from her brother-in-law. As neither of them could read she took it to her mistress.

Mme. Aubain, who was counting the stitches in her knitting, put the work down by her side, broke the seal of the letter, started, and said in a low voice, with a look of meaning:

"It is bad news . . . that they have to tell you. Your nephew . . ."

He was dead. The letter said no more.

Félicité fell on to a chair, leaning her head against the wainscot; and she closed her eyelids, which suddenly flushed pink. Then with bent forehead, hands hanging, and fixed eyes, she said at intervals:

"Poor little lad! poor little lad!"

Liébard watched her and heaved sighs. Mme. Aubain trembled a little.

She suggested that Félicité should go to see her sister at Trouville. Félicité answered by a gesture that she had no need.

There was a silence. The worthy Liébard thought it was time for them to withdraw.

Then Félicité said:

"They don't care, not they!"

Her head dropped again; and she took up mechanically, from time to time, the long needles on her work-table.

Women passed in the yard with a barrow of dripping linen.

As she saw them through the window-panes, she remembered her washing; she had put it to soak the day before, to-day she must wring it out; and she left the room.

Her plank and tub were at the edge of the Toucques. She threw a pile of linen on the bank, rolled up her sleeves, and taking her wooden beater dealt lusty blows whose sound carried to the neighbouring gardens. The meadows were empty, the river stirred in the wind; and down below long grasses wavered, like the hair of corpses floating in the water. She kept her grief down and was very brave until the evening; but once in her room she surrendered to it utterly, lying stretched on the mattress with her face in the pillow and her hands clenched against her temples.

Much later she heard, from the captain himself, the circumstances of Victor's end. They had bled him too much at the hospital for yellow fever. Four doctors held him at once. He had died instantly, and the chief had said:

"Bah! there goes another!"

His parents had always been brutal to him. She preferred not to see them again; and they made no advances, either because they forgot her or from the callousness of the wretchedly poor.

Virginie began to grow weaker.

Tightness in her chest, coughing, continual fever, and veinings on her cheek-bones betrayed some deep-seated complaint. M. Poupart had advised a stay in Provence.[2] Mme. Aubain determined on it, would have brought her daughter home at once but for the climate of Pont-l'Évêque.

She made an arrangement with a job-master, and he drove her to the convent every Tuesday. There is a terrace in the garden, with a view over the Seine. Virginie took walks there over the fallen vine-leaves, on her mother's arm. A shaft of sunlight through the clouds made her blink sometimes, as she gazed at the sails in the distance and the whole horizon from the castle of Tancarville to the light-houses at Havre. Afterwards they rested in the arbour. Her mother had secured a little cask of excellent Malaga;[3] and Virginie, laughing at the idea of getting tipsy, drank a thimble-full of it, no more.

Her strength came back visibly. The autumn glided gently away. Félicité reassured Mme. Aubain. But one evening, when she had

2. In southern France. 3. A sweet wine.

been out on a commission in the neighbourhood, she found M. Poupart's gig at the door. He was in the hall, and Mme. Aubain was tying her bonnet.

"Give me my foot-warmer, purse, gloves. Quicker, come!"

Virginie had inflammation of the lungs; perhaps it was hopeless.

"Not yet!" said the doctor, and they both got into the carriage under whirling flakes of snow. Night was coming on and it was very cold.

Félicité rushed into the church to light a taper. Then she ran after the gig, came up with it in an hour, and jumped lightly in behind. As she hung on by the fringes a thought came into her mind: "The courtyard has not been shut up; supposing burglars got in!" And she jumped down.

At dawn next day she presented herself at the doctor's. He had come in and started for the country again. Then she waited in the inn, thinking that a letter would come by some hand or other. Finally, when it was twilight, she took the Lisieux coach.

The convent was at the end of a steep lane. When she was about half-way up it she heard strange sounds—a death-bell tolling. "It is for someone else," thought Félicité, and she pulled the knocker violently.

After some minutes there was a sound of trailing slippers, the door opened ajar, and a nun appeared.

The good sister, with an air of compunction, said that "she had just passed away." On the instant the bell of St. Leonard's tolled twice as fast.

Félicité went up to the second floor.

From the doorway she saw Virginie stretched on her back, with her hands joined, her mouth open, and head thrown back under a black crucifix that leaned towards her, between curtains that hung stiffly, less pale than was her face. Mme. Aubain, at the foot of the bed which she clasped with her arms, was choking with sobs of agony. The mother superior stood on the right. Three candlesticks on the chest of drawers made spots of red, and the mist came whitely through the windows. Nuns came and took Mme. Aubain away.

For two nights Félicité never left the dead child. She repeated the same prayers, sprinkled holy water over the sheets, came and sat down again, and watched her. At the end of the first vigil she noticed that the face had grown yellow, the lips turned blue, the nose was sharper, and the eyes sunk in. She kissed them several times, and would not have been immensely surprised if Virginie had opened them again; to minds like hers the supernatural is quite simple. She made the girl's toilette, wrapped her in her shroud, lifted her down into her bier, put a garland on her head, and spread out her hair. It was fair, and extraordinarily long for her age. Félicité cut off a big

lock and slipped half of it into her bosom, determined that she should never part with it.

The body was brought back to Pont-l'Évêque, as Mme. Aubain intended; she followed the hearse in a closed carriage.

It took another three-quarters of an hour after the mass to reach the cemetery. Paul walked in front, sobbing. M. Bourais was behind, and then came the chief residents, the women shrouded in black mantles, and Félicité. She thought of her nephew; and because she had not been able to pay these honours to him her grief was doubled, as though the one were being buried with the other.

Mme. Aubain's despair was boundless. It was against God that she first rebelled, thinking it unjust of Him to have taken her daughter from her—she had never done evil and her conscience was so clear! Ah, no!—she ought to have taken Virginie off to the south. Other doctors would have saved her. She accused herself now, wanted to join her child, and broke into cries of distress in the middle of her dreams. One dream haunted her above all. Her husband, dressed as a sailor, was returning from a long voyage, and shedding tears he told her that he had been ordered to take Virginie away. Then they consulted how to hide her somewhere.

She came in once from the garden quite upset. A moment ago—and she pointed out the place—the father and daughter had appeared to her, standing side by side, and they did nothing, but they looked at her.

For several months after this she stayed inertly in her room. Félicité lectured her gently; she must live for her son's sake, and for the other, in remembrance of "her."

"Her?" answered Mme. Aubain, as though she were just waking up. "Ah, yes! . . . yes! . . . You do not forget her!" This was an allusion to the cemetery, where she was strictly forbidden to go.

Félicité went there every day.

Precisely at four she skirted the houses, climbed the hill, opened the gate, and came to Virginie's grave. It was a little column of pink marble with a stone underneath and a garden plot enclosed by chains. The beds were hidden under a coverlet of flowers. She watered their leaves, freshened the gravel, and knelt down to break up the earth better. When Mme. Aubain was able to come there she felt a relief and a sort of consolation.

Then years slipped away, one like another, and their only episodes were the great festivals as they recurred—Easter, the Assumption, All Saints' Day. Household occurrences marked dates that were referred to afterwards. In 1825, for instance, two glaziers white-washed the hall; in 1827 a piece of the roof fell into the courtyard and nearly killed a man. In the summer of 1828 it was Madame's turn to offer the consecrated bread; Bourais, about this time, mysteriously absented

himself; and one by one the old acquaintances passed away: Guyot, Liébard, Mme. Lechaptois, Robelin, and Uncle Gremanville, who had been paralysed for a long time.

One night the driver of the mail-coach announced the Revolution of July[4] in Pont-l'Évêque. A new sub-prefect was appointed a few days later—Baron de Larsonnière, who had been consul in America, and brought with him, besides his wife, a sister-in-law and three young ladies, already growing up. They were to be seen about on their lawn, in loose blouses, and they had a negro and a parrot. They paid a call on Mme. Aubain which she did not fail to return. The moment they were seen in the distance Félicité ran to let her mistress know. But only one thing could really move her feelings—the letters from her son.

He was swallowed up in a tavern life and could follow no career. She paid his debts, he made new ones; and the sighs that Mme. Aubain uttered as she sat knitting by the window reached Félicité at her spinning-wheel in the kitchen.

They took walks together along the espaliered wall, always talking of Virginie and wondering if such and such a thing would have pleased her and what, on some occasion, she would have been likely to say.

All her small belongings filled a cupboard in the two-bedded room. Mme. Aubain inspected them as seldom as she could. One summer day she made up her mind to it—and some moths flew out of the wardrobe.

Virginie's dresses were in a row underneath a shelf, on which there were three dolls, some hoops, a set of toy pots and pans, and the basin that she used. They took out her petticoats as well, and the stockings and handkerchiefs, and laid them out on the two beds before folding them up again. The sunshine lit up these poor things, bringing out their stains and the creases made by the body's movements. The air was warm and blue, a blackbird warbled, life seemed bathed in a deep sweetness. They found a little plush hat with thick, chestnut-coloured pile; but it was eaten all over by moth. Félicité begged it for her own. Their eyes met fixedly and filled with tears; at last the mistress opened her arms, the servant threw herself into them, and they embraced each other, satisfying their grief in a kiss that made them equal.

It was the first time in their lives, Mme. Aubain's nature not being expansive. Félicité was as grateful as though she had received a favour; and cherished her mistress from that moment with the devotion of an animal and a religious worship.

The kindness of her heart unfolded.

When she heard the drums of a marching regiment in the street

4. In 1830 the Bourbons were driven out, and Louis-Philippe became king of France.

she posted herself at the door with a pitcher of cider and asked the soldiers to drink. She nursed cholera patients and protected the Polish refugees;[5] one of these even declared that he wished to marry her. They quarrelled, however; for when she came back from the Angelus one morning she found that he had got into her kitchen and made himself a vinegar salad which he was quietly eating.

After the Poles came father Colmiche, an old man who was supposed to have committed atrocities in '93.[6] He lived by the side of the river in the ruins of a pigsty. The little boys watched him through the cracks in the wall, and threw pebbles at him which fell on the pallet where he lay constantly shaken by a catarrh; his hair was very long, his eyes inflamed, and there was a tumour on his arm bigger than his head. She got him some linen and tried to clean up his miserable hole; her dream was to establish him in the bake-house without letting him annoy Madame. When the tumour burst she dressed it every day; sometimes she brought him cake, and would put him in the sunshine on a truss of straw. The poor old man, slobbering and trembling, thanked her in his worn-out voice, was terrified that he might lose her, and stretched out his hands when he saw her go away. He died; and she had a mass said for the repose of his soul.

That very day a great happiness befell her; just at dinner-time appeared Mme. de Larsonnière's negro, carrying the parrot in its cage, with perch, chain, and padlock. A note from the baroness informed Mme. Aubain that her husband had been raised to a prefecture and they were starting that evening; she begged her to accept the bird as a memento and mark of her regard.

For a long time he had absorbed Félicité's imagination, because he came from America; and that name reminded her of Victor, so much so that she made inquiries of the negro. She had once gone so far as to say "How Madame would enjoy having him!"

The negro repeated the remark to his mistress; and as she could not take the bird away with her she chose this way of getting rid of him.

IV

His name was Loulou. His body was green and the tips of his wings rose-pink; his forehead was blue and his throat golden.

But he had the tiresome habits of biting his perch, tearing out his feathers, sprinkling his dirt about, and spattering the water of his tub. He annoyed Mme. Aubain, and she gave him to Félicité for good.

She endeavoured to train him; soon he could repeat "Nice boy! Your servant, sir! Good morning, Marie!" He was placed by the side

5. After the Polish uprising against Russia in 1831 was suppressed, many Poles came to France.
6. In 1793 the Reign of Terror during the French Revolution began.

of the door, and astonished several people by not answering to the name Jacquot, for all parrots are called Jacquot. People compared him to a turkey and a log of wood, and stabbed Félicité to the heart each time. Strange obstinacy on Loulou's part!—directly you looked at him he refused to speak.

None the less he was eager for society; for on Sundays, while the Rochefeuille ladies, M. de Houppeville, and new familiars—Onfroy the apothecary, Monsieur Varin, and Captain Mathieu—were playing their game of cards, he beat the windows with his wings and threw himself about so frantically that they could not hear each other speak.

Bourais' face, undoubtedly, struck him as extremely droll. Directly he saw it he began to laugh—and laugh with all his might. His peals rang through the courtyard and were repeated by the echo; the neighbours came to their windows and laughed too; while M. Bourais, gliding along under the wall to escape the parrot's eye, and hiding his profile with his hat, got to the river and then entered by the garden gate. There was a lack of tenderness in the looks which he darted at the bird.

Loulou had been slapped by the butcher-boy for making so free as to plunge his head into his basket; and since then he was always trying to nip him through his shirt. Fabu threatened to wring his neck, although he was not cruel, for all his tattooed arms and large whiskers. Far from it; he really rather liked the parrot, and in a jovial humour even wanted to teach him to swear. Félicité, who was alarmed by such proceedings, put the bird in the kitchen. His little chain was taken off and he roamed about the house.

His way of going downstairs was to lean on each step with the curve of his beak, raise the right foot, and then the left; and Félicité was afraid that these gymnastics brought on fits of giddiness. He fell ill and could not talk or eat any longer. There was a growth under his tongue, such as fowls have sometimes. She cured him by tearing the pellicle off with her finger-nails. Mr. Paul was thoughtless enough one day to blow some cigar smoke into his nostrils, and another time when Mme. Lormeau was teasing him with the end of her umbrella he snapped at the ferrule. Finally he got lost.

Félicité had put him on the grass to refresh him, and gone away for a minute, and when she came back—no sign of the parrot! She began by looking for him in the shrubs, by the waterside, and over the roofs, without listening to her mistress's cries of "Take care, do! You are out of your wits!" Then she investigated all the gardens in Pont-l'Évêque, and stopped the passers-by. "You don't ever happen to have seen my parrot, by any chance, do you?" And she gave a description of the parrot to those who did not know him. Suddenly, behind the mills at the foot of the hill she thought she could make

out something green that fluttered. But on the top of the hill there was nothing. A hawker assured her that he had come across the parrot just before, at Saint-Melaine, in Mère Simon's shop. She rushed there; they had no idea of what she meant. At last she came home exhausted, with her slippers in shreds and despair in her soul; and as she was sitting in the middle of the garden-seat at Madame's side, telling the whole story of her efforts, a light weight dropped on to her shoulder—it was Loulou! What on earth had he been doing? Taking a walk in the neighbourhood, perhaps!

She had some trouble in recovering from this, or rather never did recover. As the result of a chill she had an attack of quinsy, and soon afterwards an earache. Three years later she was deaf; and she spoke very loud, even in church. Though Félicité's sins might have been published in every corner of the diocese without dishonour to her or scandal to anybody, his Reverence the priest thought it right now to hear her confession in the sacristy only.

Imaginary noises in the head completed her upset. Her mistress often said to her, "Heavens! how stupid you are!" "Yes, Madame," she replied, and looked about for something.

Her little circle of ideas grew still narrower; the peal of churchbells and the lowing of cattle ceased to exist for her. All living beings moved as silently as ghosts. One sound only reached her ears now—the parrot's voice.

Loulou, as though to amuse her, reproduced the click-clack of the turn-spit, the shrill call of a man selling fish, and the noise of the saw in the joiner's house opposite; when the bell rang he imitated Mme. Aubain's "Félicité! the door! the door!"

They carried on conversations, he endlessly reciting the three phrases in his repertory, to which she replied with words that were just as disconnected but uttered what was in her heart. Loulou was almost a son and a lover to her in her isolated state. He climbed up her fingers, nibbled at her lips, and clung to her kerchief; and when she bent her forehead and shook her head gently to and fro, as nurses do, the great wings of her bonnet and the bird's wings quivered together.

When the clouds massed and the thunder rumbled Loulou broke into cries, perhaps remembering the downpours in his native forests. The streaming rain made him absolutely mad; he fluttered wildly about, dashed up to the ceiling, upset everything, and went out through the window to dabble in the garden; but he was back quickly to perch on one of the fire-dogs and hopped about to dry himself, exhibiting his tail and his beak in turn.

One morning in the terrible winter of 1837 she had put him in front of the fireplace because of the cold. She found him dead, in the middle of his cage: head downwards, with his claws in the wires.

He had died from congestion, no doubt. But Félicité thought he had been poisoned with parsley, and though there was no proof of any kind her suspicions inclined to Fabu.

She wept so piteously that her mistress said to her, "Well, then, have him stuffed!"

She asked advice from the chemist, who had always been kind to the parrot. He wrote to Havre, and a person called Fellacher undertook the business. But as parcels sometimes got lost in the coach she decided to take the parrot as far as Honfleur herself.

Along the sides of the road were leafless apple-trees, one after the other. Ice covered the ditches. Dogs barked about the farms; and Félicité, with her hands under her cloak, her little black sabots and her basket, walked briskly in the middle of the road.

She crossed the forest, passed High Oak, and reached St. Gatien.

A cloud of dust rose behind her, and in it a mail-coach, carried away by the steep hill, rushed down at full gallop like a hurricane. Seeing this woman who would not get out of the way, the driver stood up in front and the postilion shouted too. He could not hold in his four horses, which increased their pace, and the two leaders were grazing her when he threw them to one side with a jerk of the reins. But he was wild with rage, and lifting his arm as he passed at full speed, gave her such a lash from waist to neck with his big whip that she fell on her back.

Her first act, when she recovered consciousness, was to open her basket. Loulou was happily none the worse. She felt a burn in her right cheek, and when she put her hands against it they were red; the blood was flowing.

She sat down on a heap of stones and bound up her face with her handkerchief. Then she ate a crust of bread which she had put in the basket as a precaution, and found a consolation for her wound in gazing at the bird.

When she reached the crest of Ecquemauville she saw the Honfleur lights sparkling in the night sky like a company of stars; beyond, the sea stretched dimly. Then a faintness overtook her and she stopped; her wretched childhood, the disillusion of her first love, her nephew's going away, and Virginie's death all came back to her at once like the waves of an oncoming tide, rose to her throat, and choked her.

Afterwards, at the boat, she made a point of speaking to the captain, begging him to take care of the parcel, though she did not tell him what was in it.

Fellacher kept the parrot a long time. He was always promising it for the following week. After six months he announced that a packing-case had started, and then nothing more was heard of it. It really

seemed as though Loulou was never coming back. "Ah, they have stolen him!" she thought.

He arrived at last, and looked superb. There he was, erect upon a branch which screwed into a mahogany socket, with a foot in the air and his head on one side, biting a nut which the bird-stuffer—with a taste for impressiveness-had gilded.

Félicité shut him up in her room. It was a place to which few people were admitted, and held so many religious objects and miscellaneous things that it looked like a chapel and bazaar in one.

A big cupboard impeded you as you opened the door. Opposite the window commanding the garden a little round one looked into the court; there was a table by the folding-bed with a water-jug, two combs, and a cube of blue soap in a chipped plate. On the walls hung rosaries, medals, several benign Virgins, and a holy water vessel made out of cocoa-nut; on the chest of drawers, which was covered with a cloth like an altar, was the shell box that Victor had given her, and after that a watering-can, a toy-balloon, exercise-books, the illustrated geography, and a pair of young lady's boots; and, fastened by its ribbons to the nail of the looking-glass, hung the little plush hat! Félicité carried observances of this kind so far as to keep one of Monsieur's frock-coats. All the old rubbish which Mme. Aubain did not want any longer she laid hands on for her room. That was why there were artificial flowers along the edge of the chest of drawers and a portrait of the Comte d'Artois[7] in the little window recess.

With the aid of a bracket Loulou was established over the chimney, which jutted into the room. Every morning when she woke up she saw him there in the dawning light, and recalled old days and the smallest details of insignificant acts in a deep quietness which knew no pain.

Holding, as she did, no communication with anyone, Félicité lived as insensibly as if she were walking in her sleep. The Corpus Christi processions roused her to life again. Then she went round begging mats and candlesticks from the neighbours to decorate the altar they put up in the street.

In church she was always gazing at the Holy Ghost in the window, and observed that there was something of the parrot in him. The likeness was still clearer, she thought, on a crude colour-print representing the baptism of Our Lord. With his purple wings and emerald body he was the very image of Loulou.

She bought him, and hung him up instead of the Comte d'Artois, so that she could see them both together in one glance. They were linked in her thoughts; and the parrot was consecrated by his associ-

7. Title of Charles X, the last of the Bourbons, the youngest brother of Louis XVI and Louis XVIII. He was king between 1824 and 1830 and died in exile in 1836.

ation with the Holy Ghost, which became more vivid to her eye and more intelligible. The Father could not have chosen to express Himself through a dove, for such creatures cannot speak; it must have been one of Loulou's ancestors, surely. And though Félicité looked at the picture while she said her prayers she swerved a little from time to time towards the parrot.

She wanted to join the Ladies of the Virgin, but Mme. Aubain dissuaded her.

And then a great event loomed up before them—Paul's marriage.

He had been a solicitor's clerk to begin with, and then tried business, the Customs, the Inland Revenue, and made efforts, even, to get into the Rivers and Forests. By an inspiration from heaven he had suddenly, at thirty-six, discovered his real line—the Registrar's Office. And there he showed such marked capacity that an inspector had offered him his daughter's hand and promised him his influence.

So Paul, grown serious, brought the lady to see his mother.

She sniffed at the ways of Pont-l'Évêque, gave herself great airs, and wounded Félicité's feelings. Mme. Aubain was relieved at her departure.

The week after came news of M. Bourais' death in an inn in Lower Brittany. The rumour of suicide was confirmed, and doubts arose as to his honesty. Mme. Aubain studied his accounts, and soon found out the whole tale of his misdoings—embezzled arrears, secret sales of wood, forged receipts, etc. Besides that he had an illegitimate child, and "relations with a person at Dozulé."

These shameful facts distressed her greatly. In March 1853 she was seized with a pain in the chest; her tongue seemed to be covered with film, and leeches did not ease the difficult breathing. On the ninth evening of her illness she died, just at seventy-two.

She passed as being younger, owing to the bands of brown hair which framed her pale, pock-marked face. There were few friends to regret her, for she had a stiffness of manner which kept people at a distance.

But Félicité mourned for her as one seldom mourns for a master. It upset her ideas and seemed contrary to the order of things, impossible and monstrous, that Madame should die before her.

Ten days afterwards, which was the time it took to hurry there from Besançon,[8] the heirs arrived. The daughter-in-law ransacked the drawers, chose some furniture, and sold the rest; and then they went back to their registering.

Madame's armchair, her small round table, her foot-warmer, and the eight chairs were gone! Yellow patches in the middle of the panels

8. In eastern France, near the Swiss border.

showed where the engravings had hung. They had carried off the two little beds and the mattresses, and all Virginie's belongings had disappeared from the cupboard. Félicité went from floor to floor dazed with sorrow.

The next day there was a notice on the door, and the apothecary shouted in her ear that the house was for sale.

She tottered, and was obliged to sit down. What distressed her most of all was to give up her room, so suitable as it was for poor Loulou. She enveloped him with a look of anguish when she was imploring the Holy Ghost, and formed the idolatrous habit of kneeling in front of the parrot to say her prayers. Sometimes the sun shone in at the attic window and caught his glass eye, and a great luminous ray shot out of it and put her in an ecstasy.

She had a pension of three hundred and eighty francs a year which her mistress had left her. The garden gave her a supply of vegetables. As for clothes, she had enough to last her to the end of her days, and she economized in candles by going to bed at dusk.

She hardly ever went out, as she did not like passing the dealer's shop, where some of the old furniture was exposed for sale. Since her fit of giddiness she dragged one leg; and as her strength was failing Mère Simon, whose grocery business had collapsed, came every morning to split the wood and pump water for her.

Her eyes grew feeble. The shutters ceased to be thrown open. Years and years passed, and the house was neither let nor sold.

Félicité never asked for repairs because she was afraid of being sent away. The boards on the roof rotted; her bolster was wet for a whole winter. After Easter she spat blood.

Then Mère Simon called in a doctor. Félicité wanted to know what was the matter with her. But she was too deaf to hear, and the only word which reached her was "pneumonia." It was a word she knew, and she answered softly "Ah! like Madame," thinking it natural that she should follow her mistress.

The time for the festal shrines was coming near. The first one was always at the bottom of the hill, the second in front of the post-office, and the third towards the middle of the street. There was some rivalry in the matter of this one, and the women of the parish ended by choosing Mme. Aubain's courtyard.

The hard breathing and fever increased. Félicité was vexed at doing nothing for the altar. If only she could at least have put something there! Then she thought of the parrot. The neighbours objected that it would not be decent. But the priest gave her permission, which so intensely delighted her that she begged him to accept Loulou, her sole possession, when she died.

From Tuesday to Saturday, the eve of the festival, she coughed more often. By the evening her face had shrivelled, her lips stuck to

her gums, and she had vomitings; and at twilight next morning, feeling herself very low, she sent for a priest.

Three kindly women were round her during the extreme unction. Then she announced that she must speak to Fabu. He arrived in his Sunday clothes, by no means at his ease in the funereal atmosphere.

"Forgive me," she said, with an effort to stretch out her arm; "I thought it was you who had killed him."

What did she mean by such stories? She suspected him of murder—a man like him! He waxed indignant, and was on the point of making a row.

"There," said the women, "she is no longer in her senses, you can see it well enough!"

Félicité spoke to shadows of her own from time to time. The women went away, and Mère Simon had breakfast. A little later she took Loulou and brought him close to Félicité with the words:

"Come, now, say good-bye to him!"

Loulou was not a corpse, but the worms devoured him; one of his wings was broken, and the tow was coming out of his stomach. But she was blind now; she kissed him on the forehead and kept him close against her cheek. Mère Simon took him back from her to put him on the altar.

V

Summer scents came up from the meadows; flies buzzed; the sun made the river glitter and heated the slates. Mère Simon came back into the room and fell softly asleep.

She woke at the noise of bells; the people were coming out from vespers. Félicité's delirium subsided. She thought of the procession and saw it as if she had been there.

All the school children, the church-singers, and the firemen walked on the pavement, while in the middle of the road the verger armed with his hallebard and the beadle with a large cross advanced in front. Then came the schoolmaster, with an eye on the boys, and the sister, anxious about her little girls; three of the daintiest, with angelic curls, scattered rose-petals in the air; the deacon controlled the band with outstretched arms; and two censer-bearers turned back at every step towards the Holy Sacrament, which was borne by Monsieur the curé, wearing his beautiful chasuble, under a canopy of dark-red velvet held by four churchwardens. A crowd of people pressed behind, between the white cloths covering the house walls, and they reached the bottom of the hill.

A cold sweat moistened Félicité's temples. Mère Simon sponged her with a piece of linen, saying to herself that one day she would have to go that way.

The hum of the crowd increased, was very loud for an instant and then went further away.

A fusillade shook the window-panes. It was the postilions saluting the monstrance. Félicité rolled her eyes and said as audibly as she could: "Does he look well?" The parrot was weighing on her mind.

Her agony began. A death-rattle that grew more and more convulsed made her sides heave. Bubbles of froth came at the corners of her mouth and her whole body trembled.

Soon the booming of the ophicleides,[9] the high voices of the children, and the deep voices of the men were distinguishable. At intervals all was silent, and the tread of feet, deadened by the flowers they walked on, sounded like a flock pattering on grass.

The clergy appeared in the courtyard. Mère Simon clambered on to a chair to reach the attic window, and so looked down straight upon the shrine. Green garlands hung over the altar, which was decked with a flounce of English lace. In the middle was a small frame with relics in it; there were two orange-trees at the corners, and all along stood silver candlesticks and china vases, with sunflowers, lilies, peonies, foxgloves, and tufts of hortensia. This heap of blazing colour slanted from the level of the altar to the carpet which went on over the pavement; and some rare objects caught the eye. There was a silver-gilt sugar-basin with a crown of violets; pendants of Alençon stone glittered on the moss, and two Chinese screens displayed their landscapes. Loulou was hidden under roses, and showed nothing but his blue forehead, like a plaque of lapis lazuli.

The churchwardens, singers, and children took their places round the three sides of the court. The priest went slowly up the steps, and placed his great, radiant golden sun[1] upon the lace. Everyone knelt down. There was a deep silence; and the censers glided to and fro on the full swing of their chains.

An azure vapour rose up into Félicité's room. Her nostrils met it; she inhaled it sensuously, mystically; and then closed her eyes. Her lips smiled. The beats of her heart lessened one by one, vaguer each time and softer, as a fountain sinks, an echo disappears; and when she sighed her last breath she thought she saw an opening in the heavens, and a gigantic parrot hovering above her head.

9. An old large brass-wind instrument now replaced by the tuba.

1. The monstrance containing the consecrated Host.

FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY

1821–1881

Fyodor Dostoevsky has become a central figure in the formation of the modern sensibility. He formulated in fictional terms, in dramatic and even sensational scenes, some of the main predicaments of our time: the choices

between God and atheism, good and evil, freedom and tyranny; the recognition of the limits and even of the fall of man against the belief in progress, revolution, and utopia. Most important, he captured unforgettably the enormous contradictions of which our common human nature is capable and by which it is torn.

Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky was born in Moscow on October 30, 1821. His father was a staff doctor at the Hospital for the Poor. Later he acquired an estate and serfs. In 1839 he was killed by one of his peasants in a quarrel. Dostoevsky was sent to the Military Engineering Academy in St. Petersburg, from which he graduated in 1843. He became a civil servant, a draftsman in the St. Petersburg Engineering Corps, but resigned soon because he feared that he would be transferred to the provinces when his writing was discovered. His first novel, *Poor People* (1846), proved a great success with the critics; his second, *The Double* (1846), which followed immediately, was a failure.

Subsequently, Dostoevsky became involved in the Petrashevsky circle, a secret society of antigovernment and socialist tendencies. He was arrested on April 23, 1849, and condemned to be shot. On December 22 he was led to public execution, but he was reprieved at the last moment and sent to penal servitude in Siberia (near Omsk), where he worked for four years in a stockade, wearing fetters, completely cut off from communications with Russia. On his release in February 1854, he was assigned as a common soldier to Semipalatinsk, a small town near the Mongolian frontier. There he received several promotions (eventually becoming an ensign); his rank of nobility, forfeited by his sentence, was restored; and he married the widow of a customs official. In July 1859, Dostoevsky was permitted to return to Russia, and finally, in December 1859, to St. Petersburg—after ten years of his life had been spent in Siberia.

In the last year of his exile, Dostoevsky had resumed writing, and in 1861, shortly after his return, he founded a review, *Time (Vremya)*. This was suppressed in 1863, though Dostoevsky had changed his political opinions and was now strongly nationalistic and conservative in outlook. He made his first trip to France and England in 1862, and traveled in Europe again in 1863 and 1865, in order to follow a young woman friend, Apollinaria Suslova, and to indulge in gambling. After his wife's death in 1864, and another unsuccessful journalistic venture, *The Epoch (Epokha)*, 1864–1865, Dostoevsky was for a time almost crushed by gambling debts, emotional entanglements, and frequent epileptic seizures. He barely managed to return from Germany in 1865. In the winter of 1866 he wrote *Crime and Punishment*, and before he had finished it, dictated a shorter novel, *The Gambler*, to meet a deadline. He married his secretary, Anna Grigoryevna Snitkina, early in 1867 and left Russia with her to avoid his creditors. For years they wandered over Germany, Italy, and Switzerland, frequently in abject poverty. Their first child died. In 1871, when the initial chapters of *The Possessed* proved a popular success, Dostoevsky returned to St. Petersburg. He became the editor of a weekly, *The Citizen (Grazhdanin)*, for a short time and then published a periodical written by himself, *The Diary of a Writer* (1876–1881), which won great acclaim. His last novel, *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880), was an immense success, and honors and some prosperity came to him at

last. At a Pushkin anniversary celebrated in Moscow in 1880 he gave the main speech. But soon after his return to St. Petersburg he died, on January 28, 1881, not yet sixty years old.

Dostoevsky, like every great writer, can be approached in different ways and read on different levels. We can try to understand him as a religious philosopher, a political commentator, a psychologist, and a novelist, and if we know much about his fascinating and varied life, we can interpret his works as biographical.

The biographical interpretation is the one that has been pushed furthest. The lurid crimes of Dostoevsky's characters (such as the rape of a young girl) have been ascribed to him, and all his novels have been studied as if they constituted a great personal confession. Dostoevsky certainly did use many of his experiences in his books (as every writer does): he several times described the feelings of a man facing a firing squad as he himself faced it on December 22, 1849, only to be reprieved at the last moment. His writings also reflect his years in Siberia: four years working in a loghouse, in chains, as he describes it in an oddly impersonal book, *Memoirs from the House of the Dead* (1862), and six more years as a common soldier on the borders of Mongolia, in a small, remote provincial town. Similarly, he used the experience of his disease (epilepsy), ascribing great spiritual significance to the ecstatic rapture preceding the actual seizure. He assigned his disease to both his most angelic "good" man, the "Idiot," Prince Myshkin, and his most diabolical, inhuman figure, the cold-blooded unsexed murderer of the old Karamazov, the flunky Smerdyakov. Dostoevsky also used something of his experiences in Germany, where in the 1860s he succumbed to a passion for gambling which he overcame only much later, during his second marriage. The short novel *The Gambler* (1866) gives an especially vivid account of this life and its moods.

There are other autobiographical elements in Dostoevsky's works, but it seems a gross misunderstanding of his methods and the procedures of art in general to conclude from his writings (as Thomas Mann has done) that he was a "saint and criminal" in one. Dostoevsky, after all, was an extremely hard worker who wrote and rewrote some twenty volumes. He was a novelist who employed the methods of the French sensational novel, he was constantly on the lookout for the most striking occurrences—the most shocking crimes and the most horrible disasters and scandals—because only in such fictional situations could he exalt his characters to their highest pitch, bringing out the clash of ideas and temperaments, revealing the deepest layers of their souls. But these fictions cannot be taken as literal transcripts of reality and actual experience.

Whole books have been written to explain Dostoevsky's religious philosophy and conception of man. The Russian philosopher Berdayev concludes his excellent study by saying, "So great is the value of Dostoevsky that to have produced him is by itself sufficient justification for the existence of the Russian people in the world." But there is no need for such extravagance. Dostoevsky's philosophy of religion is rather a personal version of extreme mystical Christianity, and assumes flesh and blood only in the context of the novels. Reduced to the bare bones of abstract propositions, it amounts to saying that man is fallen but is free to choose between evil and Christ. And

choosing Christ means taking upon oneself the burden of humanity in love and pity, since "everybody is guilty for all and before all." Hence in Dostoevsky there is tremendous stress on personal freedom of choice, and his affirmation of the worth of every individual is combined, paradoxically, with an equal insistence on the substantial identity of all men, their equality before God, the bond of love which unites them.

Dostoevsky also develops a philosophy of history, with practical political implications, based upon this point of view. According to him, the West is in complete decay; only Russia has preserved Christianity in its original form. The West is either Catholic—and Catholicism is condemned by Dostoevsky as an attempt to force salvation by magic and authority—or bourgeois, and hence materialistic and fallen away from Christ; or socialist, and socialism is to Dostoevsky identical with atheism, as it dreams of a utopia in which man would not be free to choose even at the expense of suffering. Dostoevsky—who himself had belonged to a revolutionary group and come into contact with Russian revolutionaries abroad—had an extraordinary insight into the mentality of the Russian underground. In *The Possessed* (1871–1872) he gave a lurid satiric picture of these would-be saviors of Russia and mankind. But while he was afraid of the revolution, Dostoevsky himself hoped and prophesied that Russia would save Europe from the dangers of communism, as Russia alone was the uncorrupted Christian land. Put in terms of political propositions (as Dostoevsky himself preached them in his journal, *The Diary of a Writer*, 1876–1881), what he propounds is a conservative Russian nationalism with messianic hopes for Russian Christianity. It is hard to imagine a political creed more remote from present-day realities.

When translated into abstractions, Dostoevsky's psychology is as unimpressive as his political theory. It is merely a derivative of theories propounded by German writers about the unconscious, the role of dreams, the ambivalence of human feelings. What makes it electric in the novels is his ability to dramatize it in scenes of sudden revulsions, in characters who in today's terminology would be called split personalities, in people twisted by isolation, lust, humiliation, and resentment. The dreams of Raskolnikov may be interpreted according to Freudian psychology, but to the reader without any knowledge of science they are comprehensible in their place in the novel and function as warnings and anticipations.

Dostoevsky is first of all an artist—a novelist who succeeded in using his ideas (many old and venerable, many new and fantastic) and psychological insights for the writing of stories of absorbing interest. As an artist, Dostoevsky treated the novel like a drama, constructing it in large, vivid scenes which end with a scandal or a crime or some act of violence, filling it with unforgettable "stagelike" figures torn by great passions and swayed by great ideas. Then he set this world in an environment of St. Petersburg slums, or of towns, monasteries, and country houses, all so vividly realized that we forget how the setting, the figures, and the ideas melt together into one cosmos of the imagination only remotely and obliquely related to any reality of nineteenth-century Russia. We take part in a great drama of pride and humility, good and evil, in a huge allegory of man's search for God and himself. We understand and share in this world because it is not merely Russia in the nineteenth century, where people could hardly have talked

and behaved as Dostoevsky's people do, but a myth of humanity, universalized as all art is.

Notes from Underground (1864) precedes the four great novels, *Crime and Punishment* (1866), *The Idiot* (1868), *The Possessed*, and *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880). The *Notes* can be viewed as a prologue, an introduction to the cycle of the four great novels, an anticipation of the mature Dostoevsky's method and thought. Though it cannot compare in dramatic power and scope with these, the story has its own peculiar and original artistry. It is made up of two parts, at first glance seemingly independent: the monologue of the Underground man and the confession which he makes about himself, called "À Propos of the Wet Snow." The monologue, though it includes no action, is dramatic—a long address to an imaginary hostile reader, whom the Underground man ridicules, defies, jeers at, but also flatters. The confession is an autobiographical reminiscence of the Underground man. It describes events which occurred long before the delivery of the monologue, but it functions as a confirmation in concrete terms of the self-portrait drawn in the monologue and as an explanation of the isolation of the hero.

The narrative of the confession is a comic variation on the old theme of the rescue of a fallen woman from vice, a seesaw series of humiliations permitting Dostoevsky to display all the cruelty of his probing psychology. The hero, out of spite and craving for human company, forces himself into the company of former schoolfellows and is shamefully humiliated by them. He reasserts his ego (as he cannot revenge himself on them) in the company of a humble prostitute by impressing her with florid and moving speeches, which he knows to be insincere, about her horrible future. Ironically, he converts her, but when she comes to him and surprises him in a degrading scene with his servant, he humiliates her again. When, even then, she understands and forgives and thus shows her moral superiority, he crowns his spite by deliberately misunderstanding her and forcing money on her. She is the moral victor and the Underground man returns to his hideout to jeer at humanity. It is hard not to feel that we are shown a tortured and twisted soul almost too despicable to elicit our compassion.

Still it would be a complete misunderstanding of Dostoevsky's story to take the philosophy expounded jeeringly in the long monologue of the first part merely as the irrational railings of a sick soul. The Underground man, though abject and spiteful, represents not only a specific Russian type of the time—the intellectual divorced from the soil and his nation—but also modern humanity, even Everyman, and, strangely enough, even the author, who through the mouth of this despicable character, as through a mask, expresses his boldest and most intimate convictions. In spite of all the exaggerated pathos, wild paradox, and jeering irony used by the speaker, his self-criticism and his criticism of society and history must be taken seriously and interpreted patiently if we are to extract the meaning accepted by Dostoevsky.

The Underground man is the hyperconscious man who examines himself as if in a mirror, and sees himself with pitiless candor. His very self-consciousness cripples his will and poisons his feelings. He cannot escape from his ego; he knows that he has acted badly toward the girl but at the same time he cannot help acting as he does. He knows that he is alone, that there

is no bridge from him to humanity, that the world is hostile to him, and that he is being humiliated by everybody he meets. But though he resents the humiliation, he cannot help courting it, provoking it, and liking it in his perverse manner. He understands (and knows from his own experience) that man is not good but enjoys evil and destruction.

His self-criticism widens, then, into a criticism of the assumptions of modern civilization, of nineteenth-century optimism about human nature and progress, of utilitarianism, and of all kinds of utopias. It is possible to identify definite allusions to a contemporary novel by a radical socialist and revolutionary, Chernyshevsky, entitled *What Shall We Do?* (1863), but we do not need to know the exact target of Dostoevsky's satire to recognize what he attacks: the view that man is good, that he always seeks his enlightened self-interest, that science propounds immutable truths, and that a paradise on earth will be just around the corner once society is reformed along scientific lines. In a series of vivid symbols these assumptions are represented, parodied, exposed. Science says that "twice two makes four" but the Underground man laughs that "twice two makes five is sometimes a very charming thing too." Science means to him (and to Dostoevsky) the victory of the doctrine of fatality, of iron necessity, of determinism, and thus finally of death. Man would become an "organ-stop," a "piano key," if deterministic science were valid.

Equally disastrous are the implications of the social philosophy of liberalism and of socialism (which Dostoevsky considers its necessary consequence). Man, in this view, need only follow his enlightened self-interest, need only be rational, and he will become noble and good and the earth will be a place of prosperity and peace. But the Underground man knows that this conception of man is entirely false. What if mankind does not follow, and never will follow, its own enlightened self-interest, is consciously and purposely irrational, even bloodthirsty and evil? History seems to the Underground man to speak a clear language: ". . . civilization has made mankind if not more bloodthirsty, at least more vilely, more loathsomely bloodthirsty." Man wills the irrational and evil because he does not want to become an organ-stop, a piano key, because he wants to be left with the freedom to choose between good and evil. This freedom of choice, even at the expense of chaos and destruction, is what makes him man.

Actually, man loves something other than his well-being and happiness, loves even suffering and pain, because he is a man and not an animal inhabiting some great organized rational "ant heap." The ant heap, the hen house, the block of tenements, and finally the Crystal Palace (then the newest wonder of architecture, a great hall of iron and glass erected for the Universal Exhibition in London) are the images used by the Underground man to represent his hated utopia. The heroine of *What Shall We Do?* had dreamed of a building, made of cast iron and glass and placed in the middle of a beautiful garden where there would be eternal spring and summer, eternal joy. Dostoevsky had recognized there the utopian dream of Fourier, the French socialist whom he had admired in his youth and whose ideals he had come to hate with a fierce revulsion. But we must realize that the Underground man, and Dostoevsky, despises this "ant heap," this perfectly organized society of robots, in the name of something higher, in the name

of freedom. Dostoevsky does not believe that man can achieve freedom and happiness at the same time; he thinks that man can buy happiness only at the expense of freedom, and all utopian schemes seem to him devices to lure man into the yoke of slavery. This freedom is, of course, not political freedom but freedom of choice, indeterminism, even caprice and willfulness, in the paradoxical formulation of the Underground man.

There are hints at a positive solution only in the one section (Section X), which was mutilated by the censor. A letter by Dostoevsky to his brother about the "swine of a censor who let through the passages where I jeered at everything and blasphemed ostensibly" refers to the fact that he "suppressed everything where I drew the conclusion that faith in Christ is needed." In Section XI of the present text (and Dostoevsky never restored the suppressed passages) the Underground man says merely, "I am lying because I know myself that it is not underground that is better, but something different, quite different, for which I am thirsting, but which I cannot find!" This "something . . . quite different" all the other writings of Dostoevsky show to be the voluntary following of Christ even at the expense of suffering and pain.

In a paradoxical form, through the mouth of one of his vilest characters, Dostoevsky reveals in the story his view of man and history—of the evil in man's nature and of the blood and tragedy in history—and his criticism of the optimistic, utilitarian, utopian, progressive view of man which was spreading to Russia from the West during the nineteenth century and which found its most devoted adherents in the Russian revolutionaries. Preoccupied with criticism, Dostoevsky does not here suggest any positive remedy. But if we understand the *Notes* we can understand how Raskolnikov, the murderer out of intellect in *Crime and Punishment*, can find salvation at last, and how Dmitri, the guilty-guiltless parricide of *The Brothers Karamazov*, can sing his hymn to joy in the Siberian mines. We can even understand the legend of the Great Inquisitor told by Ivan Karamazov, in which we meet the same criticism of a utopia (this time that of Catholicism) and the same exaltation of human freedom even at the price of suffering.

Monroe C. Beardsley, "Dostoevsky's Metaphor of the 'Underground,' " *Journal of the History of Ideas* (June 1942) III: 265–90, is a subtle interpretation of the central metaphor of the *Notes*. Joseph Frank, "Nihilism and *Notes from Underground*," *Sewanee Review* (1961) LXIX, interprets the *Notes* in the context of the history of the times. Robert L. Jackson, *The Underground Man in Russian Literature* (1958), traces the impact of the *Notes* on Russian literature. Konstantin Mochulsky, *Dostoevsky: Life and Work*, trans., Michael Minihan (1967), is the best general work translated from Russian, the work of an emigré in Paris. René Wellek, ed., *Dostoevsky: A Collection of Critical Essays* (1962), contains an essay by the editor on the history of Dostoevsky criticism.

Notes from Underground[1]

Part I

(UNDERGROUND)

I

I am a sick man. . . . I am a spiteful man. I am an unattractive man. I believe my liver is diseased. However, I know nothing at all about my disease, and do not know for certain what ails me. I don't consult a doctor for it, and never have, though I have a respect for medicine and doctors. Besides, I am extremely superstitious, sufficiently so to respect medicine anyway (I am well-educated enough not to be superstitious, but I am superstitious). No, I refuse to consult a doctor from spite. That you probably will not understand. Well, I understand it, though. Of course I can't explain who it is precisely that I am mortifying in this case by my spite: I am perfectly well aware that I cannot "pay out" the doctors by not consulting them; I know better than any one that by all this I am only injuring myself and no one else. But still, if I don't consult a doctor it is from spite. My liver is bad, well—let it get worse!

I have been going on like that for a long time—twenty years. Now I am forty. I used to be in the government service, but am no longer. I was a spiteful official. I was rude and took pleasure in being so. I did not take bribes, you see, so I was bound to find a recompense in that, at least. (A poor jest, but I will not scratch it out. I wrote it thinking it would sound very witty; but now that I have seen myself that I only wanted to show off in a despicable way, I will not scratch it out on purpose!)

When petitioners used to come for information to the table at which I sat, I used to grind my teeth at them, and felt intense enjoyment when I succeeded in making anybody unhappy. I almost always did succeed. For the most part they were all timid people—of course, they were petitioners. But of the uppish ones there was one officer in particular I could not endure. He simply would not be humble, and clanked his sword in a disgusting way. I carried on a feud with him for eighteen months over that sword. At last I got the better of

1. Translated by Constance Garnett. The punctuation ". . ." does not indicate omissions from this text. "The author of the diary and the diary itself are, of course, imaginary. Nevertheless it is clear that such persons as the writer of these notes not only may, but positively must, exist in our society, when we consider the circumstances in the midst of which our society is formed. I have tried to expose to the view of the public more distinctly than is commonly done, one of the characters of the recent past. He is one of the representatives of a generation still living. In this fragment, entitled 'Underground,' this person introduces himself and his views, and, as it were, tries to explain the causes owing to which he has made his appearance and was bound to make his appearance in our midst. In the second fragment there are added the actual notes of this person concerning certain events in his life." [Author's note.]

him. He left off clanking it. That happened in my youth, though.

But do you know, gentlemen, what was the chief point about my spite? Why, the whole point, the real sting of it lay in the fact that continually, even in the moment of the acutest spleen, I was inwardly conscious with shame that I was not only not a spiteful but not even an embittered man, that I was simply scaring sparrows at random and amusing myself by it. I might foam at the mouth, but bring me a doll to play with, give me a cup of tea with sugar in it, and maybe I should be appeased. I might even be genuinely touched, though probably I should grind my teeth at myself afterwards and lie awake at night with shame for months after. That was my way.

I was lying when I said just now that I was a spiteful official. I was lying from spite. I was simply amusing myself with the petitioners and with the officer, and in reality I never could become spiteful. I was conscious every moment in myself of many, very many elements absolutely opposite to that. I felt them positively swarming in me, these opposite to that. I felt them positively swarming in me all my life and craving some outlet from me, but I would not let them, would not let them, purposely would not let them come out. They tormented me till I was ashamed: they drove me to convulsions and—sickened me, at last, how they sickened me! Now, are not you fancying that . . . However, I assure you I do not care if you are. . . .

It was not only that I could not become spiteful, I did not know how to become anything: neither spiteful nor kind, neither a rascal nor an honest man, neither a hero nor an insect. Now, I am living out my life in my corner, taunting myself with the spiteful and useless consolation that an intelligent man cannot become anything seriously, and it is only the fool who becomes anything. Yes, a man in the nineteenth century must and morally ought to be pre-eminently a characterless creature; a man of character, an active man is pre-eminently a limited creature. That is my conviction of forty years. I am forty years old now, and you know forty years is a whole lifetime; you know it is extreme old age. To live longer than forty years is bad manners, is vulgar, immoral. Who lives beyond forty? Answer that, sincerely and honestly. I will tell you who do: fools and worthless fellows. I tell all old men that to their face, all these venerable old men, all these silver-haired and reverend seniors! I tell the whole world that to its face! I have a right to say so, for I shall go on living to sixty myself. To seventy! To eighty! . . . Stay, let me take breath. . . .

You imagine no doubt, gentlemen, that I want to amuse you. You are mistaken in that, too. I am by no means such a mirthful person as you imagine, or as you may imagine; however, irritated by all this babble (and I feel that you are irritated) you think fit to ask me who am I—then my answer is, I am a collegiate assessor. I was in the

service that I might have something to eat (and solely for that reason), and when last year a distant relation left me six thousand roubles in his will I immediately retired from the service and settled down in my corner. I used to live in this corner before, but now I have settled down in it. My room is a wretched, horrid one in the outskirts of the town. My servant is an old country-woman, ill-natured from stupidity, and moreover, there is always a nasty smell about her. I am told that the Petersburg climate is bad for me, and that with my small means it is very expensive to live in Petersburg. I know all that better than all these sage and experienced counsellors and monitors. . . . But I am remaining in Petersburg; . . . I am not going away from Petersburg! I am not going away because . . . ech! Why, it is absolutely no matter whether I am going away or not going away.

But what can a decent man speak of with most pleasure?

Answer: Of himself.

Well, so I will talk about myself.

II

I want now to tell you, gentlemen, whether you care to hear it or not, why I could not even become an insect. I tell you solemnly, that I have many times tried to become an insect. But I was not equal even to that. I swear, gentlemen, that to be too conscious is an illness—a real thoroughgoing illness. For man's everyday needs, it would have been quite enough to have the ordinary human consciousness, that is, half or a quarter of the amount which falls to the lot of a cultivated man of our unhappy nineteenth century, especially one who has the fatal ill-luck to inhabit Petersburg, the most theoretical and intentional town on the whole terrestrial globe. (There are intentional and unintentional towns.) It would have been quite enough, for instance, to have the consciousness by which all so-called direct persons and men of action live. I bet you think I am writing all this from affection, to be witty at the expense of men of action; and what is more, that from ill-bred affection, I am clanking a sword like my officer. But, gentlemen, whoever can pride himself on his diseases and even swagger over them?

Though, after all, every one does do that; people do pride themselves on their diseases, and I do, may be, more than any one else. We will not dispute it; my contention was absurd. But yet I am firmly persuaded that a great deal of consciousness, every sort of consciousness, in fact, is a disease. I stick to that. Let us leave that, too, for a minute. Tell me this: why does it happen that at the very, yes, at the very moments when I am most capable of feeling every refinement of all that is "good and beautiful," as they used to say at

one time, it would, as though of design, happen to me not only to feel but to do such ugly things, such that . . . Well, in short, actions that all, perhaps, commit; but which, as though purposely, occurred to me at the very time when I was most conscious that they ought not to be committed. The more conscious I was of goodness and of all that was "good and beautiful," the more deeply I sank into my mire and the more ready I was to sink in it altogether. But the chief point was that all this was, as it were, not accidental in me, but as though it were bound to be so. It was as though it were my most normal condition, and not in the least disease or depravity, so that at last all desire in me to struggle against this depravity passed. It ended by my almost believing (perhaps actually believing) that this was perhaps my normal condition. But at first, in the beginning, what agonies I endured in that struggle! I did not believe it was the same with other people, and all my life I hid this fact about myself as a secret. I was ashamed (even now, perhaps, I am ashamed): I got to the point of feeling a sort of secret abnormal, despicable enjoyment in returning home to my corner on some disgusting Petersburg night, acutely conscious that that day I had committed a loathsome action again, that what was done could never be undone, and secretly, inwardly gnawing, gnawing at myself for it, tearing and consuming myself till at last the bitterness turned into a sort of shameful accursed sweetness, and at last—into positive real enjoyment! Yes into enjoyment, into enjoyment! I insist upon that. I have spoken of this because I keep wanting to know for a fact whether other people feel such enjoyment? I will explain; the enjoyment was just from the too intense consciousness of one's own degradation; it was from feeling oneself that one had reached the last barrier, that it was horrible, but that it could not be otherwise; that there was no escape for you; that you never could become a different man; that even if time and faith were still left you to change into something different you would most likely not wish to change; or if you did wish to, even then you would do nothing; because perhaps in reality there was nothing for you to change into.

And the worst of it was, and the root of it all, that it was all in accord with the normal fundamental laws of over-acute consciousness, and with the inertia that was the direct result of those laws, and that consequently one was not only unable to change but could do absolutely nothing. Thus it would follow, as the result of acute consciousness, that one is not to blame in being a scoundrel; as though that were any consolation to the scoundrel once he has come to realize that he actually is a scoundrel. But enough. . . . Ech, I have talked a lot of nonsense, but what have I explained? How is enjoyment in this to be explained? But I will explain it. I will get to the bottom of it! That is why I have taken up my pen. . . .

I, for instance, have a great deal of *amour propre*. I am as suspicious and prone to take offence as a hunchback or a dwarf. But upon my word I sometimes have had moments when if I had happened to be slapped in the face I should, perhaps, have been positively glad of it. I say, in earnest, that I should probably have been able to discover even in that a peculiar sort of enjoyment—the enjoyment, of course, of despair; but in despair there are the most intense enjoyments, especially when one is very acutely conscious of the hopelessness of one's position. And when one is slapped in the face—why then the consciousness of being rubbed into a pulp would positively overwhelm one. The worst of it is, look at it which way one will, it still turns out that I was always the most to blame in everything. And what is most humiliating of all, to blame for no fault of my own but, so to say, through the laws of nature. In the first place, to blame because I am cleverer than any of the people surrounding me. (I have always considered myself cleverer than any of the people surrounding me, and sometimes, would you believe it, have been positively ashamed of it. At any rate, I have all my life, as it were, turned my eyes away and never could look people straight in the face.) To blame, finally, because even if I had had magnanimity, I should only have had more suffering from the sense of its uselessness. I should certainly have never been able to do anything from being magnanimous—neither to forgive, for my assailant would perhaps have slapped me from the laws of nature, and one cannot forgive the laws of nature; nor to forget, for even if it were owing to the laws of nature, it is insulting all the same. Finally even if I had wanted to be anything but magnanimous, had desired on the contrary to revenge myself on my assailant, I could not have revenged myself on any one for anything because I should certainly never have made up my mind to do anything, even if I had been able to. Why should I not have made up my mind? About that in particular I want to say a few words.

III

With people who know how to revenge themselves and to stand up for themselves in general, how is it done? Why, when they are possessed, let us suppose, by the feeling of revenge, then for the time there is nothing else but that feeling left in their whole being. Such a gentleman simply dashes straight for his object like an infuriated bull with its horns down, and nothing but a wall will stop him. (By the way: facing the wall, such gentlemen—that is, the "direct" persons and men of action—are genuinely nonplussed. For them a wall is not an evasion, as for us people who think and consequently do nothing; it is not an excuse for turning aside, an excuse for which

we are always very glad, though we scarcely believe in it ourselves, as a rule. No, they are nonplussed in all sincerity. The wall has for them something tranquillizing, morally soothing, final—maybe even something mysterious . . . but of the wall later.)

Well, such a direct person I regard as the real normal man, as his tender mother nature wished to see him when she graciously brought him into being on the earth. I envy such a man till I am green in the face. He is stupid. I am not disputing that, but perhaps the normal man should be stupid, how do you know? Perhaps it is very beautiful, in fact. And I am the more persuaded of that suspicion, if one can call it so, by the fact that if you take, for instance, the antithesis of the normal man, that is, the man of acute consciousness, who has come, of course, not out of the lap of nature but out a retort (this is almost mysticism, gentlemen, but I suspect this, too), this retort-made man is sometimes so nonplussed in the presence of his antithesis that with all his exaggerated consciousness he genuinely thinks of himself as a mouse and not a man. It may be an acutely conscious mouse, yet it is a mouse, while the other is a man, and therefore, et cætera, et cætera. And the worst of it is, he himself, his very own self, looks on himself as a mouse; no one asks him to do so; and that is an important point. Now let us look at this mouse in action. Let us suppose, for instance, that it feels insulted, too (and it almost always does feel insulted), and wants to revenge itself, too. There may even be a greater accumulation of spite in it than in *l'homme de la nature et de la vérité*.[2] The base and nasty desire to vent that spite on its assailant rankles perhaps even more nastily in it than in *l'homme de la nature et de la vérité*. For through his innate stupidity the latter looks upon his revenge as justice pure and simple; while in consequence of his acute consciousness the mouse does not believe in the justice of it. To come at last to the deed itself, to the very act of revenge. Apart from the one fundamental nastiness the luckless mouse succeeds in creating around it so many other nastinesses in the form of doubts and questions, adds to the one question so many unsettled questions that there inevitably works up around it a sort of fatal brew, a stinking mess, made up of its doubts, emotions, and of the contempt spat upon it by the direct men of action who stand solemnly about it as judges and arbitrators, laughing at it till their healthy sides ache. Of course the only thing left for it is to dismiss all that with a wave of its paw, and, with a smile of assumed contempt in which it does not even itself believe, creep ignominiously into its mouse-hole. There in its nasty, stinking, underground home our insulted, crushed, and ridiculed mouse promptly

2. "The man of nature and truth"; Rousseau's description of himself in the *Confessions* (1781–1788), which created an enormous stir because they professed to tell the whole truth about the author and were sometimes self-accusing.

becomes absorbed in cold, malignant and, above all, everlasting spite. For forty years together it will remember its injury down to the smallest, most ignominious details, and every time will add, of itself, details still more ignominious, spitefully teasing and tormenting itself with its own imagination. It will itself be ashamed of its imaginings, but yet it will recall it all, it will go over and over every detail, it will invent unheard of things against itself, pretending that those things might happen, and will forgive nothing. Maybe it will begin to revenge itself, too, but, as it were, piecemeal, in trivial ways, from behind the stove, incognito, without believing either in its own right to vengeance, or in the success of its revenge knowing that from all its efforts at revenge it will suffer a hundred times more than he on whom it revenges itself, while he, I daresay, will not even scratch himself. On its deathbed it will recall it all over again, with interest accumulated over all the years and. . . .

But it is just in that cold, abominable half despair, half belief, in that conscious burying oneself alive for grief in the underworld for forty years, in that acutely recognized and yet partly doubtful hopelessness of one's position, in that hell of unsatisfied desires turned inward, in that fever of oscillations, or resolutions determined for ever and repented of again a minute later—that the savour of that strange enjoyment of which I have spoken lies. It is so subtle, so difficult of analysis, that persons who are a little limited, or even simply persons of strong nerves, will not understand a single atom of it. "Possibly," you will add on your own account with a grin, "people will not understand it either who have never received a slap in the face," and in that way you will politely hint to me that I, too, perhaps, have had the experience of a slap in the face in my life, and so I speak as one who knows. I bet that you are thinking that. But set your minds at rest, gentlemen, I have not received a slap in the face, though it is absolutely a matter of indifference to me what you may think about it. Possibly, I even regret, myself, that I have given so few slaps in the face during my life. But enough . . . not another word on that subject of such extreme interest to you.

I will continue calmly concerning persons with strong nerves who do not understand a certain refinement of enjoyment. Though in certain circumstances these gentlemen bellow their loudest like bulls, though this, let us suppose, does them the greatest credit, yet, as I have said already, confronted with the impossible they subside at once. The impossible means the stone wall! What stone wall? Why, of course, the laws of nature, the deductions of natural science, mathematics. As soon as they prove to you, for instance, that you are descended from a monkey, then it is no use scowling, accept it for a fact. When they prove to you that in reality one drop of your own fat must be dearer to you than a hundred thousand of your

fellow-creatures, and that this conclusion is the final solution of all so-called virtues and duties and all such prejudices and fancies, then you have just to accept it, there is no help for it, for twice two is a law of mathematics. Just try refuting it.

"Upon my word," they will shout at you, "it is no use protesting: it is a case of twice two makes four! Nature does not ask your permission, she has nothing to do with your wishes, and whether you like her laws or dislike them, you are bound to accept her as she is, and consequently all her conclusions. A wall, you see, is a wall . . ." and so on, and so on.

Merciful Heavens! but what do I care for the laws of nature and arithmetic, when, for some reason I dislike those laws and the fact that twice two makes four? Of course I cannot break through the wall by battering my head against it if I really have not the strength to knock it down, but I am not going to be reconciled to it simply because it is a stone wall and I have not the strength.

As though such a stone wall really were a consolation, and really did contain some word of conciliation, simply because it is as true as twice two makes four. Oh, absurdity of absurdities! How much better it is to understand it all, to recognize it all, all the impossibilities and the stone wall; not to be reconciled to one of those impossibilities and stone walls if it disgusts you to be reconciled to it; by the way of the most inevitable, logical combinations to reach the most revolting conclusions on the everlasting theme, that even for the stone wall you are yourself somehow to blame, though again it is as clear as day you are not to blame in the least, and therefore grinding your teeth in silent impotence to sink into luxurious inertia, brooding on the fact that there is no one even for you to feel vindictive against, that you have not, and perhaps never will have, an object for your spite, that it is a sleight of hand, a bit of juggling, a card-sharper's trick, that it is simply a mess, no knowing what and no knowing who, but in spite of all these uncertainties and jugglings, still there is an ache in you, and the more you do not know, the worse the ache.

IV

"Ha, ha, ha! You will be finding enjoyment in toothache next," you cry, with a laugh.

"Well? Even in toothache there is enjoyment," I answer. I had toothache for a whole month and I know there is. In that case, of course, people are not spiteful in silence, but moan; but they are not candid moans, they are malignant moans, and the malignancy is the whole point. The enjoyment of the sufferer finds expression in those moans; if he did not feel enjoyment in them he would not moan. It is a good example, gentlemen, and I will develop it. Those moans

express in the first place all the aimlessness of your pain, which is so humiliating to your consciousness; the whole legal system of nature on which you spit disdainfully, of course, but from which you suffer all the same while she does not. They express the consciousness that you have no enemy to punish, but that you have pain; the consciousness that in spite of all possible Wagenheims[3] you are in complete slavery to your teeth; that if some one wishes it, your teeth will leave off aching, and if he does not, they will go on aching another three months; and that finally if you are still contumacious and still protest, all that is left you for your own gratification is to thrash yourself or beat your wall with your fist as hard as you can, and absolutely nothing more. Well, these mortal insults, these jeers on the part of some one unknown, end at last in an enjoyment which sometimes reaches the highest degree of voluptuousness. I ask you, gentlemen, listen sometimes to the moans of an educated man of the nineteenth century suffering from toothache, on the second or third day of the attack, when he is beginning to moan, not as he moaned on the first day, that is, not simply because he has toothache, not just as any coarse peasant, but as a man affected by progress and European civilization, a man who is "divorced from the soil and the national elements," as they express it now-a-days. His moans become nasty, disgustingly malignant, and go on for whole days and nights. And of course he knows himself that he is doing himself no sort of good with his moans; he knows better than any one that he is only lacerating and harassing himself and others for nothing; he knows that even the audience before whom he is making his efforts, and his whole family, listen to him with loathing, do not put the least faith in him, and inwardly understand that he might moan differently, more simply, without trills and flourishes, and that he is only amusing himself like that from ill-humour, from malignancy. Well, in all these recognitions and disgraces it is that there lies a voluptuous pleasure. As though he would say: "I am worrying you, I am lacerating your hearts, I am keeping every one in the house awake. Well, stay awake then, you, too, feel every minute that I have toothache. I am not a hero to you now, as I tried to seem before, but simply a nasty person, an impostor. Well, so be it, then! I am very glad that you see through me. It is nasty for you to hear my despicable moans: well, let it be nasty; here I will let you have a nastier flourish in a minute. . . ." You do not understand even now, gentlemen? No, it seems our development and our consciousness must go further to understand all the intricacies of this pleasure. You laugh? Delighted. My jests, gentlemen, are of course in bad taste, jerky, involved, lacking self-confidence. But of course that is because I do not respect myself. Can a man of perception respect himself at all?

3. Wagenheim was apparently a German who advertised painless dentistry; he may have used hypnosis or autosuggestion.

V

Come, can a man who attempts to find enjoyment in the very feeling of his own degradation possibly have a spark of respect for himself? I am not saying this now from any mawkish kind of remorse. And, indeed, I could never endure saying, "Forgive me, Papa, I won't do it again," not because I am incapable of saying that—on the contrary, perhaps just because I have been too capable of it, and in what a way, too! As though of design I used to get into trouble in cases when I was not to blame in any way. That was the nastiest part of it. At the same time I was genuinely touched and penitent, I used to shed tears and, of course, deceived myself, though I was not acting in the least and there was a sick feeling in my heart at the time. . . . . For that one could not blame even the laws of nature, though the laws of nature have continually all my life offended me more than anything. It is loathsome to remember it all, but it was loathsome even then. Of course, a minute or so later I would realize wrathfully that it was all a lie, a revolting lie, an affected lie, that is, all this penitence, this emotion, these vows of reform. You will ask why did I worry myself with such antics: answer, because it was very dull to sit with one's hands folded, and so one began cutting capers. That is really it. Observe yourselves more carefully, gentlemen, then you will understand that it is so. I invented adventures for myself and made up a life, so as at least to live in some way. How many times it has happened to me—well, for instance, to take offence simply on purpose, for nothing; and one knows oneself, of course, that one is offended at nothing, that one is putting it on, but yet one brings oneself, at last to the point of being really offended. All my life I have had an impulse to play such pranks, so that in the end I could not control it in myself. Another time, twice, in fact, I tried hard to be in love. I suffered, too, gentlemen, I assure you. In the depth of my heart there was no faith in my suffering, only a faint stir of mockery, but yet I did suffer, and in the real, orthodox way; I was jealous, beside myself . . . and it was all from *ennui*, gentlemen, all from *ennui;* inertia overcame me. You know the direct, legitimate fruit of consciousness is inertia, that is, conscious sitting-with-the-hands-folded. I have referred to this already. I repeat, I repeat with emphasis: all "direct" persons and men of action are active just because they are stupid and limited. How explain that? I will tell you: in consequence of their limitation they take immediate and secondary causes for primary ones, and in that way persuade themselves more quickly and easily than other people do that they have found an infallible foundation for their activity, and their minds are at ease and you know that is the chief thing. To begin to act, you know, you must first have your mind completely at ease and no trace of doubt left in it. Why, how am I, for example to set my mind at rest? Where

are the primary causes on which I am to build? Where are my foundations? Where am I to get them from? I exercise myself in reflection, and consequently with me every primary cause at once draws after itself another still more primary, and so on to infinity. That is just the essence of every sort of consciousness and reflection. It must be a case of the laws of nature again. What is the result of it in the end? Why, just the same. Remember I spoke just now of vengeance. (I am sure you did not take it in.) I said that a man revenges himself because he sees justice in it. Therefore he has found a primary cause, that is, justice. And so he is at rest on all sides, and consequently he carries out his revenge calmly and successfully, being persuaded that he is doing a just and honest thing. But I see no justice in it, I find no sort of virtue in it either, and consequently if I attempt to revenge myself, it is only out of spite. Spite, of course, might overcome everything, all my doubts, and so might serve quite successfully in place of a primary cause, precisely because it is not a cause. But what is to be done if I have not even spite (I began with that just now, you know). In consequence again of those accursed laws of consciousness, anger in me is subject to chemical disintegration. You look into it, the object flies off into air, your reasons evaporate, the criminal is not to be found, the wrong becomes not a wrong but a phantom, something like the toothache, for which no one is to blame, and consequently there is only the same outlet left again—that is, to beat the wall as hard as you can. So you give it up with a wave of the hand because you have not found a fundamental cause. And try letting yourself be carried away by your feelings, blindly, without reflection, without a primary cause, repelling consciousness at least for a time; hate or love, if only not to sit with your hands folded. The day after to-morrow, at the latest, you will begin despising yourself for having knowingly deceived yourself. Result: a soap-bubble and inertia. Oh, gentlemen, do you know, perhaps I consider myself an intelligent man, only because all my life I have been able neither to begin nor to finish anything. Granted I am a babbler, a harmless vexatious babbler, like all of us. But what is to be done if the direct and sole vocation of every intelligent man is babble, that is, the intentional pouring of water through a sieve?

VI

Oh, if I had done nothing simply from laziness! Heavens, how I should have respected myself, then. I should have respected myself because I should at least have been capable of being lazy; there would at least have been one quality, as it were, positive in me, in which I could have believed myself. Question: What is he? Answer: A sluggard; how very pleasant it would have been to hear that of oneself! It

would mean that I was positively defined, it would mean that there was something to say about me. "Sluggard"—why, it is a calling and vocation, it is a career. Do not jest, it is so. I should then be a member of the best club by right, and should find my occupation in continually respecting myself. I knew a gentleman who prided himself all his life on being a connoisseur of Lafitte. He considered this as his positive virtue, and never doubted himself. He died, not simply with a tranquil, but with a triumphant, conscience, and he was quite right, too. Then I should have chosen a career for myself, I should have been a sluggard and a glutton, not a simple one, but, for instance, one with sympathies for everything good and beautiful. How do you like that? I have long had visions of it. That "good and beautiful" weighs heavily on my mind at forty. But that is at forty; then—oh, then it would have been different! I should have found for myself a form of activity in keeping with it, to be precise, drinking to the health of everything "good and beautiful." I should have snatched at every opportunity to drop a tear into my glass and then to drain it to all that is "good and beautiful." I should then have turned everything into the good and the beautiful; in the nastiest, unquestionable trash, I should have sought out the good and the beautiful. I should have exuded tears like a wet sponge. An artist, for instance, paints a picture worthy of Gay.[4] At once I drink to the health of the artist who painted the picture worthy of Gay, because I love all that is "good and beautiful." An author has written *What you will*:[5] at once I drink to the health of "what you will" because I love all that is "good and beautiful."

I should claim respect for doing so. I should persecute any one who would not show me respect. I should live at ease, I should die with dignity, why, it is charming, perfectly charming! And what a good round belly I should have grown, what a triple chin I should have established, what a ruby nose I should have coloured for myself, so that every one would have said, looking at me: "Here is an asset! Here is something real and solid!" And, say what you like, it is very agreeable to hear such remarks about oneself in this negative age.

VII

But these are all golden dreams. Oh, tell me, who was it first announced, who was it first proclaimed, that man only does nasty things because he does not know his own interests; and that if he were enlightened, if his eyes were opened to his real normal inter-

4. Nikolay Nikolaevich Gay (1831–1894), Russian painter of historical pictures who then had a great reputation. His father was a French emigrant. 5. Subtitle of Shakespeare's comedy *Twelfth Night*, generally used on the Continent instead of the main title, which is difficult to translate.

ests, man would at once cease to do nasty things, would at once become good and noble because, being enlightened and understanding his real advantage, he would see his own advantage in the good and nothing else, and we all know that not one man can, consciously, act against his own interests, consequently, so to say, through necessity, he would begin doing good? Oh, the babe! Oh, the pure, innocent child! Why, in the first place, when in all these thousands of years has there been a time when man has acted only from his own interest? What is to be done with the millions of facts that bear witness that men, *consciously*, that is fully understanding their real interests, have left them in the background and have rushed headlong on another path, to meet peril and danger, compelled to this course by nobody and by nothing, but, as it were, simply disliking the beaten track, and have obstinately, wilfully, struck out another difficult, absurd way, seeking it almost in the darkness. So, I suppose, this obstinacy and perversity were pleasanter to them than any advantage. . . . Advantage! What is advantage? And will you take it upon yourself to define with perfect accuracy in what the advantage of man consists? And what if it so happens that a man's advantage, *sometimes*, not only may, but even must, consist in his desiring in certain cases what is harmful to himself and not advantageous. And if so, if there can be such a case, the whole principle falls into dust. What do you think—are there such cases? You laugh; laugh away, gentlemen, but only answer me: have man's advantages been reckoned up with perfect certainty? Are there not some which not only have not been included but cannot possibly be included under any classification? You see, you gentlemen have, to the best of my knowledge, taken your whole register of human advantages from the averages of statistical figures and politico-economical formulas. Your advantages are prosperity, wealth, freedom, peace—and so on, and so on. So that the man who should, for instance, go openly and knowingly in opposition to all that list would, to your thinking, and indeed mine, too, of course, be obscurantist or an absolute madman: would not he? But, you know, this is what is surprising: why does it so happen that all these statisticians, sages and lovers of humanity, when they reckon up human advantages invariably leave out one? They don't even take it into their reckoning in the form in which it should be taken, and the whole reckoning depends upon that. It would be no great matter, they would simply have to take it, this advantage, and add it to the list. But the trouble is, that this strange advantage does not fall under any classification and is not in place in any list. I have a friend for instance . . . Ech! gentlemen, but of course he is your friend, too; and indeed there is no one, no one, to whom he is not a friend! When he prepares for any undertaking this gentleman immediately explains to you, elegantly and clearly, exactly

how he must act in accordance with the laws of reason and truth. What is more, he will talk to you with excitement and passion of the true normal interests of man; with irony he will upbraid the short-sighted fools who do not understand their own interests, nor the true significance of virtue; and, within a quarter of an hour, without any sudden outside provocation, but simply through something inside him which is stronger than all his interests, he will go off on quite a different tack—that is, act in direct opposition to what he has just been saying about himself, in opposition to the laws of reason, in opposition to his own advantage, in fact in opposition to everything . . . I warn you that my friend is a compound personality, and therefore it is difficult to blame him as an individual. The fact is, gentlemen, it seems there must really exist something that is dearer to almost every man than his greatest advantages, or (not to be illogical) there is a most advantageous advantage (the very one omitted of which we spoke just now) which is more important and more advantageous than all other advantages, for the sake of which a man if necessary is ready to act in opposition to all laws; that is, in opposition to reason, honour, peace, prosperity—in fact, in opposition to all those excellent and useful things if only he can attain that fundamental, most advantageous advantage which is dearer to him than all. "Yes, but it's advantage all the same," you will retort. But excuse me, I'll make the point clear, and it is not a case of playing upon words. What matters is, that this advantage is remarkable from the very fact that it breaks down all our classifications, and continually shatters every system constructed by lovers of mankind for the benefit of mankind. In fact, it upsets everything. But before I mention this advantage to you, I want to compromise myself personally, and therefore I boldly declare that all these fine systems, all these theories for explaining to mankind their real normal interests, in order that inevitably striving to pursue these interests they may at once become good and noble—are, in my opinion, so far, mere logical exercises! Yes, logical exercises. Why, to maintain this theory of the regeneration of mankind of means of the pursuit of his own advantage is to my mind almost the same thing as . . . as to affirm, for instance, following Buckle,[6] that through civilization mankind becomes softer, and consequently less bloodthirsty and less fitted for warfare. Logically it does seem to follow from his arguments. But man has such a predilection for systems and abstract deductions that he is ready to distort the truth intentionally, he is ready to deny the evidence of his senses only to justify his logic. I take this example because it is the most glaring instance of it. Only look about you: blood is being spilt in streams,

6. Henry Thomas Buckle (1821–1862), the author of the *History of Civilization in England* (two volumes, 1857, 1861), which held that all progress is due to the march of mind. There is no moral progress except indirectly, as a result of intellectual enlightenment.

and in the merriest way, as though it were champagne. Take the whole of the nineteenth century in which Buckle lived. Take Napoleon—the Great and also the present one. Take North America—the eternal union. Take the farce of Schleswig-Holstein.[7] . . . And what is it that civilization softens in us? The only gain of civilization for mankind is the greater capacity for variety of sensations—and absolutely nothing more. And through the development of this many-sidedness man may come to finding enjoyment in bloodshed. In fact, this has already happened to him. Have you noticed that it is the most civilized gentlemen who have been the subtlest slaughterers, to whom the Attilas and Stenka Razins[8] could not hold a candle, and if they are not so conspicuous as the Attilas and Stenka Razins it is simply because they are so often met with, are so ordinary and have become so familiar to us. In any case civilization has made mankind if not more bloodthirsty, at least more vilely, more loathsomely bloodthirsty. In old days he saw justice in bloodshed and with his conscience at peace exterminated those he thought proper. Now we do think bloodshed abominable and yet we engage in this abomination, and with more energy than ever. Which is worse? Decide that for yourselves. They say that Cleopatra (excuse an instance from Roman history) was fond of sticking gold pins into her slave-girls' breasts and derived gratification from their screams and writhings. You will say that that was in the comparatively barbarous times; that these are barbarous times too, because also, comparatively speaking, pins are stuck in even now; that though man has now learned to see more clearly than in barbarous ages, he is still far from having learnt to act as reason and science would dictate. But yet you are fully convinced that he will be sure to learn when he gets rid of certain old bad habits, and when common sense and science have completely re-educated human nature and turned it in a normal direction. You are confident that then man will cease from *intentional* error and will, so to say, be compelled not to want to set his will against his normal interests. That is not all; then, you say, science itself will teach man (though to my mind it's a superfluous luxury) that he never has really had any caprice or will of his own, and that he himself is something of the nature of a piano-key or the stop of an organ, and that there are, besides, things called the laws of nature; so that everything he does is not done by his willing it, but is done of itself, by the laws of nature. Consequently we have only to discover these laws of nature, and man will no longer have to answer

7. Austria and Prussia invaded Denmark and annexed its southernmost part, Schleswig-Holstein, in 1864. 8. A Don Cossack leader who in 1670 conquered many cities along the Volga. He was finally defeated, captured, and executed in 1671. *Attila* (406?–453 A.D.) was king of the Huns (433?–453). In 451 his armies penetrated as far as Orléans, in what today is France. He was defeated in the battle of Châlons on the Catalaunian plains and retired to Hungary. In 452 he led an expedition against Rome.

for his actions and life will become exceedingly easy for him. All human actions, will then, of course, be tabulated according to these laws, mathematically like tables of logarithms up to 108,000, and entered in an index; or, better still, there would be published certain edifying works of the nature of encyclopædic lexicons, in which everything will be so clearly calculated and explained that there will be no more incidents or adventures in the world.

Then—this is all what you say—new economic relations will be established all ready-made and worked out with mathematical exactitude, so that every possible question will vanish in the twinkling of any eye, simply because every possible answer to it will be provided. Then the "Crystal Palace"[9] will be built. Then . . . In fact those will be halcyon days. Of course there is no guaranteeing (this is my comment) that it will not be, for instance, frightfully dull then (for what will one have to do when everything will be calculated and tabulated), but of course boredom may lead you to anything . It is boredom sets one sticking golden pins into people, but all that would not matter. What is bad (this is my comment again) is that I dare say people will be thankful for the gold pins then. Man is stupid, you know, phenomenally stupid; or rather he is not at all stupid, but he is so ungrateful that you could not find another like him in all creation. I, for instance, would not be in the least surprised if all of a sudden, *à propos* of nothing, in the midst of general prosperity a gentleman with an ignoble, or rather with a reactionary and ironical, countenance were to arise and, putting his arms akimbo, say to us all: "I say, gentlemen, hadn't we better kick over the whole show and scatter rationalism to the winds, simply to send these logarithms to the devil, and to enable us to live once more at our own sweet foolish will!" That again would not matter, but what is annoying is that he would be sure to find followers—such is the nature of man. And all that for the most foolish reason, which, one would think, was hardly worth mentioning: that is, that man everywhere and at all times, whoever he may be, has preferred to act as he chose and not in the least as his reason and advantage dictated. And one may choose what is contrary to one's own interests, and sometimes one *positively ought* (that is my idea). One's own free unfettered choice, one's own caprice, however wild it may be, one's own fancy worked up at times to frenzy—is that very "most advantageous advantage" which we have overlooked, which comes under no classification and against which all systems and theories are continually being shattered to atoms. And how do these wiseacres know that man wants a normal, a virtuous choice? What has made them conceive that man must want a ration-

9. A structure of glass and iron built in London in 1851–1854, and at that time admired as the newest wonder of architecture. The nave was five hundred yards long. The building burned down in 1936.

ally advantageous choice? What man wants is simply *independent* choice, whatever that independence may cost and wherever it may lead. And choice, of course, the devil only knows what choice.

VIII

"Ha! ha! ha! But you know there is no such thing as choice in reality, say what you like," you will interpose with a chuckle. "Science has succeeded in so far analysing man that we know already that choice and what is called freedom of will is nothing else than——"

Stay, gentlemen, I meant to begin with that myself. I confess, I was rather frightened. I was just going to say that the devil only knows what choice depends on, and that perhaps that was a very good thing, but I remembered the teaching of science . . . and pulled myself up. And here you have begun upon it. Indeed, if there really is some day discovered a formula for all our desires and caprices—that is, an explanation of what they depend upon, by what laws they arise, how they develop, what they are aiming at in one case and in another and so on, that is a real mathematical formula—then, most likely man will at once cease to feel desire, indeed, he will be certain to. For who would want to choose by rule? Besides, he will at once be transformed from a human being into an organ-stop or something of the sort; for what is a man without desires, without free will and without choice, if not a stop in an organ? What do you think? Let us reckon the chances—can such a thing happen or not?

"H'm!" you decide. "Our choice is usually mistaken from a false view of our advantage. We sometimes choose absolute nonsense because in our foolishness we see in that nonsense the easiest means for attaining a supposed advantage. But when all that is explained and worked out on paper (which is perfectly possible, for it is contemptible and senseless to suppose that some laws of nature man will never understand), then certainly so-called desires will no longer exist. For if a desire should come into conflict with reason we shall then reason and not desire, because it will be impossible retaining our reason to be senseless in our desires, and in that way knowingly act against reason and desire to injure ourselves. And as all choice and reasoning can be really calculated—because there will some day be discovered the laws of our so-called freewill—so, joking apart, there may one day be something like a table constructed of them, so that we really shall choose in accordance with it. If, for instance, some day they calculate and prove to me that I make a long nose at some one because I could not help making a long nose at him and that I had to do it in that particular way, what freedom is left me, especially if I am a learned man and have taken my degree somewhere? Then

I should be able to calculate my whole life for thirty years beforehand. In short, if this could be arranged there would be nothing left for us to do; anyway, we should have to understand that. And, in fact, we ought unwearyingly to repeat to ourselves that at such and such a time and in such and such circumstances nature does not ask our leave; that we have got to take her as she is and not fashion her to suit our fancy, and if we really aspire to formulas and tables of rules, and well, even . . . to the chemical retort, there's no help for it, we must accept the retort too, or else it will be accepted without our consent. . . .

Yes, but here I come to a stop! Gentlemen, you must excuse me for being over-philosophical; it's the result of forty years underground! Allow me to indulge my fancy. You see, gentlemen, reason is an excellent thing, there's no disputing that, but reason is nothing but reason and satisfies only the rational side of man's nature, while will is a manifestation of the whole life, that is, of the whole human life including reason and all the impulses. And although our life, in this manifestation of it, is often worthless, yet it is life and not simply extracting square roots. Here I, for instance, quite naturally want to live, in order to satisfy all my capacities for life, and not simply my capacity for reasoning, that is, not simply one twentieth of my capacity for life. What does reason know? Reason only knows what it has succeeded in learning (some things, perhaps, it will never learn; this is a poor comfort, but why not say so frankly?) and human nature acts as a whole, with everything that is in it, consciously or unconsciously, and, even if it goes wrong, it lives. I suspect, gentlemen, that you are looking at me with compassion; you tell me again that an enlightened and developed man, such, in short, as the future man will be, cannot consciously desire anything disadvantageous to himself, that that can be proved mathematically. I thoroughly agree, it can—by mathematics. But I repeat for the hundredth time, there is one case, one only, when man may consciously, purposely, desire what is injurious to himself, what is stupid, very stupid—simply in order to have the right to desire for himself even what is very stupid and not to be found by an obligation to desire only what is sensible. Of course, this very stupid thing, this caprice of ours, may be in reality, gentlemen, more advantageous for us than anything else on earth, especially in certain cases. And in particular it may be more advantageous than any advantage even when it does us obvious harm, and contradicts the soundest conclusions of our reason concerning our advantage—for in any circumstances it preserves for us what is most precious and most important—that is, our personality, our individuality. Some, you see, maintain that this really is the most precious thing for mankind; choice can, of course, if it chooses, be in agreement with reason; and especially if this be not abused but

kept within bounds. It is profitable and sometimes even praiseworthy. But very often, and even most often, choice is utterly and stubbornly opposed to reason . . . and . . . and . . . do you know that that, too, is profitable, sometimes even praiseworthy? Gentlemen, let us suppose that man is not stupid. (Indeed one cannot refuse to suppose that, if only from the one consideration, that, if man is stupid, then who is wise?) But if he is not stupid, he is monstrously ungrateful! Phenomenally ungrateful. In fact, I believe that the best definition of man is the ungrateful biped. But that is not all, that is not his worst defect; his worst defect is his perpetual moral obliquity, perpetual—from the days of the Flood to the Schleswig-Holstein period. Moral obliquity and consequently lack of good sense; for it has long been accepted that lack of good sense is due to no other cause than moral obliquity. Put it to the test and cast your eyes upon the history of mankind. What will you see? Is it a grand spectacle? Grand, if you like. Take the Colossus of Rhodes,[1] for instance, that's worth something. With good reason Mr. Anaevsky testifies of it that some say that it is the work of man's hands, while others maintain that it has been created by nature herself. Is it many-coloured? May be it is many-coloured, too: if one takes the dress uniforms, military and civilian, of all peoples in all ages—that alone is worth something, and if you take the undress uniforms you will never get to the end of it; no historian would be equal to the job. Is it monotonous? May be it's monotonous too: it's fighting and fighting; they are fighting now, they fought first and they fought last—you will admit, that it is almost too monotonous. In short, one may say anything about the history of the world—anything that might enter the most disordered imagination. The only thing one can't say is that it's rational. The very word sticks in one's throat. And, indeed, this is the odd thing that is continually happening: there are continually turning up in life moral and rational persons, sages and lovers of humanity who make it their object to live all their lives as morally and rationally as possible, to be, so to speak, a light to their neighbours simply in order to show them that it is possible to live morally and rationally in this world. And yet we all know that those very people sooner or later have been false to themselves, playing some queer trick, often a most unseemly one. Now I ask you: what can be expected of man since he is a being endowed with such strange qualities? Shower upon him every earthly blessing, drown him in a sea of happiness, so that nothing but bubbles of bliss can be seen on the surface; give him economic prosperity, such that he should have nothing else to do but sleep, eat cakes and busy himself with the continuation of his species, and even then out of sheer ingratitude, sheer spite, man

1. A statue of Helios (Apollo) at Rhodes (an island in the Aegean Sea), about a hundred feet high, which was considered one of the Seven Wonders of the World. It was erected about 290 B.C.

would play you some nasty trick. He would even risk his cakes and would deliberately desire the most fatal rubbish, the most uneconomical absurdity, simply to introduce into all his fantastic dreams, his vulgar folly that he will desire to retain, simply in order to prove to himself—as though that were so necessary—that men still are men and not the keys of a piano, which the laws of nature threaten to control so completely that soon one will be able to desire nothing but by the calendar. And that is not all: even if man really were nothing but a piano-key, even if this were proved to him by natural science and mathematics, even then he would not become reasonable, but would purposely do something perverse out of simple ingratitude, simply to gain his point. And if he does not find means he will contrive destruction and chaos, will contrive sufferings of all sorts, only to gain his point! He will launch a curse upon the world, and as only man can curse (it is his privilege, the primary distinction between him and other animals), may be by his curse alone he will attain his object—that is, convince himself that he is a man and not a piano-key! If you say that all this, too, can be calculated and tabulated—chaos and darkness and curses, so that the mere possibility of calculating it all beforehand would stop it all, and reason would reassert itself, then man would purposely go mad in order to be rid of reason and gain his point! I believe in it, I answer for it, for the whole work of man really seems to consist in nothing but proving to himself every minute that he is a man and not a piano-key! It may be at the cost of his skin, it may be by cannibalism! And this being so, can one help being tempted to rejoice that it has not yet come off, and that desire still depends on something we don't know?

You will scream at me (that is, if you condescend to do so) that no one is touching my free will, that all they are concerned with is that my will should of itself, of its own free will, coincide with my own normal interests, with the laws of nature and arithmetic.

Good Heavens, gentlemen, what sort of free will is left when we come to tabulation and arithmetic, when it will all be a case of twice two makes four? Twice two makes four without my will. As if free will meant that!

IX

Gentlemen, I am joking, and I know myself that my jokes are not brilliant, but you know one can't take everything as a joke. I am, perhaps, jesting against the grain. Gentlemen, I am tormented by questions; answer them for me. You, for instance, want to cure men of their old habits and reform their will in accordance with science and good sense. But how do you know, not only that it is possible, but also that it is *desirable*, to reform man in that way? And what

leads you to the conclusion that man's inclinations *need* reforming? In short, how do you know that such a reformation will be a benefit to man? And to go to the root of the matter, why are you so positively convinced that not to act against his real normal interests guaranteed by the conclusions of reason and arithmetic is certainly always advantageous for man and must always be a law for mankind? So far, you know, this is only your supposition. It may be the law of logic, but not the law of humanity. You think, gentlemen, perhaps that I am mad? Allow me to defend myself. I agree that man is preeminently a creative animal, predestined to strive consciously for an object and to engage in engineering—that is, incessantly and eternally to make new roads, *wherever they may lead*. But the reason why he wants sometimes to go off at a tangent may just be that he is *predestined* to make the road, and perhaps, too, that however stupid the "direct" practical man may be, the thought sometimes will occur to him that the road almost always does lead *somewhere*, and that the destination it leads to is less important than the process of making it, and that the chief thing is to save the well-conducted child from despising engineering, and so giving way to the fatal idleness, which, as we all know, is the mother of all the vices. Man likes to make roads and to create, that is a fact beyond dispute. But why has he such a passionate love for destruction and chaos also? Tell me that! But on that point I want to say a couple of words myself. May it not be that he loves chaos and destruction (there can be no disputing that he does sometimes love it) because he is instinctively afraid of attaining his object and completing the edifice he is constructing? Who knows, perhaps he only loves that edifice from a distance, and is by no means in love with it at close quarters; perhaps he only loves building it and does not want to live in it, but will leave it, when completed, for the use of *les animaux domestiques*—such as the ants, the sheep, and so on. Now the ants have quite a different taste. They have a marvellous edifice of that pattern which endures for ever—the ant-heap.

With the ant-heap the respectable race of ants began and with the ant-heap they will probably end, which does the greatest credit to their perseverance and good sense. But man is a frivolous and incongruous creature, and perhaps, like a chess player, loves the process of the game, not the end of it. And who knows (there is no saying with certainty), perhaps the only goal on earth to which mankind is striving lies in this incessant process of attaining, in other words, in life itself, and not in the thing to be attained, which must always be expressed as a formula, as positive as twice two makes four, and such positiveness is not life, gentlemen, but is the beginning of death. Anyway, man has always been afraid of this mathematical certainty, and I am afraid of it now. Granted that man does nothing but seek

that mathematical certainty, he traverses oceans, sacrifices his life in the quest, but to succeed, really to find it, he dreads, I assure you. He feels that when he has found it there will be nothing for him to look for. When workmen have finished their work they do at least receive their pay, they go to the tavern, then they are taken to the police-station—and there is occupation for a week. But where can man go? Anyway, one can observe a certain awkwardness about him when he has attained such objects. He loves the process of attaining, but does not quite like to have attained, and that, of course, is very absurd. In fact, man is a comical creature; there seems to be a kind of jest in it all. But yet mathematical certainty is, after all, something insufferable. Twice two makes four seems to me simply a piece of insolence. Twice two makes four is a pert coxcomb who stands with arms akimbo barring your path and spitting. I admit that twice two makes four is an excellent thing, but if we are to give everything its due, twice two makes five is sometimes a very charming thing too.

And why are you so firmly, so triumphantly, convinced that only the normal and the positive—in other words, only what is conducive to welfare—is for the advantage of man? Is not reason in error as regards advantage? Does not man, perhaps, love something besides well-being? Perhaps he is just as fond of suffering? Perhaps suffering is just as great a benefit to him as well-being? Man is sometimes extraordinarily, passionately, in love with suffering, and that is a fact. There is no need to appeal to universal history to prove that; only ask yourself, if you are a man and have lived at all. As far as my personal opinion is concerned, to care only for well-being seems to me positively ill-bred. Whether it's good or bad, it is sometimes very pleasant, too, to smash things. I hold no brief for suffering nor for well-being either. I am standing for . . . my caprice, and for its being guaranteed to me when necessary. Suffering would be out of place in vaudevilles, for instance; I know that. In the "Crystal Palace" it is unthinkable; suffering means doubt, negation, and what would be the good of a crystal palace if there could be any doubt about it? And yet I think man will never renounce real suffering, that is, destruction and chaos. Why, suffering is the sole origin of consciousness. Though I did lay it down at the beginning that consciousness is the greatest misfortune for man, yet I know man prizes it and would not give it up for any satisfaction. Consciousness, for instance, is infinitely superior to twice two makes four. Once you have mathematical certainty there is nothing left to do or to understand. There will be nothing left but to bottle up your five senses and plunge into contemplation. While if you stick to consciousness, even though the same result is attained, you can at least flog yourself at times, and that will, at any rate, liven you up. Reactionary as it is, corporal punishment is better than nothing.

X[2]

You believe in a crystal palace that can never be destroyed—a palace at which one will not be able to put out one's tongue or make a long nose on the sly. And perhaps that is just why I am afraid of this edifice, that it is of crystal and can never be destroyed and that one cannot put one's tongue out at it even on the sly.

You see, if it were not a palace, but a hen-house, I might creep into it to avoid getting wet, and yet I would not call the hen-house a palace out of gratitude to it for keeping me dry. You laugh and say that in such circumstances a hen-house is as good as a mansion. Yes, I answer, if one had to live simply to keep out of the rain.

But what is to be done, if I have taken it into my head that that is not the only object in life, and that if one must live one had better live in a mansion. That is my choice, my desire. You will only eradicate it when you have changed my preference. Well, do change it, allure me with something else, give me another ideal. But meanwhile I will not take a hen-house for a mansion. The crystal palace may be an idle dream, it may be that it is inconsistent with the laws of nature and that I have invented it only through my own stupidity, through the old-fashioned irrational habits of my generation. But what does it matter to me that it is inconsistent? That makes no difference since it exists in my desires, or rather exists as long as my desires exist. Perhaps you are laughing again? Laugh away; I will put up with any mockery rather than pretend that I am satisfied when I am hungry. I know, anyway, that I will not be put off with a compromise, with a recurring zero, simply because it is consistent with the laws of nature and actually exists. I will not accept as the crown of my desires a block of slum tenements on a lease of a thousand years, and perhaps with a sign-board of Wagenheim the dentist hanging out. Destroy my desires, eradicate my ideals, show me something better, and I will follow you. You will say, perhaps, that it is not worth your trouble; but in that case I can give you the same answer. We are discussing things seriously; but if you won't deign to give me your attention, I will drop your acquaintance. I can retreat into my underground hole.

But while I am alive and have desires I would rather my hand were withered off than bring one brick to such a building! Don't remind me that I have just rejected the crystal place for the sole reason that one cannot put one's tongue to it. I did not say because I am so fond of putting my tongue out. Perhaps the thing I resented was, that of all your edifices there has not been one at which one could not put out one's tongue. On the contrary, I would let my

2. Section X was badly mutilated by the censor, as Dostoevsky makes clear in the letter to his brother Mikhail, dated March 26, 1864, which is quoted in our introduction.

tongue be cut off out of gratitude if things could be so arranged, that I should lose all desire to put it out. It is not my fault that things cannot be so arranged, and that one must be satisfied with model flats. Then why am I made with such desires? Can I have been constructed simply in order to come to the conclusion that all my construction is a cheat? Can this be my whole purpose? I do not believe it.

But do you know what: I am convinced that we underground folk ought to be kept on a curb. Though we may sit forty years underground without speaking, when we do come out into the light of day and break out we talk and talk and talk. . . .

XI

The long and the short of it is, gentlemen, that it is better to do nothing! Better conscious inertia! And so hurrah for underground! Though I have said that I envy the normal man to the last drop of my bile, yet I should not care to be in his place such as he is now (though I shall not cease envying him). No, no; anyway the underground life is more advantageous. There, at any rate, one can. . . . Oh, but even now I am lying! I am lying because I know myself that it is not underground that is better, but something different, quite different, for which I am thirsting, but which I cannot find! Damn underground!

I will tell you another thing that would be better, and that is, if I myself believed in anything of what I have just written. I swear to you, gentlemen, there is not one thing, not one word of what I have written that I really believe. That is, I believe it, perhaps, but at the same time I feel and suspect that I am lying like a cobbler.

"Then why have you written all this?" you will say to me. "I ought to put you underground for forty years without anything to do and then come to you in your cellar, to find out what stage you have reached. How can a man be left with nothing to do for forty years?"

"Isn't that shameful, isn't that humiliating?" you will say, perhaps, wagging your heads contemptuously. "You thirst for life and try to settle the problems of life by a logical tangle. And how persistent, how insolent are your sallies, and at the same time time what a scare you are in! You talk nonsense and are pleased with it, you say impudent things and are in continual alarm and apologizing for them. You declare that you are afraid of nothing and at the same time try to ingratiate yourself in our good opinion. You declare that you are gnashing your teeth and at the same time you try to be witty so as to amuse us. You know that your witticisms are not witty, but you are evidently well satisfied with their literary value. You may, perhaps, have really suffered, but you have no respect for your own

suffering. You may have sincerity, but you have no modesty; out of the pettiest vanity you expose your sincerity to publicity and ignominy. You doubtlessly mean to say something, but hide your last word through fear, because you have not the resolution to utter it, and only have a cowardly impudence. You boast of consciousness, but you are not sure of your ground, for though your mind works, yet your heart is darkened and corrupt, and you cannot have a full, genuine consciousness without a pure heart. And how intrusive you are, how you insist and grimace! Lies, lies, lies!"

Of course I have myself made up all the things you say. That, too, is from underground. I have been for forty years listening to you through a crack under the floor. I have invented them myself, there was nothing else I could invent. It is no wonder that I have learned it by heart and it has taken a literary form. . . .

But can you really be so credulous as to think that I will print all this and give it to you to read too? And another problem: why do I call you "gentlemen," why do I address you as though you really were my readers? Such confessions as I intend to make are never printed nor given to other people to read. Anyway, I am not strong-minded enough for that, and I don't see why I should be. But you see a fancy has occurred to me and I want to realize it at all costs. Let me explain.

Every man has reminiscences which he would not tell to every one, but only to his friends. He has other matters in his mind which he would not reveal even to his friends, but only to himself, and that in secret. But there are other things which a man is afraid to tell even to himself, and every decent man has a number of such things stored away in his mind. The more decent he is, the greater the number of such things in his mind. Anyway, I have only lately determined to remember some of my early adventures. Till now I have always avoided them, even with a certain uneasiness. Now, when I am not only recalling them, but have actually decided to write an account of them, I want to try the experiment whether one can, even with oneself, be perfectly open and not take fright at the whole truth. I will observe, in parenthesis, that Heine[3] says that a true autobiography is almost an impossibility, and that man is bound to lie about himself. He considers that Rousseau certainly told lies about himself in his *Confessions*, and even intentionally lied, out of vanity. I am convinced that Heine is right; I quite understand how sometimes one may, out of sheer vanity, attribute regular crimes to oneself, and indeed I can very well conceive that kind of vanity. But Heine judged of people who made their confessions to the public. I write only for

3. Dostoevsky alludes to *Confessions* (1854), fragmentary memoirs written by the German poet Heinrich Heine (1797–1856), in which on the very first page Heine speaks of Rousseau as lying and inventing disgraceful incidents about himself for his *Confessions*.

myself, and I wish to declare once and for all that if I write as though I were addressing readers, that is simply because it is easier for me to write in that form. It is a form, an empty form—I shall never have readers. I have made this plain already. . . .

I don't wish to be hampered by any restrictions in the compilation of my notes. I shall not attempt any system or method. I will jot things down as I remember them.

But here, perhaps, some one will catch at the word and ask me: if you really don't reckon on readers, why do you make such compacts with yourself—and on paper too—that is, that you won't attempt any system or method, that you jot things down as you remember them, and so on, and so on? Why are you explaining? Why do you apologize?

Well, there it is, I answer.

There is a whole psychology in all this, though. Perhaps it is simply that I am a coward. And perhaps that I purposely imagine an audience before me in order that I may be more dignified while I write. There are perhaps thousands of reasons. Again, what is my object precisely in writing? If it is not for the benefit of the public why should I not simply recall these incidents in my own mind without putting them on paper?

Quite so; but yet it is more imposing on paper. There is something more impressive in it; I shall be better able to criticize myself and improve my style. Besides, I shall perhaps obtain actual relief from writing. To-day, for instance, I am particularly oppressed by one memory of a distant past. It came back vividly to my mind a few days ago, and has remained haunting me like an annoying tune that one cannot get rid of. And yet I must get rid of it somehow. I have hundreds of such reminiscences; but at times some one stands out from the hundred and oppresses me. For some reason I believe that if I write it down I should get rid of it. Why not try?

Besides, I am bored, and I never have anything to do. Writing will be a sort of work. They say work makes man kind-hearted and honest. Well, here is a chance for me, anyway.

Snow is falling to-day, yellow and dingy. It fell yesterday, too, and a few days ago. I fancy it is the wet snow that has reminded me of that incident which I cannot shake off now. And so let it be a story *à propos* of the falling snow.

Part II

À PROPOS OF THE WET SNOW

When from dark error's subjugation
My words of passionate exhortation

Had wrenched thy fainting spirit free;
And writhing prone in thine affliction
Thou didst recall with malediction
The vice that had encompassed thee:
And when thy slumbering conscience, fretting
By recollection's torturing flame,
Thou didst reveal the hideous setting
Of thy life's current ere I came:
When suddenly I saw thee sicken,
And weeping, hide thine anguished face,
Revolted, maddened, horror-stricken,
At memories of foul disgrace, etc., etc., etc. . . .

NEKRASOV[4] *(translated by Juliet Soskice)*

I

At that time I was only twenty-four. My life was even then gloomy, ill-regulated, and as solitary as that of a savage. I made friends with no one and positively avoided talking, and buried myself more and more in my hole. At work in the office I never looked at any one, and I was perfectly well aware that my companions looked upon me, not only as a queer fellow, but even looked upon me—I always fancied this—with a sort of loathing. I sometimes wondered why it was that nobody except me fancied that he was looked upon with aversion? One of the clerks had a most repulsive, pock-marked face, which looked positively villainous. I believe I should not have dared to look at any one with such an unsightly countenance. Another had such a very dirty old uniform that there was an unpleasant odor in his proximity. Yet not one of these gentlemen showed the slightest self-consciousness—either about their clothes or their countenance or their character in any way. Neither of them ever imagined that they were looked at with repulsion; if they had imagined it they would not have minded—so long as their superiors did not look at them in that way. It is clear to me now that, owing to my unbounded vanity and to the high standard I set for myself, I often looked at myself with furious discontent, which verged on loathing, and so I inwardly attributed the same feeling to every one. I hated my face, for instance: I thought it disgusting, and even suspected that there was something base in my expression, and so every day when I turned up at the office I tried to behave as independently as possible, and to assume a lofty expression, so that I might not be suspected of being abject.

4. Nikolay A. Nekrasov (1821–1878) was a famous Russian poet and editor of radical sympathies. The poem quoted dates from 1845, and is without title. The poem ends with the lines, "Into my house come bold and free, Its rightful mistress there to be."

"My face may be ugly," I thought, "but let it be lofty, expressive, and, above all, *extremely* intelligent." But I was positively and painfully certain that it was impossible for my countenance ever to express those qualities. And what was worst of all, I thought it actually stupid-looking, and I would have been quite satisfied if I could have looked intelligent. In fact, I would even have put up with looking base if, at the same time, my face could have been thought strikingly intelligent.

Of course, I hated my fellow clerks one and all, and I despised them all, yet at the same time I was, as it were, afraid of them. In fact, it happened at times that I thought more highly of them than of myself. It somehow happened quite suddenly that I alternated between despising them and thinking them superior to myself. A cultivated and decent man cannot be vain without setting a fearfully high standard for himself, and without despising and almost hating himself at certain moments. But whether I despised them or thought them superior I dropped my eyes almost every time I met any one. I even made experiments whether I could face so and so's looking at me, and I was always the first to drop my eyes. This worried me to distraction. I had a sickly dread, too, of being ridiculous, and so had a slavish passion for the conventional in everything external. I loved to fall into the common rut, and had a whole-hearted terror of any kind of eccentricity in myself. But how could I live up to it? I was morbidly sensitive, as a man of our age should be. They were all stupid, and as like one another as so many sheep. Perhaps I was the only one in the office who fancied that I was a coward and a slave, and I fancied it just because I was more highly developed. But it was not only that I fancied it, it really was so. I was a coward and a slave. I say this without the slightest embarrassment. Every decent man of our age must be a coward and a slave. That is his normal condition. Of that I am firmly persuaded. He is made and constructed to that very end. And not only at the present time owing to some casual circumstances, but always, at all times, a decent man is bound to be a coward and a slave. It is the law of nature for all decent people all over the earth. If any one of them happens to be valiant about something, he need not be comforted nor carried away by that; he would show the white feather just the same before something else. That is how it invariably and inevitably ends. Only donkeys and mules are valiant, and they only till they are pushed up to the wall. It is not worth while to pay attention to them for they really are of no consequence.

Another circumstance, too, worried me in those days: that there was no one like me and I was unlike any one else. "I am unique and they are all alike," I thought—and pondered.

From that it is evident that I was still a youngster.

The very opposite sometimes happened. It was loathsome sometimes to go to the office; things reached such a point that I often came home ill. But all at once, *à propos* of nothing, there would come a phase of scepticism and indifference (everything happened in phases to me), and I would laugh myself at any intolerance and fastidiousness, I would reproach myself with being *romantic*. At one time I was unwilling to speak to any one, while at other times I would not only talk, but go to the length of contemplating making friends with them. All my fastidiousness would suddenly, for no rhyme or reason, vanish. Who knows, perhaps I never had really had it, and it had simply been affected, and got out of books. I have not decided that question even now. Once I quite made friends with them, visited their homes, played preference, drank vodka, talked of promotions. . . . But here let me make a digression.

We Russians, speaking generally, have never had those foolish transcendental "romantics"—German, and still more French—on whom nothing produces any effect; if there were an earthquake, if all France perished at the barricades, they would still be the same, they would not even have the decency to affect a change, but would still go on singing their transcendental songs to the hour of their death, because they are fools. We, in Russia, have no fools; that is well known. That is what distinguishes us from foreign lands. Consequently these transcendental natures are not found amongst us in their pure form. The idea that they are is due to our "realistic" journalists and critics of that day, always on the look out for Kostanzhoglos and Uncle Pyotr Ivanichs[5] and foolishly accepting them as our ideal; they have slandered our romantics, taking them for the same transcendental sort as in Germany or France. On the contrary, the characteristics of our "romantics" are absolutely and directly opposed to the transcendental European type, and no European standard can be applied to them. (Allow me to make use of this word "romantic"—an old-fashioned and much respected word which has done good service and is familiar to all.) The characteristics of our romantic are to understand everything, *to see everything and to see it often incomparably more clearly than our most realistic minds see it;* to refuse to accept anyone or anything, but at the same time not to despise anything; to give way, to yield, from policy; never to lose sight of a useful practical object (such as rent-free quarters at the government expense, pensions, decorations), to keep their eye on that object through all the enthusiasm and volumes of lyrical poems, and at the same time to preserve "the good and the beautiful" invi-

5. A character in Ivan Goncharov's novel *A Common Story* (1847); a high bureaucrat, a factory owner who teaches lessons of sobriety and good sense to the romantic hero, Alexander Aduyev. *Konstanzhoglo:* The ideal efficient landowner in the second part of Gogol's novel *Dead Souls* (1852).

olate within them to the hour of their death, and to preserve themselves also, incidentally, like some precious jewel wrapped in cotton wool if only for the benefit of "the good and the beautiful." Our "romantic" is a man of great breadth and the greatest rogue of all our rogues, I assure you. . . . I can assure you from experience, indeed. Of course, that is, if he is intelligent. But what am I saying! The romantic is always intelligent, and I only meant to observe that although we have had foolish romantics they don't count, and they were only so because in the flower of their youth they degenerated into Germans, and to preserve their precious jewel more comfortably, settled somewhere out there—by preference in Weimar or the Black Forest.

I, for instance, genuinely despised my official work and did not openly abuse it simply because I was in it myself and got a salary for it. Anyway, take note, I did not openly abuse it. Our romantic would rather go out of his mind—a thing, however, which very rarely happens—than take to open abuse, unless he had some other career in view; and he is never kicked out. At most, they would take him to the lunatic asylum as "the King of Spain"[6] if he should go mad. But it is only the thin, fair people who go out of their minds in Russia. Innumerable "romantics" attain later in life to considerable rank in the service. Their many-sidedness is remarkable! And what a faculty they have for the most contradictory sensations! I was comforted by this thought even in those days, and I am of the same opinion now. That is why there are so many "broad natures" among us who never lose their ideal even in the depths of degradation; and though they never stir a finger for their ideal, though they are arrant thieves and knaves, yet they tearfully cherish their first ideal and are extraordinarily honest at heart. Yes, it is only among us that the most incorrigible rogue can be absolutely and loftily honest at heart without in the least ceasing to be a rogue. I repeat, our romantics, frequently, become such accomplished rascals (I use the term "rascals" affectionately), suddenly display such a sense of reality and practical knowledge that their bewildered superiors and the public generally can only ejaculate in amazement.

Their many-sidedness is really amazing, and goodness knows what it may develop into later on, and what the future has in store for us. It is not a poor material! I do not say this from any foolish or boastful patriotism. But I feel sure that you are again imagining that I am joking. Or perhaps it's just the contrary and you are convinced that I really think so. Anyway, gentlemen, I shall welcome both views as an honour and a special favour. And do forgive my digression.

I did not, of course, maintain friendly relations with my comrades

6. An allusion to Gogol's story "Memoirs of a Madman" (1835). The narrator imagines himself "the King of Spain" and is finally carried off to a lunatic asylum.

and soon was at loggerheads with them, and in my youth and inexperience I even gave up bowing to them, as though I had cut off all relations. That, however, only happened to me once. As a rule, I was always alone.

In the first place I spent most of my time at home, reading. I tried to stifle all that was continually seething within me by means of external impressions. And the only external means I had was reading. Reading, of course, was a great help—exciting me, giving me pleasure and pain. But at times it bored me fearfully. One longed for movement in spite of everything, and I plunged all at once into dark, underground, loathsome vice of the pettiest kind. My wretched passions were acute, smarting, from my continual, sickly irritability. I had hysterical impulses, with tears and convulsions. I had no resource except reading, that is, there was nothing in my surroundings which I could respect and which attracted me. I was overwhelmed with depression, too; I had a hysterical craving for incongruity and for contrast, and so I took to vice. I have not said all this to justify myself. . . . But, no! I am lying. I did want to justify myself. I make that little observation for my own benefit, gentlemen. I don't want to lie. I vowed to myself I would not.

And so, furtively, timidly, in solitude, at night, I indulged in filthy vice, with a feeling of shame which never deserted me, even at the most loathsome moments, and which at such moments nearly made me curse. Already even then I had my underground world in my soul. I was fearfully afraid of being seen, of being met, of being recognized. I visited various obscure haunts.

One night as I was passing a tavern I saw through a lighted window some gentlemen fighting with billiard cues, and saw one of them thrown out of a window. At other times I should have felt very much disgusted, but I was in such a mood at the time, that I actually envied the gentleman thrown out of a window—and I envied him so much that I even went into the tavern and into the billiard-room. "Perhaps," I thought, "I'll have a fight, too, and they'll throw me out of the window."

I was not drunk—but what is one to do—depression will drive a man to such a pitch of hysteria? But nothing happened. It seemed that I was not even equal to being thrown out of the window and I went away without having my fight.

An officer put me in my place from the first moment.

I was standing by the billiard-table and in my ignorance blocking up the way, and he wanted to pass; he took me by the shoulders and without a word—without a warning or explanation—moved me from where I was standing to another spot and passed by as though he had not noticed me. I could have forgiven blows, but I could not forgive his having moved me without noticing me.

Devil knows what I would have given for a real regular quarrel—a more decent, a more *literary* one, so to speak. I had been treated like a fly. This officer was over six foot, while I was a spindly little fellow. But the quarrel was in my hands. I had only to protest and I certainly would have been thrown out of the window. But I changed my mind and preferred to beat a resentful retreat.

I went out of the tavern straight home, confused and troubled, and the next night I went out again with the same lewd intentions, still more furtively, abjectly and miserably than before, as it were, with tears in my eyes—but still I did go out again. Don't imagine, though, it was cowardice made me slink away from the officer: I never have been a coward at heart, though I have always been a coward in action. Don't be in a hurry to laugh—I assure you I can explain it all.

Oh, if only that officer had been one of the sort who would consent to fight a duel! But no, he was one of those gentlemen (alas, long extinct!) who preferred fighting with cues or, like Gogol's Lieutenant Pirogov,[7] appealing to the police. They did not fight duels and would have thought a duel with a civilian like me an utterly unseemly procedure in any case—and they looked upon the duel altogether as something impossible, something free-thinking and French. But they were quite ready to bully, especially when they were over six foot.

I did not slink away through cowardice, but through an unbounded vanity. I was afraid not of his six foot, not of getting a sound thrashing and being thrown out of the window; I should have had physical courage enough, I assure you; but I had not the moral courage. What I was afraid of was that every one present, from the insolent marker down to the lowest little stinking, pimply clerk in a greasy collar, would jeer at me and fail to understand when I began to protest and to address them in literary language. For of the point of honour—not of honour, but of the point of honour *(point d'honneur)*—one cannot speak among us except in literary language. You can't allude to the "point of honour" in ordinary language. I was fully convinced (the sense of reality, in spite of all my romanticism!) that they would all simply split their sides with laughter, and that the officer would not simply beat me, that is, without insulting me, but would certainly prod me in the back with his knee, kick me round the billiard-table, and only then perhaps have pity and drop me out of the window.

Of course, this trivial incident could not with me end in that. I often met that officer afterwards in the street and noticed him very

7. A character in Gogol's story "The Nevsky Prospekt" (1835). He pays violent court to the wife of a German tradesman and is thrown out by him and his friends. He does not actually call the police.

carefully. I am not quite sure whether he recognized me, I imagine not; I judge from certain signs. But I—I stared at him with spite and hatred and so it went on . . . for several years! My resentment grew even deeper with years. At first I began making stealthy inquiries about this officer. It was difficult for me to do so, for I knew no one. But one day I heard some one shout his surname in the street as I was following him at a distance, as though I were tied to him—and so I learnt his surname. Another time I followed him to his flat, and for ten kopecks learned from the porter where he lived, on which storey, whether he lived alone or with others,and so on—in fact, everything one could learn from a porter. One morning, though I had never tried my hand with the pen, it suddenly occurred to me to write a satire on this officer in the form of a novel which would unmask his villainy. I wrote the novel with relish. I did unmask his villainy, I even exaggerated it; at first I so altered his surname that it it could easily be recognized, but on second thoughts I changed it, and sent the story to the *Otechestvennye Zapiski*.[8] But at that time such attacks were not the fashion and my story was not printed. That was a great vexation to me.

Sometimes I was positively choked with resentment. At last I determined to challenge my enemy to a duel. I composed a splendid, charming letter to him, imploring him to apologize to me, and hinting rather plainly at a duel in case of refusal. The letter was so composed that if the officer had had the least understanding of the good and the beautiful he would certainly have flung himself on my neck and have offered me his friendship. And how fine that would have been! How we should have got on together! "He could have shielded me with his higher rank, while I could have improved his mind with my culture, and, well . . . my ideas, and all sorts of things might have happened." Only fancy, this was two years after his insult to me, and my challenge would have been a ridiculous anachronism, in spite of all the ingenuity of my letter in disguising and explaining away the anchronism. But, thank God (to this day I thank the Almighty with tears in my eyes) I did not send the letter to him. Cold shivers run down my back when I think of what might have happened if I had sent it.

And all at once I revenged myself in the simplest way, by a stroke of genius! A brilliant thought suddenly dawned upon me. Sometimes on holidays I used to stroll along the sunny side of the Nevsky[9] about four o'clock in the afternoon. Though it was hardly a stroll so much as a series of innumerable miseries, humiliations, and resentments; but no doubt that was just what I wanted. I used to wriggle

8. *Notes of the Fatherland*, the most famous radical Russian journal, founded in 1839. 9. Nevsky Prospekt, the most elegant main street in St. Petersburg, about three miles long; now called "Prospekt of the 25th October."

along in a most unseemingly fashion, like an eel, continually moving aside to make way for generals, for officers of the guards and the hussars, or for ladies. At such minutes there used to be a convulsive twinge at my heart, and I used to feel hot all down my back at the mere thought of the wretchedness of my attire, of the wretchedness and abjectness of my little scurrying figure. This was a regular martyrdom, a continual, intolerable humiliation at the thought, which passed into an incessant and direct sensation, that I was a mere fly in the eyes of all this world, a nasty, disgusting fly—more intelligent, more highly developed, more refined in feeling than any of them, of course—but a fly that was continually making way for every one, insulted and injured by every one. Why I inflicted this torture upon myself, why I went to the Nevsky, I don't know. I felt simply drawn there at every possible opportunity.

Already then I began to experience a rush of the enjoyment of which I spoke in the first chapter. After my affair with the officer I felt even more drawn there than before: it was on the Nevsky that I met him most frequently, there I could admire him. He, too, went there chiefly on holidays. He, too, turned out of his path for generals and persons of high rank, and he, too, wriggled between them like an eel; but people, like me, or even better dressed like me, he simply walked over; he made straight for them as though there was nothing but empty space before him, and never, under any circumstances, turned aside. I gloated over my resentment watching him and . . . always resentfully made way for him. It exasperated me that even in the street I could not be on an even footing with him.

"Why must you invariably be the first to move aside?" I kept asking myself in hysterical rage waking up sometimes at three o'clock in the morning. "Why is it you and not he? There's no regulation about it; there's no written law. Let the making way be equal as it usually is when refined people meet: he moves half-way and you move half-way; you pass with mutual respect."

But that never happened, and I always moved aside, while he did not even notice my making way for him. And lo and behold a bright idea dawned up on! "What," I thought, "if I meet him and don't move on one side? What if I don't move aside on purpose, even if I knock up against him? How would that be?" This audacious idea took such a hold on me that it gave me no peace. I was dreaming of it continually, horribly, and I purposely went more frequently to the Nevsky in order to picture more vividly how I should do it when I did do it. I was delighted. This intention seemed to me more and more practical and possible.

"Of course I shall not really push him," I thought, already more good-natured in my joy. "I will simply not turn aside, will run up against him, not very violently, but just shouldering each other—

just as much as decency permits. I will push against him just as much as he pushes against me." At last I made up my mind completely. But my preparations took a great deal of time. To begin with, when I carried out my plan I should need to be looking rather more decent, and so I had to think of my get-up. "In case of emergency, if, for instance, there were any sort of public scandal (and the public there is of the most *recherché*: the Countess walks there; Prince D. walks there; all of the literary world is there), I must be well dressed; that inspires respect and of itself puts on an an equal footing in the eyes of society."

With this object I asked for some of my salary in advance, and bought at Churkin's a pair of black gloves and a decent hat. Black gloves seemed to me both more dignified and *bon ton* than the lemon-coloured ones which I had contemplated at first. "The colour is too gaudy, it looks as though one were trying to be conspicuous," and I did not take the lemon-coloured ones. I had got ready long beforehand a good shirt, with white bone studs; my overcoat was the only thing that held me back. The coat in itself was a very good one, it kept me warm; but it was wadded and it had a raccoon collar which was the height of vulgarity. I had to change the collar at any sacrifice, and to have a beaver one like an officer's. For this purpose I began visiting the Gostiny Dvor[1] and after several attempts I pitched upon a piece of cheap German beaver. Though these German beavers soon grow shabby and look wretched, yet at first they look exceedingly well, and I only needed it for one occasion. I asked the price; even so, it was too expensive. After thinking it over thoroughly I decided to sell my raccoon collar. The rest of the money—a considerable sum for me, I decided to borrow from Anton Antonich Syetochkin, my immediate superior, an unassuming person, though grave and judicious. He never lent money to any one, but I had, on entering the service, been specially recommended to him by an important personage who had got me my berth. I was horribly worried. To borrow from Anton Antonich seemed to me monstrous and shameful. I did not sleep for two or three nights. Indeed, I did not sleep well at that time, I was in a fever; I had a vague sinking at my heart or else a sudden throbbing, throbbing, throbbing! Anton Antonich was surprised at first, then he frowned, then he reflected, and did after all lend me the money, receiving from me a written authorization to take from my salary a fortnight later the sum that he had lent me.

In this way everything was at last ready. The handsome beaver replaced the mean-looking raccoon, and I began by degrees to get to work. It would never have done to act off-hand, at random; the plan

1. Originally a guesthouse for foreign merchants; later used for displaying their wares.

had to be carried out skilfully, by degrees. But I must confess that after many efforts I began to despair: we simply could not run into each other. I made every preparation, I was quite determined—it seemed as though we should run into one another directly—and before I knew what I was doing I had stepped aside for him again and he had passed without noticing me. I even prayed as I approached him that God would grant me determination. One time I had made up my mind thoroughly, but it ended in my stumbling and falling at his feet because at the very last instant when I was six inches from him my courage failed me. He very calmly stepped over me, while I flew on one side like a ball. That night I was ill again, feverish and delirious.

And suddenly it ended most happily. The night before I had made up my mind not to carry out my fatal plan and to abandon it all, and with that object I went to the Nevsky for the last time, just to see how I would abandon it all. Suddenly, three paces from my enemy, I unexpectedly made up my mind—I closed my eyes, and we ran full tilt, shoulder to shoulder, against one another! I did not budge an inch and passed him on a perfectly equal footing! He did not even look round and pretended not to notice it; but he was only pretending, I am convinced of that. I am convinced of that to this day! Of course, I got the worst of it—he was stronger, but that was not the point. The point was that I had attained my object, I had kept up my dignity, I had not yielded a step, and had put myself publicly on an equal social footing with him. I returned home feeling that I was fully avenged for everything. I was delighted. I was triumphant and sang Italian arias. Of course, I will not describe to you what happened to me three days later; if you have read my first chapter you can guess that for yourself. The officer was afterwards transferred; I have not seen him now for fourteen years. What is the dear fellow doing now? Whom is he walking over?

II

But the period of my dissipation would end and I always felt very sick afterwards. It was followed by remorse—I tried to drive it away: I felt too sick. By degrees, however, I grew used to that too. I grew used to everything, or rather I voluntarily resigned myself to enduring it. But I had a means of escape that reconciled everything—that was to find refuge in "the good and the beautiful," in dreams, of course. I was a terrible dreamer, I would dream for three months on end, tucked away in my corner, and you may believe me that at those moments I had no resemblance to the gentleman who, in the perturbation of his chicken heart, put a collar of German beaver on his great coat. I suddenly became a hero. I would not have admit-

ted my six-foot lieutenant even if he had called on me. I could not even picture him before me then. What were my dreams and how I could satisfy myself with them—it is hard to say now, but at the time I was satisfied with them. Though, indeed, even now, I am to some extent satisfied with them. Dreams were particularly sweet and vivid after a spell of dissipation; they came with remorse and with tears, with curses and transports. There were moments of such positive intoxication, of such happiness, that there was not the faintest trace of irony within me, on my honour. I had faith, hope, love. I believed blindly at such times that by some miracle, by some external circumstance, all this would suddenly open out, expand; that suddenly a vista of suitable activity—beneficent, good, and, above all, *ready made* (what sort of activity I had no idea, but the great thing was that it should be all ready for me)—would rise up before me—and I should come out into the light of day, almost riding a white horse and crowned with laurel. Anything but the foremost place I could not conceive for myself, and for that very reason I quite contentedly occupied the lowest in reality. Either to be a hero or to grovel in the mud—there was nothing between. That was my ruin, for when I was in the mud I comforted myself with the thought that at other times I was a hero, and the hero was a cloak for the mud: for an ordinary man it was shameful to defile himself, but a hero was too lofty to be utterly defiled, and so he might defile himself. It is worth noting that these attacks of the "good and the beautiful" visited me even during the period of dissipation and just at the times when I was touching bottom. They came in separate spurts, as though reminding me of themselves, but did not banish the dissipation by their appearance. On the contrary, they seemed to add a zest to it by contrast, and were only sufficiently present to serve as an appetizing sauce. That sauce was made up of contradictions and sufferings, of agonizing inward analysis, and all these pangs and pinpricks gave a certain piquancy, even a significance to my dissipation—in fact, completely answered the purpose of an appetizing sauce. There was a certain depth of meaning in it. And I could hardly have resigned myself to the simple, vulgar, direct debauchery of a clerk and have endured all the filthiness of it. What could have allured me about it then and have drawn me at night into the street? No, I had a lofty way of getting out of it all.

And what loving-kindness, oh Lord, what loving-kindness I felt at times in those dreams of mine! in those "flights into the good and the beautiful"; though it was fantastic love, though it was never applied to anything human in reality, yet there was so much of this love that one did not feel afterwards even the impulse to apply it in reality; that would have been superfluous. Everything, however, passed sat-

isfactorily by a lazy and fascinating transition into the sphere of art, that is, into the beautiful forms of life, lying ready, largely stolen from the poets and novelists and adapted to all sorts of needs and uses. I, for instance, was triumphant over every one; every one, of course, was in dust and ashes, and was forced spontaneously to recognize my superiority, and I forgave them all. I was a poet and a grand gentleman, I fell in love; I came in for countless millions and immediately devoted them to humanity, and at the same time I confessed before all the people my shameful deeds, which, of course, were not merely shameful, but had in them much that was "good and beautiful" something in the Manfred[2] style. Every one would kiss me and weep (what idiots they would be if they did not), while I should go barefoot and hungry preaching new ideas and fighting a victorious Austerlitz[3] against the obscurantists. Then the band would play a march, an amnesty would be declared, the Pope would agree to retire from Rome to Brazil; then there would be a ball for the whole of Italy at the Villa Borghese on the shores of the Lake of Como,[4] the Lake of Como being for that purpose transferred to the neighbourhood of Rome; then would come a scene in the bushes, and so on, and so on—as though you did not know all about it? You will say that it is vulgar and contemptible to drag all this into public after all the tears and transports which I have myself confessed. But why is it contemptible? Can you imagine that I am ashamed of it all, and that it was stupider than anything in your life, gentlemen? And I can assure you that some of these fancies were by no means badly composed. . . . It did not all happen on the shores of Lake Como. And yet you are right—it really is vulgar and contemptible. And most contemptible of all it is that now I am attempting to justify myself to you. And even more contemptible than that is my making this remark now. But that's enough, or there will be no end to it: each step will be more contemptible than the last. . . .

I could never stand more than three months of dreaming at a time without feeling an irresistible desire to plunge into society. To plunge into society meant to visit my superior at the office, Anton Antonich Syetochkin. He was the only permanent acquaintance I have had in my life, and wonder at the fact myself now. But I only went to see him when that phase came over me, and when my dreams had reached such a point of bliss that it became essential at once to embrace my fellows and all mankind; and for that purpose I needed, at least, one human being, actually existing. I had to call on Anton Antonich,

2. The hero of Lord Byron's verse drama *Manfred* (1817), who was oppressed by a mysterious guilt. 3. A village near Brno, the capital of Moravia, now in Czechoslovakia, where Napoleon defeated the combined Austrian and Russian armies in 1805. 4. Villa Borghese is in Rome, Lake Como on the border between Italy and Switzerland.

however, on Tuesday—his at-home day; so I had always to time my passionate desire to embrace humanity so that it might fall on a Tuesday.

This Anton Antonich lived on the fourth storey in a house in Five Corners, in four low-pitched rooms, one smaller than the other, of a particularly frugal and sallow appearance. He had two daughters and their aunt, who used to pour out the tea. Of the daughters one was thirteen and another fourteen, they both had snub noses, and I was awfully shy of them because they were always whispering and giggling together. The master of the house usually sat in his study on a leather couch in front of the table with some grey-headed gentlemen, usually a colleague from our office or some other department. I never saw more than two or three visitors there, always the same. They talked about the excise duty; about business in the Senate,[5] about salaries, about promotions, about His Excellency, and the best means of pleasing him, and so on. I had the patience to sit like a fool beside these people for four hours at a stretch, listening to them without knowing what to say to them or venturing to say a word. I became stupefied, several times I felt myself perspiring, I was overcome by a sort of paralysis; but this was pleasant and good for me. On returning home I deferred for a time my desire to embrace all mankind.

I had however one other acquaintance of a sort, Simonov, who was an old schoolfellow. I had a number of schoolfellows, indeed, in Petersburg, but I did not associate with them and had even given up nodding to them in the street. I believe I had transferred into the department I was in simply to avoid their company and to cut off all connection with my hateful childhood. Curses on that school and all those terrible years of penal servitude! In short, I parted from my schoolfellows as soon as I got out into the world. There were two or three left to whom I nodded in the street. One of them was Simonov, who had been in no way distinguished at school, was of a quiet and equable disposition; but I discovered in him a certain independence of character and even honesty. I don't even suppose that he was particularly stupid. I had at one time spent some rather soulful moments with him, but these had not lasted long and had somehow been suddenly clouded over. He was evidently uncomfortable at these reminiscences, and was, I fancy, always afraid that I might take up the same tone again. I suspected that he had an aversion for me, but still I went on going to see him, not being quite certain of it.

And so on one occasion, unable to endure my solitude and knowing that as it was Thursday Anton Antonich's door would be closed, I thought of Simonov. Climbing up to his fourth storey I was think-

5. The Russian Senate was at that time not a parliamentary body, but a high court.

ing that the man disliked me and that it was a mistake to go and see him. But as it always happened that such reflections impelled me, as though purposely, to put myself into a false position, I went in. It was almost a year since I had last seen Simonov.

III

I found two of my old schoolfellows with him. They seemed to be discussing an important matter. All of them took scarcely any notice of my entrance, which was strange, for I had not met them for years. Evidently they looked upon me as something on the level of a common fly. I had not been treated like that even at school, though they all hated me. I knew, of course, that they must despise me now for my lack of success in the service, and for my having let myself sink so low, going about badly dressed and so on—which seemed to them a sign of my incapacity and insignificance. But I had not expected such contempt. Simonov was positively surprised at my turning up. Even in old days he had always seemed surprised at my coming. All this disconcerted me: I sat down, feeling rather miserable, and began listening to what they were saying.

They were engaged in warm and earnest conversation about a farewell dinner which they wanted to arrange for the next day to a comrade of theirs called Zverkov, an officer in the army, who was going away to a distant province. This Zverkov had been all the time at school with me too. I had begun to hate him particularly in the upper grades. In the lower grades he had simply been a pretty, playful boy whom everybody liked. I had hated him, however, even in the lower grades, just because he was a pretty and playful boy. He was always bad at his lessons and got worse and worse as he went on; however, he left with a good certificate, as he had powerful interest. During his last year at school he came in for an estate of two hundred serfs, and as almost all of us were poor he took up a swaggering tone among us. He was vulgar in the extreme, but at the same time he was a good-natured fellow, even in his swaggering. In spite of superficial, fantastic, and sham notions of honour and dignity, all but very few of us positively grovelled before Zverkov, and the more so the more he swaggered. And it was not from any interested motive that they grovelled, but simply because he had been favoured by the gifts of nature. Moreover, it was, as it were, an accepted idea among us that Zverkov was a specialist in regard to tact and the social graces. This last particularly infuriated me. I hated the abrupt self-confident tone of his voice, his admiration of his own witticisms, which were often frightfully stupid, though he was bold in his language; I hated his handsome, but stupid face (for which I would, however, have gladly exchanged my intelligent one), and the free-and-easy military

manners in fashion in the 'forties. I hated the way in which he used to talk of his future conquests of women (he did not venture to begin his attack upon women until he had the epaulettes of an officer, and was looking forward to them with impatience), and boasted of the duels he would constantly be fighting. I remember how I, invariably so taciturn, suddenly fastened upon Zverkov, when one day talking at a leisure moment with his schoolfellows of his future relations with the fair sex, and growing as sportive as a puppy in the sun, he all at once declared that he would not leave a single village girl on his estate unnoticed, that that was his *droit de seigneur*,[6] and that if the peasants dared to protest he would have them all flogged and double the tax on them, the bearded rascals. Our servile rabble applauded, but I attacked him, not from compassion for the girls and their fathers, but simply because they were applauding such an insect. I got the better of him on that occasion, but though Zverkov was stupid he was lively and impudent, and so laughed it off, and in such a way that my victory was not really complete: the laugh was on his side. He got the better of me on several occasions afterwards, but without malice, jestingly, casually. I remained angrily and contemptuously silent and would not answer him. When we left school he made advances to me; I did not rebuff them, for I was flattered, but we soon parted and quite naturally. Afterwards I heard of his barrack-room success as a lieutenant, and of the fast life he was leading. Then there came other rumours—of his successes in the service. By then he had taken to cutting me in the street, and I suspected that he was afraid of compromising himself by greeting a personage as insignificant as me. I saw him once in the theatre, in the third tier of boxes. By then he was wearing shoulder-straps. He was twisting and twirling about, ingratiating himself with the daughters of an ancient General. In three years he had gone off considerably, though he was still rather handsome and adroit. One could see that by the time he was thirty he would be corpulent. So it was to this Zverkov that my school-fellows were going to give a dinner on his departure. They had kept up with him for those three years, though privately they did not consider themselves on an equal footing with him, I am convinced of that.

Of Simonov's two visitors, one was Ferfichkin, a Russianized German—a little fellow with the face of a monkey, a blockhead who was always deriding every one, a very bitter enemy of mine from our days in the lower grades—a vulgar, impudent, swaggering fellow, who affected a most sensitive feeling of personal honour, though, of course, he was a wretched little coward at heart. He was one of those worshippers of Zverkov who made up to the latter from interested motives

6. "The right of the master," i.e., to all the women serfs.

and often borrowed money from him. Simonov's other visitor, Trudolyubov, was a person in no way remarkable—a tall young fellow, in the army, with a cold face, fairly honest, though he worshipped success of every sort, and was only capable of thinking of promotion. He was some sort of distant relation of Zverkov's, and this, foolish as it seems, gave him a certain importance among us. He always thought me of no consequence whatever; his behaviour to me, though not quite courteous, was tolerable.

"Well, with seven roubles each," said Trudolyubov, "twenty-one roubles between the three of us, we ought to be able to get a good dinner. Zverkov, of course, won't pay."

"Of course not, since we are inviting him," Simonov decided.

"Can you imagine," Ferfichkin interrupted hotly and conceitedly, like some insolent flunkey boasting of his master the General's decorations, "can you imagine that Zverkov will let us pay alone? He will accept from delicacy, but he will order half a dozen bottles of champagne."

"Do we want half a dozen for the four of us?" observed Trudolyubov, taking notice only of the half-dozen.

"So the three of us, with Zverkov for the fourth, twenty-one roubles, at the Hôtel de Paris at five o'clock to-morrow," Simonov, who had been asked to make the arrangements, concluded finally.

"How twenty-one roubles?" I asked in some agitation, with a show of being offended; "if you count me it will not be twenty-one, but twenty-eight roubles."

It seemed to me that to invite myself so suddenly and unexpectedly would be positively graceful, and that they would all be conquered at once and would look at me with respect.

"Do you want to join, too?" Simonov observed, with no appearance of pleasure, seeming to avoid looking at me. He knew me through and through.

It infuriated me that he knew me so thoroughly.

"Why not? I am an old schoolfellow of his, too, I believe, and I must own I feel hurt that you have left me out," I said, boiling over again.

"And where were we to find you?" Ferfichkin put in roughly.

"You never were on good terms with Zverkov," Trudolyubov added, frowning.

But I had already clutched at the idea and would not give it up.

"It seems to me that no one has a right to form an opinion upon that," I retorted in a shaking voice, as though something tremendous had happened. "Perhaps that is just my reason for wishing it now, that I have not always been on good terms with him."

"Oh, there's no making you out . . . with these refinements," Trudolyubov jeered.

"We'll put your name down," Simonov decided, addressing me. "To-morrow at five o'clock at the Hôtel de Paris."

"What about the money?" Ferfichkin began in an undertone, indicating me to Simonov, but he broke off, for even Simonov was embarrassed.

"That will do," said Trudolyubov, getting up. "If he wants to come so much, let him."

"But it's a private thing, between us friends," Ferfichkin said crossly, as he, too, picked up his hat. "It's not an official gathering."

"We do not want at all, perhaps . . ."

They went away. Ferfichkin did not greet me in any way as he went out, Trudolyubov barely nodded. Simonov, with whom I was left *tête-à-tête*, was in a state of vexation and perplexity, and looked at me queerly. He did not sit down and did not ask me to.

"H'm . . . yes . . . to-morrow, then. Will you pay your subscription now? I just ask so as to know," he muttered in embarrassment.

I flushed crimson, and as I did so I remembered that I had owed Simonov fifteen roubles for ages—which I had, indeed, never forgotten, though I had not paid it.

"You will understand, Simonov, that I could have no idea when I came here. . . . I am very much vexed that I have forgotten. . . ."

"All right, all right, that doesn't matter. You can pay to-morrow after the dinner. I simply wanted to know. . . . Please don't . . ."

He broke off and began pacing the room still more vexed. As he walked he began to stamp with his heels.

"Am I keeping you?" I asked, after two minutes of silence.

"Oh!" he said, starting, "that is—to be truthful—yes. I have to go and see some one . . . not far from here," he added in an apologetic voice, somewhat abashed.

"My goodness, why didn't you say so?" I cried, seizing my cap, with an astonishingly free-and-easy air, which was the last thing I should have expected of myself.

"It's close by . . . not two passes away," Simonov repeated, accompanying me to the front door with a fussy air which did not suit him at all. "So five o'clock, punctually, to-morrow," he called down the stairs after me. He was very glad to get rid of me. I was in a fury.

"What possessed me, what possessed me to force myself upon them?" I wondered, grinding my teeth as I strode along the street, "for a scoundrel, a pig like that Zverkov! Of course, I had better not go; of course, I must just snap my fingers at them. I am not bound in any way. I'll send Simonov a note by to-morrow's post. . . ."

But what made me furious was that I knew for certain that I should go, that I should make a point of going; and the more tactless, the more unseemly my going would be, the more certainly I would go.

And there was a positive obstacle to my going: I had no money. All I had was nine roubles, I had to give seven of that to my servant, Apollon, for his monthly wages. That was all I paid him—he had to keep himself.

Not to pay him was impossible, considering his character. But I will talk about that fellow, about that plague of mine, another time.

However, I knew I should go and should not pay him his wages.

That night I had the most hideous dreams. No wonder; all the evening I had been oppressed by memories of my miserable days at school, and I could not shake them off. I was sent to the school by distant relations, upon whom I was dependent and of whom I have heard nothing since—they sent me there a forlorn, silent boy, already crushed by their reproaches, already troubled by doubt, and looking with savage distrust at every one. My schoolfellows met me with spiteful and merciless jibes because I was not like any of them. But I could not endure their taunts; I could not give in to them with the ignoble readiness with which they gave in to one another. I hated them from the first, and shut myself away from every one in timid, wounded, and disproportionate pride. Their coarseness revolted me. They laughed cynically at my face, at my clumsy figure; and yet what stupid faces they had themselves. In our school the boys' faces seemed in a special way to degenerate and grow stupider. How many fine-looking boys came to us! In a few years they became repulsive. Even at sixteen I wondered at them morosely; even then I was struck by the pettiness of their thoughts, the stupidity of their pursuits, their games, their conversations. They had no understanding of such essential things, they took no interest in such striking, impressive subjects, that I could not help considering them inferior to myself. It was not wounded vanity that drove me to it, and for God's sake do not thrust upon me your hackneyed remarks, repeated to nausea, that "I was only a dreamer," while they even then had an understanding of life. They understood nothing, they had no idea of real life, and I swear that that was what made me most indignant with them. On the contrary, the most obvious, striking reality they accepted with fantastic stupidity and even at that time were accustomed to respect success. Everything that was just, but oppressed and looked down upon, they laughed at heartlessly and shamefully. They took rank for intelligence; even at sixteen they were already talking about a snug berth. Of course, a great deal of it was due to their stupidity, to the bad examples with which they had always been surrounded in their childhood and boyhood. They were monstrously depraved. Of course a great deal of that, too, was superficial and an assumption of cynicism; of course there were glimpses of youth and freshness even in their depravity; but even that freshness was not attractive, and showed itself in a certain rakishness. I hated them horribly, though

perhaps I was worse than any of them. They repaid me in the same way, and did not conceal their aversion for me. But by then I did not desire their affection: on the contrary I continually longed for their humiliation. To escape from their derision I purposely began to make all the progress I could with my studies and forced my way to the very top. This impressed them. Moreover, they all began by degrees to grasp that I had already read books none of them could read, and understood things (not forming part of our school curriculum) of which they had not even heard. They took a savage and sarcastic view of it, but were morally impressed, especially as the teachers began to notice me on those grounds. The mockery ceased, but the hostility remained, and cold and strained relations became permanent between us. In the end I could not put up with it: with years a craving for society, for friends, developed in me. I attempted to get on friendly terms with some of my schoolfellows; but somehow or other my intimacy with them was always strained and soon ended of itself. Once, indeed, I did have a friend. But I was already a tyrant at heart; I wanted to exercise unbounded sway over him; I tried to instil into him a contempt for his surroundings; I required of him a disdainful and complete break with those surroundings. I frightened him with my passionate affection; I reduced him to tears, to hysterics. He was a simple and devoted soul; but when he devoted himself to me entirely I began to hate him immediately and repulsed him—as though all I needed him for was to win a victory over him, to subjugate him and nothing else. But I could not subjugate all of them; my friend was not at all like them either, he was, in fact, a rare exception. The first thing I did on leaving school was to give up the special job for which I had been destined so as a to break all ties, to curse my past and shake the dust from off my feet. . . . And goodness knows why, after all that, I should go trudging off to Simonov's!

Early next morning I roused myself and jumped out of bed with excitement, as though it were all about to happen at once. But I believed that some radical change in my life was coming, and would inevitably come that day. Owing to its rarity, perhaps, any external event, however trivial, always made me feel as though some radical change in my life were at hand. I went to the office, however, as usual, but sneaked away home two hours earlier to get ready. The great thing, I thought, is not to be the first to arrive, or they will think I am overjoyed at coming. But there were thousands of such great points to consider, and they all agitated and overwhelmed me. I polished my boots a second time with my own hands; nothing in the world would have induced Apollon to clean them twice a day, as he considered that it was more than his duties required of him. I

stole the brushes from the passage to clean them, being careful he should not detect it, for fear of his contempt. Then I minutely examined my clothes and thought that everything looked old, worn, and threadbare. I had let myself get too slovenly. My uniform, perhaps, was tidy, but I could not go out to dinner in my uniform. The worst of it was that on the knee of my trousers was a big yellow stain. I had a foreboding that that stain would deprive me of nine-tenths of my personal dignity. I knew, too, that It was very bad to think so. "But this is no time for thinking: now I am in for the real thing," I thought, and my heart sank. I knew, too, perfectly well even then, that I was monstrously exaggerating the facts. But how could I help it? I could not control myself and was already shaking with fever. With despair I pictured to myself how coldly and disdainfully that "scoundrel" Zverkov would meet me; with what dull-witted, invincible contempt the blockheard Trudolyubov would look at me; with what impudent rudeness the insect Ferfichkin would snigger at me in order to curry favour with Zverkov; how completely Simonov would take it all in, and how he would despise me for the abjectness of my vanity and lack of spirit—and, worst of all, how paltry, *unliterary*, commonplace it would all be. Of course, the best thing would be not to go at all. But that was most impossible of all: if I feel impelled to do anything, I seem to be pitchforked into it. I should have jeered at myself ever afterwards: "So you funked it, you funked it, you funked the *real thing!*" On the contrary, I passionately longed to show all that "rabble" that I was by no means such a spiritless creature as I seemed to myself. What is more, even in the acutest paroxysm of this cowardly fever, I dreamed of getting the upper hand, of dominating them, carrying them away, making them like me—if only for my "elevation of thought and unmistakable wit." They would abandon Zverkov, he would sit on one side, silent and ashamed, while I should crush him. Then, perhaps, we would be reconciled and drink to our everlasting friendship; but what was most bitter and most humiliating for me was that I knew even then, knew fully and for certain, that I needed nothing of all this really, that I did not really want to crush, to subdue, to attract them, and that I did not care a straw really for the result, even if I did achieve it. Oh, how I prayed for the day to pass quickly! In unutterable anguish I went to the window, opened the movable pane and looked out into the troubled darkness of the thickly falling wet snow. At last my wretched little clock hissed out five. I seized my hat and trying not to look at Apollon, who had been all day expecting his month's wages, but in his foolishness was unwilling to be the first to speak about it, I slipt between him and the door and jumping into a high-class sledge, on which I spent my last half rouble, I drove up in grand style to the Hôtel de Paris.

IV

I had been certain the day before that I should be the first to arrive. But it was not a question of being the first to arrive. Not only were they not there, but I had difficulty in finding our room. The table was not laid even. What did it mean? After a good many questions I elicited from the waiters that the dinner had been ordered not for five, but for six o'clock. This was confirmed at the buffet too. I felt really ashamed to go on questioning them. It was only twenty-five minutes past five. If they changed the dinner hour they ought at least to have let me know—that is what the post is for, and not to have put me in an absurd position in my own eyes and . . . and even before the waiters. I sat down; the servant began laying the table; I felt even more humiliated when he was present. Toward six o'clock they brought in candles, though there were lamps burning in the room. It had not occurred to the waiter, however, to bring them in at once when I arrived. In the next room two gloomy, angry-looking persons were eating their dinners in silence at two different tables. There was a great deal of noise, even shouting, in a room further away; one could hear the laughter of a crowd of people, and nasty little shrieks in French: there were ladies at the dinner. It was sickening, in fact. I rarely passed more unpleasant moments, so much so that when they did arrive all together punctually at six I was overjoyed to see them, as though they were my deliverers, and even forgot that it was incumbent upon me to show resentment.

Zverkov walked in at the head of them; evidently he was the leading spirit. He and all of them were laughing; but, seeing me, Zverkov drew himself up a little, walked up to me deliberately with a slight, rather jaunty bend from the waist. He shook hands with me in a friendly, but not over-friendly, fashion, with a sort of circumspect courtesy like that of a General, as though in giving me his hand he were warding off something. I had imagined, on the contrary, that on coming in he would at once break into his habitual thin, shrill laugh and fall to making his insipid jokes and witticisms. I had been preparing for them ever since the previous day, but I had not expected such condescension, such high-official courtesy. So, then, he felt himself ineffably superior to me in every respect! If he only meant to insult me by that high-official tone, if would not matter, I thought—I could pay him back for it one way or another. But what if, in reality, without the least desire to be offensive, that sheepshead had a notion in earnest that he was superior to me and could only look at me in a patronizing way? The very supposition made me gasp.

"I was surprised to hear of your desire to join us," he began, lisping and drawling, which was something new. "You and I seem to

have seen nothing of one another. You fight shy of us. You shouldn't. We are not such terrible people as you think. Well, anyway, I am glad to renew our acquaintance."

And he turned carelessly to put down his hat on the window.

"Have you been waiting long?" Trudolyubov inquired.

"I arrived at five o'clock as you told me yesterday," I answered aloud, with an irritability that threatened an explosion.

"Didn't you let him know that we had changed the hour?" said Trudolyubov to Simonov.

"No, I didn't. I forgot," the latter replied, with no sign of regret, and without even apologizing to me he went off to order the *hors d'œuvres*.

"So you've been here a whole hour? Oh, poor fellow!" Zverkov cried ironically, for to his notions this was bound to be extremely funny. That rascal Ferfichkin followed with his nasty little snigger like a puppy yapping. My position struck him, too, as exquisitely ludicrous and embarrassing.

"It isn't funny at all!" I cried to Ferfichkin, more and more irritated. "It wasn't my fault, but other people's. They neglected to let me know. It was . . . it was . . . it was simply absurd."

"It's not only absurd, but something else as well," muttered Trudolyubov, naïvely taking my part. "You are not hard enough upon it. It was simply rudeness—unintentional, of course. And how could Simonov . . . h'm!"

"If a trick like that had been played on me," observed Ferfichkin, "I should . . ."

"But you should have ordered something for yourself," Zverkov interrupted, "or simply asked for dinner without waiting for us."

"You will allow that I might have done that without your permission," I rapped out. "If I waited, it was . . ."

"Let us sit down, gentlemen," cried Simonov, coming in. "Everything is ready; I can answer for the champagne; it is capitally frozen. . . . You see, I did not know your address, where was I to look for you?" he suddenly turned to me, but again he seemed to avoid looking at me. Evidently he had something against me. It must have been what happened yesterday.

All sat down; I did the same. It was a round table. Trudolyubov was on my left, Simonov on my right. Zverkov was sitting opposite, Ferfichkin next to him, between him and Trudolyubov.

"Tell me, are you . . . in a government office?" Zverkov went on attending to me. Seeing that I was embarrassed he seriously thought that he ought to be friendly to me, and, so to speak, cheer me up.

"Does he want me to throw a bottle at his head?" I thought, in a fury. In my novel surroundings I was unnaturally ready to be irritated.

"In the N—— office," I answered jerkily, with my eyes on my plate.

"And ha-ave you a go-ood berth? I say, what ma-a-de you leave your original job?"

"What ma-a-de me was that I wanted to leave my original job," I drawled more than he, hardly able to control myself. Ferfichkin went off into a guffaw. Simonov looked at me ironically. Trudolyubov left off eating and began looking at me with curiosity.

Zverkov winced, but he tried not to notice it.

"And the remuneration?"

"What remuneration?"

"I mean, your sa-a-lary?"

"Why are you cross-examining me?" However, I told him at once what my salary was. I turned horribly red.

"It is not very handsome," Zverkov observed majestically.

"Yes, you can't afford to dine at cafés on that," Ferfichkin added insolently.

"To my thinking it's very poor," Trudolyubov observed gravely.

"And how thin you have grown! How you have changed!" added Zverkov, with a shade of venom in his voice, scanning me and my attire with a sort of insolent compassion.

"Oh, spare his blushes," cried Ferfichkin, sniggering.

"My dear sir, allow me to tell you I am not blushing," I broke out at last; "do you hear? I am dining here, at this café, at my own expense, not at other people's—note that, Mr. Ferfichkin."

"Wha-at?" Isn't every one here dining at his own expense? You would seem to be . . ." Ferfichkin flew out at me, turning as red as a lobster, and looking me in the face with fury.

"Tha-at," I answered, feeling I had gone too far, "and I imagine it would be better to talk of something more intelligent."

"You intend to show off your intelligence, I suppose?"

"Don't disturb yourself, that would be quite out of place here."

"Why are you clacking away like that, my good sir, eh? Have you gone out of your wits in your office?"

"Enough, gentlemen, enough!" Zverkov cried, authoritatively.

"How stupid it is!" muttered Simonov.

"It really is stupid. We have met here, a company of friends, for a farewell dinner to a comrade and you carry on an altercation," said Trudolyubov, rudely addressing himself to me alone. "You invited yourself to join us, so don't disturb the general harmony."

"Enough, enough!" cried Zverkov. "Give over, gentlemen, it's out of place. Better let me tell you how I nearly got married the day before yesterday. . . ."

And then followed a burlesque narrative of how this gentleman had almost been married two days before. There was not a word

about the marriage, however, but the story was adorned with generals, colonels, and gentlemen-in-waiting, while Zverkov almost took the lead among them. It was greeted with approving laughter; Ferfichkin positively squealed.

No one paid any attention to me, and I sat crushed and humiliated.

"Good Heavens, these are not the people for me!" I thought. "And what a fool I have made of myself before them! I let Ferfichkin go too far, though. The brutes imagine they are doing me an honour in letting me sit down with them. They don't understand that it's an honour to them and not to me! I've grown thinner! My clothes! Oh, damn my trousers! Zverkov noticed the yellow stain on the knee as soon as he came in. . . . But what's the use! I must get up at once, this very minute, take my hat and simply go without a word . . . with contempt! And to-morrow I can send a challenge. The scoundrels! As though I cared about the seven roubles. They may think. . . . Damn it! I don't care about the seven roubles. I'll go this minute!"

Of course I remained. I drank sherry and Lafitte by the glassful in my discomfiture. Being unaccustomed to it, I was quickly affected. My annoyance increased as the wine went to my head. I longed all at once to insult them all in a most flagrant manner and then go away. To seize the moment and show what I could do, so that they would say, "He's clever, though he is absurd," and . . . and . . . in fact, damn them all!

I scanned them all insolently with my drowsy eyes. But they seemed to have forgotten me altogether. They were noisy, vociferous, cheerful. Zverkov was talking all the time. I began listening. Zverkov was talking of some exuberant lady whom he had at last led on to declaring her love (of course, he was lying like a horse), and how he had been helped in this affair by an intimate friend of his, a Prince Kolya, an officer in the hussars, who had three thousand serfs.

"And yet this Kolya, who has three thousand serfs, has not put in an appearance here to-night to see you off," I cut in suddenly.

For a minute every one was silent. "You are drunk already." Trudolyubov deigned to notice me at last, glancing contemptuously in my direction. Zverkov, without a word, examined me as though I were an insect. I dropped my eyes. Simonov made haste to fill up the glasses with champagne.

Trudolyubov raised his glass, as did every one else but me.

"Your health and good luck on the journey!" he cried to Zverkov. "To old times, to our future, hurrah!"

They all tossed off their glasses, and crowded round Zverkov to kiss him. I did not move; my full glass stood untouched before me.

"Why, aren't you going to drink it?" roared Trudolyubov, losing

patience and turning menacingly to me.

"I want to make a speech separately, on my own account . . . and then I'll drink it, Mr. Trudolyubov."

"Spiteful brute!" muttered Simonov. I drew myself up in my chair and feverishly seized my glass, prepared for something extraordinary, though I did not know myself precisely what I was going to say.

"Silence!" cried Ferfichkin. "Now for a display of wit!"

Zverkov waited very gravely, knowing what was coming.

"Mr. Lieutenant Zverkov," I began, "let me tell you that I hate phrases, phrasemongers, and men in corsets . . . that's the first point, and there is a second one to follow it."

There was a general stir.

"The second point is: I hate ribaldry and ribald talkers. Especially ribald talkers! The third point: I love justice, truth, and honesty." I went on almost mechanically, for I was beginning to shiver with horror myself and had no idea how I came to be talking like this. "I love thought, Monsieur Zverkov; I love true comradeship, on an equal footing and not . . . H'm . . . I love. . . . But, however, why not? I will drink your health, too, Mr. Zverkov. Seduce the Circassian girls, shoot the enemies of the fatherland and . . . and . . . to your health, Monsieur Zverkov!"

Zverkov got up from his seat, bowed to me and said:

"I am very much obliged to you." He was frightfully offended and turned pale.

"Damn the fellow!" roared Trudolyubov, bringing his fist down on the table.

"Well, he wants a punch in the face for that," squealed Ferfichkin.

"We ought to turn him out," muttered Simonov.

"Not a word, gentlemen, not a movement!" cried Zverkov solemnly, checking the general indignation. "I thank you all, but I can show him for myself how much value I attach to his words."

"Mr. Ferfichkin, you will give me satisfaction to-morrow for your words just now!" I said aloud, turning with dignity to Ferfichkin.

"A duel, you mean? Certainly," he answered. But probably I was so ridiculous as I challenged him and it was so out of keeping with my appearance that everyone, including Ferfichkin, was prostrate with laughter.

"Yes, let him alone, of course! He is quite drunk," Trudolyubov said with disgust.

"I shall never forgive myself for letting him join us," Simonov muttered again.

"Now is the time to throw a bottle at their heads," I thought to myself. I picked up the bottle . . . and filled my glass. . . . "No, I'd better sit on to the end," I went on thinking; "you would be pleased,

my friends if I went away. Nothing will induce me to go. I'll go on sitting here and drinking to the end, on purpose, as a sign that I don't think you of the slightest consequence. I will go on sitting and drinking, because this a public-house and I paid my entrance money. I'll sit here and drink, for I look upon you as so many pawns, as inanimate pawns. I'll sit here and drink . . . and sing if I want to, yes, sing, for I have the right to . . . to sing . . . H'm!"

But I did not sing. I simply tried not to look at any of them. I assumed most unconcerned attitudes and waited with impatience for them to speak first. But alas, they did not address me! And oh, how I wished, how I wished at that moment to be reconciled to them! It struck eight, at last nine. They moved from the table to the sofa. Zverkov stretched himself on a lounge and put one foot on a round table. Wine was brought there. He did, as a fact, order three bottles on his own account. I, of course, was not invited to join them. They all sat round him on the sofa. They listened to him, almost with reverence. It was evident that they were fond of him. "What for? What for?" I wondered. From time to time they were moved to drunken enthusiasm and kissed each other. They talked of the Caucasus, of the nature of true passion, of snug berths in the service, of the income of an hussar called Podkharzhevsky, whom none of them knew personally, and rejoiced in the largeness of it, of the extraordinary grace and beauty of a Princess D., whom none of them had ever seen; then it came to Shakespeare's being immortal.

I smiled contemptuously and walked up and down the other side of the room, opposite the sofa, from the table to the stove and back again. I tried my very utmost to show them that I could do without them, and yet I purposely made a noise with my boots, thumping with my heels. But it was all in vain. They paid no attention. I had the patience to walk up and down in front of them from eight o'clock till eleven, in the same place, from the table to the stove and back again. "I walk up and down to please myself and no one can prevent me." The waiter who came into the room stopped, from time to time, to look at me. I was somewhat giddy from turning round so often; at moments it seemed to me that I was in delirium. During those three hours I was three times soaked with sweat and dry again. At times, with an intense, acute pang I was stabbed to the heart by the thought that ten years, twenty years, forty years would pass, and that even in forty years I would remember with loathing and humiliation those filthiest, most ludicrous, and most awful moments of my life. No one could have gone out of his way to degrade himself more shamelessly, and I fully realized it, fully, and yet I went on pacing up and down from the table to the stove. "Oh, if you only knew what thoughts and feelings I am capable of, how cultured I am!" I thought at moments, mentally addressing the sofa on which

my enemies were sitting. But my enemies behaved as though I were not in the room. Once—only once—they turned towards me, just when Zverkov was talking about Shakespeare, and I suddenly gave a contemptuous laugh. I laughed in such an affected and disgusting way that they all at once broke off their conversation, and silently and gravely for two minutes watched me walking up and down from the table to the stove, *taking no notice of them*. But nothing came of it: they said nothing, and two minutes later they ceased to notice me again. It struck eleven.

"Friends," cried Zverkov getting up from the sofa, "let us all be off now, *there*!"

"Of course, of course," the others assented. I turned sharply to Zverkov. I was so harassed, so exhausted, that I would have cut my throat to put an end to it. I was in a fervor; my hair, soaked with perspiration, stuck to my forehead and temples.

"Zverkov, I beg your pardon," I said abruptly and resolutely. "Ferfichkin, yours too, and every one's, every one's: I have insulted you all!"

"Aha! A duel is not in your line, old man," Ferfichkin hissed venomously.

It sent a sharp pang to my heart.

"No, it's not the duel I am afraid of, Ferfichkin! I am ready to fight you to-morrow, after we are reconciled. I insist upon it, in fact, and you cannot refuse. I want to show you that I am not afraid of a duel. You shall fire first and I shall fire into the air."

"He is comforting himself," said Simonov.

"He's simply raving," said Trudolyubov.

"But let us pass. Why are you barring our way? What do you want?" Zverkov answered disdainfully.

They were all flushed, their eyes were bright: they had been drinking heavily.

"I ask for your friendship, Zverkov; I insulted you, but . . ."

"Insulted? *You* insulted *me*? Understand, sir, that you never, under any circumstances, could possibly insult *me*."

"And that's enough for you. Out of the way!" concluded Trudolyubov.

"Olympia is mine, friends, that's agreed!" cried Zverkov.

"We won't dispute your right, we won't dispute your right," the others answered, laughing.

I stood as though spat upon. The party went noisily out of the room. Trudolyubov struck up some stupid song. Simonov remained behind for a moment to tip the waiters. I suddenly went up to him.

"Simonov! give me six roubles!" I said, with desperate resolution.

He looked at me in extreme amazement, with vacant eyes. He, too, was drunk.

"You don't mean you are coming with us?"

"Yes."

"I've no money," he snapped out, and with a scornful laugh he went out of the room.

I clutched at his overcoat. It was a nightmare.

"Simonov, I saw you had money. Why do you refuse me? Am I a scoundrel? Beware of refusing me: if you knew, if you knew why I am asking! My whole future, my whole plans depend upon it!"

Simonov pulled out the money and almost flung it at me.

"Take it, if you have no sense of shame!" he pronounced pitilessly, and ran to overtake them.

I was left for a moment alone. Disorder, the remains of dinner, a broken wine-glass on the floor, spilt wine, cigarette ends, fumes of drink and delirium in my brain, an agonizing misery in my heart and finally the waiter, who had seen and heard all and was looking inquisitively into my face.

"I am going there!" I cried. "Either they shall all go down on their knees to beg for my friendship, or I will give Zverkov a slap in the face!"

V

"So this is it, this is it at last—contact with real life," I muttered as I ran headlong downstairs. "This is very different from the Pope's leaving Rome and going to Brazil, very different from the ball on Lake Como!"

"You are a scoundrel," a thought flashed through my mind, "if you laugh at this now."

"No matter!" I cried, answering myself. "Now everything is lost!"

There was no trace to be seen of them, but that made no difference—I knew where they had gone.

At the steps was standing a solitary night sledge-driver in a rough peasant coat, powdered over with the still falling, wet, and as it were warm, snow. It was hot and steamy. The little shaggy piebald horse was also covered with snow and coughing, I remember that very well. I made a rush for the roughly made sledge; but as soon as I raised my foot to get into it, the recollection of how Simonov had just given me six roubles seemed to double me up and I tumbled into the sledge like a sack.

"No, I must do a great deal to make up for all that," I cried. "But I will make up for it or perish on the spot this very night. Start!"

We set off. There was a perfect whirl in my head.

"They won't go down on their knees to beg for my friendship. That is a mirage, cheap mirage, revolting, romantic and fantastical—that's another ball on Lake Como. And so I am bound to slap

Zverkov's face! It is my duty to. And so it is settled; I am flying to give him a slap in the face. Hurry up!"

The driver tugged at the reins.

"As soon as I go in I'll give it him. Ought I before giving him the slap to say a few words by way of preface? No. I'll simply go in and give it him. They will all be sitting in the drawing-room, and he with Olympia on the sofa. That damned Olympia! She laughed at my looks on one occasion and refused me. I'll pull Olympia's hair, pull Zverkov's ears! No, better one ear, and pull him by it round the room. Maybe they will all begin beating me and will kick me out. That's most likely, indeed. No matter! Anyway, I shall first slap him; the initiative will be mine; and by the laws of honour that is everything: he will be branded and cannot wipe off the slap by any blows, by nothing but a duel. He will be forced to fight. And let them beat me now. Let them, the ungrateful wretches! Trudolyubov will beat me hardest, he is so strong; Ferfichkin will be sure to catch hold sideways and tug at my hair. But no matter, no matter! That's what I am going for. The blockheads will be forced at last to see the tragedy of it all! When they drag me to the door I shall call out to them that in reality they are not worth my little finger. Get on, driver, get on!" I cried to the driver. He started and flicked his whip, I shouted so savagely.

"We shall fight at daybreak, that's a settled thing. I've done with the office. Ferfichkin made a joke about it just now. But where can I get pistols? Nonsense! I'll get my salary in advance and buy them. And powder, and bullets? That's the second's business. And how can it all be done by daybreak? And where am I to get a second? I have no friends. Nonsense!" I cried, lashing myself up more and more. "It's of no consequence! the first person I meet in the street is bound to be my second, just as he would be bound to pull a drowning man out of water. The most eccentric things may happen. Even if I were to ask the director himself to be my second to-morrow, and to keep the secret! Anton Antonich. . . ."

The fact is, that at that very minute the disgusting absurdity of my plan and the other side of the question was clearer and more vivid to my imagination than it could be to any one on earth. But. . . .

"Get on, driver, get on, you rascal, get on!"

"Ugh, sir!" said the son of toil.

Cold shivers suddenly ran down me.

Wouldn't it be better . . . to go straight home? My God, my God! Why did I invite myself to this dinner yesterday? But no, it's impossible. And my walking up and down for three hours from the table to the stove? No, they, they and no one else must pay for my walking up and down! They must wipe out this dishonour! Drive on!

And what if they give me into custody? They won't dare! They'll

be afraid of the scandal. And what if Zverkov is so contemptuous that he refuses to fight a duel? He is sure to; but in that case I'll show them . . . I will turn up at the posting station when he is setting off-tomorrow, I'll catch him by the leg, I'll pull off his coat when he gets into the carriage. I'll get my teeth into his hand, I'll bite him. "See what lengths you can drive a desperate man to!" He may hit me on the head and they may belabour me from behind. I will shout to the assembled multitude: "Look at this young puppy who is driving off to captivate the Circassian girls after letting me spit in his face!"

Of course, after that everything will be over! The office will have vanished off the face of the earth. I shall be arrested, I shall be tried, I shall be dismissed from the service, thrown in prison, sent to Siberia. Never mind! In fifteen years when they let me out of prison I will trudge off to him, a beggar, in rags. I shall find him in some provincial town. He will be married and happy. He will have a grown-up daughter. . . . I shall say to him: "Look, monster, at my hollow cheeks and my rags! I've lost everything—my career, my happiness, art, science, *the woman I loved*, and all through you. Here are pistols. I have come to discharge my pistol and . . . and I . . . forgive you. Then I shall fire into the air and he will hear nothing more of me. . . ."

I was actually on the point of tears, though I knew perfectly well at that moment that all this was out of Pushkin's *Silvio* and Lermontov's *Masquerade*.[7] And all at once I felt horribly ashamed, so ashamed that I stopped the horse, got out of the sledge, and stood still in the snow in the middle of the street. The driver gazed at me, sighing and astonished.

What was I to do? I could not go in there—it was evidently stupid, and I could not leave things as they were, because that would seem as though . . . Heavens, how could I leave things! And after such insults! "No!" I cried, throwing myself into the sledge again. "It is ordained! It is fate! Drive on, drive on!"

And in my impatience I punched the sledge-driver on the back of the neck.

"What are you up to? What are you hitting me for?" the peasant shouted, but he whipped up his nag so that it began kicking.

The wet snow was falling in big flakes; I unbuttoned myself, regardless of it. I forgot everything else, for I had finally decided on the slap, and felt with horror that it was going to happen *now*, *at once*, and that *no force could stop it*. The deserted street lamps gleamed sullenly in the snowy darkness like torches at a funeral. The snow

7. A verse play by the poet Mikhail Yu. Lermontov (1814–1841). *Silvio*: Actually "The Shot" (1830), by the Russian Poet Alexander Pushkin (1799–1837), a story in which the hero, Silvio, finally gives up the idea of revenging himself for a slap on the face.

drifted under my great-coat, under my coat, under my cravat, and melted there. I did not wrap myself up—all was lost, anyway.

At last we arrived. I jumped out, almost unconscious, ran up the steps and began knocking and kicking at the door. I felt fearfully weak, particularly in my legs and my knees. The door was opened quickly as though they knew I was coming. As a fact, Simonov had warned them that perhaps another gentleman would arrive, and this was a place in which one had to give notice and to observe certain precautions. It was one of those 'millinery establishments" which were abolished by the police a good time ago. By day it really was a shop; but at night, if one had an introduction, one might visit it for other purposes.

I walked rapidly through the dark shop into the familiar drawing-room, where there was only one candle burning, and stood still in amazement: there was no one there. "Where are they?" I asked somebody. But by now, of course, they had separated. Before me was standing a person with a stupid smile, the "madam" herself, who had seen me before. A minute later a door opened and another person came in.

Taking no notice of anything I strode about the room, and, I believe, I talked to myself. I felt as though I had been saved from death and was conscious of this, joyfully, all over: I should have given that slap, I should certainly certainly have given it! But now they were not here and . . . everything had vanished and changed! I looked round. I could not realize my condition yet. I looked mechanically at the girl who had come in: and had a glimpse of a fresh, young, rather pale face, with straight, dark eyebrows, and with grave, as it were wondering, eyes that attracted me at once; I should have hated her if she had been smiling. I began looking at her more intently and, as it were, with effort. I had not fully collected my thoughts. There was something simple and good-natured in her face, but something strangely grave. I am sure that this stood in her way here, and no one of those fools had noticed her. She could not, however, have been called a beauty, though she was tall, strong-looking, and well built. She was very simply dressed. Something loathsome stirred within me. I went straight up to her.

I chanced to look into the glass. My harassed face struck me as revolting in the extreme, pale, angry, abject, with dishevelled hair. "No matter, I am glad of it," I thought; "I am glad that I shall seem repulsive to her; I like that."

VI

. . . Somewhere behind a screen a clock began wheezing, as though oppressed by something, as though some one were strangling it. After

an unnaturally prolonged wheezing there followed a shrill, nasty, and as it were unexpectedly rapid, chime—as though some one were suddenly jumping forward. It struck two. I woke up, though I had indeed not been asleep but lying half conscious.

It was almost completely dark in the narrow, cramped, low-pitched room, cumbered up with an enormous wardrobe and piles of cardboard boxes and all sorts of frippery and litter. The candle end that had been burning on the table was going out and gave a faint flicker from time to time. In a few minutes there would be complete darkness.

I was not long in coming to myself; everything came back to my mind at once, without an effort, as though it had been in ambush to pounce upon me again. And, indeed, even while I was unconscious a point seemed continually to remain in my memory unforgotten, and round it my dreams moved drearily. But strange to say, everything that had happened to me in that day seemed to me now, on waking, to be in the far, far away past, as though I had long, long ago lived all that down.

My head was full of fumes. Something seemed to be hovering over me, rousing me, exciting me, and making me restless. Misery and spite seemed surging up in me again and seeking an outlet. Suddenly I saw beside me two wide eyes scrutinizing me curiously and persistently. The look in those eyes was coldly detached, sullen, as it were utterly remote; it weighed upon me.

A grim idea came into my brain and passed all over my body, as a horrible sensation, such as one feels when one goes into a damp and mouldy cellar. There was something unnatural in those two eyes, beginning to look at me only now. I recalled, too, that during those two hours I had not said a single word to this creature, and had, in fact, considered it utterly superfluous; in fact, the silence had for some reason gratified me. Now I suddenly realized vividly the hideous idea—revolting as a spider—of vice, which, without love, grossly and shamelessly begins with that in which true love finds its consummation. For a long time we gazed at each other like that, but she did not drop her eyes before mine and her expression did not change, so that at last I felt uncomfortable.

"What is your name?" I asked abruptly, to put an end to it.

"Liza," she answered almost in a whisper, but somehow far from graciously, and she turned her eyes away.

I was silent.

"What weather! The snow . . . it's disgusting!" I said, almost to myself, putting my arm under my head despondently, and gazing at the ceiling.

She made no answer. This was horrible.

"Have you always lived in Petersburg?" I asked a minute later,

almost angrily, turning my head slightly towards her.

"No."

"Where do you come from?"

"From Riga," she answered reluctantly.

"Are you a German?"

"No, Russian."

"Have you been here long?"

"Where?"

"In this house?"

"A fortnight."

She spoke more and more jerkily. The candle went out; I could no longer distinguish her face.

"Have you a father and mother?"

"Yes . . . no . . . I have."

"Where are they?"

"There . . . in Riga."

"What are they?"

"Oh, nothing."

"Nothing? Why, what class are they?"

"Tradespeople."

"Have you always lived with them?"

"Yes."

"How old are you?"

"Twenty."

"Why did you leave them?"

"Oh, for no reason."

That answer meant "Let me alone; I feel sick, sad."

We were silent.

God knows why I did not go away. I felt myself more and more sick and dreary. The images of the previous day began of themselves, apart from my will, flitting through my memory in confusion. I suddenly recalled something I had seen that morning when, full of anxious thoughts, I was hurrying to the office.

"I saw them carrying a coffin out yesterday and they nearly dropped it," I suddenly said aloud, not that I desired to open the conversation, but as it were by accident.

"A coffin?"

"Yes, in the Haymarket; they were bringing it up out of a cellar."

"From a cellar?"

"Not from a cellar, but from a basement. Oh, you know . . . down below . . . from a house of ill-fame. It was filthy all round . . . Egg-shells, litter . . . stench. It was loathsome."

Silence.

"A nasty day to be buried," I began, simply to avoid being silent.

"Nasty, in what way?"

"The snow, the wet." (I yawned.)

"It makes no difference," she said suddenly, after a brief silence.

"No, it's horrid." (I yawned again.) "The gravediggers must have sworn at getting drenched by the snow. And there must have been water in the grave."

"Why water in the grave?" she asked, with a sort of curiosity, but speaking even more harshly and abruptly than before.

I suddenly began to feel provoked.

"Why, there must have been water at the bottom a foot deep. You can't dig a dry grave in Volkovo Cemetery."

"Why?"

"Why? Why, the place is waterlogged. It's a regular marsh. So they bury them in water. I've seen it myself . . . many times."

(I had never seen it once, indeed I had never been in Volkovo, and had only heard stories of it.)

"Do you mean to say, you don't mind how you die?"

"But why should I die?" she answered, as though defending herself.

"Why, some day you will die, and you will die just the same as that dead woman. She was . . . a girl like you. She died of consumption."

"A wench would have died in a hospital . . ." (She knows all about it already; she said "wench," not "girl.")

"She was in debt to her madam," I retorted, more and more provoked by the discussion; "and went on earning money for her up to the end, though she was in consumption. Some sledge-drivers standing by were talking about her to some soldiers and telling them so. No doubt they knew her. They were laughing. They were going to meet in a pot-house to drink to her memory."

A great deal of this was my invention. Silence followed, profound silence. She did not stir.

"And is it better to die in a hospital?"

"Isn't it just the same? Besides, why should I die?" she added irritably.

"If not now, a little later."

"Why, a little later?"

"Why, indeed? Now you are young, pretty, fresh, you fetch a high price. But after another year of this life you will be very different—you will go off."

"In a year?"

"Anyway, in a year you will be worth less," I continued maliginantly. "You will go from here to something lower, another house; a year later—to a third, lower and lower, and in seven years you will come to a basement in the Haymarket. That will be if you were

lucky. But it would be much worse if you got some disease, consumption, say . . . and caught a chill, or something or other. It's not easy to get over an illness in your way of life. If you catch anything you may not get rid of it. And so you would die."

"Oh, well, then I shall die," she answered, quite vindictively, and she made a quick movement.

"But one is sorry."

"Sorry for whom?"

"Sorry for life."

Silence.

"Have you been engaged to be married? Eh?"

"What's that to you?"

"Oh, I am not cross-examining you. It's nothing to me. Why are you so cross? Of course you may have had your own troubles. What is it to me? It's simply that I felt sorry."

"Sorry for whom?"

"Sorry for you."

"No need," she whispered hardly audibly, and again made a faint movement.

That incensed me at once. What! I was so gentle with her, and she. . . .

"Why, do you think that you are on the right path?"

"I don't think anything."

"That's what's wrong, that you don't think. Realize it while there is still time. There still is time. You are still young, good-looking; you might love, be married, be happy. . . ."

"Not all married women are happy," she snapped out in the rude abrupt tone she had used at first.

"Not all, of course, but anyway it is much better than the life here. Infinitely better. Besides, with love one can live even without happiness. Even in sorrow life is sweet; life is sweet, however one lives. But here what is there but . . . filth? Phew!"

I turned away with disgust; I was no longer reasoning coldly. I began to feel myself what I was saying and warmed to the subject. I was already longing to expound the cherished ideas I had brooded over in my corner. Something suddenly flared up in me. An object had appeared before me.

"Never mind my being here, I am not an example for you. I am, perhaps, worse than you are. I was drunk when I came here, though," I hastened, however, to say in self-defence. "Besides, a man is no example for a woman. It's a different thing. I may degrade and defile myself, but I am not any one's slave. I come and go, and that's an end of it. I shake it off, and I am a different man. But you are a slave from the start. Yes, a slave! You give up everything, your whole freedom. If you want to break your chains afterwards, you won't be

able to: you will be more and more fast in the snares. It is an accursed bondage. I know it. I won't speak of anything else, maybe you won't understand, but tell me: no doubt you are in debt to your madam? There, you see," I added, though she made no answer, but only listened in silence, entirely absorbed, "that's a bondage for you! You will never buy your freedom. They will see to that. It's like selling your soul to the devil. . . . And besides . . . perhaps I, too, am just as unlucky—how do you know—and wallow in the mud on purpose, out of misery? You know, men take to drink from grief; well, maybe I am here from grief. Come, tell me, what is there good here? Here you and I . . . came together . . . just now and did not say one word to one another all the time, and it was only afterwards you began staring at me like a wild creature, and I at you. Is that loving? Is that how one human being should meet another? It's hideous, that's what it is!"

"Yes!" she assented sharply and hurriedly.

I was positively astounded by the promptitude of this "Yes." So the same thought may have been straying through her mind when she was staring at me just before. So she, too, was capable of certain thoughts? "Damn it all, this was interesting, this was a point of likeness!" I thought, almost rubbing my hands. And indeed it's easy to turn a young soul like that!

It was the exercise of my power that attracted me most.

She turned her head nearer to me, and it seemed to me in the darkness that she propped herself on her arm. Perhaps she was scrutinizing me. How I regretted that I could not see her eyes. I heard her deep breathing.

"Why have you come here?" I asked her, with a note of authority already in my voice.

"Oh, I don't know."

"But how nice it would be to be living in your father's house! It's warm and free; and you have a home of your own."

"But what if it's worse than this?"

"I must take the right tone," flashed through my mind. "I may not get far with sentimentality." But it was only a momentary thought. I swear she really did interest me. Besides, I was exhausted and moody. And cunning so easily goes hand-in-hand with feeling.

"Who denies it!" I hastened to answer. "Anything may happen. I am convinced that some one has wronged you, and that you are more sinned against than sinning. Of course, I know nothing of your story, but it's not likely a girl like you has come here of her own inclination. . . ."

"A girl like me?" she whispered, hardly audibly; but I heard it.

Damn it all, I was flattering her. That was horrid. But perhaps it was a good thing. . . . She was silent.

"See, Liza, I will tell you about myself. If I had had a home from childhood, I shouldn't be what I am now. I often think that. However bad it may be at home, anyway they are your father and mother, and not enemies, strangers. Once a year at least, they'll show their love of you. Anyway, you know you are at home. I grew up without a home; and perhaps that's why I've turned so . . . unfeeling."

I waited again. "Perhaps she doesn't understand," I thought, "and, indeed, it is absurd—it's moralizing."

"If I were a father and had a daughter, I believe I should love my daughter more than my sons, really," I began indirectly, as though talking of something else, to distract her attention. I must confess I blushed.

"Why so?" she asked.

Ah! so she was listening!

"I don't know, Liza. I knew a father who was a stern, austere man, but used to go down on his knees to his daughter, used to kiss her hands, her feet, he couldn't make enough of her, really. When she danced at parties he used to stand for five hours at a stretch, gazing at her. He was mad over her: I understand that! She would fall asleep tired at night, and he would wake to kiss her in her sleep and make the sign of the cross over her. He would go about in a dirty old coat, he was stingy to every one else, but would spend his last penny for her, giving her expensive presents, and it was his greatest delight when she was pleased with what he gave her. Fathers always love their daughters more than the mothers do. Some girls live happily at home! And I believe I should never let my daughters marry."

"What next?" she said, with a faint smile.

"I should be jealous, I really should. To think that she should kiss any one else! That she should love a stranger more than her father! It's painful to imagine it. Of course, that's all nonsense, of course every father would be reasonable at last. But I believe before I should let her marry, I should worry myself to death; I should find fault with all her suitors. But I should end by letting her marry whom she herself loved. The one whom the daughter loves always seems the worst to the father, you know. That is always so. So many family troubles come from that."

"Some are glad to sell their daughters, rather than marrying them honourably."

Ah, so that was it!

"Such a thing, Liza, happens in those accursed families in which there is neither love nor God," I retorted warmly, "and where there is no love, there is no sense either. There are such families, it's true, but I am not speaking of them. You must have seen wickedness in your own family, if you talk of that. Truly, you must have been

unlucky. H'm! . . . that sort of thing mostly comes about through poverty."

"And is it any better with the gentry? Even among the poor, honest people live happily."

"H'm . . . yes. Perhaps. Another thing, Liza, man is fond of reckoning up his troubles, but does not count his joys. If he counted them up as he ought, he would see that every lot has enough happiness provided for it. And what if all goes well with the family, if the blessing of God is upon it, if the husband is a good one, loves you, cherishes you, never leaves you! There is happiness in such a family! Even sometimes there is happiness in the midst of sorrow; and indeed sorrow is everywhere. If you marry *you will find out for yourself.* But think of the first years of married life with one you love: what happiness, what happiness there sometimes is in it! And indeed it's the ordinary thing. In those early days even quarrels with one's husband end happily. Some women get up quarrels with their husbands just because they love them. Indeed, I knew a woman like that: she seemed to say that because she loved him, she would torment him and make him feel it. You know that you may torment a man on purpose through love. Women are particularly given to that, thinking to themselves 'I will love him so, I will make so much of him afterwards, that it's no sin to torment him a little now.' And all in the house rejoice in the sight of you, and you are happy and gay and peaceful and honourable. . . . Then there are some women who are jealous. If he went off anywhere—I knew one such woman, she couldn't restrain herself, but would jump up at night and run off on the sly to find out where he was, whether he was with some other woman. That's a pity. And the woman knows herself it's wrong, and her heart fails her and she suffers, but she loves—it's all through love. And how sweet it is to make it up after quarrels, to own herself in the wrong or to forgive him! And they are both so happy all at once—as though they had met anew, been married over again; as though their love had begun afresh. And no one, no one should know what passes between husband and wife if they love one another. And whatever quarrels there may be between them they ought not to call in their own mother to judge between them and tell tales of one another. They are their own judges. Love is a holy mystery and ought to be hidden from all other eyes, whatever happens. That makes it holier and better. They respect one another more, and much is built on respect. And if once there has been love, if they have been married for love, why should love pass away? Surely one can keep it! It is rare that one cannot keep it. And if the husband is kind and straightforward, why should not love last? The first phase of married love will pass, it is true, but then there will come a love that is better still. Then there will be the union of souls, they will have everything

in common, there will be no secrets between them. And once they have children, the most difficult times will seem to them happy, so long as there is love and courage. Even toil will be a joy, you may deny yourself bread for your children and even that will be a joy. They will love you for it afterwards; so you are laying by for your future. As the children grow up you feel that you are an example, a support for them; that even after you die your children will always keep your thoughts and feelings, because they have received them from you, they will take on your semblance and likeness. So you see this is a great duty. How can it fail to draw the father and mother nearer? People say it's a trial to have children. Who says that? It is heavenly happiness! Are you fond of little children, Liza? I am awfully fond of them. You know—a little rosy baby boy at your bosom, and what husband's heart is not touched, seeing his wife nursing his child! A plump little rosy baby, sprawling and snuggling, chubby little hands and feet, clean tiny little nails, so tiny that it makes one laugh to look at them; eyes that look as if they understand everything. And while it sucks it clutches at your bosom with its little hand, plays. When its father comes up, the child tears itself away from the bosom, flings itself back, looks at its father, laughs, as though it were fearfully funny and falls to sucking again. Or it will bite its mother's breast when its little teeth are coming, while it looks sideways at her with its little eyes as though to say, 'Look, I am biting!' Is not all that happiness when they are the three together, husband, wife and child? One can forgive a great deal for the sake of such moments. Yes, Liza, one must first learn to live oneself before one blames others!"

"It's by pictures, pictures like that one must get at you," I thought to myself, though I did speak with real feeling, and all at once I flushed crimson. "What if she were suddenly to burst out laughing, what should I do then?" That idea drove me to fury. Towards the end of my speech I really was excited, and now my vanity was somehow wounded. The silence continued. I almost nudged her.

"Why are you——" she began and stopped. But I understood: there was a quiver of something different in her voice, not abrupt, harsh and unyielding as before, but something soft and shamefaced, so shamefaced that I suddenly felt ashamed and guilty.

"What?" I asked, with tender curiosity.

"Why, you . . ."

"What?"

"Why, you . . . speak somehow like a book," she said, and again there was a note of irony in her voice.

That remark sent a pang to my heart. It was not what I was expecting.

I did not understand that she was hiding her feelings under irony, that this is usually the last refuge of modest and chaste-souled people

when the privacy of their soul is coarsely and intrusively invaded, and that their pride makes them refuse to surrender till the last moment and shrink from giving expression to their feelings before you. I ought to have guessed the truth from the timidity with which she had repeatedly approached her sarcasm, only bringing herself to utter it, at last with an effort. But I did not guess, and an evil feeling took possession of me.

"Wait a bit!" I thought.

VII

"Oh, hush, Liza! How can you talk about being like a book, when it makes even me, an outsider, feel sick? Though I don't look at it as an outsider, for, indeed, it touches me to the heart. . . . Is it possible, is it possible that you do not feel sick at being here yourself? Evidently habit does wonders! God knows what habit can do with any one. Can you seriously think that you will never grow old, that you will always be good-looking, and that they will keep you here for ever and ever? I say nothing of the loathsomeness of the life here. . . . Though let me tell you this about it—about your present life, I mean; here though you are young now, attractive, nice, with soul and feeling, yet you know as soon as I came to myself just now I felt at once sick at being here with you! One can only come here when one is drunk. But if you were anywhere else, living as good people live, I should perhaps be more than attracted by you, should fall in love with you, should be glad of a look from you, let alone a word; I should hang about your door, should go down on my knees to you, should look upon you as my betrothed and think it an honour to be allowed to. I should not dare to have an impure thought about you. But here, you see, I know that I have only to whistle and you have to come with me whether you like it or not. I don't consult your wishes, but you mine. The lowest labourer hires himself as a workman, but he doesn't make a slave of himself altogether; besides, he knows that he will be free again presently. But when are you free? Only think what you are giving up here? What is it you are making a slave of? It is your soul, together with your body; you are selling your soul which you have no right to dispose of! You give your love to be outraged by every drunkard! Love! But that's everything, you know, it's a priceless diamond, it's a maiden's treasure, love—why, a man would be ready to give his soul, to face death to gain that love. But how much is your love worth now? You are sold, all of you, body and soul, and there is no need to strive for love when you can have everything without love. And you know there is no greater insult to a girl than that, do you understand? To be sure, I have heard that they comfort you, poor fools, they let you have lovers of

your own here. But you know that's simply a farce, that's simply a sham, it's just laughing at you, and you are taken in by it! Why, do you suppose he really loves you, that lover of yours? I don't believe it. How can he love you when he knows you may be called away from him any minute? He would be a low fellow if he did! Will he have a grain of respect for you? What have you in common with him? He laughs at you and robs you—that is all his love amounts to! You are lucky if he does not beat you. Very likely he does beat you, too. Ask him, if you have got one, whether he will marry you. He will laugh in your face, if he doesn't spit in it or give you a blow—though maybe he is not worth a bad halfpenny himself. And for what have you ruined your life, if you come to think of it? For the coffee they give you to drink and the plentiful meals? But with what object are they feeding you up? An honest girl couldn't swallow the food, for she would know what she was being fed for. You are in debt here, and, of course, you will always be in debt, and you will go on in debt to the end, till the visitors here begin to scorn you. And that will soon happen, don't rely upon your youth—all that flies by express train here, you know. You will be kicked out. And not simply kicked out; long before that she'll begin nagging at you, scolding you, abusing you, as though you had not sacrificed your health for her, had not thrown away your youth and your soul for her benefit, but as though you had ruined her, beggared her, robbed her. And don't expect any one to take your part: the others, your companions, will attack you, too, to win her favour, for all are in slavery here, and have lost all conscience and pity here long ago. They have become utterly vile, and nothing on earth is viler, more loathsome, and more insulting than their abuse. And you are laying down everything here, unconditionally, youth and health and beauty and hope, and at twenty-two you will look like a woman of five-and-thirty, and you will be lucky if you are not diseased, pray to God for that! No doubt you are thinking now that you have a gay time and no work to do! Yet there is no work harder or more dreadful in the world or ever has been. One would think that the heart alone would be worn out with tears. And you won't dare to say a word, not half a word when they drive you away from here; you will go away as though you were to blame. You will change to another house, then to a third, then somewhere else, till you come down at last to the Haymarket. There you will be beaten at every turn; that is good manners there, the visitors don't know how to be friendly without beating you. You don't believe that it is so hateful there? Go and look for yourself some time, you can see with your own eyes. Once, one New Year's Day, I saw a woman at a door. They had turned her out as a joke, to give her a taste of the frost because she had been crying too much, and they shut the door behind her. At nine o'clock in the morning she was already

quite drunk, dishevelled, half-naked, covered with bruises, her face was powdered, but she had a black-eye, blood was trickling from her nose and her teeth; some cabman had just given her a drubbing. She was sitting on the stone steps, a salt fish of some sort was in her hand; she was crying, wailing something about her luck and beating with the fish on the steps, and cabmen and drunken soldiers were crowding in the doorway taunting her. You don't believe that you will ever be like that? I should be sorry to believe it, too, but how do you know; maybe ten years, eight years ago that very woman with the salt fish came here fresh as a cherub, innocent, pure, knowing no evil, blushing at every word. Perhaps she was like you, proud, ready to take offence, not like the others; perhaps she looked like a queen, and knew what happiness was in store for the man who should love her and whom she should love. Do you see how it ended? And what if at that very minute when she was beating on the filthy steps with that fish, drunken and dishevelled—what if at that very minute she recalled the pure early days in her father's house, when she used to go to school and the neighbour's son watched for her on the way, declaring that he would love her as long as he lived, that he would devote his life to her, and when they vowed to love one another for ever and be married as soon as they were grown up! No, Liza, it would be happy for you if you were to die soon of consumption in some corner, in some cellar like that woman just now. In the hospital, do you say? You will be lucky if they take you, but what if you are still of use to the madam here? Consumption is a queer disease, it is not like fever. The patient goes on hoping till the last minute and says he is all right. He deludes himself. And that just suits your madam. Don't doubt it, that's how it is; you have sold your soul, and what is more you owe money, so you daren't say a word. But when you are dying, all will abandon you, all will turn away from you, for then there will be nothing to get from you. What's more, they will reproach you for cumbering the place, for being so long over dying. However you beg you won't get a drink of water without abuse: 'Whenever are you going off, you nasty hussy, you won't let us sleep with your moaning, you make the gentlemen sick.' That's true, I have heard such things said myself. They will thrust you dying into the filthiest corner in the cellar—in the damp and darkness; what will your thoughts be, lying there alone? When you die, strange hands will lay you out, with grumbling and impatience; no one will bless you, no one will sigh for you, they only want to get rid of you as soon as may be; they will buy a coffin, take you to the grave as they did that poor woman to-day, and celebrate your memory at the tavern. In the gravest sleet, filth, wet snow—no need to put themselves out for you—'Let her down, Vanyukha; it's just like her luck—even here, she is head-foremost, the hussy. Shorten the

cord, you rascal.' 'It's all right as it is.' 'All right, is it? Why, she's on her side! She was a fellow-creature, after all! But, never mind, throw the earth on her.' And they won't care to waste much time quarrelling over you. They will scatter the wet blue clay as quick as they can and go off to the tavern . . . and there your memory on earth will end; other women have children to go to their graves, fathers, husbands. While for you neither tear, nor sigh, nor remembrance; no one in the whole world will ever come to you, your name will vanish from the face of the earth—as though you had never existed, never been born at all! Nothing but filth and mud, however you knock at your coffin lid at night, when the dead arise, however you cry: 'Let me out, kind people, to live in the light of day! My life was no life at all; my life has been thrown away like a dish-clout; it was drunk away in the tavern at the Haymarket; let me out, kind people, to live in the world again.' "

And I worked myself up to such a pitch that I began to have a lump in my throat myself, and . . . and all at once I stopped, sat up in dismay, and bending over apprehensively, began to listen with a beating heart. I had reason to be troubled.

I had felt for some time that I was turning her soul upside down and rending her heart, and—and the more I was convinced of it, the more eagerly I desired to gain my object as quickly and as effectually as possible. It was the exercise of my skill that carried me away; yet it was not merely sport. . . .

I knew I was speaking stiffly, artificially, even bookishly, in fact, I could not speak except "like a book." But that did not trouble me: I knew, I felt that I should be understood and that this very bookishness might be an assistance. But now, having attained my effect, I was suddenly panic-stricken. Never before had I witnessed such despair! She was lying on her face, thrusting her face into the pillow and clutching it in both hands. Her heart was being torn. Her youthful body was shuddering all over as though in convulsions. Suppressed sobs rent her bosom and suddenly burst out in weeping and wailing, then she pressed closer into the pillow: she did not want any one here, not a living soul, to know of her anguish and her tears. She bit the pillow, bit her hand till it bled (I saw that afterwards), or, thrusting her fingers into her dishevelled hair seemed rigid with the effort of restraint, holding her breath and clenching her teeth. I began saying something, begging her to calm herself, but felt that I did not dare; and all at once, in a sort of cold shiver, almost in terror, began fumbling in the dark, trying hurriedly to get dressed to go. It was dark: though I tried my best I could not finish dressing quickly. Suddenly I felt a box of matches and a candlestick with a whole candle in it. As soon as the room was lighted up, Liza sprang up, sat up in bed, and with a contorted face, with a half insane smile, looked at

me almost senselessly. I sat down beside her and took her hands; she came to herself, made an impulsive movement towards me, would have caught hold of me, but did not dare, and slowly bowed her head before me.

"Liza, my dear, I was wrong . . . forgive me, my dear," I began, but she squeezed my hand in her fingers so tightly that I felt I was saying the wrong thing and stopped.

"This is my address, Liza, come to me."

"I will come," she answered resolutely, her head still bowed.

"But now I am going, good-bye . . . till we meet again."

I got up; she, too, stood up and suddenly flushed all over, gave a shudder, snatched up a shawl that was lying on a chair and muffled herself in it to her chin. As she did this she gave another sickly smile, blushed and looked at me strangely. I felt wretched; I was in haste to get away—to disappear.

"Wait a minute," she said suddenly, in the passage just at the doorway, stopping me with her hand on my overcoat. She put down the candle in hot haste and ran off; evidently she had thought of something or wanted to show me something. As she ran away she flushed, her eyes shone, and there was a smile on her lips—what was the meaning of it? Against my will I waited: she came back a minute later with an expression that seemed to ask forgiveness for something. In fact, it was not the same face, not the same look as the evening before: sullen, mistrustful, and obstinate. Her eyes now were imploring, soft, and at the same time trustful, caressing, timid. The expression with which children look at people they are very fond of, of whom they are asking a favour. Her eyes were a light hazel, they were lovely eyes, full of life, and capable of expressing love as well as sullen hatred.

Making no explanation, as though I, as a sort of higher being, must understand everything without explanations, she held out a piece of paper to me. Her whole face was positively beaming at that instant with naïve, almost childish, triumph. I unfolded it. It was a letter to her from a medical student or some one of that sort—a very high-flown and flowery, but extremely respectful, love-letter. I don't recall the words now, but I remember well that through the high-flown phrases there was apparent a genuine feeling, which cannot be feigned. When I had finished reading it I met her glowing, questioning, and childishly impatient eyes fixed upon me. She fastened her eyes upon my face and waited impatiently for what I should say. In a few words, hurriedly, but with a sort of joy and pride, she explained to me that she had been to a dance somewhere in a private house, a family of "very nice people *who knew nothing*, absolutely nothing, for she had only come here so lately and it had all happened . . . and she hadn't made up her mind to stay and was certainly going

away as soon as she had paid her debt . . ."and at that party there had been the student who had danced with her all the evening. He had talked to her, and it turned out that he had known her in old days at Riga when he was a child, they had played together, but a very long time ago—and he knew her parents, but *about this* he knew nothing, nothing whatever, and had no suspicion! And the day after the dance (three days ago) he had sent her that letter through the friend with whom she had gone to the party . . . and . . . well, that was all.

She dropped her shining eyes with a sort of bashfulness as she finished.

The poor girl was keeping that student's letter as a precious treasure, and had run to fetch it, her only treasure, because she did not want me to go away without knowing that she, too, was honestly and genuinely loved; that she, too, was addressed respectfully. No doubt that letter was destined to lie in her box and lead to nothing. But none the less, I am certain that she would keep it all her life as a precious treasure, as her pride and justification, and now at such a minute she had thought of that letter and brought it with naïve pride to raise herself in my eyes that I might see, that I, too, might think well of her. I said nothing, pressed her hand and went out. I so longed to get away. . . . I walked all the way home, in spite of the fact that the melting snow was still falling in heavy flakes. I was exhausted, shattered, in bewilderment. But behind the bewilderment the truth was already gleaming. The loathsome truth.

VIII

It was some time, however, before I consented to recognize that truth. Waking up in the morning after some hours of heavy, leaden sleep, and immediately realizing all that had happened on the previous day, I was positively amazed at my last night's *sentimentality* with Liza, at all those "outcries of horror and pity." "To think of having such an attack of womanish hysteria, pah!" I concluded. And what did I thrust my address upon her for? What if she comes? Let her come, though; it doesn't matter. . . . But *obviously*, that was not now the chief and the most important matter: I had to make haste and at all costs save my reputation in the eyes of Zverkov and Simonov as quickly as possible; that was the chief business. And I was so taken up that morning that I actually forgot all about Liza.

First of all I had at once to repay what I had borrowed the day before from Simonov. I resolved on a desperate measure: to borrow fifteen roubles straight off from Anton Antonich. As luck would have it he was in the best of humours that morning, and gave it to me at once, on the first asking. I was so delighted at this that, as I signed

the I O U with a swaggering air, I told him casually that the night before "I had been keeping it up with some friends at the Hôtel de Paris; we were giving a farewell party to a comrade, in fact, I might say a friend of my childhood, and you know—a desperate rake, fearfully spoilt—of course, he belongs to a good family, and has considerable means, a brilliant career; he is witty, charming, a regular Lovelace, you understand; we drank an extra 'half-dozen' and . . ."

And it went off all right; all this was uttered very easily, unconstrainedly and complacently.

On reaching home I promptly wrote to Simonov.

To this hour I am lost in admiration when I recall the truly gentlemanly, good-humoured, candid tone of my letter. With tact and good-breeding, and, above all, entirely without superfluous words, I blamed myself for all that had happened. I defended myself, "if I really may be allowed to defend myself," by alleging that being utterly unaccustomed to wine, I had been intoxicated with the first glass, which I said, I had drunk before they arrived, while I was waiting for them at the Hôtel de Paris between five and six o'clock. I begged Simonov's pardon especially; I asked him to convey my explanations to all the others, especially to Zverkov, whom "I seemed to remember as though in a dream" I had insulted. I added that I would have called upon all of them myself, but my head ached, and besides I had not the face to. I was particularly pleased with a certain lightness, almost carelessness (strictly within the bounds of politeness, however), which was apparent in my style, and better than any possible arguments, gave them at once to understand that I took rather an independent view of "all that unpleasantness last night;" that I was by no means so utterly crushed as you, my friends, probably imagine; but on the contrary, looked upon it as a gentleman serenely respecting himself should look upon it. "On a young hero's past no censure is cast!"

"There is actually an aristocratic playfulness about it!" I thought admiringly, as I read over the letter. And it's all because I am an intellectual and cultivated man! Another man in my place would not have known how to extricate himself, but here I have got out of it and am as jolly as ever again, and all because I am "a cultivated and educated man of our day." And, indeed, perhaps, everything was due to the wine yesterday. H'm! . . . no, it was not the wine. I did not drink anything at all between five and six when I was waiting for them. I had lied to Simonov; I had lied shamelessly; and indeed I wasn't ashamed now. . . . Hang it all though, the great thing was that I was rid of it.

I put six roubles in the letter, sealed it up, and asked Apollon to take it to Simonov. When he learned that there was money in the letter, Apollon became more respectful and agreed to take it. Towards

evening I went out for a walk. My head was still aching and giddy after yesterday. But as evening came on and the twilight grew denser, my impressions and, following them, my thoughts, grew more and more different and confused. Something was not dead within me, in the depths of my heart and conscience it would not die, and it showed itself in acute depression. For the most part I jostled my way through the most crowded business streets, along Myeshchansky Street, along Sadovy Street and in Yusupov Garden. I always liked particularly sauntering along these streets in the dusk, just when there were crowds of working people of all sorts going home from their daily work, with faces looking cross with anxiety. What I liked was just that cheap bustle, that bare prose. On this occasion the jostling of the streets irritated me more than ever. I could not make out what was wrong with me, I could not find the clue, something seemed rising up continually in my soul, painfully, and refusing to be appeased. I returned home completely upset, it was just as though some crime were lying on my conscience.

The thought that Liza was coming worried me continually. It seemed queer to me that of all my recollections of yesterday this tormented me, as it were, especially, as it were, quite separately. Everything else I had quite succeeded in forgetting by the evening; I dismissed it all and was still perfectly satisfied with my letter to Simonov. But on this point I was not satisfied at all. It was as though I were worried only by Liza. "What if she comes," I thought incessantly, "well, it doesn't matter, let her come! H'm! it's horrid that she should see, for instance, how I live. Yesterday I seemed such a hero to her, while now, h'm! It's horrid, though, that I have let myself go so, the room looks like a beggar's. And I brought myself to go out to dinner in such a suit! And my American leather sofa with the stuffing sticking out. And my dressing-gown, which will not cover me, such tatters, and she will see all this and she will see Apollon. That beast is certain to insult her. He will fasten upon her in order to be rude to me. And I, of course, shall be panic-stricken as usual, I shall begin bowing and scraping before her and pulling my dressing-gown round me, I shall begin smiling, telling lies. Oh, the beastliness! And it isn't the beastliness of it that matters most! There is something more important, more loathsome, viler! Yes, viler! And to put on that dishonest lying mask again!" . . .

When I reached that thought I fired up all at once.

"Why dishonest? How dishonest? I was speaking sincerely last night. I remember there was real feeling in me, too. What I wanted was to excite an honourable feeling in her. . . . Her crying was a good thing, it will have a good effect."

Yet I could not feel at ease. All that evening, even when I had come back home, even after nine o'clock, when I calculated that

Liza could not possibly come, she still haunted me, and what was worse, she came back to my mind always in the same position. One moment out of all that had happened last night stood vividly before my imagination; the moment when I struck a match and saw her pale, distorted face, with its look of torture. And what a pitiful, what an unnatural, what a distorted smile she had at that moment! But I did not know then, that fifteen years later I should still in my imagination see Liza, always with the pitiful, distorted, inappropriate smile which was on her face at that minute.

Next day I was ready again to look upon it all as nonsense, due to over-excited nerves, and, above all, as *exaggerated*, I was always conscious of that weak point of mine, and sometimes very much afraid of it. "I exaggerate everything, that is where I go wrong," I repeated to myself every hour. But, however, "Liza will very likely come all the same," was the refrain with which all my reflections ended. I was so uneasy that I sometimes flew into a fury: "She'll come, she is certain to come!" I cried, running about the room, "if not to-day, she will come to-morrow; she'll find me out! The damnable romanticism of these pure hearts! Oh, the vileness—oh, the silliness—oh, the stupidity of these 'wretched sentimental souls!' Why, how fail to understand? How could one fail to understand? . . ."

But at this point I stopped short, and in great confusion, indeed.

And how few, how few words, I thought, in passing, were needed; how little of the idyllic (and affectedly, bookishly, artificially idyllic too) had sufficed to turn a whole human life at once according to my will. That's virginity, to be sure! Freshness of soil!

At times a thought occurred to me, to go to her, "to tell her all," and beg her not to come to me. But this thought stirred such wrath in me that I believed I should have crushed that "damned" Liza if she had chanced to be near me at the time. I should have insulted her, have spat at her, have turned her out, have struck her!

One day passed, however, another and another; she did not come and I began to grow calmer. I felt particularly bold and cheerful after nine o'clock, I even sometimes began dreaming, and rather sweetly: I, for instance, became the salvation of Liza, simply through her coming to me and my talking to her. . . . I develop her, educate her. Finally, I notice that she loves me, loves me passionately. I pretend not to understand (I don't know, however, why I pretend, just for effect, perhaps). At last all confusion, transfigured, trembling and sobbing, she flings herself at my feet and says that I am her saviour, and that she loves me better than anything in the world. I am amazed, but. . . . "Liza," I say, "can you imagine that I have not noticed your love, I saw it all, I divined it, but I did not dare to approach you first, because I had an influence over you and was afraid that you would force yourself, from gratitude, to respond to

my love, would try to rouse in your heart a feeling which was perhaps absent, and I did not wish that . . . because it would be tyranny . . . it would be indelicate (in short, I launch off at that point into European, inexplicably lofty subtleties à la George Sand[8]) but now, now you are mine, you are my creation, you are pure, you are good, you are my noble wife.

'Into my house come bold and free,
Its rightful mistress there to be.' "[9]

Then we begin living together, go abroad and so on, and so on. In fact, in the end it seemed vulgar to me myself, and I began putting out my tongue at myself.

Besides, they won't let her out, "the hussy!" I thought. They don't let them go out very readily, especially in the evening (for some reason I fancied she would come in the evening, and at seven o'clock precisely). Though she did say she was not altogether a slave there yet, and had certain rights; so, h'm! Damn it all, she will come, she is sure to come!

It was a good thing, in fact, that Apollon distracted my attention at that time by his rudeness. He drove me beyond all patience! He was the bane of my life, the curse laid upon me by Providence. We had been squabbling continually for years, and I hated him. My God, how I hated him! I believe I had never hated any one in my life as I hated him, especially at some moments. He was an elderly, dignified man, who worked part of his time as a tailor. But for some unknown reason he despised me beyond all measure, and looked down upon me insufferably. Though, indeed, he looked down upon every one. Simply to glance at that flaxen, smoothly brushed head, at the tuft of hair he combed up on his forehead and oiled with sunflower oil, at that dignified mouth, compressed into the shape of the letter V, made one feel one was confronting a man who never doubted of himself. He was a pedant, to the most extreme point, the greatest pedant I had met on earth, and with that had a vanity only befitting Alexander of Macedon. He was in love with every button on his coat, every nail on his fingers—absolutely in love with them, and he looked it! In his behaviour to me he was a perfect tyrant, he spoke very little to me, and if he chanced to glance at me he gave me a firm, majestically self-confident and invariably ironical look that drove me sometimes to fury. He did his work with the air of doing me the greatest favour. Though he did scarcely anything for me, and did not, indeed, consider himself bound to do anything.

8. Pseudonym of the French woman novelist Mme. Aurore Dudevant (1804–1876), famous also as a promoter of feminism. 9. The last lines of the poem by Nekrasov used as the epigraph of Part II of this story.

There could be no doubt that he looked upon me as the greatest fool on earth, and that "he did not get rid of me" was simply that he could get wages from me every month. Many sins should be forgiven me for what I suffered from him. My hatred reached such a point that sometimes his very step almost threw me into convulsions. What I loathed particularly was his lisp. His tongue must have been a little too long or something of that sort, for he continually lisped, and seemed to be very proud of it, imagining that it greatly added to his dignity. He spoke in a slow, measured tone, with his hands behind his back and his eyes fixed on the ground. He maddened me particularly when he read aloud the psalms to himself behind his partition. Many a battle I waged over that reading! But he was awfully fond of reading aloud in the evenings, in a slow, even, sing-song voice, as though over the dead. It is interesting that that is how he has ended: he hires himself out to read the psalms over the dead, and at the same time he kills rats and makes blacking. But at that time I could not get rid of him, it was as though he were chemically combined with my existence. Besides, nothing would have induced him to consent to leave me. I could not live in furnished lodgings: my lodging was my private solitude, my shell, my cave, in which I concealed myself from all mankind, and Apollon seemed to me, for some reason, an integral part of that flat, and for seven years I could not turn him away.

To be two or three days behind with his wages for instance, was impossible. He would have made such a fuss, I should not have known where to hide my head. But I was so exasperated with every one during those days, that I made up my mind for some reason and with some object to *punish* Apollon and not to pay him for a fortnight the wages that were owing him. I had for a long time—for the last two years—been intending to do this, simply in order to teach him not to give himself airs with me, and to show him that if I liked I could withhold his wages. I purposed to say nothing to him about it, and was purposely silent indeed, in order to score off his pride and force him to be the first to speak of his wages. Then I would take the seven roubles out of a drawer, show him I have the money put aside on purpose, but that I won't, I won't, I simply won't pay him his wages, I won't just because that is "what I wish," because "I am master, and it is for me to decide," because he has been disrespectful, because he has been rude; but if he were to ask respectfully I might be softened and give it to him, otherwise he might wait another fortnight, another three weeks, a whole month. . . .

But angry as I was, yet he got the better of me. I could not hold out for four days. He began as he always did begin in such cases, for there had been such cases already, there had been attempts (and it may be observed I knew all this beforehand, I knew his nasty tactics

by heart). He would begin by fixing upon me an exceedingly severe stare, keeping it up for several minutes at a time, particularly on meeting me or seeing me out of the house. If I held out and pretended not to notice these stares, he would, still in silence, proceed to further tortures. All at once, *à propos* of nothing, he would walk softly and smoothly into my room, when I was pacing up and down or reading, stand by the door, one hand behind his back and one foot behind the other, and fix upon me a stare more than severe, utterly contemptuous. If I suddenly asked him what he wanted, he would make me no answer, but continue staring at me persistently for some seconds, then, with a peculiar compression of his lips and a most significant air, deliberately turn round and deliberately go back to his room. Two hours later he would come out again and again present himself before me in the same way. It had happened that in my fury I did not even ask him what he wanted, but simply raised my head sharply and imperiously and began staring back at him. So we stared at one another for two minutes; at last he turned with deliberation and dignity and went back again for two hours.

If I were still not brought to reason by all this, but persisted in my revolt, he would suddenly begin sighing while he looked at me, long, deep sighs as though measuring by them the depths of my moral degradation, and, of course, it ended at last by his triumphing completely: I raged and shouted, but still was forced to do what he wanted.

This time the usual staring manœuvres had scarcely begun when I lost my temper and flew at him in a fury. I was irritated beyond endurance apart from him.

"Stay," I cried, in a frenzy, as he was slowly and silently turning, with one hand behind his back, to go to his room, "stay! Come back, come back, I tell you!" and I must have bawled so unnaturally, that he turned round and even looked at me with some wonder. However, he persisted in saying nothing, and that infuriated me.

"How dare you come and look at me like that without being sent for? Answer!"

After looking at me calmly for half a minute, he began turning round again.

"Stay!" I roared, running up to him, "don't stir! There. Answer, now: what did you come in to look at?"

"If you have any order to give me it's my duty to carry it out," he answered, after another silent pause, with a slow, measured lisp, raising his eyebrows and calmly twisting his head from one side to another, all this with exasperating composure.

"That's not what I am asking you about, you torturer!" I shouted, turning crimson with anger. "I'll tell you why you came here myself: you see, I don't give you your wages, you are so proud you don't want to bow down and ask for it, and so you come to punish me

with your stupid stares, to worry me and you have no sus . . . pic . . . ion how stupid it is—stupid, stupid, stupid, stupid!" . . .

He would have turned round again without a word, but I seized him.

"Listen," I shouted to him. "Here's the money, do you see, here it is" (I took it out of the table drawer); "here's the seven roubles complete, but you are not going to have it, you . . . are . . . not . . . going . . . to . . . have it until you come respectfully with bowed head to beg my pardon. Do you hear?"

"That cannot be," he answered, with the most unnatural self-confidence.

"It shall be so," I said, "I give you my word of honour, it shall be!"

"And there's nothing for me to beg your pardon for," he went on, as though he had not noticed my exclamations at all. "Why, besides, you called me a 'torturer,' for which I can summon you at the police-station at any time for insulting behaviour."

"Go, summon me," I roared, "go at once, this very minute, this very second! You are a torturer all the same! a torturer!"

But he merely looked at me, then turned, and regardless of my loud calls to him, he walked to his room with an even step and without looking round.

"If it had not been for Liza nothing of this would have happened," I decided inwardly. Then, after waiting a minute, I went myself behind his screen with a dignified and solemn air, though my heart was beating slowly and violently.

"Apollon," I said quietly and emphatically, though I was breathless, "go at once without a minute's delay and fetch the police-officer."

He had meanwhile settled himself at his table, put on his spectacles and taken up some sewing. But, hearing my order, he burst into a guffaw.

"At once, go this minute! Go on, or else you can't imagine what will happen."

"You are certainly out of your mind," he observed, without even raising his head, lisping as deliberately as ever and threading his needle. "Whoever heard of a man sending for the police against himself? And as for being frightened—you are upsetting yourself about nothing, for nothing will come of it."

"Go!" I shrieked, clutching him by the shoulder. I felt I should strike him in a minute.

But I did not notice the door from the passage softly and slowly open at that instant and a figure come in, stop short, and begin staring at us in perplexity. I glanced, nearly swooned with shame, and rushed back to my room. There, clutching at my hair with both

hands, I leaned my head against the wall and stood motionless in that position.

Two minutes later I heard Apollon's deliberate footsteps. "There is some woman asking for you," he said, looking at me with peculiar severity. Then he stood aside and let in Liza. He would not go away, but stared at us sarcastically.

"Go away, go away," I commanded in desperation. At that moment my clock began whirring and wheezing and struck seven.

IX

'Into my house come bold and free,
Its rightful mistress there to be.'
(From the same poem)

I stood before her crushed, crestfallen, revoltingly confused, and I believe I smiled as I did my utmost to wrap myself in the skirts of my ragged wadded dressing-gown—exactly as I had imagined the scene not long before in a fit of depression. After standing over us for a couple of minutes Apollon went away, but that did not make me more at ease. What made it worse was that she, too, was overwhelmed with confusion, more so, in fact, than I should have expected. At the sight of me, of course.

"Sit down," I said mechanically, moving a chair up to the table, and I sat down on the sofa. She obediently sat down at once and gazed at me open-eyed, evidently expecting something from me at once. This naïveté of expectation drove me to fury, but I restrained myself.

She ought to have tried not to notice, as though everything had been as usual, while instead of that, she . . . and I dimly felt that I should make her pay dearly for *all this*.

"You have found me in a strange position, Liza," I began, stammering and knowing that this was the wrong way to begin. "No, no, don't imagine anything," I cried, seeing that she had suddenly flushed. "I am not ashamed of my poverty. . . . On the contrary I look with pride on my poverty. I am poor but honourable. . . . One can be poor and honourable," I muttered. "However . . . would you like tea?" . . .

"No," she was beginning.

"Wait a minute."

I leapt up and ran to Apollon. I had to get out of the room somehow.

"Apollon," I whispered in feverish haste, flinging down before him the seven roubles which had remained all the time in my clenched

fist, "here are your wages, you see I give them to you; but for that you must come to my rescue: bring me tea and a dozen rusks from the restaurant. If you won't go, you'll make me a miserable man! You don't know what this woman is. . . . This is—everything! You may be imagining something. . . . But you don't know what that woman is!" . . .

Apollon, who had already sat down to his work and put on his spectacles again, at first glanced askance at the money without speaking or putting down his needle; then, without paying the slightest attention to me or making any answer he went on busying himself with his needle, which he had not yet threaded. I waited before him for three minutes with my arms crossed *à la Napoléon*. My temples were moist with sweat. I was pale, I felt it. But, thank God, he must have been moved to pity, looking at me. Having threaded his needle he deliberately got up from his seat, deliberately moved back his chair, deliberately took off his spectacles, deliberately counted the money, and finally asking me over his shoulder: "Shall I get a whole portion?" deliberately walked out of the room. As I was going back to Liza, the thought occurred to me on the way: shouldn't I run away just as I was in my dressing-gown, no matter where, and then let happen what would.

I sat down again. She looked at me uneasily. For some minutes we were silent.

"I will kill him," I shouted suddenly, striking the table with my fist so that the ink spurted out of the inkstand.

"What are you saying!" she cried, starting.

"I will kill him! kill him!" I shrieked, suddenly striking the table in absolute frenzy, and at the same time fully understanding how stupid it was to be in such a frenzy. "You don't know, Liza, what that torturer is to me. He is my torturer. . . . He has gone now to fetch some rusks; he . . ."

And suddenly I burst into tears. It was an hysterical attack. How ashamed I felt in the midst of my sobs; but still I could not restrain them.

She was frightened.

"What is the matter? What is wrong?" she cried, fussing about me.

"Water, give me water, over there!" I muttered in a faint voice, though I was inwardly conscious that I could have got on very well without water and without muttering in a faint voice. But I was, what is called, *putting it on*, to save appearances, though the attack was a genuine one.

She gave me water, looking at me in bewilderment. At that moment Apollon brought in the tea. It suddenly seemed to me that this commonplace, prosaic tea was horribly undignified and paltry after all

that had happened, and I blushed crimson. Liza looked at Apollon with positive alarm. He went out without a glance at either of us.

"Liza, do you despise me?" I asked, looking at her fixedly, trembling with impatience to know what she was thinking.

She was confused, and did not know what to answer.

"Drink your tea," I said to her angrily. I was angry with myself, but, of course, it was she who would have to pay for it. A horrible spite against her suddenly surged up in my heart; I believe I could have killed her. To revenge myself on her I swore inwardly not to say a word to her all the time. "She is the cause of it all," I thought.

Our silence lasted for five minutes. The tea stood on the table; we did not touch it. I had got to the point of purposely refraining from beginning in order to embarrass her further; it was awkward for her to begin alone. Several times she glanced at me with mournful perplexity. I was obstinately silent. I was, of course, myself the chief sufferer, because I was fully conscious of the disgusting meanness of my spiteful stupidity, and yet at the same time I could not restrain myself.

"I want to . . . get away . . . from there altogether," she began, to break the silence in some way, but, poor girl, that was just what she ought not to have spoken about at such a stupid moment to a man so stupid as I was. My heart positively ached with pity for her tactless and unnecessary straightforwardness. But something hideous at once stifled all compassion in me; it even provoked me to greater venom. I did not care what happened. Another five minutes passed.

"Perhaps I am in your way," she began timidly, hardly audibly, and was getting up.

But as soon as I saw this first impulse of wounded dignity I positively trembled with spite, and at once burst out.

"Why have you come to me, tell me that, please?" I began, gasping for breath and regardless of logical connection in my words. I longed to have it all out at once, at one burst; I did not even trouble how to begin. "Why have you come? Answer, answer," I cried, hardly knowing what I was doing. "I'll tell you, my good girl, why you have come. You've come because I talked sentimental stuff to you then. So now you are soft as butter and longing for fine sentiments again. So you may as well know that I was laughing at you then. And I am laughing at you now. Why are you shuddering? Yes, I was laughing at you! I had been insulted just before, at dinner, by the fellows who came that evening before me. I came to you, meaning to thrash one of them, an officer; but I didn't succeed, I didn't find him; I had to avenge the insult on some one to get back my own again; you turned up, I vented my spleen on you and laughed at you. I had been humiliated, so I wanted to humiliate; I had been treated like a rag, so I wanted to show my power. . . . That's what it was, and you

imagined I had come there on purpose to save you. Yes? You imagined that? You imagined that?"

I knew that she would perhaps be muddled and not take it all in exactly, but I knew, too, that she would grasp the gist of it, very well indeed. And so, indeed, she did. She turned white as a handkerchief, tried to say something, and her lips worked painfully; but she sank on a chair as though she had been felled by an axe. And all the time afterwards she listened to me with her lips parted and her eyes wide open, shuddering with awful terror. The cynicism, the cynicism of my words overwhelmed her. . . .

"Save you!" I went on, jumping up from my chair and running up and down the room before her. "Save you from what? But perhaps I am worse than you myself. Why didn't you throw it in my teeth when I was giving you that sermon: 'But what did you come here yourself for? was it to read us a sermon?' Power, power was what I wanted then, sport was what I wanted, I wanted to ring out your tears, your humiliation, your hysteria—that was what I wanted then! Of course, I couldn't keep it up then, because I am a wretched creature, I was frightened, and, the devil knows why, gave you my address in my folly. Afterwards, before I got home, I was cursing and swearing at you because of that address, I hated you already because of the lies I had told you. Because I only like playing with words, only dreaming, but, do you know, what I really want is that you should all go to hell. That is what I want. I want peace; yes, I'd sell the whole world for a farthing, straight off, so long as I was left in peace. Is the world to go to pot, or am I to go without my tea? I say that the world may go to pot for me so long as I always get my tea. Did you know that, or not? Well, anyway, I know that I am a blackguard, a scoundrel, an egoist, a sluggard. Here I have been shuddering for the last three days at the thought of your coming. And do you know what has worried me particularly for these three days? That I posed as such a hero to you, and now you would see me in a wretched torn dressing-gown, beggarly, loathsome. I told you just now that I was not ashamed of my poverty; so you may as well know that I am ashamed of it; I am more ashamed of it than of anything, more afraid of it than of being found out if I were a thief, because I am as vain as though I had been skinned and the very air blowing on my hurts. Surely by now you must realize that I shall never forgive you for having found me in this wretched dressing-gown, just as I was flying at Apollon like a spiteful cur. The saviour, the former hero, was flying like a mangy, unkempt sheep-dog at his lackey, and the lackey was jeering at him! And I shall never forgive you for the tears I could not help shedding before you just now, like some silly woman put to shame! And for what I am confessing to you now, I shall never forgive *you* either! Yes—you must answer for it all because you turned

up like this, because I am a blackguard, because I am the nastiest, stupidest, absurdest, and most envious of all the worms on earth, who are not a bit better than I am, but, the devil knows why, are never put to confusion; while I shall always be insulted by every louse, that is my doom! And what is it to me that you don't understand a word of this! And what do I care, what do I care about you, and whether you go to ruin there or not? Do you understand? How I shall hate you now after saying this, for having been here and listening. Why, it's not once in a lifetime a man speaks out like this, and then it is in hysterics! . . . What more do you want? Why do you still stand confronting me, after all this? Why are you worrying me? Why don't you go?"

But at this point a strange thing happened. I was so accustomed to think and imagine everything from books, and to picture everything in the world to myself just as I had made it up in my dreams beforehand, that I could not all at once take in this strange circumstance. What happened was this: Liza, insulted and crushed by me, understood a great deal more than I imagined. She understood from all this what a woman understands first of all, if she feels genuine love, that is, that I was myself unhappy.

The frightened and wounded expression on her face was followed first by a look of sorrowful perplexity. When I began calling myself a scoundrel and a blackguard and my tears flowed (the tirade was accompanied throughout by tears) her whole face worked convulsively. She was on the point of getting up and stopping me; when I finished she took no notice of my shouting: "Why are you here, why don't you go away?" but realized only that it must have been very bitter to me to say all this. Besides, she was so crushed, poor girl; she considered herself infinitely beneath me; how could she feel anger or resentment? She suddenly leapt up from her chair with an irresistible impulse and held out her hands, yearning towards me, though still timid and not daring to stir. . . . At this point there was a revulsion in my heart, too. Then she suddenly rushed to me, threw her arms round me and burst into tears. I, too, could not restrain myself, and sobbed as I never had before.

"They won't let me . . . I can't be good!" I managed to articulate; then I went to the sofa, fell on it face downwards, and sobbed on it for a quarter of an hour in genuine hysterics. She came close to me, put her arms round me and stayed motionless in that position. But the trouble was that the hysterics could not go on for ever, and (I am writing the loathsome truth) lying face downwards on the sofa with my face thrust into my nasty leather pillow, I began by degrees to be aware of a far-away, involuntary but irresistible feeling that it would be awkward now for me to raise my head and look Liza straight in the face. Why was I ashamed? I don't know, but I was ashamed. The

thought, too, came into my over-wrought brain that our parts now were completely changed, that she was now the heroine, while I was just such a crushed and humiliated creature as she had been before me that night—four days before. . . . And all this came into my mind during the minutes I was lying on my face on the sofa.

My God! surely I was not envious of her then.

I don't know, to this day I cannot decide, and at the time, of course, I was still less able to understand what I was feeling than now. I cannot get on without domineering and tyrannizing over some one, but . . . there is no explaining anything by reasoning and so it is useless to reason.

I conquered myself, however, and raised my head; I had to do so sooner or later . . . and I am convinced to this day that it was just because I was ashamed to look at her that another feeling was suddenly kindled and flamed up in my heart . . . a feeling of mastery and possession. My eyes gleamed with passion, and I gripped her hands tightly. How I hated her and how I was drawn to her at that minute! The one feeling intensified the other. It was almost like an act of vengeance. At first there was a look of amazement, even of terror on her face, but only for one instant. She warmly and rapturously embraced me.

X

A quarter of an hour later I was rushing up and down the room in frenzied impatience, from minute to minute I went up to the screen and peeped through the crack at Liza. She was sitting on the ground with her head leaning against the bed, and must have been crying. But she did not go away, and that irritated me. This time she understood it all. I had insulted her finally, but . . . there's no need to describe it. She realized that my outburst of passion had been simply revenge, a fresh humiliation, and that to my earlier, almost causeless hatred was added a *personal hatred*, born of envy. . . . Though I do not maintain positively that she understood all this distinctly; but she certainly did fully understand that I was a despicable man, and what was worse, incapable of loving her.

I know I shall be told that this is incredible—but it is incredible to be as spiteful and stupid as I was; it may be added that it was strange I should not love her, or at any rate, appreciate her love. Why is it strange? In the first place, by then I was incapable of love, for I repeat, with me loving meant tyrannizing and showing my moral superiority. I have never in my life been able to imagine any other sort of love, and have nowadays come to the point of sometimes thinking that love really consists in the right—freely given by the beloved object—to tyrannize over her.

Even in my underground dreams I did not imagine love except as a struggle. I began it always with hatred and ended it with moral subjugation, and afterwards I never knew what to do with the subjugated object. And what is there to wonder at in that, since I had succeeded in so corrupting myself, since I was so out of touch with "real life," as to have actually thought of reproaching her, and putting her to shame for having come to me to hear "fine sentiments"; and did not even guess that she had come not to hear fine sentiments, but to love me, because to a woman all reformation, all salvation from any sort of ruin, and all moral renewal is included in love and can only show itself in that form.

I did not hate her so much, however, when I was running about the room and peeping through the crack in the screen. I was only insufferably oppressed by her being here. I wanted her to disappear. I wanted "peace," to be left alone in my underground world. Real life oppressed me with its novelty so much that I could hardly breathe.

But several minutes passed and she still remained, without stirring, as though she were unconscious. I had the shamelessness to tap softly at the screen as though to remind her. . . . She started, sprang up, and flew to seek her kerchief, her hat, her coat, as though making her escape from me. . . . Two minutes later she came from behind the screen and looked with heavy eyes at me. I gave a spiteful grin, which was forced, however, to *keep up appearances*, and I turned away from her eyes.

"Good-bye," she said, going towards the door.

I ran up to her, seized her hand, opened it, thrust something in it and closed it again. Then I turned at once and dashed away in haste to the other corner of the room to avoid seeing her, anyway. . . .

I did not mean a moment since to tell a lie—to write that I did this accidentally, not knowing what I was doing through foolishness, through losing my head. But I don't want to lie, and so I will say straight out that I opened her hand and put the money in it . . . from spite. It came into my head to do this while I was running up and down the room and she was sitting behind the screen. But this I can say for certain: though I did that cruel thing purposely, it was not an impulse from the heart, but came from my evil brain. This cruelty was so affected, so purposely made up, so completely a product of the brain, of books, that I could not even keep it up a minute—first I dashed away to avoid seeing her, and then in shame and despair rushed after Liza. I opened the door in the passage and began listening.

"Liza! Liza!" I cried on the stairs, but in a low voice, not boldly.

There was no answer, but I fancied I heard her footsteps, lower down on the stairs.

"Liza!" I cried, more loudly.

No answer. But at that minute I heard the stiff outer glass door open heavily with a creak and slam violently, the sound echoed up the stairs.

She had gone. I went back to my room in hesitation. I felt horribly oppressed.

I stood still at the table, beside the chair on which she had sat and looked aimlessly before me. A minute passed, suddenly I started; straight before me on the table I saw. . . . In short, I saw a crumpled blue five-rouble note, the one I had thrust into her hand a minute before. It was the same note; it could be no other, there was no other in the flat. So she had managed to fling it from her hand on the table at the moment when I had dashed into the further corner.

Well! I might have expected that she would do that. Might I have expected it? No, I was such an egoist, I was so lacking in respect for my fellow-creatures that I could not even imagine she would do so. I could not endure it. A minute later I flew like a madman to dress, flinging on what I could at random and ran headlong after her. She could not have got two hundred paces away when I ran out into the street.

It was a still night and the snow was coming down in masses and falling almost perpendicularly, covering the pavement and the empty street as though with a pillow. There was no one in the street, no sound was to be heard. The street lamps gave a disconsolate and useless glimmer. I ran two hundred paces to the cross-roads and stopped short.

Where had she gone? And why was I running after her?

Why? To fall down before her, to sob with remorse, to kiss her feet, to entreat her forgiveness! I longed for that, my whole breast was being rent to pieces, and never, never shall I recall that minute with indifference. But—what for? I thought. Should I not begin to hate her, perhaps, even to-morrow, just because I had kissed her feet to-day? Should I give her happiness? Had I not recognized that day, for the hundredth time, what I was worth? Should I not torture her?

I stood in the snow, gazing into the troubled darkness and pondered this.

"And will it not be better?" I mused fantastically, afterwards at home, stifling the living pang of my heart with fantastic dreams. "Will it not be better that she should keep the resentment of the insult for ever? Resentment—why, it is purification; it is a most stinging and painful consciousness! To-morrow I should have defiled her soul and have exhausted her heart, while now the feeling of insult will never die in her heart, and however loathsome the filth awaiting

her—the feeling of insult will elevate and purify her . . . by hatred . . . h'm! . . . perhaps, too, by forgiveness. . . . Will all that make things easier for her though? . . ."

And, indeed, I will ask on my own account here, an idle question: which is better—cheap happiness or exalted sufferings? Well, which is better?

So I dreamed as I sat at home that evening, almost dead with the pain in my soul. Never had I endured such suffering and remorse, yet could there have been the faintest doubt when I ran out from my lodging that I should turn back half-way? I never met Liza again and I have heard nothing of her. I will add, too, that I remained for a long time afterwards pleased with the phrase about the benefit from resentment and hatred in spite of the fact that I almost fell ill from misery.

Even now, so many years later, all this is somehow a very evil memory. I have many evil memories now, but . . . hadn't I better end my "Notes" here? I believe I made a mistake in beginning to write them, anyway I have felt ashamed all the time I've been writing this story; so it's hardly literature so much as a corrective punishment. Why, to tell long stories, showing how I have spoiled my life through morally rotting in my corner, through lack of fitting environment, through divorce from real life, and rankling spite in my underground world, would certainly not be interesting; a novel needs a hero, and all the traits for an anti-hero are *expressly* gathered together here, and what matters most, it all produces an unpleasant impression, for we are all divorced from life, we are all cripples, every one of us, more or less. We are so divorced from it that we feel at once a sort of loathing for real life, and so cannot bear to be reminded of it. Why, we have come almost to looking upon real life as an effort, almost as hard labour, and we are all privately agreed that it is better in books. And why do we fuss and fume sometimes? Why are we perverse and ask for something else? We don't know what ourselves. It would be the worse for us if our petulant prayers were answered. Come, try, give any one of us, for instance, a little more independence, untie our hands, widen the spheres of our activity, relax the control and we . . . yes, I assure you . . . we should be begging to be under control again at once. I know that you will very likely be angry with me for that, and will begin shouting and stamping. Speak for yourself, you will say, and for your miseries in your underground holes, and don't dare to say "all of us"—excuse me, gentlemen, I am not justifying myself with that "all of us." As for what concerns me in particular I have only in my life carried to an extreme what you have not dared to carry half-way, and what's more, you have taken your cowardice for good sense, and have found comfort in

deceiving yourselves. So that perhaps, after all, there is more life in me than in you. Look into it more carefully! Why, we don't even know what living means now, what it is, and what it is called? Leave us alone without books and we shall be lost and in confusion at once. We shall not know what to join on to, what to cling to, what to love and what to hate, what to respect and what to despise. We are oppressed at being men—men with a real individual flesh and blood, we are ashamed of it, we think it a disgrace and try to contrive to be some sort of impossible generalized man. We are stillborn, and for generations past have been begotten, not by living fathers, and that suits us better and better. We are developing a taste for it. Soon we shall contrive to be born somehow from an idea. But enough; I don't want to write more from "Underground."

(The notes of this paradoxalist do not end here, however. He could not refrain from going on with them, but it seems to us that we may stop here.)

LEO TOLSTOY

1828–1910

Count Leo Tolstoy excited the interest of the West mainly as a public figure: a count owning large estates who decided to give up his wealth and live like a simple Russian peasant—to dress in a blouse, to eat peasant food, and even to plow the fields and make shoes with his own hands. By the time of his death he had become the leader of a religious cult, the propounder of a new religion. It was, in substance, a highly simplified primitive Christianity which he put into a few moral commands (such as, "Do not resist evil") and from which he drew, with radical consistency, a complete condemnation of modern civilization: the state, courts and law, war, patriotism, marriage, modern art and literature, science and medicine. In debating this Christian anarchism people have tended to forget that Tolstoy established his command of the public ear as a novelist, or they have exaggerated the contrast between the early worldly novelist and the later prophet who repudiated all his early novelistic work: *War and Peace*, the enormous epic of the 1812 invasion of Russia, and *Anna Karenina*, the story of an adulterous love, superbly realized in accurately imagined detail.

Tolstoy was born at Yásnaya Polyána, his mother's estate near Tula (about 130 miles south of Moscow), on August 28, 1828. His father was a retired lieutenant colonel; one of his ancestors, the first count, had served Peter the Great as an ambassador. His mother's father was a Russian general in chief. Tolstoy lost both parents early in his life and was brought up by aunts. He went to the University of Kazan between 1844 and 1847, drifted along aimlessly for a few years more, and in 1851 became a cadet in the Caucasus. As an artillery officer he saw action in the wars with the mountain tribes and

again, in 1854–1855, during the Crimean War against the French and English. Tolstoy had written fictional reminiscences of his childhood while he was in the Caucasus, and during the Crimean War he wrote war stories which established his literary reputation. For some years he lived on his estate, where he founded and himself taught an extremely "progressive" school for peasant children. He made two trips to western Europe, in 1857 and in 1860–61. In 1862 he married the daughter of a physician, Sonya Bers, who bore him thirteen children.

In the first years of his married life, between 1863 and 1869, he wrote his enormous novel *War and Peace*. The book made him famous in Russia but was not translated into English until long afterward. Superficially, *War and Peace* is a historical novel about the Napoleonic invasion of Russia in 1812, a huge swarming epic of a nation's resistance to the foreigner. Tolstoy himself interprets history in general as a struggle of anonymous collective forces which are moved by unknown irrational impulses, waves of communal feeling. Heroes, great men, are actually not heroes but merely insignificant puppets; the best general is the one who does nothing to prevent the unknown course of Providence. But *War and Peace* is not only an impressive and vivid panorama of historical events but also the profound story—centered in two main characters, Pierre Bezukhov and Prince Andrey Bolkonsky—of a search for the meaning of life. Andrey finds the meaning of life in love and forgiveness of his enemies. Pierre, at the end of a long groping struggle, an education by suffering, finds it in an acceptance of ordinary existence, its duties and pleasures, the family, the continuity of the race.

Tolstoy's next long novel, *Anna Karenina* (1875–1877), resumes this second thread of *War and Peace*. It is a novel of contemporary manners, a narrative of adultery and suicide. But this vivid story, told with incomparable concrete imagination, is counterpointed and framed by a second story, that of Levin, another seeker after the meaning of life, a figure who represents the author as Pierre did in the earlier book; the work ends with a promise of solution, with the ideal of a life in which we should "remember God." Thus *Anna Karenina* also anticipates the approaching crisis in Tolstoy's life. When it came, with the sudden revulsion he describes in *A Confession* (1879), he condemned his earlier books and spent the next years in writing pamphlets and tracts expounding his religion.

Only slowly did Tolstoy return to the writing of fiction, now regarded entirely as a means of presenting his creed. The earlier novels seemed to him unclear in their message, overdetailed in their method. Hence Tolstoy tried to simplify his art; he wrote plays with a thesis, stories which are like fables or parables, and one long, rather inferior novel, *The Resurrection* (1899), his most savage satire on Russian and modern institutions.

In 1901 Tolstoy was excommunicated. A disagreement with his wife about the nature of the good life and about financial matters sharpened into a conflict over his last will, which finally led to a complete break: he left home in the company of a doctor friend. He caught cold on the train journey south and died in the house of the stationmaster of Astápovo, on November 20, 1910.

If we look back on Tolstoy's work as a whole, we must recognize its continuity. From the very beginning he was a Rousseauist. As early as 1851,

when he was in the Caucasus, his diary announced his intention of founding a new, simplified religion. Even as a young man on his estate he had lived quite simply, like a peasant, except for occasional sprees and debauches. He had been horrified by war from the very beginning, though he admired the heroism of the individual soldier and had remnants of patriotic feeling. All his books concern the same theme, the good life, and they all say that the good life lies outside of civilization, near to the soil, in simplicity and humility, in love of one's neighbor. Power, the lust for power, luxury, are always evil.

As a novelist Tolstoy is rooted in the tradition of the older realism. He read and knew the English writers of the eighteenth century, and also Thackeray and Trollope. He did not care for the recent French writers (he was strong in his disapproval of Flaubert) except for Maupassant, who struck him as truthful and useful in his struggle against hypocrisy. Tolstoy's long novels are loosely plotted, though they have large over-all designs. They work by little scenes vividly visualized, by an accumulation of exact detail. Each character is drawn by means of repeated emphasis on certain physical traits, like Pierre's shortsightedness and his hairy, clumsy hands, or Princess Marya's luminous eyes, the red patches on her face, and her shuffling gait. This concretely realized surface, however, everywhere recedes into depths: to the depiction of disease, delirium, and death and to glimpses into eternity. In *War and Peace* the blue sky is the recurrent symbol for the metaphysical relationships of man. Tolstoy is so robust, has his feet so firmly on the ground, presents what he sees with such clarity and objectivity, that one can be easily deluded into considering his dominating quality to be physical, sensual, antithetical to Dostoevsky's spirituality. The contrasts between the two greatest Russian novelists are indeed obvious. While Tolstoy's method can be called epic, Dostoevsky's is dramatic; while Tolstoy's view of man is Rousseauistic, Dostoevsky stresses the fall of man; while Tolstoy rejects history and status, Dostoevsky appeals to the past and wants a hierarchical society, and so on. But these profound differences should not obscure one basic similarity: the deep spirituality of both, their rejection of the basic materialism and the conception of truth propounded by modern science and theorists of realism.

The Death of Iván Ilyich (1886) belongs to the period after Tolstoy's religious conversion when he slowly returned to fiction writing. It represents a happy medium between his early and late manner. Its story and moral are simple and obvious, as always with Tolstoy (in contrast to Dostoevsky). And it says what almost all of his works are intended to convey—that man is leading the wrong kind of life, that he should return to essentials, to "nature." In *The Death of Iván Ilyich* Tolstoy combines a savage satire on the futility and hypocrisy of conventional life with a powerful symbolic presentation of man's isolation in the struggle with death and of man's hope for a final resurrection. Iván Ilyich is a Russian judge, an official, but he is also the average man of the prosperous middle classes of his time and ours, and he is also Everyman confronted with disease and dying and death. He is an ordinary person, neither virtuous nor particularly vicious, a "go-getter" in his profession, a "family man," as marriages go, who has children but has drifted apart from his wife. Through his disease, which comes about by a

trivial accident in the trivial business of fixing a curtain, Iván Ilyich is slowly awakened to self-consciousness and a realization of the falsity of his life and ambitions. The isolation which disease imposes upon him, the wall of hypocrisy erected around him by his family and his doctors, his suffering and pain, drive him slowly to the recognition of *It*: to a knowledge, not merely theoretical but proved on his pulses, of his own mortality. At first he would like simply to return to his former pleasant and normal life—even in the last days of his illness, knowing he must die, he screams in his agony, "I won't!"—but at the end, struggling in the black sack into which he is being pushed, he sees the light at the bottom. " 'Death is finished,' he said to himself. 'It is no more!' "

All the people around him are egotists and hypocrites: his wife, who can remember only how she suffered during his agony; his daughter, who thinks only of the delay in her marriage; his colleagues, who speculate only about the room his death will make for promotions in the court; the doctors, who think only of the name of the disease and not of the patient; all except his shy and frightened son, Vásya, and the servant Gerásim. Gerásim is a healthy peasant lad, assistant to the butler, but because he is near to nature, he is free from hypocrisy, helps his master to be comfortable, and even mentions death, while all the others conceal the truth from him. The doctors, especially, are shown as mere specialists, inhuman and selfish. The first doctor is like a judge, like Iván himself when he sat in court, summing up and cutting off further questions of the patient (or is it the prisoner?). The satire at points appears ineffectively harsh in its violence, but it will not seem exceptional to those who know the older Tolstoy's general attitude toward courts, medicine, marriage, and even modern literature. The cult of art is jeered at, in small touches, only incidentally; it belongs, according to Tolstoy, to the falsities of modern civilization, alongside marriage (which merely hides bestial sensuality), and science (which merely hides rapacity and ignorance).

The story is deliberately deprived of any element of suspense, not only by the announcement contained in the title but by the technique of the cutback. We first hear of Iván Ilyich's death and see the reaction of the widow and friends, and only then listen to the story of his life. The detail, as always in Tolstoy, is superbly concrete and realistic: he does not shy away from the smell of disease, the physical necessity of using a chamber-pot, or the sound of screaming. He can employ the creaking of a hassock as a recurrent motif to point up the comedy of hypocrisy played by the widow and her visitor. He can seriously and tragically use the humble image of a black sack or the illusion of the movement of a train.

But all this naturalistic detail serves the one purpose of making us realize, as Iván Ilyich realizes, that not only Caius is mortal but you and I also, and that the life of most of us civilized people is a great lie because it disguises and ignores its dark background, the metaphysical abyss, the reality of Death. While the presentation of *The Death of Iván Ilyich* approaches, at moments, the tone of a legend or fable ("Iván Ilyich's life had been most simple and most ordinary and therefore most terrible"), Tolstoy in this story manages to stay within the concrete situation of our society and to combine the aesthetic method of realism with the universalizing power of symbolic art.

R. F. Christian, *Tolstoy: A Critical Introduction* (1969), is clear, instructive, informative. E. B. Greenwood, *Tolstoy: The Comprehensive Vision* (1975), contains an excellent chapter, "Death: *A Confession* and *Ivan Ilyich*." Ralph E. Matlaw, *Tolstoy: A Collection of Critical Essays* (1967), and Philip Rahv, *Image and Idea* (1949), both present essays on "The Death of Ivan Ilyich." Theodore Redpath, *Tolstoy* (1960), provides a brief introduction with good criticism of ideas. Ernest J. Simmons, *Leo Tolstoy* (1946), is the fullest biography in English.

The Death of Iván Ilyich[1]

I

During an interval in the Melvínski trial in the large building of the Law Courts the members and public prosecutor met in Iván Egórovich Shébek's private room, where the conversation turned on the celebrated Krasóvski case. Fëdor Vasílievich warmly maintained that it was not subject to their jurisdiction, Iván Egórovich maintained the contrary, while Peter Ivánovich, not having entered into the discussion at the start, took no part in it but looked through the *Gazette* which had just been handed in.

"Gentlemen," he said, "Iván Ilyich has died!"

"You don't say!"

"Here read it yourself," replied Peter Ivánovich, handing Fëdor Vasílievich the paper still damp from the press. Surrounded by a black border were the words: "Praskóvya Fëdorovna Goloviná, with profound sorrow, informs relatives and friends of the demise of her beloved husband Iván Ilyich Golovín, Member of the Court of Justice, which occurred on February the 4th of this year 1882. The funeral will take place on Friday at one o'clock in the afternoon."

Iván Ilyich had been a colleague of the gentlemen present and was liked by them all. He had been ill for some weeks with an illness said to be incurable. His post had been kept open for him, but there had been conjectures that in case of his death Alexéev might receive his appointment, and that either Vínnikov or Shtábel would succeed Alexéev. So on receiving the news of Iván Ilyich's death the first thought of each of the gentlemen in that private room was of the changes and promotions it might occasion among themselves or their acquaintances.

"I shall be sure to get Shtábel's place or Vínnikov's," thought Fëdor Vasílievich. "I was promised that long ago, and the promotion means an extra eight hundred rubles a year for me besides the allowance."

1. Translated by Louise and Aylmer Maude.

"Now I must apply for my brother-in-law's transfer from Kalúga," thought Peter Ivánovich. "My wife will be very glad, and then she won't be able to say that I never do anything for her relations."

"I thought he would never leave his bed again," said Peter Ivánovich aloud. "It's very sad."

"But what really was the matter with him?"

"The doctors couldn't say—at least they could, but each of them said something different. When last I saw him I thought he was getting better."

"And I haven't been to see him since the holidays. I always meant to go."

"Had he any property?"

"I think his wife had a little—but something quite trifling."

"We shall have to go to see her, but they live so terribly far away."

"Far away from you, you mean. Everything's far away from your place."

"You see, he never can forgive my living on the other side of the river," said Peter Ivánovich, smiling at Shébek. Then, still talking of the distances between different parts of the city, they returned to the Court.

Besides considerations as to the possible transfers and promotions likely to result from Iván Ilyich's death, the mere fact of the death of a near acquaintance aroused, as usual, in all who heard of it the complacent feeling that, "it is he who is dead and not I."

Each one thought or felt, "Well, he's dead but I'm alive!" But the more intimate of Iván Ilyich's acquaintances, his so-called friends, could not help thinking also that they would now have to fulfil the very tiresome demands of propriety by attending the funeral service and paying a visit of condolence to the widow.

Fëdor Vasílievich and Peter Ivánovich had been his nearest acquaintances. Peter Ivánovich had studied law with Iván Ilyich and had considered himself to be under obligations to him.

Having told his wife at dinner-time of Iván Ilyich's death, and of his conjecture that it might be possible to get her brother transferred to their circuit, Peter Ivánovich sacrificed his usual nap, put on his evening clothes, and drove to Iván Ilyich's house.

At the entrance stood a carriage and two cabs. Leaning against the wall in the hall downstairs near the cloak-stand was a coffin-lid covered with cloth of gold, ornamented with gold cord and tassels, that had been polished up with metal powder. Two ladies in black were taking off their fur cloaks. Peter Ivánovich recognized one of them as Iván Ilyich's sister, but the other was a stranger to him. His colleague Schwartz was just coming downstairs, but on seeing Peter Ivánovich enter he stopped and winked at him, as if to say: "Iván Ilyich has made a mess of things—not like you and me."

Schwartz's face with his Piccadilly whiskers, and his slim figure in evening dress, had as usual an air of elegant solemnity which contrasted with the playfulness of his character and had a special piquancy here, or so it seemed to Peter Iványovich.

Peter Iványovich allowed the ladies to precede him and slowly followed them upstairs. Schwartz did not come down but remained where he was, and Peter Iványovich understood that he wanted to arrange where they should play bridge that evening. The ladies went upstairs to the widow's room, and Schwartz with seriously compressed lips but a playful look in his eyes, indicated by a twist of his eyebrows the room to the right where the body lay.

Peter Iványovich, like everyone else on such occasions, entered feeling uncertain what he would have to do. All he knew was that at such times it is always safe to cross oneself. But he was not quite sure whether one should make obeisances while doing so. He therefore adopted a middle course. On entering the room he began crossing himself and made a slight movement resembling a bow. At the same time, as far as the motion of his head and arm allowed, he surveyed the room. Two young men—apparently nephews, one of whom was a high-school pupil—were leaving the room, crossing themselves as they did so. An old woman was standing motionless, and a lady with strangely arched eyebrows was saying something to her in a whisper. A vigorous, resolute Church Reader, in a frock-coat, was reading something in a loud voice with an expression that precluded any contradiction. The butler's assistant, Gerásim, stepping lightly in front of Peter Iványovich, was strewing something on the floor. Noticing this, Peter Iványovich was immediately aware of a faint odour of a decomposing body.

The last time he had called on Iván Ilyich, Peter Iványovich had seen Gerásim in the study. Iván Ilyich had been particularly fond of him and he was performing the duty of a sick nurse.

Peter Iványovich continued to make the sign of the cross slightly inclining his head in an intermediate direction between the coffin, the Reader, and the icons on the table in a corner of the room. Afterwards, when it seemed to him that this movement of his arm in crossing himself had gone on too long, he stopped and began to look at the corpse.

The dead man lay, as dead men always lie, in a specially heavy way, his rigid limbs sunk in the soft cushions of the coffin, with the head forever bowed on the pillow. His yellow waxen brow with bald patches over his sunken temples was thrust up in the way peculiar to the dead, the protruding nose seeming to press on the upper lip. He was much changed and had grown even thinner since Peter Iványovich had last seen him, but, as is always the case with the dead, his face was handsomer and above all more dignified than when he was

alive. The expression on the face said that what was necessary had been accomplished, and accomplished rightly. Besides this there was in that expression a reproach and a warning to the living. This warning seemed to Peter Iványovich out of place, or at least not applicable to him. He felt a certain discomfort and so he hurriedly crossed himself once more and turned and went out of the door—too hurriedly and too regardless of propriety, as he himself was aware.

Schwartz was waiting for him in the adjoining room with legs spread wide apart and both hands toying with his top-hat behind his back. The mere sight of that playful, well-groomed, and elegant figure refreshed Peter Iványovich. He felt that Schwartz was above all these happenings and could not surrender to any depressing influences. His very look said that this incident of a church service for Iván Ilyich could not be a sufficient reason for infringing the order of the session—in other words, that it would certainly not prevent his unwrapping a new pack of cards and shuffling them that evening while a footman placed four fresh candles on the table: in fact, that there was no reason for supposing that this incident would hinder their spending the evening agreeably. Indeed he said this in a whisper as Peter Iványovich passed him, proposing that they should meet for a game at Fëdor Vasílievich's. But apparently Peter Iványovich was not destined to play bridge that evening. Praskóvya Fëdorovna (a short, fat woman who despite all efforts to the contrary had continued to broaden steadily from her shoulders downwards and who had the same extraordinary arched eyebrows as the lady who had been standing by the coffin), dressed all in black, her head covered with lace, came out of her own room with some other ladies, conducted them to the room where the dead body lay, and said: "The service will begin immediately. Please go in."

Schwartz, making an indefinite bow, stood still, evidently neither accepting nor declining this invitation. Praskóvya Fëdorovna recognizing Peter Iványovich, sighed, went close up to him, took his hand, and said: "I know you were a true friend to Iván Ilyich . . ." and looked at him awaiting some suitable response. And Peter Iványovich knew that, just as it had been the right thing to cross himself in that room, so what he had to do here was to press her hand, sigh, and say, "Believe me . . ." So he did all this and as he did it felt that the desired result had been achieved: that both he and she were touched.

"Come with me. I want to speak to you before it begins," said the widow. "Give me your arm."

Peter Iványovich gave her his arm and they went to the inner rooms, passing Schwartz who winked at Peter Iványovich compassionately.

"That does for our bridge! Don't object if we find another player.

Perhaps you can cut in when you do escape," said his playful look.

Peter Iványovich sighed still more deeply and despondently, and Praskóvya Fëdorovna pressed his arm gratefully. When they reached the drawing-room, upholstered in pink cretonne and lighted by a dim lamp, they sat down at the table—she on a sofa and Peter Iványovich on a low hassock, the springs of which yielded spasmodically under his weight. Praskóvya Fëdorovna had been on the point of warning him to take another seat, but felt that such a warning was out of keeping with her present condition and so changed her mind. As he sat down on the hassock Peter Iványovich recalled how Iván Ilyich had arranged this room and had consulted him regarding this pink cretonne with green leaves. The whole room was full of furniture and knick-knacks, and on her way to the sofa the lace of the widow's black shawl caught on the carved edge of the table. Peter Iványovich rose to detach it, and the springs of the hassock, relieved of his weight, rose also and gave him a push. The widow began detaching her shawl herself, and Peter Iványovich again sat down, suppressing the rebellious springs of the hassock under him. But the widow had not quite freed herself and Peter Iványovich got up again, and again the hassock rebelled and even creaked. When this was all over she took out a clean cambric handkerchief and began to weep. The episode with the shawl and the struggle with the hassock had cooled Peter Iványovich's emotions and he sat there with a sullen look on his face. This awkward situation was interrupted by Sokolóv, Iván Ilyich's butler, who came to report that the plot in the cemetery that Praskóvya Fëdorovna had chosen would cost two hundred rubles. She stopped weeping and, looking at Peter Iványovich with the air of a victim, remarked in French that it was very hard for her. Peter Iványovich made a silent gesture signifying his full conviction that it must indeed be so.

"Please smoke," she said in a magnanimous yet crushed voice, and turned to discuss with Sokolóv the price of the plot for the grave.

Peter Iványovich while lighting his cigarette heard her inquiring very circumstantially into the prices of different plots in the cemetery and finally decide which she would take. When that was done she gave instructions about engaging the choir. Sokolóv then left the room.

"I look after everything myself," she told Peter Iványovich, shifting the albums that lay on the table; and noticing that the table was endangered by his cigarette-ash, she immediately passed him an ash-tray, saying as she did so: "I consider it an affectation to say that my grief prevents my attending to practical affairs. On the contrary, if anything can—I won't say console me, but—distract me, it is seeing to everything concerning him." She again took out her handkerchief

as if preparing to cry, but suddenly, as if mastering her feeling, she shook herself and began to speak calmly. "But there is something I want to talk to you about."

Peter Iványovich bowed, keeping control of the springs of the hassock, which immediately began quivering under him.

"He suffered terribly the last few days."

"Did he?" said Peter Iványovich.

"Oh, terribly! He screamed unceasingly, not for minutes but for hours. For the last three days he screamed incessantly. It was unendurable. I cannot understand how I bore it; you could hear him three rooms off. Oh, what I have suffered!"

"Is it possible that he was conscious all that time?" asked Peter Iványovich.

"Yes," she whispered. "To the last moment. He took leave of us a quarter of an hour before he died, and asked us to take Volódya away."

The thought of the sufferings of this man he had known so intimately, first as a merry little boy, then as a school-mate, and later as a grown-up colleague, suddenly struck Peter Iványovich with horror, despite an unpleasant consciousness of his own and this woman's dissimulation. He again saw that brow, and that nose pressing down on the lip, and felt afraid for himself.

"Three days of frightful suffering and then death! Why, that might suddenly, at any time, happen to me," he thought, and for a moment felt terrified. But—he did not himself know how—the customary reflection at once occurred to him that this had happened to Iván Ilyich and not to him, and that it should not and could not happen to him, and that to think that it could would be yielding to depression which he ought not to do, as Schwartz's expression plainly showed. After which reflection Peter Iványovich felt reassured, and began to ask with interest about the details of Iván Ilyich's death, as though death was an accident natural to Iván Ilyich but certainly not to himself.

After many details of the really dreadful physical sufferings Iván Ilyich had endured (which details he learnt only from the effect those sufferings had produced on Praskóvya Fëdorovna's nerves) the widow apparently found it necessary to get to business.

"Oh, Peter Iványovich, how hard it is! How terribly, terribly hard!" and she again began to weep.

Peter Iványovich sighed and waited for her to finish blowing her nose. When she had done so he said, "Believe me . . ." and she again began talking and brought out what was evidently her chief concern with him—namely, to question him as to how she could obtain a grant of money from the government on the occasion of her husband's death. She made it appear that she was asking Peter Ivá-

novich's advice about her pension, but he soon saw that she already knew about that to the minutest detail, more even than he did himself. She knew how much could be got out of the government in consequence of her husband's death, but wanted to find out whether she could possibly extract something more. Peter Iványovich tried to think of some means of doing so, but after reflecting for a while and, out of propriety, condemning the government for its niggardliness, he said he thought that nothing more could be got. Then she sighed and evidently began to devise means of getting rid of her visitor. Noticing this, he put out his cigarette, rose, pressed her hand, and went out into the anteroom.

In the dining-room where the clock stood that Iván Ilyich had liked so much and had bought at an antique shop, Peter Iványovich met a priest and a few acquaintances who had come to attend the service, and he recognized Iván Ilyich's daughter, a handsome young woman. She was in black and her slim figure appeared slimmer than ever. She had a gloomy, determined, almost angry expression, and bowed to Peter Iványovich as though he were in some way to blame. Behind her, with the same offended look, stood a wealthy young man, an examining magistrate, whom Peter Iványovich also knew and who was her fiancé, as he had heard. He bowed mournfully to them and was about to pass into the death-chamber, when from under the stairs appeared the figure of Iván Ilyich's schoolboy son, who was extremely like this father. He seemed a little Iván Ilyich, such as Peter Iványovich remembered when they studied law together. His tear-stained eyes had in them the look that is seen in the eyes of boys of thirteen or fourteen who are not pure-minded.

When he saw Peter Iványovich he scowled morosely and shamefacedly. Peter Iványovich nodded to him and entered the death-chamber. The service began: candles, groans, incense, tears, and sobs. Peter Iványovich stood looking gloomily down at his feet. He did not look once at the dead man, did not yield to any depressing influence, and was one of the first to leave the room. There was no one in the anteroom, but Gerásim darted out of the dead man's room, rummaged with his strong hands among the fur coats to find Peter Iványovich's and helped him on with it.

"Well, friend Gerásim," said Peter Iványovich, so as to say something. "It's a sad affair, isn't it?"

"It's God's will. We shall all come to it some day," said Gerásim, displaying his teeth—the even, white teeth of a healthy peasant—and, like a man in the thick of urgent work, he briskly opened the front door, called the coachman, helped Peter Iványovich into the sledge, and sprang back to the porch as if in readiness for what he had to do next.

Peter Iványovich found the fresh air particularly pleasant after the

smell of incense, the dead body, and carbolic acid.

"Where to, sir?" asked the coachman.

"It's not too late even now. . . . I'll call round on Fëdor Vasílievich."

He accordingly drove there and found them just finishing the first rubber, so that it was quite convenient for him to cut in.

II

Iván Ilyich's life had been most simple and most ordinary and therefore most terrible.

He had been a member of the Court of Justice, and died at the age of forty-five. His father had been an official who after serving in various ministries and departments in Petersburg had made the sort of career which brings men to positions from which by reason of their long service they cannot be dismissed, though they are obviously unfit to hold any responsible position, and for whom therefore posts are specially created, which though fictitious, carry salaries of from six to ten thousand rubles that are not fictitious, and in receipt of which they live on to a great age.

Such was the Privy Councillor and superfluous member of various superfluous institutions, Ilya Efímovich Golovín.

He had three sons, of whom Iván Ilyich was the second. The eldest son was following in his father's footsteps only in another department, and was already approaching that stage in the service at which a similar sinecure would be reached. The third son was a failure. He had ruined his prospects in a number of positions and was now serving in the railway department. His father and brothers, and still more their wives, not merely disliked meeting him, but avoided remembering his existence unless compelled to do so. His sister had married Baron Greff, a Petersburg official of her father's type. Iván Ilyich was *le phénix de la famille*[2] as people said. He was neither as cold and formal as his elder brother nor as wild as the younger, but was a happy mean between them—an intelligent, polished, lively and agreeable man. He had studied with his younger brother at the School of Law, but the latter had failed to complete the course and was expelled when he was in the fifth class. Iván Ilyich finished the course well. Even when he was at the School of Law he was just what he remained for the rest of his life: a capable, cheerful, good-natured, and sociable man, though strict in the fulfilment of what he considered to be his duty: and he considered his duty to be what was so considered by those in authority. Neither as a boy nor as a man was he a toady, but from early youth was by

2. "The phoenix of the family." The word "phoenix" is used here to mean "rare bird," "prodigy."

nature attracted to people of high station as a fly is drawn to the light, assimilating their ways and views of life and establishing friendly relations with them. All the enthusiasms of childhood and youth passed without leaving much trace on him; he succumbed to sensuality, to vanity, and latterly among the highest classes to liberalism, but always within limits which his instinct unfailingly indicated to him as correct.

At school he had done things which had formerly seemed to him very horrid and made him feel disgusted with himself when he did them; but when later on he saw that such actions were done by people of good position and that they did not regard them as wrong, he was able not exactly to regard them as right, but to forget about them entirely or not be at all troubled at remembering them.

Having graduated from the School of Law and qualified for the tenth rank of the civil service, and having received money from his father for his equipment, Iván Ilyich ordered himself clothes at Scharmer's, the fashionable tailor, hung a medallion inscribed *respice finem*[3] on his watch-chain, took leave of his professor and the prince who was patron of the school, had a farewell dinner with his comrades at Donon's first-class restaurant, and with his new and fashionable portmanteau, linen, clothes, shaving and other toilet appliances, and a travelling rug, all purchased at the best shops, he set off for one of the provinces where, through his father's influence, he had been attached to the governor as an official for special service.

In the province Iván Ilyich soon arranged as easy and agreeable a position for himself as he had at the School of Law. He performed his official tasks, made his career, and at the same time amused himself pleasantly and decorously. Occasionally he paid official visits to country districts, where he behaved with dignity both to his superiors and inferiors, and performed the duties entrusted to him, which related chiefly to the sectarians,[4] with an exactness and incorruptible honesty of which he could not but feel proud.

In official matters, despite his youth and taste for frivolous gaiety, he was exceedingly reserved, punctilious, and even severe; but in society he was often amusing and witty, and always good-natured, correct in his manner, and *bon enfant*, as the governor and his wife—with whom he was like one of the family—used to say of him.

In the province he had an affair with a lady who made advances to the elegant young lawyer, and there was also a milliner; and there were carousals with aides-de-camp who visited the district, and after-supper visits to a certain outlying street of doubtful reputation; and there was too some obsequiousness to his chief and even to his chief's

3. "Regard the end" (a Latin motto). 4. The Old Believers, a large group of Russians (about twenty-five million in 1900), members of a sect which originated in a break with the Orthodox Church in the seventeenth century; they were subject to many legal restrictions.

wife, but all this was done with such a tone of good breeding that no hard names could be applied to it. It all came under the heading of the French saying: *"Il faut que jeunesse se passe."*[5] It was all done with clean hands, in clean linen, with French phrases, and above all among people of the best society and consequently with the approval of people of rank.

So Iván Ilyich served for five years and then came a change in his official life. The new and reformed judicial institutions were introduced, and new men were needed. Iván Ilyich became such a new man. He was offered the post of Examining Magistrate, and he accepted it though the post was in another province and obliged him to give up the connexions he had formed and to make new ones. His friends met to give him a send-off; they had a group-photograph taken and presented him with a silver cigarette-case, and he set off to his new post.

As examining magistrate Iván Ilyich was just as *comme il faut* and decorous a man, inspiring general respect and capable of separating his official duties from his private life, as he had been when acting as an official on special service. His duties now as examining magistrate were far more interesting and attractive than before. In his former position it had been pleasant to wear an undress uniform made by Scharmer, and to pass through the crowd of petitioners and officials who were timorously awaiting an audience with the governor, and who envied him as with free and easy gait he went straight into his chief's private room to have a cup of tea and a cigarette with him. But not many people had then been directly dependent on him—only police officials and the sectarians when he went on special missions—and he liked to treat them politely, almost as comrades, as if he were letting them feel that he who had the power to crush them was treating them in this simple, friendly way. There were then but few such people. But now, as an examining magistrate, Iván Ilyich felt that everyone without exception, even the most important and self-satisfied, was in his power, and that he need only write a few words on a sheet of paper with a certain heading, and this or that important, self-satisfied person would be brought before him in the role of an accused person or a witness, and if he did not choose to allow him to sit down, would have to stand before him and answer his questions. Iván Ilyich never abused his power; he tried on the contrary to soften its expression, but the consciousness of it and of the possibility of softening its effect, supplied the chief interest and attraction of his office. In his work itself, especially in his examinations, he very soon acquired a method of eliminating all considerations irrelevant to the legal aspect of the case, and reducing

5. Youth must have its fling. [Translator's note.]

even the most complicated case to a form in which it would be presented on paper only in its externals, completely excluding his personal opinion of the matter, while above all observing every prescribed formality. The work was new and Iván Ilyich was one of the first men to apply the new Code of 1864.[6]

On taking up the post of examining magistrate in a new town, he made new acquaintances and connexions, placed himself on a new footing, and assumed a somewhat different tone. He took up an attitude of rather dignified aloofness towards the provincial authorities, but picked out the best circle of legal gentlemen and wealthy gentry living in the town and assumed a tone of slight dissatisfaction with the government, of moderate liberalism, and of enlightened citizenship. At the same time, without at all altering the elegance of his toilet, he ceased shaving his chin and allowed his beard to grow as it pleased.

Iván Ilyich settled down very pleasantly in this new town. The society there, which inclined towards opposition to the governor, was friendly, his salary was larger, and he began to play *vint* [a form of bridge], which he found added not a little to the pleasure of life, for he had a capacity for cards, played good-humouredly, and calculated rapidly and astutely, so that he usually won.

After living there for two years he met his future wife, Praskóvya Fëdorovna Míkhel, who was the most attractive, clever, and brilliant girl of the set in which he moved, and among other amusements and relaxations from his labours as examining magistrate, Iván Ilyich established light and playful relations with her.

While he had been an official on special service he had been accustomed to dance, but now as an examining magistrate it was exceptional for him to do so. If he danced now, he did it as if to show that though he served under the reformed order of things, and had reached the fifth official rank, yet when it came to dancing he could do it better than most people. So at the end of an evening he sometimes danced with Praskóvya Fëdorovna, and it was chiefly during these dances that he captivated her. She fell in love with him. Iván Ilyich had at first no definite intention of marrying, but when the girl fell in love with him he said to himself: "Really, why shouldn't I marry?"

Praskóvya Fëdorovna came of a good family, was not bad looking, and had some little property. Iván Ilyich might have aspired to a more brilliant match, but even this was good. He had his salary, and she, he hoped, would have an equal income. She was well connected, and was a sweet, pretty, and thoroughly correct young woman. To say that Iván Ilyich married because he fell in love with Praskóvya

6. The emancipation of the serfs in 1861 was followed by a thorough all-round reform of judicial proceedings. [Translator's note.]

Fëdorovna and found that she sympathized with his views of life would be as incorrect as to say that he married because his social circle approved of the match. He was swayed by both these considerations: the marriage gave him personal satisfaction, and at the same time it was considered the right thing by the most highly placed of his associates.

So Iván Ilyich got married.

The preparations for marriage and the beginning of married life, with its conjugal caresses, the new furniture, new crockery, and new linen, were very pleasant until his wife became pregnant—so that Iván Ilyich had begun to think that marriage would not impair the easy, agreeable, gay, and always decorous character of his life, approved of by society and regarded by himself as natural, but would even improve it. But from the first months of his wife's pregnancy, something new, unpleasant, depressing, and unseemly, and from which there was no way of escape, unexpectedly showed itself.

His wife, without any reason—*de gaieté de coeur* as Iván Ilyich expressed it to himself—began to disturb the pleasure and propriety of their life. She began to be jealous without any cause, expected him to devote his whole attention to her, found fault with everything, and made coarse and ill-mannered scenes.

At first Iván Ilyich hoped to escape from the unpleasantness of this state of affairs by the same easy and decorous relation to life that had served him heretofore: he tried to ignore his wife's disagreeable moods, continued to live in his usual easy and pleasant way, invited friends to his house for a game of cards, and also tried going out to his club or spending his evenings with friends. But one day his wife began upbraiding him so vigorously, using such coarse words, and continued to abuse him every time he did not fulfil her demands, so resolutely and with such evident determination not to give way till he submitted—that is, till he stayed at home and was bored just as she was—that he became alarmed. He now realized that matrimony—at any rate with Praskóvya Fëdorovna—was not always conducive to the pleasures and amenities of life, but on the contrary often infringed both comfort and propriety, and that he must therefore entrench himself against such infringement. And Iván Ilyich began to seek for means of doing so. His official duties were the one thing that imposed upon Praskóvya Fëdorovna, and by means of his official work and the duties attached to it he began struggling with his wife to secure his own independence.

With the birth of their child, the attempts to feed it and the various failures in doing so, and with the real and imaginary illnesses of mother and child, in which Iván Ilyich's sympathy was demanded but about which he understood nothing, the need of securing for

himself an existence outside his family life became still more imperative.

As his wife grew more irritable and exacting and Iván Ilyich transferred the centre of gravity of his life more and more to his official work, so did he grow to like his work better and became more ambitious than before.

Very soon, within a year of his wedding, Iván Ilyich had realized that marriage, though it may add some comforts to life, is in fact a very intricate and difficult affair towards which in order to perform one's duty, that is, to lead a decorous life approved of by society, one must adopt a definite attitude just as towards one's official duties.

And Iván Ilyich evolved such an attitude towards married life. He only required of it those conveniences—dinner at home, housewife, and bed—which it could give him, and above all that propriety of external forms required by public opinion. For the rest he looked for light-hearted pleasure and propriety, and was very thankful when he found them, but if he met with antagonism and querulousness he at once retired into his separate fenced-off world of official duties, where he found satisfaction.

Iván Ilyich was esteemed a good official, and after three years was made Assistant Public Prosecutor. His new duties, their importance, the possibility of indicting and imprisoning anyone he chose, the publicity his speeches received, and the success he had in all these things, made his work still more attractive.

More children came. His wife became more and more querulous and ill-tempered, but the attitude Iván Ilyich had adopted towards his home life rendered him almost impervious to her grumbling.

After seven years' service in that town he was transferred to another province as Public Prosecutor. They moved, but were short of money and his wife did not like the place they moved to. Though the salary was higher the cost of living was greater, besides which two of their children died and family life became still more unpleasant for him.

Praskóvya Fëdorovna blamed her husband for every inconvenience they encountered in their new home. Most of the conversations between husband and wife, especially as to the children's education, led to topics which recalled former disputes, and those disputes were apt to flare up again at any moment. There remained only those rare periods of amorousness which still came to them at times but did not last long. These were islets at which they anchored for a while and then again set out upon that ocean of veiled hostility which showed itself in their aloofness from one another. This aloofness might have grieved Iván Ilyich had he considered that it ought not to exist, but he now regarded the position as normal, and even made it the goal at which he aimed in family life. His aim was to

free himself more and more from those unpleasantnesses and to give them a semblance of harmlessness and propriety. He attained this by spending less and less time with his family, and when obliged to be at home he tried to safeguard his position by the presence of outsiders. The chief thing however was that he had his official duties. The whole interest of his life now centered in the official world and that interest absorbed him. The consciousness of his power, being able to ruin anybody he wished to ruin, the importance, even the external dignity of his entry into court, or meetings with his subordinates, his success with superiors and inferiors, and above all his masterly handling of cases, of which he was conscious—all this gave him pleasure and filled his life, together with chats with his colleagues, dinners, and bridge. So that on the whole Iván Ilyich's life continued to flow as he considered it should do—pleasantly and properly.

So things continued for another seven years. His eldest daughter was already sixteen, another child had died, and only one son was left, a schoolboy and a subject of dissensions. Iván Ilyich wanted to put him in the School of Law, but to spite him Praskóvya Fëdorovna entered him at the High School. The daughter had been educated at home and had turned out well: the boy did not learn badly either.

III

So Iván Ilyich lived for seventeen years after his marriage. He was already a Public Prosecutor of long standing, and had declined several proposed transfers while awaiting a more desirable post, when an unanticipated and unpleasant occurrence quite upset the peaceful course of his life. He was expecting to be offered the post of presiding judge in a University town, but Hoppe somehow came to the front and obtained the appointment instead. Iván Ilyich became irritable, reproached Hoppe, and quarrelled both with him and with his immediate superiors—who became colder to him and again passed him over when other appointments were made.

This was in 1880, the hardest year of Iván Ilyich's life. It was then that it became evident on the one hand that his salary was insufficient for them to live on, and on the other that he had been forgotten, and not only this, but that what was for him the greatest and most cruel injustice appeared to others a quite ordinary occurrence. Even his father did not consider it his duty to help him. Iván Ilyich felt himself abandoned by everyone, and that they regarded his position with a salary of 3,500 rubles as quite normal and even fortunate. He alone knew that with the consciousness of the injustices done him, with his wife's incessant nagging, and with the debts he had

contracted by living beyond his means his position was far from normal.

In order to save money that summer he obtained leave of absence and went with his wife to live in the country at her brother's place.

In the country, without his work, he experienced *ennui* for the first time in his life, and not only *ennui* but intolerable depression, and he decided that it was impossible to go on living like that, and that it was necessary to take energetic measures.

Having passed a sleepless night pacing up and down the veranda, he decided to go to Petersburg and bestir himself, in order to punish those who had failed to appreciate him and to get transferred to another ministry.

Next day, despite many protests from his wife and her brother, he started for Petersburg with the sole object of obtaining a post with a salary of five thousand rubles a year. He was no longer bent on any particular department, or tendency, or kind of activity. All he now wanted was an appointment to another post with a salary of five thousand rubles, either in the administration, in the banks, with the railways, in one of the Empress Márya's Institutions,[7] or even in the customs—but it had to carry with it a salary of five thousand rubles and be in a ministry other than that in which they had failed to appreciate him.

And this quest of Iván Ilyich's was crowned with remarkable and unexpected success. At Kursk an acquaintance of his, F. I. Ilyín, got into the first-class carriage, sat down beside Iván Ilyich, and told him of a telegram just received by the governor of Kursk announcing that a change was about to take place in the ministry: Peter Ivánovich was to be superseded by Iván Semënovich.

The proposed change, apart from its significance for Russia, had a special significance for Iván Ilyich, because by bringing forward a new man, Peter Petróvich, and consequently his friend Zachár Ivánovich, it was highly favourable for Iván Ilyich, since Zachár Ivánovich was a friend and colleague of his.

In Moscow his news was confirmed, and on reaching Petersburg Iván Ilyich found Zachár Ivánovich and received a definite promise of an appointment in his former department of Justice.

A week later he telegraphed to his wife: "Zachár in Miller's place. I shall receive appointment on presentation of report."

Thanks to this change of personnel, Iván Ilyich had unexpectedly obtained an appointment in his former ministry which placed him two stages above his former colleagues besides giving him five thousand rubles salary and three thousand five hundred rubles for expenses

7. Reference to the charitable organization founded by the Empress Márya, wife of Paul I, late in the eighteenth century.

connected with his removal. All his ill humour towards his former enemies and the whole department vanished, and Iván Ilyich was completely happy.

He returned to the country more cheerful and contented than he had been for a long time. Praskóvya Fëdorovna also cheered up and a truce was arranged between them. Iván Ilyich told of how he had been fêted by everybody in Petersburg, how all those who had been his enemies were put to shame and now fawned on him, how envious they were of his appointment, and how much everybody in Petersburg had liked him.

Praskóvya Fëdorovna listened to all this and appeared to believe it. She did not contradict anything, but only made plans for their life in the town to which they were going. Iván Ilyich saw with delight that these plans were his plans, that he and his wife agreed, and that, after a stumble, his life was regaining its due and natural character of pleasant lightheartedness and decorum.

Iván Ilyich had come back for a short time only, for he had to take up his new duties on the 10th of September. Moreover, he needed time to settle into the new place, to move all his belongings from the province, and to buy and order many additional things: in a word, to make such arrangements as he had resolved on, which were almost exactly what Praskóvya Fëdorovna too had decided on.

Now that everything had happened so fortunately, and that he and his wife were at one in their aims and moreover saw so little of one another they got on together better than they had done since the first years of marriage. Iván Ilyich had thought of taking his family away with him at once, but the insistence of his wife's brother and her sister-in-law, who had suddenly become particularly amiable and friendly to him and his family, induced him to depart alone.

So he departed, and the cheerful state of mind induced by his success and by the harmony between his wife and himself, the one intensifying the other, did not leave him. He found a delightful house, just the thing both he and his wife had dreamt of. Spacious, lofty reception rooms in the old style, a convenient and dignified study, rooms for his wife and daughter, a study for his son—it might have been specially built for them. Iván Ilyich himself superintended the arrangements, chose the wallpapers, supplemented the furniture (preferably with antiques which he considered particularly *comme il faut*), and supervised the upholstering. Everything progressed and progressed and approached the ideal he had set himself: even when things were only half completed they exceeded his expectations. He saw what a refined and elegant character, free from vulgarity, it would all have when it was ready. On falling asleep he pictured to himself how the reception-room would look. Looking at the yet unfinished drawing-room he could see the fireplace, the screen, the what-not,

the little chairs dotted here and there, the dishes and plates on the walls, and the bronzes, as they would be when everything was in place. He was pleased by the thought of how his wife and daughter, who shared his taste in this matter, would be impressed by it. They were certainly not expecting as much. He had been particularly successful in finding, and buying cheaply, antiques which gave a particularly aristocratic character to the whole place. But in his letters he intentionally understated everything in order to be able to surprise them. All this so absorbed him that his new duties—though he liked his official work—interested him less than he had expected. Sometimes he even had moments of absent-mindedness during the Court Sessions, and would consider whether he should have straight or curved cornices for his curtains. He was so interested in it all that he often did things himself, rearranging the furniture, or rehanging the curtains. Once when mounting a step-ladder to show the upholsterer, who did not understand, how he wanted the hangings draped, he made a false step and slipped, but being a strong and agile man he clung on and only knocked his side against the knob of the window frame. The bruised place was painful but the pain soon passed, and he felt particularly bright and well just then. He wrote: "I feel fifteen years younger." He thought he would have everything ready by September, but it dragged on till mid-October. But the result was charming not only in his eyes but to everyone who saw it.

In reality it was just what is usually seen in the houses of people of moderate means who want to appear rich, and therefore succeed only in resembling others like themselves: there were damasks, dark wood, plants, rugs, and dull and polished bronzes—all the things people of a certain class have in order to resemble other people of that class. His house was so like the others that it would never have been noticed, but to him it all seemed to be quite exceptional. He was very happy when he met his family at the station and brought them to the newly furnished house all lit up, where a footman in a white tie opened the door into the hall decorated with plants, and when they went on into the drawing room and the study uttering exclamations of delight. He conducted them everywhere, drank in their praises eagerly, and beamed with pleasure. At tea that evening, when Praskóvya Fëdorovna among other things asked him about his fall, he laughed, and showed them how he had gone flying and had frightened the upholsterer.

"It's a good thing I'm a bit of an athlete. Another man might have been killed, but I merely knocked myself, just here; it hurts when it's touched, but it's passing off already—it's only a bruise."

So they began living in their new home—in which, as always happens, when they got thoroughly settled in they found they were just one room short—and with the increased income, which as always

was just a little (some five hundred rubles) too little, but it was all very nice.

Things went particularly well at first, before everything was finally arranged and while something had still to be done: this thing bought, that thing ordered, another thing moved, and something else adjusted. Though there were some disputes between husband and wife, they were both so well satisfied and had so much to do that it all passed off without any serious quarrels. When nothing was left to arrange it became rather dull and something seemed to be lacking, but they were then making acquaintances, forming habits, and life was growing fuller.

Iván Ilyich spent his mornings at the law court and came home to dinner, and at first he was generally in a good humour, though he occasionally became irritable just on account of his house. (Every spot on the tablecloth or the upholstery, and every broken window-blind string, irritated him. He had devoted so much trouble to arranging it all that every disturbance of it distressed him.) But on the whole his life ran its course as he believed life should do: easily, pleasantly, and decorously.

He got up at nine, drank his coffee, read the paper, and then put on his undress uniform and went to the law courts. There the harness in which he worked had already been stretched to fit him and he donned it without a hitch: petitioners, inquiries at the chancery, the chancery itself, and the sittings public and administrative. In all this the thing was to exclude everything fresh and vital, which always disturbs the regular course of official business, and to admit only official relations with people, and then only on official grounds. A man would come, for instance, wanting some information. Iván Ilyich, as one in whose sphere the matter did not lie, would have nothing to do with him: but if the man had some business with him in his official capacity, something that could be expressed on officially stamped paper, he would do everything, positively everything he could within the limits of such relations, and in doing so would maintain the semblance of friendly human relations, that is, would observe the courtesies of life. As soon as the official relations ended, so did everything else. Iván Ilyich possessed this capacity to separate his real life from the official side of affairs and not mix the two, in the highest degree, and by long practice and natural aptitude had brought it to such a pitch that sometimes, in the manner of a virtuoso, he would even allow himself to let the human and official relations mingle. He let himself do this just because he felt that he could at any time he chose resume the strictly official attitude again and drop the human relation. And he did it all easily, pleasantly, correctly, and even artistically. In the intervals between the sessions he smoked, drank tea, chatted a little about politics, a little about general topics, a little about cards, but most of all about official appointments. Tired, but with the feelings of a virtuoso—one of the first violins

who has played his part in an orchestra with precision—he would return home to find that his wife and daughter had been out paying calls, or had a visitor, and that his son had been to school, had done his homework with his tutor, and was duly learning what is taught at High Schools. Everything was as it should be. After dinner, if they had no visitors, Iván Ilyich sometimes read a book that was being much discussed at the time, and in the evening settled down to work, that is, read official papers, compared the depositions of witnesses, and noted paragraphs of the Code applying to them. This was neither dull nor amusing. It was dull when he might have been playing bridge, but if no bridge was available it was at any rate better than doing nothing or sitting with his wife. Iván Ilyich's chief pleasure was giving little dinners to which he invited men and women of good social position, and just as his drawing-room resembled all other drawing-rooms so did his enjoyable little parties resemble all other such parties.

Once they even gave a dance. Iván Ilyich enjoyed it and everything went off well, except that it led to a violent quarrel with his wife about the cakes and sweets. Praskóvya Fëdorovna had made her own plans, but Iván Ilyich insisted on getting everything from an expensive confectioner and ordered too many cakes, and the quarrel occurred because some of those cakes were left over and the confectioner's bill came to forty-five rubles. It was a great and disagreeable quarrel. Praskóvya Fëdorovna called him "a fool and an imbecile," and he clutched at his head and made angry allusions to divorce.

But the dance itself had been enjoyable. The best people were there, and Iván Ilyich had danced with Princess Trúfonova, a sister of the distinguished founder of the Society "Bear my Burden."

The pleasures connected with his work were pleasures of ambition; his social pleasures were those of vanity; but Iván Ilyich's greatest pleasure was playing bridge. He acknowledged that whatever disagreeable incident happened in his life, the pleasure that beamed like a ray of light above everything else was to sit down to bridge with good players, not noisy partners, and of course to four-handed bridge (with five players it was annoying to have to stand out, though one pretended not to mind), to play a clever and serious game (when the cards allowed it) and then to have supper and drink a glass of wine. After a game of bridge, especially if he had won a little (to win a large sum was unpleasant), Iván Ilyich went to bed in specially good humour.

So they lived. They formed a circle of acquaintances among the best people and were visited by people of importance and by young folk. In their views as to their acquaintances, husband, wife, and daughter were entirely agreed, and tacitly and unanimously kept at arm's length and shook off the various shabby friends and relations who, with much show of affection, gushed into the drawing-room with its Japanese plates on the walls. Soon these shabby friends ceased

to obtrude themselves and only the best people remained in the Golovíns' set.

Young men made up to Lisa, and Petríshchev, an examining magistrate and Dmítri Ivánovich Petríschchev's son and sole heir, began to be so attentive to her that Iván Ilyich had already spoken to Praskóvya Fëdorovna about it, and considered whether they should not arrange a party for them, or get up some private theatricals.

So they lived, and all went well, without change, and life flowed pleasantly.

IV

They were all in good health. It could not be called ill health if Iván Ilyich sometimes said that he had a queer taste in his mouth and felt some discomfort in his left side.

But this discomfort increased and, though not exactly painful, grew into a sense of pressure in his side accompanied by ill humour. And his irritability became worse and worse and began to mar the agreeable, easy, and correct life that had established itself in the Golovín family. Quarrels between husband and wife became more and more frequent, and soon the ease and amenity disappeared and even the decorum was barely maintained. Scenes again became frequent, and very few of those islets remained on which husband and wife could meet without an explosion. Praskóvya Fëdorovna now had good reason to say that her husband's temper was trying. With characteristic exaggeration she said he had always had a dreadful temper, and that it had needed all her good nature to put up with it for twenty years. It was true that now the quarrels were started by him. His bursts of temper always came just before dinner, often just as he began to eat his soup. Sometimes he noticed that a plate or dish was chipped, or the food was not right, or his son put his elbow on the table, or his daughter's hair was not done as he liked it, and for all this he blamed Praskóvya Fëdorovna. At first she retorted and said disagreeable things to him, but once or twice he fell into such a rage at the beginning of dinner that she realized it was due to some physical derangement brought on by taking food, and so she restrained herself and did not answer, but only hurried to get the dinner over. She regarded this self-restraint as highly praiseworthy. Having come to the conclusion that her husband had a dreadful temper and made her life miserable, she began to feel sorry for herself, and the more she pitied herself the more she hated her husband. She began to wish he would die; yet she did not want him to die because then his salary would cease. And this irritated her against him still more. She considered herself dreadfully unhappy just because not even his death could save her, and though she concealed her exasperation, that hidden exasperation of hers increased his irritation also.

After one scene in which Iván Ilyich had been particularly unfair and after which he had said in explanation that he certainly was irritable but that it was due to his not being well, she said that if he was ill it should be attended to, and insisted on his going to see a celebrated doctor.

He went. Everything took place as he had expected and as it always does. There was the usual waiting and the important air assumed by the doctor, with which he was so familiar (resembling that which he himself assumed in court), and the sounding and listening, and the questions which called for answers that were foregone conclusions and were evidently unnecessary, and the look of importance which implied that "if only you put yourself in our hands we will arrange everything—we know indubitably how it has to be done, always in the same way for everybody alike." It was all just as it was in the law courts. The doctor put on just the same air towards him as he himself put on towards an accused person.

The doctor said that so-and-so indicated that there was so-and-so inside the patient, but if the investigation of so-and-so did not confirm this, then he must assume that and that. If he assumed that and that, then . . . and so on. To Iván Ilyich only one question was important: was his case serious or not? But the doctor ignored that inappropriate question. From his point of view it was not the one under consideration, the real question was to decide between a floating kidney, chronic catarrh, or appendicitis. It was not a question of Iván Ilyich's life or death, but one between a floating kidney and appendicitis. And that question the doctor solved brilliantly, as it seemed to Iván Ilyich, in favour of the appendix, with the reservation that should an examination of the urine give fresh indications the matter would be reconsidered. All this was just what Iván Ilyich had himself brilliantly accomplished a thousand times in dealing with men on trial. The doctor summed up just as brilliantly, looking over his spectacles triumphantly and even gaily at the accused. From the doctor's summing up Iván Ilyich concluded that things were bad, but that for the doctor, and perhaps for everybody else, it was a matter of indifference, though for him it was bad. And this conclusion struck him painfully, arousing in him a great feeling of pity for himself and of bitterness towards the doctor's indifference to a matter of such importance.

He said nothing of this, but rose, placed the doctor's fee on the table, and remarked with a sigh: "We sick people probably often put inappropriate questions. But tell me, in general, is this complaint dangerous or not? . . ."

The doctor looked at him sternly over his spectacles with one eye, as if to say: "Prisoner, if you will not keep to the questions put to you, I shall be obliged to have you removed from the court."

"I have already told you what I consider necessary and proper. The analysis may show something more." And the doctor bowed.

Iván Ilyich went out slowly, seated himself disconsolately in his sledge, and drove home. All the way home he was going over what the doctor had said, trying to translate those complicated, obscure, scientific phrases into plain language and find in them an answer to the question: "Is my condition bad? Is it very bad? Or is there as yet nothing much wrong?" And it seemed to him that the meaning of what the doctor had said was it was very bad. Everything in the streets seemed depressing. The cabmen, the houses, the passers-by, and the shops, were dismal. His ache, this dull gnawing ache that never ceased for a moment, seemed to have acquired a new and more serious significance from the doctor's dubious remarks. Iván Ilyich now watched it with a new and oppressive feeling.

He reached home and began to tell his wife about it. She listened, but in the middle of his account his daughter came in with her hat on, ready to go out with her mother. She sat down reluctantly to listen to this tedious story, but could not stand it long, and her mother too did not hear him to the end.

"Well, I am very glad," she said. "Mind now to take your medicine regularly. Give me the prescription and I'll send Gerásim to the chemist's." And she went to get ready to go out.

While she was in the room Iván Ilyich had hardly taken time to breathe, but he sighed deeply when she left it.

"Well," he thought, "perhaps it isn't so bad after all."

He began taking his medicine and following the doctor's directions, which had been altered after the examination of the urine. But then it happened that there was a contradiction between the indications drawn from the examination of the urine and the symptoms that showed themselves. It turned out that what was happening differed from what the doctor had told him, and that he had either forgotten, or blundered, or hidden something from him. He could not, however, be blamed for that, and Iván Ilyich still obeyed his orders implicitly and at first derived some comfort from doing so.

From the time of his visit to the doctor, Iván Ilyich's chief occupation was the exact fulfilment of the doctor's instructions regarding hygiene and the taking of medicine, and the observation of his pain and his excretions. His chief interests came to be people's ailments and people's health. When sickness, deaths, or recoveries were mentioned in his presence, especially when the illness resembled his own, he listened with agitation which he tried to hide, asked questions, and applied what he heard to his own case.

The pain did not grow less, but Iván Ilyich made efforts to force himself to think that he was better. And he could do this so long as nothing agitated him. But as soon as he had any unpleasantness with

his wife, any lack of success in his official work, or held bad cards at bridge, he was at once acutely sensible of his disease. He had formerly borne such mischances, hoping soon to adjust what was wrong, to master it and attain success, or make a grand slam. But now every mischance upset him and plunged him into despair. He would say to himself. "There now, just as I was beginning to get better and the medicine had begun to take effect, comes this accursed misfortune, or unpleasantness . . ." And he was furious with the mishap, or with the people who were causing the unpleasantness and killing him, for he felt that this fury was killing him but could not restrain it. One would have thought that it should have been clear to him that this exasperation with circumstances and people aggravated his illness, and that he ought therefore to ignore unpleasant occurrences. But he drew the very opposite conclusion: he said that he needed peace, and he watched for everything that might disturb it and became irritable at the slightest infringement of it. His condition was rendered worse by the fact that he read medical books and consulted doctors. The progress of his disease was so gradual that he could deceive himself when comparing one day with another—the difference was so slight. But when he consulted the doctors it seemed to him that he was getting worse, and even very rapidly. Yet despite this he was continually consulting them.

That month he went to see another celebrity, who told him almost the same as the first had done but put his questions rather differently, and the interview with this celebrity only increased Iván Ilyich's doubts and fears. A friend of a friend of his, a very good doctor, diagnosed his illness again quite differently from the others, and though he predicted recovery, his questions and suppositions bewildered Iván Ilyich still more and increased his doubts. A homeopathist diagnosed the disease in yet another way, and prescribed medicine which Iván Ilyich took secretly for a week. But after a week, not feeling any improvement and having lost confidence both in the former doctor's treatment and in this one's, he became still more despondent. One day a lady acquaintance mentioned a cure effected by a wonder-working icon. Iván Ilyich caught himself listening attentively and beginning to believe that it had occurred. This incident alarmed him. "Has my mind really weakened to such an extent?" he asked himself. "Nonsense! It's all rubbish. I mustn't give way to nervous fears but having chosen a doctor must keep strictly to his treatment. That is what I will do. Now it's all settled. I won't think about it, but will follow the treatment seriously till summer, and then we shall see. From now there must be no more of this wavering!" This was easy to say but impossible to carry out. The pain in his side oppressed him and seemed to grow worse and more incessant, while the taste in his mouth grew stranger and stranger. It seemed to him that his

breath had a disgusting smell, and he was conscious of a loss of appetite and strength. There was no deceiving himself: something terrible, new, and more important than anything before in his life, was taking place within him of which he alone was aware. Those about him did not understand or would not understand it, but thought everything in the world was going on as usual. That tormented Iván Ilyich more than anything. He saw that his household, especially his wife and daughter who were in a perfect whirl of visiting, did not understand anything of it and were annoyed that he was so depressed and so exacting, as if he were to blame for it. Though they tried to disguise it he saw that he was an obstacle in their path, and that his wife had adopted a definite line in regard to his illness and kept to it regardless of anything he said or did. Her attitude was this: "You know," she would say to her friends, "Iván Ilyich can't do as other people do, and keep to the treatment prescribed for him. One day he'll take his drops and keep strictly to his diet and go to bed in good time, but the next day unless I watch him he'll suddenly forget his medicine, eat sturgeon—which is forbidden—and sit up playing cards till one o'clock in the morning."

"Oh, come, when was that?" Iván Ilyich would ask in vexation. "Only once at Peter Ivánovich's."

"And yesterday with Shébek."

"Well, even if I hadn't stayed up, this pain would have kept me awake."

"Be that as it may you'll never get well like that, but will always make us wretched."

Praskóvya Fédorovna's attitude to Iván Ilyich's illness, as she expressed it both to others and to him, was that it was his own fault and was another of the annoyances he caused her. Iván Ilyich felt that this opinion escaped her involuntarily—but that did not make it easier for him.

At the law courts too, Iván Ilyich noticed, or thought he noticed, a strange attitude towards himself. It sometimes seemed to him that people were watching him inquisitively as a man whose place might soon be vacant. Then again, his friends would suddenly begin to chaff him in a friendly way about his low spirits, as if the awful, horrible, and unheard-of thing that was going on within him, incessantly gnawing at him and irresistibly drawing him away, was a very agreeable subject for jests. Schwartz in particular irritated him by his jocularity, vivacity, and *savoir-faire*, which reminded him of what he himself had been ten years ago.

Friends came to make up a set and they sat down to cards. They dealt, bending the new cards to soften them, and he sorted the diamonds in his hand and found he had seven. His partner said "No trumps" and supported him with two diamonds. What more could

be wished for? It ought to be jolly and lively. They would make a grand slam. But suddenly Iván Ilyich was conscious of that gnawing pain, that taste in his mouth, and it it seemed ridiculous that in such circumstances he should be pleased to make a grand slam.

He looked at his partner Mikháil Mikháylovich, who rapped the table with his strong hand and instead of snatching up the tricks pushed the cards courteously and indulgently towards Iván Ilyich that he might have the pleasure of gathering them up without the trouble of stretching out his hand for them. "Does he think I am too weak to stretch out my arm?" thought Iván Ilyich, and forgetting what he was doing he over-trumped his partner, missing the grand slam by three tricks. And what was most awful of all was that he saw how upset Mikháil Mikháylovich was about it but did not himself care. And it was dreadful to realize why he did not care.

They all saw that he was suffering, and said: "We can stop if you are tired. Take a rest." Lie down? No, he was not at all tired, and he finished the rubber. All were gloomy and silent. Iván Ilyich felt that he had diffused this gloom over them and could not dispel it. They had supper and went away, and Iván Ilyich was left alone with the consciousness that his life was poisoned and was poisoning the lives of others, and that this poison did not weaken but penetrated more and more deeply into his whole being.

With this consciousness, and with physical pain besides the terror, he must go to bed, often to lie awake the greater part of the night. Next morning he had to get up again, dress, go to the law courts, speak, and write; or if he did not go out, spend at home those twenty-four hours a day each of which was a torture. And he had to live thus all alone on the brink of an abyss, with no one who understood or pitied him.

V

So one month passed and then another. Just before the New Year his brother-in-law came to town and stayed at their house. Iván Ilyich was at the law courts and Praskóvya Fëdorovna had gone shopping. When Iván Ilyich came home and entered his study he found his brother-in-law there—a healthy, florid man—unpacking his portmanteau himself. He raised his head on hearing Iván Ilyich's footsteps and looked up at him for a moment without a word. That stare told Iván everything. His brother-in-law opened his mouth to utter an exclamation of surprise but checked himself, and that action confirmed it all.

"I have changed, eh?"

"Yes, there is a change."

And after that, try as he would to get his brother-in-law to return to the subject of his looks, the latter would say nothing about it. Pra-

skóvya Fëdorovna came home and her brother went out to her. Iván Ilyich locked the door and began to examine himself in the glass, first full face, then in profile. He took up a portrait of himself taken with his wife, and compared it with what he saw in the glass. The change in him was immense. Then he bared his arms to the elbow, looked at them, drew the sleeves down again, sat down on an ottoman, and grew blacker than night.

"No, no, this won't do!" he said to himself, and jumped up, went to the table, took up some law papers and began to read them, but could not continue. He unlocked the door and went into the reception-room. The door leading to the drawing-room was shut. He approached it on tiptoe and listened.

"No, you are exaggerating!" Praskóvya Fëdorovna was saying.

"Exaggerating! Don't you see it? Why, he's a dead man! Look at his eyes—there's no light in them. But what is it that is wrong with him?"

"No one knows. Nikoláevich [that was another doctor] said something, but I don't know what. And Leshchetítsky [this was the celebrated specialist] said quite the contrary. . ."

Iván Ilyich walked away, went to his own room, lay down and began musing: "The kidney, a floating kidney." He recalled all the doctors had told him of how it detached itself and swayed about. And by an effort of imagination he tried to catch that kidney and arrest it and support it. So little was needed for this, it seemed to him. "No, I'll go to see Peter Ivánovich again." [That was the friend whose friend was a doctor.] He rang, ordered the carriage, and got ready to go.

"Where are you going, *Jean?*" asked his wife, with a specially sad and exceptionally kind look.

This exceptionally kind look irritated him. He looked morosely at her.

"I must go to see Peter Ivánovich."

He went to see Peter Ivánovich, and together they went to see his friend, the doctor. He was in, and Iván Ilyich had a long talk with him.

Reviewing the anatomical and physiological details of what in the doctor's opinion was going on inside him, he understood it all.

There was something, a small thing, in the vermiform appendix. It might all come right. Only stimulate the energy of one organ and check the activity of another, then absorption would take place and everything would come right. He got home rather late for dinner, ate his dinner, and conversed cheerfully, but could not for a long time bring himself to go back to work in his room. At last, however, he went to his study and did what was necessary, but the consciousness that he had put something aside—an important, intimate mat-

ter which he would revert to when his work was done—never left him. When he had finished his work he remembered that this intimate matter was the thought of his vermiform appendix. But he did not give himself up to it, and went to the drawing-room for tea. There were callers there, including the examining magistrate who was a desirable match for his daughter, and they were conversing, playing the piano, and singing. Iván Ilyich, as Praskóvya Fëdorovna remarked, spent that evening more cheerfully than usual, but he never for a moment forgot that he had postponed the important matter of the appendix. At eleven o'clock he said good-night and went to his bedroom. Since his illness he had slept alone in a small room next to his study. He undressed and took up a novel by Zola,[8] but instead of reading it he fell into thought, and in his imagination that desired improvement in the vermiform appendix occurred. There was the absorption and evacuation and the reestablishment of normal activity. "Yes, that's it!" he said to himself. "One need only assist nature, that's all." He remembered his medicine, rose, took it, and lay down on his back watching for the beneficent action of the medicine and for it to lessen the pain. "I need only take it regularly and avoid all injurious influences. I am already feeling better, much better." He began touching his side: it was not painful to the touch. "There, I really don't feel it. It's much better already." He put out the light and turned on his side. . . . "The appendix is getting better, absorption is occurring." Suddenly he felt the old, familiar, dull, gnawing pain, stubborn and serious. There was the same familiar loathsome taste in his mouth. His heart sank and he felt dazed. "My God! My God!" he muttered. "Again, again! And it will never cease." And suddenly the matter presented itself in a quite different aspect. "Vermiform appendix! Kidney!" he said to himself. "It's not a question of appendix or kidney, but of life and . . . death. Yes, life was there and now it is going, going and I cannot stop it. Yes. Why deceive myself? Isn't it obvious to everyone but me that I'm dying, and that it's only a question of weeks, days . . . it may happen this moment. There was light and now there is darkness. I was here and now I'm going there! Where?" A chill came over him, his breathing ceased, and he felt only the throbbing of his heart.

"When I am not, what will there be? There will be nothing. Then where shall I be when I am no more? Can this be dying? No, I don't want to!" He jumped up and tried to light the candle, felt for it with trembling hands, dropped candle and candlestick on the floor, and fell back on his pillow.

"What's the use? It makes no difference," he said to himself, star-

8. Émile Zola (1840–1902), French novelist, author of the *Rougon-Macquart* novels (*Nana*, *Germinal*, and so on). Tolstoy condemned Zola for his naturalistic theories and considered his novels crude and gross.

ing with wide-open eyes into the darkness. "Death. Yes, death. And none of them know or wish to know it, and they have no pity for me. Now they are playing." (He heard through the door the distant sound of a song and its accompaniment.) "It's all the same to them, but they will die too! Fools! I first, and they later, but it will be the same for them. And now they are merry . . . the beasts!"

Anger choked him and he was agonizingly, unbearably miserable. "It is impossible that all men have been doomed to suffer this awful horror!" He raised himself.

"Something must be wrong. I must calm myself—must think it all over from the beginning." And he again began thinking. "Yes, the beginning of my illness: I knocked my side, but I was still quite well that day and the next. It hurt a little, then rather more. I saw the doctors, then followed despondency and anguish, more doctors, and I drew nearer to the abyss. My strength grew less and I kept coming nearer and nearer, and now I have wasted away and there is no light in my eyes. I think of the appendix—but this is death! I think of mending the appendix, and all the while here is death! Can it really be death!" Again terror seized him and he gasped for breath. He leant down and began feeling for the matches, pressing with his elbow on the stand beside the bed. It was in his way and hurt him, he grew furious with it, pressed on it still harder, and upset it. Breathless and in despair he fell on his back, expecting death to come immediately.

Meanwhile the visitors were leaving. Praskóvya Fëdorovna was seeing them off. She heard something fall and came in.

"What has happened?"

"Nothing. I knocked it over accidentally."

She went out and returned with a candle. He lay there panting heavily, like a man who has run a thousand yards, and stared upwards at her with a fixed look.

"What is it, *Jean*?"

"No . . . o . . . thing. I upset it." ("Why speak of it? She won't understand," he thought.)

And in truth she did not understand. She picked up the stand, lit his candle, and hurried away to see another visitor off. When she came back he still lay on his back, looking upwards.

"What is it? Do you feel worse?"

"Yes."

She shook her head and sat down.

"Do you know, *Jean*, I think we must ask Leshchetítsky to come and see you here."

This meant calling in the famous specialist, regardless of expense. He smiled malignantly and said "No." She remained a little longer and then went up to him and kissed his forehead.

While she was kissing him he hated her from the bottom of his soul and with difficulty refrained from pushing her away.

"Good-night. Please God you'll sleep."

"Yes."

VI

Iván Ilyich saw that he was dying, and he was in continual despair.

In the depth of his heart he knew he was dying, but not only was he not accustomed to the thought, he simply did not and could not grasp it.

The syllogism he had learned from Kiesewetter's *Logic:*[9] "Caius is a man, men are mortal, therefore Caius is mortal," had always seemed to him correct as applied to Caius, but certainly not as applied to himself. That Caius—man in the abstract—was mortal, was perfectly correct, but he was not Caius, not an abstract man, but a creature quite, quite separate from all others. He had been little Ványa, with a mamma and a papa, with Mítya and Volódya, with the toys, a coachman and a nurse, afterwards with Kátenka and with all the joys, griefs, and delights of childhood, boyhood, and youth. What did Caius know of the smell of that striped leather ball Ványa had been so fond of? Had Caius kissed his mother's hand like that, and did the silk of her dress rustle so for Caius? Had he rioted like that at school when the pastry was bad? Had Caius been in love like that? Could Caius preside at a session as he did? "Caius really was mortal, and it was right for him to die; but for me, little Ványa, Iván Ilyich, with all my thoughts and emotions, it's altogether a different matter. It cannot be that I ought to die. That would be too terrible."

Such was his feeling.

"If I had to die like Caius I should have known it was so. An inner voice would have told me so, but there was nothing of the sort in me and I and all my friends felt that our case was quite different from that of Caius. And now here it is!" he said to himself. "It can't be. It's impossible! But here it is. How is this? How is one to understand it?"

He could not understand it, and tried to drive this false, incorrect, morbid thought away and to replace it by other proper and healthy thoughts. But that thought, and not the thought only but the reality itself, seemed to come and confront him.

And to replace that thought he called up a succession of others, hoping to find in them some support. He tried to get back into the former current of thoughts that had once screened the thought of

9. Karl Kiesewetter (1766–1819) was a German popularizer of Kant's philosophy. His *Outline of Logic According to Kantian Principles* (1796) was widely used in Russian adaptations as a schoolbook.

death from him. But strange to say, all that had formerly shut off, hidden, and destroyed, his consciousness of death, no longer had that effect. Iván Ilyich now spent most of his time in attempting to re-establish that old current. He would say to himself: "I will take up my duties again—after all I used to live by them." And banishing all doubts he would go to the law courts, enter into conversation with his colleagues, and sit carelessly as was his wont, scanning the crowd with a thoughtful look and leaning both his emaciated arms on the arms of his oak chair; bending over as usual to a colleague and drawing his papers nearer he would interchange whispers with him, and then suddenly raising his eyes and sitting erect would pronounce certain words and open the proceedings. But suddenly in the midst of those proceedings the pain in his side, regardless of the stage the proceedings had reached, would begin its own gnawing work. Iván Ilyich would turn his attention to it and try to drive the thought of it away, but without success. *It* would come and stand before him and look at him, and he would be petrified and the light would die out of his eyes, and he would again begin asking himself whether *It* alone was true. And his colleagues and subordinates would see with surprise and distress that he, the brilliant and subtle judge, was becoming confused and making mistakes. He would shake himself, try to pull himself together, manage somehow to bring the sitting to a close, and return home with the sorrowful consciousness that his judicial labours could not as formerly hide from him what he wanted them to hide, and could not deliver him from *It*. And what was worst of all was that *It* drew his attention to itself not in order to make him take some action but only that he should look at *It*, look it straight in the face: look at it without doing anything, suffer inexpressibly.

And to save himself from this condition Iván Ilyich looked for consolations—new screens—and new screens were found and for a while seemed to save him, but then they immediately fell to pieces or rather became transparent, as *It* penetrated them and nothing could veil *It*.

In these latter days he would go into the drawing-room he had arranged—that drawing-room where he had fallen and for the sake of which (how bitterly ridiculous it seemed) he had sacrificed his life—for he knew that his illness originated with that knock. He would enter and see that something had scratched the polished table. He would look for the cause of this and find that it was the bronze ornamentation of an album, that had got bent. He would take up the expensive album which he had lovingly arranged, and feel vexed with his daughter and her friends for their untidiness—for the album was torn here and there and some of the photographs turned upside down. He would put it carefully in order and bend the ornamentation back into position. Then it would occur to him to place all those

things in another corner of the room, near the plants. He would call the footman, but his daughter or wife would contradict him, and he would dispute and grow angry. But that was all right, for then he did not think about *It*. *It* was invisible.

But then, when he was moving something himself, his wife would say: "Let the servants do it. You will hurt yourself again." And suddenly *It* would flash through the screen and he would see it. It was just a flash, and he hoped it would disappear, but he would involuntarily pay attention to his side. "It sits there as before, gnawing just the same!" And he could no longer forget *It*, but could distinctly see it looking at him from behind the flowers. "What is it all for?"

"It really is so! I lost my life over that curtain as I might have done when storming a fort. Is that possible? How terrible and how stupid. It can't be true! It can't, but it is."

He would go to his study, lie down, and again be alone with *It*: face to face with *It*. And nothing could be done with *It* except to look at it and shudder.

VII

How it happened it is impossible to say because it came about step by step, unnoticed, but in the third month of Iván Ilyich's illness, his wife, his daughter, his son, his acquaintances, the doctors, the servants, and above all he himself, were aware that the whole interest he had for other people was whether he would soon vacate his place, and at last release the living from the discomfort caused by his presence and be himself released from his sufferings.

He slept less and less. He was given opium and hypodermic injections of morphine, but this did not relieve him. The dull depression he experienced in a somnolent condition at first gave him a little relief, but only as something new, afterwards it became as distressing as the pain itself or even more so.

Special foods were prepared for him by the doctors' orders, but all those foods became increasingly distasteful and disgusting to him.

For his excretions also special arrangements had to be made, and this was a torment to him every time—a torment from the uncleanliness, the unseemliness, and the smell, and from knowing that another person had to take part in it.

But just through this most unpleasant matter, Iván Ilyich obtained comfort. Gerásim, the butler's young assistant, always came in to carry the things out. Gerásim was a clean, fresh peasant lad, grown stout on town food and always cheerful and bright. At first the sight of him, in his clean Russian peasant costume, engaged on that disgusting task embarrassed Iván Ilyich.

Once when he got up from the commode too weak to draw up his

trousers, he dropped into a soft armchair and looked with horror at his bare, enfeebled thighs with the muscles so sharply marked on them.

Gerásim with a firm light tread, his heavy boots emitting a pleasant smell of tar and fresh winter air, came in wearing a clean Hessian apron, the sleeves of his print shirt tucked up over his strong bare young arms; and refraining from looking at his sick master out of consideration for his feelings, and restraining the joy of life that beamed from his face, he went up to the commode.

"Gerásim!" said Iván Ilyich in a weak voice.

Gerásim started, evidently afraid he might have committed some blunder, and with a rapid movement turned his fresh, kind, simple young face which just showed the first downy sign of a beard.

"Yes, sir?"

"That must be very unpleasant for you. You must forgive me. I am helpless."

"Oh, why, sir," and Gerásim's eyes beamed and he showed his glistening white teeth, "what's a little trouble? It's a case of illness with you, sir."

And his deft strong hands did their accustomed task, and he went out of the room stepping lightly. Five minutes later he as lightly returned.

Iván Ilyich was still sitting in the same position in the armchair.

"Gerásim," he said when the latter had replaced the freshly-washed utensil. "Please come here and help me." Gerásim went up to him. "Lift me up. It is hard for me to get up, and I have sent Dmítri away."

Gerásim went up to him, grasped his master with his strong arms deftly but gently, in the same way that he stepped—lifted him, supported him with one hand, and with the other drew up his trousers and would have set him down again, but Iván Ilyich asked to be led to the sofa. Gerásim, without an effort and without apparent pressure, led him, almost lifting him, to the sofa and placed him on it.

"Thank you. How easily and well you do it all!"

Gerásim smiled again and turned to leave the room. But Iván Ilyich felt his presence such a comfort that he did not want to let him go.

"One thing more, please move up that chair. No, the other one—under my feet. It is easier for me when my feet are raised."

Gerásim brought the chair, set it down gently in place, and raised Iván Ilyich's legs on to it. It seemed to Iván Ilyich that he felt better while Gerásim was holding up his legs.

"It's better when my legs are higher," he said. "Place that cushion under them."

Gerásim did so. He again lifted the legs and placed them, and

again Iván Ilyich felt better while Gerásim held his legs. When he set them down Iván Ilyich fancied he felt worse.

"Gerásim," he said. "Are you busy now?"

"Not at all, sir," said Gerásim, who had learnt from the townsfolk how to speak to gentlefolk.

"What have you still to do?"

"What have I to do? I've done everything except chopping the logs for to-morrow."

"Then hold my legs up a bit higher, can you?"

"Of course I can. Why not?" And Gerásim raised his master's legs higher and Iván Ilyich thought that in that position he did not feel any pain at all.

"And how about the logs?"

"Don't trouble about that, sir. There's plenty of time."

Iván Ilyich told Gerásim to sit down and hold his legs, and began to talk to him. And strange to say it seemed to him that he felt better while Gerásim held his legs up.

After that Iván Ilyich would sometimes call Gerásim and get him to hold his legs on his shoulders, and he liked talking to him. Gerásim did it all easily, willingly, simply, and with a good nature that touched Iván Ilyich. Health, strength, and vitality in other people were offensive to him, but Gerásim's strength and vitality did not mortify but soothed him.

What tormented Iván Ilyich most was the deception, the lie, which for some reason they all accepted, that he was not dying but was simply ill, and that he only need keep quiet and undergo a treatment and then something very good would result. He however knew that do what they would nothing would come of it, only still more agonizing suffering and death. This deception tortured him—their not wishing to admit what they all knew and what he knew, but wanting to lie to him concerning his terrible condition, and wishing and forcing him to participate in that lie. Those lies—lies enacted over him on the eve of his death and destined to degrade this awful, solemn act to the level of their visitings, their curtains, their sturgeon for dinner—were a terrible agony for Iván Ilyich. And strangely enough, many times when they were going through their antics over him he had been within a hairbreadth of calling out to them: "Stop lying! You know and I know that I am dying. Then at least stop lying about it!" But he had never had the spirit to do it. The awful, terrible act of his dying was, he could see, reduced by those about him to the level of a casual, unpleasant, and almost indecorous incident (as if someone entered a drawing-room diffusing an unpleasant odour) and this was done by that very decorum which he had served all his life long. He saw that no one felt for him, because no one even wished to grasp his position. Only Gerásim recognized and pitied

him. And so Iván Ilyich felt at ease only with him. He felt comforted when Gerásim supported his legs (sometimes all night long) and refused to go to bed, saying: "Don't you worry, Iván Ilyich. I'll get sleep enough later on," or when he suddenly became familiar and exclaimed: "If you weren't sick it would be another matter, but as it is, why should I grudge a little trouble?" Gerásim alone did not lie; everything showed that he alone understood the facts of the case and did not consider it necessary to disguise them, but simply felt sorry for his emaciated and enfeebled master. Once when Iván Ilyich was sending him away he even said straight out: "We shall all of us die, so why should I grudge a little trouble?"—expressing the fact that he did not think his work burdensome, because he was doing it for a dying man and hoped someone would do the same for him when his time came.

Apart from this lying, or because of it, what most tormented Iván Ilyich was that no one pitied him as he wished to be pitied. At certain moments after prolonged suffering he wished most of all (though he would have been ashamed to confess it) for someone to pity him as a sick child is pitied. He longed to be petted and comforted. He knew he was an important functionary, that he had a beard turning grey, and that therefore what he longed for was impossible, but still he longed for it. And in Gerásim's attitude towards him there was something akin to what he wished for, and so that attitude comforted him. Iván Ilyich wanted to weep, wanted to be petted and cried over, and then his colleague Shébek would come, and instead of weeping and being petted, Iván Ilyich would assume a serious, severe, and profound air, and by force of habit would express his opinion on a decision of the Court of Appeal and would stubbornly insist on that view. This falsity around him and within him did more than anything else to poison his last days.

VIII

It was morning. He knew it was morning because Gerásim had gone, and Peter the footman had come and put out the candles, drawn back one of the curtains, and begun quietly to tidy up. Whether it was morning or evening, Friday or Sunday, made no difference, it was all just the same: the gnawing, unmitigated, agonizing pain, never ceasing for an instant, the consciousness of life inexorably waning but not yet extinguished, the approach of that ever dreaded and hateful Death which was the only reality, and always the same falsity. What were days, weeks, hours, in such a case?

"Will you have some tea, sir?"

"He wants things to be regular, and wishes the gentlefolk to drink tea in the morning," thought Iván Ilyich, and only said "No."

"Wouldn't you like to move onto the sofa, sir?"

"He wants to tidy up the room, and I'm in the way. I am uncleanliness and disorder," he thought, and said only:

"No, leave me alone."

The man went on bustling about. Iván Ilyich stretched out his hand. Peter came up, ready to help.

"What is it, sir?"

"My watch."

Peter took the watch which was close at hand and gave it to his master.

"Half-past eight. Are they up?"

"No sir, except Vladímir Iványich" (the son) "who has gone to school. Praskóvya Fëdorovna ordered me to wake her if you asked for her. Shall I do so?"

"No, there's no need to." "Perhaps I'd better have some tea," he thought, and added aloud: "Yes, bring me some tea."

Peter went to the door, but Iván Ilyich dreaded being left alone. "How can I keep him here? Oh yes, my medicine." "Peter, give me my medicine." "Why not? Perhaps it may still do me some good." He took a spoonful and swallowed it. "No, it won't help. It's all tomfoolery, all deception," he decided as soon as he became aware of the familiar, sickly, hopeless taste. "No, I can't believe in it any longer. But the pain, why this pain? If it would only cease just for a moment!" And he moaned. Peter turned towards him. "It's all right. Go and fetch me some tea."

Peter went out. Left alone Iván Ilyich groaned not so much with pain, terrible though, that was, as from mental anguish. Always and forever the same, always these endless days and nights. If only it would come quicker! If only *what* would come quicker? Death, darkness? . . . No, no! Anything rather than death!

When Peter returned with the tea on a tray, Iván Ilyich stared at him for a time in perplexity, not realizing who and what he was. Peter was disconcerted by that look and his embarrassment brought Iván Ilyich to himself.

"Oh, tea! All right, put it down. Only help me to wash and put on a clean shirt."

And Iván Ilyich began to wash. With pauses for rest, he washed his hands and then his face, cleaned his teeth, brushed his hair, and looked in the glass. He was terrified by what he saw, especially by the limp way in which his hair clung to his pallid forehead.

While his shirt was being changed he knew that he would be still more frightened at the sight of his body, so he avoided looking at it. Finally he was ready. He drew on a dressing-gown, wrapped himself in a plaid, and sat down in the armchair to take his tea. For a moment he felt refreshed, but as soon as he began to drink the tea he was

again aware of the same taste, and the pain also returned. He finished it with an effort, and then lay down stretching out his legs, and dismissed Peter.

Always the same. Now a spark of hope flashes up, then a sea of despair rages, and always pain; always pain, always despair, and always the same. When alone he had a dreadful and distressing desire to call someone, but he knew beforehand that with others present it would be still worse. "Another dose of morphine—to lose consciousness. I will tell him, the doctor, that he must think of something else. It's impossible, impossible, to go on like this."

An hour and another pass like that. But now there is a ring at the door bell. Perhaps it's the doctor? It is. He comes in fresh, hearty, plump, and cheerful, with that look on his face that seems to say: "There now, you're in a panic about something, but we'll arrange it all for you directly!" The doctor knows this expression is out of place here, but he has put it on once for all and can't take it off—like a man who has put on a frock-coat in the morning to pay a round of calls.

The doctor rubs his hands vigorously and reassuringly.

"Brr! How cold it is! There's such a sharp frost; just let me warm myself!" he says, as if it were only a matter of waiting till he was warm, and then he would put everything right.

"Well now, how are you?"

Iván Ilyich feels that the doctor would like to say: "Well, how are our affairs?" but that even he feels that this would not do, and says instead: "What sort of a night have you had?"

Iván Ilyich looks at him as much as to say: "Are you really never ashamed of lying?" But the doctor does not wish to understand this question, and Iván Ilyich says: "Just as terrible as ever. The pain never leaves me and never subsides. If only something . . ."

"Yes, you sick people are always like that. . . . There, now I think I'm warm enough. Even Praskóvya Fëdorovna, who is so particular, could find no fault with my temperature. Well, now I can say good-morning," and the doctor presses his patient's hand.

Then, dropping his former playfulness, he begins with a most serious face to examine the patient, feeling his pulse and taking his temperature, and then begins the sounding and auscultation.

Iván Ilyich knows quite well and definitely that all this is nonsense and pure deception, but when the doctor, getting down on his knee, leans over him, putting his ear first higher then lower, and performs various gymnastic movements over him with a significant expression on his face, Iván Ilyich submits to it all as he used to submit to the speeches of the lawyers, though he knew very well that they were all lying and why they were lying.

The doctor, kneeling on the sofa, is still sounding him when Pras-

kóvya Fëdorovna's silk dress rustles at the door and she is heard scolding Peter for not having let her know of the doctor's arrival.

She comes in, kisses her husband, and at once proceeds to prove that she has been up a long time already, and only owing to a misunderstanding failed to be there when the doctor arrived.

Iván Ilyich looks at her, scans her all over, sets against her the whiteness and plumpness and cleanness of her hands and neck, the gloss of her hair, and the sparkle of her vivacious eyes. He hates her with his whole soul. And the thrill of hatred he feels for her makes him suffer from her touch.

Her attitude towards him and his disease is still the same. Just as the doctor had adopted a certain relation to his patient which he could not abandon, so had she formed one towards him—that he was not doing something he ought to do and was himself to blame, and that she reproached him lovingly for this—and she could not now change that attitude.

"You see he doesn't listen to me and doesn't take his medicine at the proper time. And above all he lies in a position that is no doubt bad for him—with his legs up."

She described how he made Gerásim hold his legs up.

The doctor smiled with a contemptuous affability that said: "What's to be done? These sick people do have foolish fancies of that kind, but we must forgive them."

When the examination was over the doctor looked at his watch, and then Praskóvya Fëdorovna announced to Iván Ilyich that it was of course as he pleased, but she had sent to-day for a celebrated specialist who would examine him and have a consultation with Michael Danílovich (their regular doctor).

"Please don't raise any objections. I am doing this for my own sake," she said ironically, letting it be felt that she was doing it all for his sake and only said this to leave him no right to refuse. He remained silent, knitting his brows. He felt that he was so surrounded and involved in a mesh of falsity that it was hard to unravel anything.

Everything she did for him was entirely for her own sake, and she told him she was doing for herself what she actually was doing for herself, as if that was so incredible that he must understand the opposite.

At half-past eleven the celebrated specialist arrived. Again the sounding began and the significant conversations in his presence and in other room, about the kidneys and the appendix, and the questions and answers, with such an air of importance that again, instead of the real question of life and death which now alone confronted him, the question arose of the kidney and the appendix which were not behaving as they ought to and would now be attacked by Michael

Danílovich and the specialist and forced to amend their ways.

The celebrated specialist took leave of him with a serious though not hopeless look, and in reply to the timid question in Iván Ilyich, with eyes glistening with fear and hope, put to him as to whether there was a chance of recovery, said that he could not vouch for it but there was a possibility. The look of hope with which Iván Ilyich watched the doctor out was so pathetic that Praskóvya Fëdorovna, seeing it, even wept as she left the room to hand the doctor his fee.

The gleam of hope kindled by the doctor's encouragement did not last long. The same room, the same pictures, curtains, wallpaper, medicine bottles, were all there, and the same aching suffering body, and Iván Ilyich began to moan. They gave him a subcutaneous injection and he sank into oblivion.

It was twilight when he came to. They brought him his dinner and he swallowed some beef tea with difficulty, and then everything was the same again and night was coming on.

After dinner, at seven o'clock, Praskóvya Fëdorovna came into the room in evening dress, her full bosom pushed up by her corset, and with traces of powder on her face. She had reminded him in the morning that they were going to the theatre. Sarah Bernhardt was visiting the town and they had a box, which he had insisted on their taking. Now he had forgotten about it and her toilet offended him, but he concealed his vexation when he remembered that he had himself insisted on their securing a box and going because it would be an instructive and aesthetic pleasure for the children.

Praskóvya Fëdorovna came in, self-satisfied but yet with a rather guilty air. She sat down and asked how he was, but, as he saw, only for the sake of asking and not in order to learn about it, knowing that there was nothing to learn—and then went on to what she really wanted to say: that she would not on any account have gone but that the box had been taken and Helen and their daughter were going, as well as Petríshchev (the examining magistrate, their daughter's fiancé) and that it was out of the question to let them go alone; but that she would have much preferred to sit with him for a while; and he must be sure to follow the doctor's orders while she was away.

"Oh, and Fëdor Petróvich" (the fiancé) "would like to come in. May he? And Lisa?"

"All right."

Their daughter came in in full evening dress, her fresh young flesh exposed (making a show of that very flesh which in his own case caused so much suffering), strong, healthy, evidently in love, and impatient with illness, suffering, and death, because they interfered with her happiness.

Fëdor Petróvich came in too, in evening dress, his hair curled *à la Capoul*, a tight stiff collar round his long sinewy neck, an enor-

mous white shirt-front and narrow black trousers tightly stretched over his strong thighs. He had one white glove tightly drawn on, and was holding his opera hat in his hand.

Following him the schoolboy crept in unnoticed, in a new uniform, poor little fellow, and wearing gloves. Terribly dark shadows showed under his eyes, the meaning of which Iván Ilyich knew well.

His son had always seemed pathetic to him, and now it was dreadful to see the boy's frightened look of pity. It seemed to Iván Ilyich that Vásya was the only one besides Gerásim who understood and pitied him.

They all sat down and again asked how he was. A silence followed. Lisa asked her mother about the opera-glasses, and there was an altercation between mother and daughter as to who had taken them and where they had been put. This occasioned some unpleasantness.

Fëdor Petróvich inquired of Iván Ilyich whether he had ever seen Sarah Bernhardt. Iván Ilyich did not at first catch the question, but then replied: "No, have you seen her before?"

"Yes, in *Adrienne Lecouvreur.*"[1]

Praskóvya Fëdorovna mentioned some rôles in which Sarah Bernhardt was particularly good. Her daughter disagreed. Conversation sprang up as to the elegance and realism of her acting—the sort of conversation that is always repeated and is always the same.

In the midst of the conversation Fëdor Petróvich glanced at Iván Ilyich and became silent. The others also looked at him and grew silent. Iván Ilyich was staring with glittering eyes straight before him, evidently indignant with them. This had to be rectified, but it was impossible to do so. The silence had to be broken, but for a time no one dared to break it and they all became afraid that the conventional deception would suddenly become obvious and the truth become plain to all. Lisa was the first to pluck up courage and break that silence, but by trying to hide what everybody was feeling, she betrayed it.

"Well, if we are going it's time to start," she said, looking at her watch, a present from her father, and with a faint and significant smile at Fëdor Petróvich relating to something known only to them. She got up with a rustle of her dress.

They all rose, said good-night, and went away.

When they had gone it seemed to Iván Ilyich that he felt better; the falsity had gone with them. But the pain remained—that same pain and that same fear that made everything monotonously alike, nothing harder and nothing easier. Everything was worse.

1. A play (1849) by the French dramatist Eugène Scribe (1791–1861), in which the heroine was a famous actress of the eighteenth century. Tolstoy considered Scribe, who wrote over four hundred plays, a shoddy, commercial playwright.

Again minute followed minute and hour followed hour. Everything remained the same and there was no cessation. And the inevitable end of it all became more and more terrible.

"Yes, send Gerásim here," he replied to a question Peter asked.

IX

His wife returned late at night. She came in on tiptoe, but he heard her, opened his eyes, and made haste to close them again. She wished to send Gerásim away and to sit with him herself, but he opened his eyes and said: "No, go away."

"Are you in great pain?"

"Always the same."

"Take some opium."

He agreed and took some. She went away.

Till about three in the morning he was in a state of stupefied misery. It seemed to him that he and his pain were being thrust into a narrow, deep black sack, but though they were pushed further and further in they could not be pushed to the bottom. And this, terrible enough in itself, was accompanied by suffering. He was frightened yet wanted to fall through the sack, he struggled but yet co-operated. And suddenly he broke through, fell, and regained consciousness. Gerásim was sitting at the foot of the bed dozing quietly and patiently, while he himself lay with his emaciated stockinged legs resting on Gerásim's shoulders; the same shaded candle was there and the same unceasing pain.

"Go away, Gerásim," he whispered.

"It's all right, sir. I'll stay a while."

"No. Go away."

He removed his legs from Gerásim's shoulders, turned sideways onto his arm, and felt sorry for himself. He only waited till Gerásim had gone into the next room and then restrained himself no longer but wept like a child. He wept on account of his helplessness, his terrible loneliness, the cruelty of man, the cruelty of God, and the absence of God.

"Why hast Thou done all this? Why hast Thou brought me here? Why, dost Thou torment me so terribly?"

He did not expect an answer and yet wept because there was no answer and could be none. The pain again grew more acute, but he did not stir and did not call. He said to himself: "Go on! Strike me! But what is it for? What have I done to Thee? What is it for?"

Then he grew quiet and not only ceased weeping but even held his breath and became all attention. It was as though he were listening not to an audible voice but to a voice of his soul, to the current of thoughts arising within him.

"What is it you want?" was the first clear conception capable of expression in words, that he heard.

"What do you want? What do you want?" he repeated to himself.

"What do I want? To live and not to suffer," he answered.

And again he listened with such concentrated attention that even his pain did not distract him.

"To live? How?" asked his inner voice.

"Why, to live as I used to—well and pleasantly."

"As you lived before, well and pleasantly?" the voice repeated.

And in imagination he began to recall the moments of his pleasant life. But strange to say none of those best moments of his pleasant life now seemed at all what they had then seemed—none of them except the first recollections of childhood. There, in childhood, there had been something really pleasant with which it would be possible to live if it could return. But the child who had experienced that happiness existed no longer, it was like a reminiscence of somebody else.

As soon as the period began which had produced the present Iván Ilyich, all that had then seemed joys now melted before his sight and turned into something trivial and often nasty.

And the further he departed from childhood and the nearer he came to the present the more worthless and doubtful were the joys. This began with the School of Law. A little that was really good was still found there—there was light-heartedness, friendship, and hope. But in the upper classes there had already been fewer of such good moments. Then during the first years of his official career, when he was in the service of the Governor, some pleasant moments again occurred: they were the memories of love for a woman. Then all became confused and there was still less of what was good; later on again there was still less that was good, and the further he went the less there was. His marriage, a mere accident, then the disenchantment that followed it, his wife's bad breath and the sensuality and hypocrisy: then that deadly official life and those preoccupations about money, a year of it, and two, and ten, and twenty, and always the same thing. And the longer it lasted the more deadly it became. "It is as if I had been going downhill while I imagined I was going up. And that is really what it was. I was going up in public opinion, but to the same extent life was ebbing away from me. And now it is all done and there is only death."

"Then what does it mean? Why? It can't be that life is so senseless and horrible. But if it really has been so horrible and senseless, why must I die and die in agony? There is something wrong!"

"Maybe I did not live as I ought to have done," it suddenly occurred to him. "But how could that be, when I did everything properly?" he replied, and immediately dismissed from his mind this, the sole

solution of all the riddles of life and death, as something quite impossible.

"Then what do you want now? To live? Live how? Live as you lived in the law courts when the usher proclaimed 'The judge is coming!' The judge is coming, the judge!" he repeated to himself. "Here he is, the judge. But I am not guilty!" he exclaimed angrily. "What is it for?" And he ceased crying, but turning his face to the wall continued to ponder on the same question: Why, and for what purpose, is there all this horror? But however much he pondered he found no answer. And whenever the thought occurred to him, as it often did, that it all resulted from his not having lived as he ought to have done, he at once recalled the correctness of his whole life, and dismissed so strange an idea.

X

Another fortnight passed. Iván Ilyich now no longer left his sofa. He would not lie in bed but lay on the sofa, facing the wall nearly all the time. He suffered ever the same unceasing agonies and in his loneliness pondered always on the same insoluble question: "What is this? Can it be that it is Death?" And the inner voice answered: "Yes, it is Death."

"Why these sufferings?" And the voice answered, "For no reason—they just are so." Beyond and besides this there was nothing.

From the very beginning of his illness, ever since he had first been to see the doctor, Iván Ilyich's life had been divided between two contrary and alternating moods: now it was despair and the expectation of this uncomprehended and terrible death, and now hope and an intently interested observation of the functioning of his organs. Now before his eyes there was only a kidney or an intestine that temporarily evaded its duty, and now only that incomprehensible and dreadful death from which it was impossible to escape.

These two states of mind had alternated from the very beginning of his illness, but the further it progressed the more doubtful and fantastic became the conception of the kidney, and the more real the sense of impending death.

He had but to call to mind what he had been three months before and what he was now, to call to mind with what regularity he had been going downhill, for every possible of hope to be shattered.

Latterly during that loneliness in which he found himself as he lay facing the back of the sofa, a loneliness in the midst of a populous town and surrounded by numerous acquaintances and relations but that yet could not have been more complete anywhere—either at the bottom of the sea or under the earth—during that terrible loneliness Iván Ilyich had lived only in memories of the past. Pictures of his past rose before him one after another. They always began with what

was nearest in time and then went back to what was most remote—to his childhood—and rested there. If he thought of the stewed prunes that had been offered him that day, his mind went back to the raw shrivelled French plums of his childhood, their peculiar flavour and the flow of saliva when he sucked their stones, and along with the memory of that taste came a whole series of memories of those days: his nurse, his brother, and their toys. "No, I mustn't think of that. . . . It is too painful," Iván Ilyich said to himself, and brought himself back to the present—to the button on the back of the sofa and the creases in its morocco. "Morocco is expensive, but it does not wear well: there had been a quarrel about it. It was a different kind of quarrel and a different kind of morocco that time when we tore father's portfolio and were punished, and mamma brought us some tarts. . . ." And again his thoughts dwelt on his childhood, and again it was painful and he tried to banish them and fix his mind on something else.

Then again together with that chain of memories another series passed through his mind—of how his illness had progressed and grown worse. There also the further back he looked the more life there had been. There had been more of what was good in life and more of life itself. The two merged together. "Just as the pain went on getting worse and worse, so my life grew worse and worse," he thought. "There is one bright spot there at the back, at the beginning of life, and afterwards all becomes blacker and blacker and proceeds more and more rapidly—in inverse ratio to the square of the distance from death," thought Iván Ilyich. And the example of a stone falling downwards with increasing velocity entered his mind. Life, a series of increasing sufferings, flies further and further towards its end—the most terrible suffering. "I am flying. . . ." He shuddered, shifted himself, and tried to resist, but was already aware that resistance was impossible, and again with eyes weary of gazing but unable to cease seeing what was before them, he stared at the back of the sofa and waited—awaiting that dreadful fall and shock and destruction.

"Resistance is impossible!" he said to himself. "If I could only understand what it is all for! But that too is impossible. An explanation would be possible if it could be said that I have not lived as I ought to. But it is impossible to say that," and he remembered all the legality, correctitude, and propriety of his life. "That at any rate can certainly not be admitted," he thought, and his lips smiled ironically as if someone could see that smile and be taken in by it. "There is no explanation! Agony, death. . . . What for?"

XI

Another two weeks went by in this way and during that fortnight an event occurred that Iván Ilyich and his wife had desired. Petrish-

chev formally proposed. It happened in the evening. The next day Praskóvya Fëdorovna came into her husband's room considering how best to inform him of it, but that very night there had been a fresh change for the worse in his condition. She found him still lying on the sofa but in a different position. He lay on his back, groaning and staring fixedly straight in front of him.

She began to remind him of his medicines, but he turned his eyes towards her with such a look that she did not finish what she was saying; so great an animosity, to her in particular, did that look express.

"For Christ's sake let me die in peace!" he said.

She would have gone away, but just then their daughter came in and went up to say good morning. He looked at her as he had done at his wife, and in reply to her inquiry about his health said dryly that he would soon free them all of himself. They were both silent and after sitting with him for a while went away.

"Is it our fault?" Lisa said to her mother. "It's as if we were to blame! I am sorry for papa, but why should we be tortured?"

The doctor came at his usual time. Iván Ilyich answered "Yes" and "No," never taking his angry eyes from him, and at last said: "You know you can do nothing for me, so leave me alone."

"We can ease your sufferings."

"You can't even do that. Let me be."

The doctor went into the drawing-room and told Praskóvya Fëdorovna that the case was very serious and that the only resource left was opium to allay her husband's sufferings, which must be terrible.

It was true, as the doctor said, that Iván Ilyich's physical sufferings were terrible, but worse than the physical sufferings were his mental sufferings which were his chief torture.

His mental sufferings were due to the fact that that night, as he looked at Gerásim's sleepy, good-natured face with its prominent cheek-bones, the question suddenly occurred to him: "What if my whole life has really been wrong?"

It occurred to him that what had appeared perfectly impossible before, namely that he had not spent his life as he should have done, might after all be true. It occurred to him that his scarcely perceptible attempts to struggle against what was considered good by the most highly placed people, those scarcely noticeable impulses which he had immediately suppressed, might have been the real thing, and all the rest false. And his professional duties and the whole arrangement of his life and of his family, and all his social and official interests, might all have been false. He tried to defend all those things to himself and suddenly felt the weakness of what he was defending. There was nothing to defend.

"But if that is so," he said to himself, "and I am leaving this life with the consciousness that I have lost all that was given me and it is

impossible to rectify it—what then?"

He lay on his back and began to pass his life in review in quite a new way. In the morning when he saw first his footman, then his wife, then his daughter, and then the doctor, their every word and movement confirmed to him the awful truth that had been revealed to him during the night. In them he saw himself—all that for which he had lived—and saw clearly that it was not real at all, but a terrible and huge deception which had hidden both life and death. This consciousness intensified his physical suffering tenfold. He groaned and tossed about, and pulled at his clothing which choked and stifled him. And he hated them on that account.

He was given a large dose of opium and became unconscious, but at noon his sufferings began again. He drove everybody away and tossed from side to side.

His wife came to him and said:

"*Jean*, my dear, do this for me. It can't do any harm and often helps. Healthy people often do it."

He opened his eyes wide.

"What? Take communion? Why? It's unnecessary! However . . ."

She began to cry.

"Yes, do, my dear. I'll send for our priest. He is such a nice man."

"All right. Very well," he muttered.

When the priest came and heard his confession, Iván Ilyich was softened and seemed to feel a relief from his doubts and consequently from his sufferings, and for a moment there came a ray of hope. He again began to think of the vermiform appendix and the possibility of correcting it. He received the sacrament with tears in his eyes.

When they laid him down again afterwards he felt a moment's ease, and the hope that he might live awoke in him again. He began to think of the operation that had been suggested to him. "To live! I want to live!" he said to himself.

His wife came in to congratulate him after his communion, and when uttering the usual conventional words she added:

"You feel better, don't you?"

Without looking at her he said "Yes."

Her dress, her figure, the expression of her face, the tone of her voice, all revealed the same thing. "This is wrong, it is not as it should be. All you have lived for and still live for is falsehood and deception, hiding life and death from you." And as soon as he admitted that thought, his hatred and his agonizing physical suffering again sprang up, and with that suffering a consciousness of the unavoidable, approaching end. And to this was added a new sensation of grinding shooting pain and a feeling of suffocation.

The expression of his face when he uttered that "yes" was dread-

ful. Having uttered it, he looked her straight in the eyes, turned on his face with a rapidity extraordinary in his weak state and shouted:

"Go away! Go away and leave me alone!"

XII

From that moment the screaming began that continued for three days, and was so terrible that one could not hear it through two closed doors without horror. At the moment he answered his wife he realized that he was lost, that there was no return, that the end had come, the very end, and his doubts were still unsolved and remained doubts.

"Oh! Oh! Oh!" he cried in various intonations. He had begun by screaming "I won't!" and continued screaming on the letter "o."

For three whole days, during which time did not exist for him, he struggled in that black sack into which he was being thrust by an invisible, resistless force. He struggled as a man condemned to death struggles in the hands of the executioner, knowing that he cannot save himself. And every moment he felt that despite all his efforts he was drawing nearer and nearer to what terrified him. He felt that his agony was due to his being thrust into that black hole and still more to his not being able to get right into it. He was hindered from getting into it by his conviction that his life had been a good one. That very justification of his life held him fast and prevented his moving forward, and it caused him most torment of all.

Suddenly some force struck him in the chest and side, making it still harder to breathe, and he fell through the hole and there at the bottom was a light. What had happened to him was like the sensation one sometimes experiences in a railway carriage when one thinks one is going backwards while one is really going forwards and suddenly becomes aware of the real direction.

"Yes, it was all not the right thing," he said to himself, "but that's no matter. It can be done. But what *is* the right thing?" he asked himself, and suddenly grew quiet.

This occurred at the end of the third day, two hours before his death. Just then his schoolboy son had crept softly in and gone up to the bedside. The dying man was still screaming desperately and waving his arms. His hand fell on the boy's head, and the boy caught it, pressed it to his lips, and began to cry.

At that very moment Iván Ilyich fell through and caught sight of the light, and it was revealed to him that though his life had not been what it should have been, this could still be rectified. He asked himself, "What *is* the right thing?" and grew still, listening. Then he felt that someone was kissing his hand. He opened his eyes, looked at his son, and felt sorry for him. His wife came up to him and he

glanced at her. She was gazing at him open-mouthed, with undried tears on her nose and cheek and a despairing look on her face. He felt sorry for her too.

"Yes, I am making them wretched," he thought. "They are sorry, but it will be better for them when I die." He wished to say this but had not the strength to utter it. "Besides, why speak? I must act," he thought. With a look at his wife he indicated his son and said: "Take him away . . . sorry for him . . . sorry for you too. . . ." He tried to add, "forgive me," but said "forego" and waved his hand, knowing that He whose understanding mattered would understand.

And suddenly it grew clear to him that what had been oppressing him and would not leave him was all dropping away at once from two sides, from ten sides, and from all sides. He was sorry for them, he must act so as not to hurt them: release them and free himself from these sufferings. "How good and how simple!" he thought. "And the pain?" he asked himself. "What has become of it? Where are you, pain?"

He turned his attention to it.

"Yes, here it is. Well, what of it? Let the pain be."

"And death . . . where is it?"

He sought his former accustomed fear of death and did not find it. "Where is it? What death?" There was no fear because there was no death.

In place of death there was light.

"So that's what it is!" he suddenly exclaimed aloud. "What joy!"

To him all this happened in a single instant, and the meaning of that instant did not change. For those present his agony continued for another two hours. Something rattled in his throat, his emaciated body twitched, then the gasping and rattle became less and less frequent.

"It is finished!" said someone near him.

He heard these words and repeated them in his soul.

"Death is finished," he said to himself. "It is no more!"

He drew in a breath, stopped in the midst of a sigh, stretched out, and died.

GEORG BÜCHNER

1813–1837

Büchner's tragedy *Woyzeck* has been called the first "proletarian" play for its unvarnished depiction of the lives of the very poor and in its clear class consciousness. It has been seen also as anticipating the theater of the absurd in presenting a view of life as cruel and meaningless. Technically it strikes

us as surprisingly modern in its objectivity, the quick succession of little scenes and the open form which seems to point ahead to the epic drama of Bertolt Brecht. The play was written by a very young man, born in 1813 as the son of a physician in Goddelau near Darmstadt in what was then the Grand Duchy of Hesse. In 1831, after the usual secondary education, Büchner went to study medicine in Strasbourg in France and, two years later, transferred to Giessen, the University of his native state.

Büchner, who, imbued with the ideas of the French Revolution, had conceived a fierce hatred to the oppressive regime of the Grand Duke, organized there a secret Society of the Rights of Man and composed a pamphlet, *The Hessian Courier* (1834), for clandestine distribution among the peasantry. The motto—"Peace to the huts—war to the palaces" (a slogan devised by Chamfort for the armies of the French Revolution)—suggests its main theme: a plea for the abolition of the aristocracy and for universal suffrage which would alleviate the economic misery of the peasantry. While the pamphlet has been hailed as a forerunner of the *Communist Manifesto*, it does accept private property and expresses merely fierce hatred of oppression and the corruption and luxury of the ruling court. It was quite ineffective: many peasants turned it in to the police. The conspiracy was betrayed, a warrant was issued against Büchner, but he managed to flee back to Strasbourg. Disillusioned, he gave up any political activity (though he never changed his radical opinions) and studied biology at the university, where he received a Ph.D. with a French dissertation on the nervous system of a fish, the barbel. He was then invited to the newly founded University of Zürich where he began to lecture on anatomy. While preparing his flight, Büchner had written a historical tragedy, *Danton's Death* (1834), which he managed to publish and thus raised some money. In Strasbourg he composed a comedy (*Leonce and Lena*) and a short story (*Lenz*) as well as translations of two plays of Victor Hugo. He must have begun *Woyzeck* in Strasbourg and continued in Zürich, but he was unable to finish it as he suddenly fell ill with typhoid fever and died on February 18, 1837, twenty-three years and four months old.

Woyzeck is, on the surface, a simple story of a murder out of jealousy. Woyzeck, a part-time soldier, aged thirty, living from hand to mouth, desperately poor, has an affair with a girl, Marie, and a child with her. She, however, succumbs to the glamour and sensual appeal of a Drum Major. Woyzeck, when he discovers the truth, stabs her to death. Büchner had read about an actual crime: the historical Woyzeck, aged forty, murdered his older, childless mistress and was condemned to death. Doubts were raised about his sanity and a Dr. Johann Clarus was called in to examine him. He wrote an elaborate report concluding that Woyzeck was responsible for his action. After some further delay Woyzeck was decapitated in a public square in Leipzig in 1824. Büchner read the printed report in the periodical to which his father subscribed and was obviously shocked by the smug jargon which condemned Woyzeck to die.

The play was not finished—it breaks off immediately after the murder—but there can be little doubt that Büchner would have concluded with the trial, and possibly the execution, as otherwise there would not have been any need to preserve the name of Woyzeck still vividly in the public's mind.

Büchner derived some details from the medical report: Woyzeck's hallucinations, his fears of Freemasonry, the hollow sounds he hears under him, the rings of the toadstools he considers sinister, but these abnormalities are played down after the first scenes. Rather the contrast between the rich and the poor is brought out as we see Woyzeck exploited by his two superiors: the Captain and the Doctor. The Doctor uses him for his absurd experiments: keeps him on a diet of peas for months, and the Captain bosses him around lecturing him on "virtue." These two are grotesque figures who are hardly representative of the upper classes. They are rather sharply drawn caricatures: the Captain is suffering from melancholy, boredom and a strange fear of time, the Doctor dreams of a scientific revolution which will result from his comic experiments, such as ordering Woyzeck to wiggle his ears in order to demonstrate man's freedom.

Woyzeck, however, suffers mainly from the treachery of Marie, who betrays him with the Drum Major, a strutting male, superior in physique and rank to Woyzeck. Marie is not merely a sensual female, vain, pleased by the gift of earrings. She has a conscience, feels contrition, affection for her child, and she has some religious stirrings. She reads in the Bible about the woman taken in adultery and wishes she were Mary Magdalene anointing the feet of Christ. But it is too late: in a rage, feeling utterly deserted and alone, Woyzeck stabs her to death. The play as often staged today ends with Woyzeck throwing the knife with which he had killed Marie into a pond and then recovering it in order to destroy the incriminating evidence. A stage direction "he drowns" was added by an editor but has no authority in the manuscripts.

The play is then primarily a human tragedy of a man driven to despair and crime not only by his poverty and inferior social status but by the all-human elemental rage at treachery, the overwhelming sense of desertion, the devastating loss of the one human being he loved. His feeling for Marie with its residual glimmer of affection and tenderness belies the frequent impression that the play expresses a purely nihilistic view of the human condition. This is most strikingly formulated in the fairy tale told by the Grandmother (scene 18) about the poor little orphan child who found the moon a piece of rotten wood and the sun a wilted sunflower and the stars little golden flies just as the shrike sticks them on the blackthorn: "When it wanted to go back down to the earth, the earth was an upset pot and was all alone and it sat down and cried and there it sits to this day, all alone." The fairy tale takes up a *Leitmotiv* of the play. "Everything," we hear several times, "is dead, everything still, as if the world were dead." In a scene Büchner later discarded, Woyzeck himself says: "What is man? Bones! Dust, sand, dirt." and, in an earlier draft of scene 7: "Everyone's a chasm. You get dizzy when you look down into it." The heavy, menacing atmosphere of determinism and man's imprisonment contradicts possibly the implied voice of protest, the indignation at the humiliations inflicted on the poor and even the glimmer of religious feeling not only in the contrite Marie but in Woyzeck himself when he gives away his meager possessions (in 17). He has found a holy picture in his mother's Bible inscribed with two simple verses which suggest an acceptance of suffering: "May pain be my reward, / Through pain I love my Lord." Commentators refer always to the

words of the dying Büchner reported by an unimpeachable witness: "We have not too much suffering but too little. For by suffering we go to God." But such glimpses of a Christian view must not be pressed too hard. The play has precisely the virtue of allowing a social, a nihilistic, an all-human, and even a religious interpretation. As it remains unfinished we cannot decide which would have ultimately received the main stress.

What always surprises and fascinates is Büchner's artistry and dramatic technique. There is an undeniable progression of the action toward the climax of the murder, but it is not presented as a logical series, as a concatenation of cause and effect, but in a sequence of often very short scenes. There are hardly any transitions and hardly any dialogues if we mean by it a genuine interchange among characters. For instance, in scene 4 in Marie's chamber, Marie is shown trying on the earrings given to her by the Drum Major but there is no interchange with Woyzeck who comes in commenting on the luck in finding *two* earrings and speaking rather of the little boy: "Those shiny drops on his forehead; everything under the sun is work. Sweat, even in our sleep." As he puts the hard-earned money on the table, Marie feels an upsurge of remorse which she immediately suppresses with the reflection that we all end in hell. The concentration, the violent changes of mood within a few lines, are masterstrokes obviously in defiance of the rhetoric of German and French classical tragedy.

The way the mood of the murder scene is indicated—forest, pond, cold fog, a bloodred moon—and the inserted folksongs, often subtly alluding to the action, show that Büchner had not quite escaped the atmosphere of romanticism of his time which is, however, strongly contradicted by the down-to-earth, sometimes coarse references to bodily functions and sexual urges. The diction is usually laconic, free from embellishment, repeating key words such as "hot" or "cold," or "on and on" and "stab to death" as in Woyzeck's monologue (12). But key words do not necessarily characterize a single person. The motif of the "red mouth" is not only Woyzeck's obsession but occurs in Marie's reflection on the fine ladies looking into their full-length mirrors. Red is the moon like a bloody iron. "Blood," "red," "knife," "mouth" are almost clusters of images, symbols which go far beyond ordinary realism and fit with the staccato rhythm of much of the language, the cry of the anguished soul of Woyzeck asking "Should I? Must I?" (12). In these two simple questions the central conflict between morals and determinism is again stated powerfully.

The play is preserved in a fair copy which, however, breaks off after scene 17. The rest has to be reconstructed from three earlier drafts which often contradict each other and have different orders of scenes. Modern editions have used them to change, contaminate, and alter the sequences even of the clean copy. (The striking opera by Alban Berg [*Wozzeck*, 1921] has Woyzeck drown in the pond and concludes with a scene showing children running off to look for Marie's corpse while her own son continues playing "hop, hop" on a wooden horse.) The exact sequence of many scenes was never finally determined, but the looseness of the overall structure and the mosaic-like series of little scenes enhance the sense of the world's chaos and the hero's bewilderment.

In English, there are now several books on Büchner since Herbert Lin-

denberger's (1964): Ronald Hauser's *Georg Büchner* (1974), Maurice Benn's *The Drama of Revolt: A Critical Study of Georg Büchner* (1976), David G. Richard's *Georg Büchner and the Birth of the Modern Drama* (1977), Julian Hilton's *Georg Büchner* (1982), and Reinhold Grimm's *Love, Lust, and Rebellion, New Approaches to Georg Büchner* (1985). *The Complete Collected Works*, translated by Henry J. Schmidt (1977), contains the drafts to *Woyzeck*, much on Alban Berg's opera, and other documentary material.

Woyzeck[1]

CHARACTERS

FRANZ WOYZECK
MARIE
CAPTAIN
DOCTOR
DRUM MAJOR
SERGEANT
ANDRES
MARGRET
BARKER
ANNOUNCER
OLD MAN
CHILD
JEW
INNKEEPER
FIRST APPRENTICE
SECOND APPRENTICE
KARL, *an idiot*
KATEY
GRANDMOTHER
FIRST CHILD
SECOND CHILD
FIRST PERSON
SECOND PERSON
COURT CLERK
JUDGE
SOLDIERS, STUDENTS, YOUNG MEN, GIRLS, CHILDREN

[SCENE 1]—*Open Field. The town in the distance.*

WOYZECK *and* ANDRES *are cutting branches in the bushes.*

WOYZECK. Yes, Andres—that stripe there across the grass, that's where heads roll at night; once somebody picked one up, he thought it was a hedgehog. Three days and three nights, and he was lying in a coffin. [*Softly.*] Andres, it was the Freemasons, that's it, the Freemasons—shh!

ANDRES. [*Sings.*]

I saw two big rabbits
Chewing up the green, green grass. . .

WOYZECK. Shh! something's moving!

ANDRES. Chewing up the green, green grass

1. A reconstruction (consisting of Büchner's incomplete revision [Fourth Draft] and scenes from the First Draft). Reconstructed and translated by Henry J. Schmidt.

Till it was all gone.[2]

WOYZECK. Something's moving behind me, under me. [*Stamps on the ground.*] Hollow—you hear that? It's all hollow down there. The Freemasons!

ANDRES. I'm scared.

WOYZECK. It's so strangely quiet. You feel like holding your breath. Andres!

ANDRES. What?

WOYZECK. Say something! [*Stares off into the distance.*] Andres! Look how bright it is! There's fire raging around the sky, and a noise is coming down like trumpets. It's coming closer! Let's go! Don't look back! [*Drags him into the bushes.*]

ANDRES. [*After a pause.*] Woyzeck! Do you still hear it?

WOYZECK. Quiet, it's all quiet, like the world was dead.

ANDRES. Listen! They're drumming. We've got to get back.

[SCENE 2]—*The town.*

MARIE *with her* CHILD *at the window.* MARGRET. *A military patrol goes by, the* DRUM MAJOR *leading.*

MARIE. [*Rocking the* CHILD *in her arms.*] Hey, boy! Ta-ra-ra-ra! You hear it? They're coming.

MARGRET. What a man, like a tree!

MARIE. He stands on his feet like a lion. (*The* DRUM MAJOR *greets them.*)

MARGRET. Say, what a friendly look you gave him, neighbor—we're not used to that from you.

MARIE. [*Sings.*]

A soldier is a handsome fellow. . .

MARGRET. Your eyes are still shining.

MARIE. So what? Why don't you take *your* eyes to the Jew and have them polished—maybe they'll shine enough to sell as two buttons.

MARGRET. What? Why, Mrs. Virgin, I'm a decent woman, but you—you can stare through seven pairs of leather pants!

MARIE. Bitch! [*Slams the window shut.*] Come, my boy, What do they want from us, anyway? You're only the poor child of a whore, and you make your mother happy with your bastard face. Ta-ta! [*Sings.*]

Maiden, now what's to be done?
You've got no ring, you've a son.
Oh, why worry my head,
I'll sing here at your bed:

2. This and the other songs in the play are authentic German songs Büchner knew, and should be sung to tunes of a popular or folk-like character.

Rockabye baby, my baby are you,
Nobody cares what I do.

Johnny, hitch up your six horses fleet,
Go bring them something to eat.
From oats they will turn,
From water they'll turn,
Only cool wine will be fine, hooray!
Only cool wine will be fine.

[*A knock at the window.*]

MARIE. Who's that! Is that you, Franz? Come on in!

WOYZECK. I can't. Have to go to roll call.

MARIE. What's the matter with you, Franz?

WOYZECK. [*Mysteriously.*] Marie, there was something out there again—a lot. Isn't it written: "And lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace"?[3]

MARIE. Man alive!

WOYZECK. It followed me until I reached town. What's going to happen?

MARIE. Franz!

WOYZECK. I've got to go. [*He leaves.*]

MARIE. That man! He's so upset. He didn't look at his own child. He'll go crazy with those thoughts of his. Why are you so quiet, son? Are you scared? It's getting so dark, you'd think you were blind. Usually there's a light shining in. I can't stand it. I'm frightened. [*Goes off.*]

[SCENE 3.]—*Carnival booths. Lights. People.*[4]

OLD MAN. DANCING CHILD.

How long we live, just time will tell,
We all have got to die,
We know that very well!

WOYZECK. Hey! Whee! Poor man, old man! Poor child! Young child! Hey, Marie, shall I carry you? . . . Beautiful world!

CARNIVAL BARKER. [*In front of a booth.*] Gentlemen! Gentlemen! [*Points to a monkey.*] Look at this creature, as God made it: he's nothing, nothing at all. Now see the effect of art: he walks upright,

3. From Revelations 9:2. Woyzeck's hallucinations are linked with the vision of St. John the Divine foretelling the end of the world and the Last Judgment. 4. In his revision, Büchner wrote only this title and left one and a half pages blank. The scene has been reconstructed from earlier drafts. [Translator's note.]

wears coat and pants, carries a sword! Ho! Take a bow! Good boy. Give me a kiss! [*Monkey trumpets.*] The little dummy is musical!

Ladies and gentlemen, here is to be seen the astronomical horse and the little cannery-birds[5]—they're favorites of all potentates of Europe and members of all learned societies. They'll tell you everything: how old you are, how many children you have, what kind of illnesses. [*Points to the money.*] He shoots a pistol, stands on one leg. It's all a matter of upbringing; he has merely a beastly reason, or rather a very reasonable beastliness—he's no brutish individual like a lot of people, present company excepted. Enter! The presentation will begin. The commencement of the beginning will start immediately.

Observe the progress of civilization. Everything progresses—a horse, a monkey, a cannery-bird. The monkey is already a soldier—that's not much, it's the lowest level of the human race!

WOYZECK. Want to?

MARIE. All right. It ought to be good. Look at his tassels, and the woman's got pants on!

(SERGEANT. DRUM MAJOR. [MARIE. WOYZECK.])

SERGEANT. Hold it! Over there. Look at her! What a piece!

DRUM MAJOR. Damn! Good enough for the propagation of cavalry regiments and the breeding of drum majors.

SERGEANT. Look how she holds her head—you'd think that black hair would pull her down like a weight. And those eyes, black. . .

DRUM MAJOR. It's like looking down a well or a chimney. Come on, after her!

MARIE. Those lights!

WOYZECK. Yeah, like a big black cat with fiery eyes. Hey, what a night!

[*Inside the booth.*]

CARNIVAL ANNOUNCER. [*Presenting a horse.*] Show your talent! Show your beastly wisdom! Put human society to shame! Gentlemen, this animal that you see here, with a tail on his body, with his four hooves, is a member of all learned societies, is a professor at our university, with whom the students learn to ride and fight duels. That was simple comprehension! Now think with double *raison.* What do you do when you think with double *raison?* Is there in the learned *société* an ass? [*The horse shakes its head.*] Now you understand double *raison!* That is beastiognomy.[6] Yes, that's no brutish individual, that's a person! A human being, a

5. The Barker says *Canaillevogel* instead of *Kanarienvögel*, which means "canaries." *Canaille* means "scoundrel." [Translator's note.]

beastly human being, but still an animal, a *bête*. [*The horse behaves improperly.*] That's right, put société to shame! You see, the beast is still nature, unspoiled nature! Take a lesson from him. Go ask the doctor, it's very unhealthy![7] It is written: man, be natural; you were created from dust, sand, dirt. Do you want to be more than dust, sand, dirt? Observe his power of reason! He can add, but he can't count on his fingers—why is that? He simply can't express himself, explain himself—he's a transformed person! Tell the gentlemen what time it is. Who among the ladies and gentlemen has a watch—a watch?

DRUM MAJOR. A watch! [*Slowly and grandly he pulls a watch out of his pocket.*] There you are, sir.

MARIE. This I've got to see. [*She climbs into the first row. The* DRUM MAJOR *helps her.*]

[SCENE 4]—*Room.*

MARIE *sits with her* CHILD *on her lap, a piece of mirror in her hand.*

MARIE. [*Looks at herself in the mirror.*] These stones really sparkle! What kind are they? What did he say?—Go to sleep, son! Shut your eyes tight. [*The* CHILD *covers his eyes with his hands.*] Tighter—stay quiet or he'll come get you. [*Sings.*]

Close up your shop, fair maid,
A gypsy boy's in the glade.
He'll lead you by the hand
Off into gypsyland.

[*Looks in the mirror again.*] It must be gold. The likes of us only have a little corner in the world and a little piece of mirror, but I have just as red a mouth as the great ladies with their mirrors from top to toe and their handsome lords who kiss their hands. I'm just a poor woman. [*The* CHILD *sits up.*] Shh, son, eyes shut—look, the sandman! He's running along the wall. [*She flashes with the mirror.*] Eyes shut, or he'll look into them, and you'll go blind.

[WOYZECK *enters behind her. She jumps up with her hands over her ears.*]

WOYZECK. What's that you got there?

MARIE. Nothing.

WOYZECK. Something's shining under your fingers.

6. *Viehsionomik*: a pun on "beast" and "physiognomy." [Translator's note.] 7. I.e., unhealthy to hold it in.

MARIE. An earring—I found it.

WOYZECK. I've never found anything like that. Two at once.

MARIE. What am I—a whore?

WOYZECK. It's all right, Marie.—Look, the boy's asleep. Lift him up under his arms, the chair's hurting him. There are shiny drops on his forehead; everything under the sun is work—sweat, even in our sleep. Us poor people! Here's some more money, Marie, my pay and some from my captain.

MARIE. Bless you, Franz.

WOYZECK. I have to go. See you tonight, Marie. Bye.

MARIE. [*Alone, after a pause.*] What a bitch I am. I could stab myself.—Oh, what a world! Everything goes to hell anyhow, man and woman alike.

[SCENE 5]—*The* CAPTAIN. WOYZECK.

The CAPTAIN *in a chair,* WOYZECK *shaves him.*

CAPTAIN. Take it easy, Woyzeck, take it easy. One thing at a time; you're making me quite dizzy. You're going to finish early today—what am I supposed to do with the extra ten minutes? Woyzeck, just think, you've still got a good thirty years to live, thirty years! That's 360 months, and days, hours, minutes! What are you going to do with that ungodly amount of time? Get organized, Woyzeck.

WOYZECK. Yes, Cap'n.

CAPTAIN. I fear for the world when I think about eternity. Activity, Woyzeck, activity! Eternal, that's eternal, that's eternal—you realize that, of course. But then again it's not eternal, it's only a moment, yes, a moment.—Woyzeck, it frightens me to think that the earth rotates in one day—what a waste of time, what will come of that? Woyzeck, I can't look at a mill wheel anymore or I get melancholy.

WOYZECK. Yes, Cap'n.

CAPTAIN. Woyzeck, you always look so upset. A good man doesn't act like that, a good man with a good conscience. Say something, Woyzeck. What's the weather like today?

WOYZECK. It's bad, Cap'n, bad—wind.

CAPTAIN. I can feel it, there's something rapid out there. A wind like that reminds me of a mouse. [*Cunningly.*] I believe it's coming from the south-north.

WOYZECK. Yes, Cap'n.

CAPTAIN. Ha! Ha! Ha! South-north! Ha! Ha! Ha! Oh, are you stupid, terribly stupid. [*Sentimentally.*] Woyzeck, you're a good man, a good man—[*With dignity.*] but Woyzeck, you've got no morality. Morality—that's when you are moral, you understand. It's a good

word. You have a child without the blessing of the church, as our Reverend Chaplain says, without the blessing of the church—*I* didn't say it.

WOYZECK. Cap'n, the good Lord isn't going to look at a poor little kid only because amen was said over it before it was created. The Lord said: "Suffer little children to come unto me."[8]

CAPTAIN. What's that you're saying? What kind of a crazy answer is that? You're getting me all confused with your answer. When I say *you,* I mean you—you!

WOYZECK. Us poor people. You see, Cap'n—money, money. If you don't have money. Just try to raise your own kind on morality in this world. After all, we're flesh and blood. The likes of us are wretched in this world and in the next; I guess if we ever got to Heaven, we'd have to help with the thunder.

CAPTAIN. Woyzeck, you have no virtue, you're not a virtuous person. Flesh and blood? When I'm lying at the window after it has rained, and I watch the white stockings as they go tripping down the street—damn it, Woyzeck, then love comes all over me. I've got flesh and blood, too. But Woyzeck, virtue, virtue! How else could I make time go by? I always say to myself: you're a virtuous man, [*Sentimentally.*] a good man, a good man.

WOYZECK. Yes, Cap'n, virtue! I haven't figured it out yet. You see, us common people, we don't have virtue, we act like nature tells us—but if I was a gentleman, and had a hat and a watch and an overcoat and could talk refined, then I'd be virtuous, too. Virtue must be nice, Cap'n. But I'm just a poor guy.

CAPTAIN. That's fine, Woyzeck, You're a good man, a good man. But you think too much, that's unhealthy—you always look so upset. This discussion has really worn me out. You can go now—and don't run like that! Slow, nice and slow down the street.

[SCENE 6]—MARIE. DRUM MAJOR.

DRUM MAJOR. Marie!

MARIE. [*Looking at him expressively.*] Go march up and down for me.—A chest like a bull and a beard like a lion. Nobody else is like that.—No woman is prouder than me.

DRUM MAJOR. Sundays when I have my plumed helmet and my white gloves—goddamn, Marie! The prince always says: man, you're quite a guy!

MARIE. [*Mockingly.*] Aw, go on! [*Goes up to him.*] What a man!

DRUM MAJOR. What a woman! Hell, let's breed a race of drum majors, hey! [*He embraces her.*]

MARIE. [*Moody.*] Leave me alone!

8. Mark 10:14.

DRUM MAJOR. You wildcat!

MARIE. [*Violently.*] Just try to touch me!

DRUM MAJOR. Is the devil in your eyes?

MARIE. For all I care. What does it matter?

[SCENE 7]—MARIE, WOYZECK.

WOYZECK. [*Stares at her, shakes his head.*] Hm! I don't see anything, I don't see anything. Oh, I should be able to see it; I should be able to grab it with my fists.

MARIE. [*Intimidated.*] What's the matter, Franz? You're out of your mind, Franz.

WOYZECK. A sin so fat and so wide—it stinks enough to smoke the angels out of Heaven. You've got a red mouth, Marie. No blister on it? Good-bye, Marie, you're as beautiful as sin.—Can mortal sin be so beautiful?

MARIE. Franz, you're delirious.

WOYZECK. Damn it!—Was he standing here like this, like this?

MARIE. As the day is long and the world is old, lots of people can stand on one spot, one after another.

WOYZECK. I saw him.

MARIE. You can see all sorts of things if you've got two eyes and aren't blind, and the sun is shining.

WOYZECK. [With my own eyes!]

MARIE. [*Fresh.*] So what!

[SCENE 8]—WOYZECK. *The* DOCTOR.

DOCTOR. What's this I saw, Woyzeck? A man of his word!

WOYZECK. What is it, Doctor?

DOCTOR. I saw it, Woyzeck—you pissed on the street, you pissed on the wall like a dog. And even though you get two cents a day. Woyzeck, that's bad. The world's getting bad, very bad.

WOYZECK. But Doctor, the call of nature. . .

DOCTOR. The call of nature, the call of nature! Nature! Haven't I proved that the *musculus constrictor vesicae*[9] is subject to the will? Nature! Woyzeck, man is free; in man alone is individuality exalted to freedom. Couldn't hold it in! [*Shakes his head, puts his hands behind his back, and paces back and forth.*] Did you eat your peas already, Woyzeck?—I'm revolutionizing science, I'll blow it sky-high. Urea ten per cent, ammonium chloride, hyperoxidic. Woyzeck, don't you have to piss again? Go in there and try.

WOYZECK. I can't, Doctor.

DOCTOR. [*With emotion.*] But pissing on the wall! I have it in writing, here's the contract. I saw it all, saw it with my own eyes—I

9. The spincter muscle of the bladder.

was just holding my nose out the window, letting the sun's rays hit it, so as to examine the process of sneezing. [*Starts kicking him.*] No, Woyzeck, I'm not getting angry; anger is unhealthy, unscientific. I am calm, perfectly calm—my pulse is beating at its usual sixty, and I'm telling you this in all cold-bloodedness! Who on earth would get excited about a human being, a human being! Now if it were a Proteus lizard that were dying! But you shouldn't have pissed on the wall. . .

WOYZECK. You see, Doctor, sometimes you've got a certain character, a certain structure.—But with nature, that's something else, you see, with nature—[*He cracks his knuckles.*] that's like—how should I put it—for example. . .

DOCTOR. Woyzeck, you're philosophizing again.

WOYZECK. [*Confidingly.*] Doctor, have you ever seen anything of double nature? When the sun's standing high at noon and the world seems to be going up in flames, I've heard a terrible voice talking to me!

DOCTOR. Woyzeck, you've got an *aberratio!*

WOYZECK. [*Puts his finger to his nose.*] The toadstools, Doctor. There—that's where it is. Have you seen how they grow in patterns? If only someone could read that.

DOCTOR. Woyzeck, you've got a marvelous *aberratio mentalis partialis,*[1] second species, beautifully developed. Woyzeck, you're getting a raise. Second species: obsession with a generally rational condition. You're doing everything as usual—shaving your captain?

WOYZECK. Yes, sir.

DOCTOR. Eating your peas?

WOYZECK. Same as ever, Doctor. My wife gets the money for the household.

DOCTOR. Going on duty?

WOYZECK. Yes, sir.

DOCTOR. You're an interesting case. Subject Woyzeck, you're getting a raise. Now behave yourself. Show me your pulse! Yes.

[SCENE 9]—CAPTAIN. DOCTOR.

CAPTAIN. Doctor, I'm afraid for the horses when I think that the poor beasts have to go everywhere on foot. Don't run like that! Don't wave your cane around in the air like that! You'll run yourself to death that way. A good man with a good conscience doesn't go so fast. A good man. [*He catches the* DOCTOR *by the coat.*] Doctor, allow me to save a human life. You're racing. . . . Doctor, I'm so melancholy, I get so emotional, I always start crying when I see

1. "Partial mental aberration."

my coat hanging on the wall—there it is.

DOCTOR. Hm! Bloated, fat, thick neck, apoplectic constitution. Yes, Captain, you might be stricken by an *apoplexia cerebralis.*[2] But you might get it just on one side and be half paralyzed, or—best of all—you might become mentally affected and just vegetate from then on: those are approximately your prospects for the next four weeks. Moreover, I can assure you that you will be a most interesting case, and if, God willing, your tongue is partially paralyzed, we'll make immortal experiments.

CAPTAIN. Doctor, don't frighten me! People have been known to die of fright, of pure, sheer fright.—I can see them now, with their hats in their hands—but they'll say, he was a good man, a good man.—You damn coffin nail!

DOCTOR. [(*Holds out his hat.*)] What's this, Captain? That's brainless!

CAPTAIN. [*Makes a crease.*) What's this, Doctor? That's in-crease!

DOCTOR. I take my leave, most honorable Dr. Drillprick.

CAPTAIN. Likewise, dearest Mr. Coffin Nail.

[SCENE 10]—*The guardroom.*

WOYZECK. ANDRES.

ANDRES. *(Sings.)*

Our hostess has a pretty maid,
She's in her garden night and day,
She sits inside her garden. . .

WOYZECK. Andres!

ANDRES. Huh?

WOYZECK. Nice weather.

ANDRES. Sunday weather. There's music outside town. All the broads are out there already, everybody's sweating—it's really moving along.

WOYZECK. [*Restlessly.*] A dance, Andres, they're dancing.

ANDRES. Yeah, at the Horse and at the Star.

WOYZECK. Dancing, dancing.

ANDRES. Big deal. [*Sings.*]

She sits inside her garden,
Until the bells have all struck twelve,
And stares at all the soo-ooldiers.

WOYZECK. Andres, I can't keep still.

ANDRES. Fool!

WOYZECK. I've got to get out of here. Everything's spinning before my eyes. How hot their hands are. Damn it, Andres!

ANDRES. What do you want?

WOYZECK. I've got to go.

2. A stroke.

ANDRES. With that whore.

WOYZECK. I've got to get out. It's so hot in here.

[SCENE 11]—*Inn.*

The windows are open, a dance. Benches in front of the house.

APPRENTICES.

FIRST APPRENTICE.

This shirt I've got, I don't know whose,
My soul it stinks like booze. . .

SECOND APPRENTICE. Brother, shall I in friendship bore a hole in your nature? Dammit, I want to bore a hole in your nature. I'm quite a guy, too, you know—I'm going to kill all the fleas on his body.

FIRST APPRENTICE. My soul, my soul it stinks like booze.—Even money eventually decays. Forget-me-not! Oh, how beautiful this world is. Brother, I could cry a rain barrel full of tears. I wish our noses were two bottles and we could pour them down each other's throats.

OTHERS. [*In chorus.*]

A hunter from the west
Once went riding through the woods.
Hip-hip, hooray! A hunter has a merry life,
O'er meadow and o'er stream,
Oh, hunting is my dream!

[WOYZECK *stands at the window.* MARIE *and the* DRUM MAJOR *dance past without seeing him.*]

MARIE. [*Dancing by.*] On! and on, on and on!

WOYZECK. [*Chokes.*] On and on—on and on! [*Jumps up violently and sinks back on the bench.*] On and on, on and on. [*Beats his hands together.*] Spin around, roll around. Why doesn't God blow out the sun so that everything can roll around in lust, man and woman, man and beast. Do it in broad daylight, do it on our hands, like flies.—Woman!—That woman is hot, hot! On and on, on and on. [*Jumps up.*] The bastard! Look how he's grabbing her, grabbing her body! He—he's got her now, like I used to have her.[3]

FIRST APPRENTICE. [*Preaches on the table.*] Yet when a wanderer stands leaning against the stream of time or gives answer for the wisdom of God, asking himself: Why does man exist? Why does man exist?—But verily I say unto you: how could the farmer, the cooper, the shoemaker, the doctor exist if God hadn't created man? How could the tailor exist if God hadn't given man a feeling of shame? How could the soldier exist, if men didn't feel the necessity of killing one another? Therefore, do not ye despair, yes, yes,

3. Or: "like it always is at the beginning!" [Translator's note.]

it is good and pleasant, yet all that is earthly is passing, even money eventually decays.—In conclusion, my dear friends, let us piss crosswise so that a Jew will die.

[SCENE 12]—*Open field.*

WOYZECK. On and on! On and on! Shh—music. [*Stretches out on the ground*] Ha—what, what are you saying? Louder, louder—stab, stab the bitch to death? Stab, stab the bitch to death. Should I? Must I? Do I hear it over there too, is the wind saying it too? Do I hear it on and on—stab her to death, to death.

[SCENE 13]—*Night.*

ANDRES *and* WOYZECK *in a bed.*

WOYZECK. (*Shakes* ANDRES.) Andres! Andres! I can't sleep—when I close my eyes, everything starts spinning, and I hear fiddles, on and on, on and on. And then there's a voice from the wall—don't you hear anything?

ANDRES. Oh, yeah—let them dance! God bless us, amen. [*Falls asleep again.*]

WOYZECK. And it floats between my eyes like a knife.

ANDRES. Drink some brandy with a painkiller in it. That'll bring your fever down.

[SCENE 14]—*Inn.*

DRUM MAJOR. WOYZECK. PEOPLE.

DRUM MAJOR. I'm a man! [*Pounds his chest.*] A man, I say. Who wants to start something? If you're not drunk as a lord, stay away from me. I'll shove your nose up your ass. I'll . . . [*To* WOYZECK.] Man, have a drink. A man gotta drink. I wish the world was booze, booze.

WOYZECK. [*Whistles.*]

DRUM MAJOR. You bastard, you want me to pull your tongue out of your throat and wrap it around you? *(They wrestle,* WOYZECK *loses.)* Shall I leave you as much breath as an old woman's fart? Shall I?

(WOYZECK *sits on the bench, exhausted and trembling.*)

DRUM MAJOR. He can whistle till he's blue in the face. Ha!

Oh, brandy, that's my life,
Oh, brandy give me courage!

A PERSON. He sure got what was coming to him.

ANOTHER. He's bleeding.

WOYZECK. One thing after another.

[SCENE 15]—WOYZECK. *The* JEW.

WOYZECK. The pistol costs too much.

JEW. Well, do you want it or don't you?

WOYZECK. How much is the knife?

JEW. It's good and straight. You want to cut your throat with it? Well, how about it? I'll give it to you as cheap as anybody else; your death'll be cheap, but not for nothing. How about it? You'll have an economical death.

WOYZECK. That can cut more than just bread.

JEW. Two cents.

WOYZECK. There! [*Goes off.*]

JEW. There! Like it was nothing. But it's money! The dog.

[SCENE 16]—MARIE. KARL, *the idiot.* CHILD.

MARIE. [*Leafs through the Bible.*] "And no guile is found in his mouth"[4]. . . . My God, my God! Don't look at me. [*Pages further.*] "And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery, and set her in the midst. . . . And Jesus said unto her, 'Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.' "[5] [*Clasps her hands together.*] My God! My God! I can't. God, just give me enough strength to pray. [*The* CHILD *snuggles up to her.*] The boy is like a knife in my heart. [Karl! He's sunning himself!]

KARL. *(Lies on the ground and tells himself fairy tales on his fingers.)* This one has a golden crown—he's a king. Tomorrow I'll go get the queen's child. Blood sausage says, come, liver sausage! [*He takes the* CHILD *and is quiet.*]

[MARIE.] Franz hasn't come, not yesterday, not today. It's getting hot in here. [*She opens the window.*] "And stood at his feet weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with ointment."[6] [*Beats her breast.*] It's all dead! Savior, Savior, I wish I could anoint your feet.

[SCENE 17]—*The barracks.*

ANDRES. WOYZECK *rummages through his things.*

WOYZECK. This jacket isn't part of the uniform, Andres; you can use it, Andres. The crucifix is my sister's, and the little ring. I've got an icon, too—two hearts and nice gold. It was in my mother's Bible, and it says:

May pain be my reward,
Through pain I love my Lord.
Lord, like Thy body, red and sore,
So be my heart forevermore.

My mother can only feel the sun shining on her hands now. That doesn't matter.

ANDRES. [*Blankly, answers to everything.*] Yeah.

4. Isaiah 53:9. 5. John 8:3,4,11. 6. Luke 7:38. Jesus forgave the woman her sins.

WOYZECK. [*Pulls out a piece of paper.*] Friedrich Johann Franz Woyzeck, enlisted infantryman in the second regiment, second battalion, fourth company, born . . . Today[7] I'm thirty years, seven months, and twelve days old.

ANDRES. Franz, you better go to the infirmary. You poor guy—drink brandy with a painkiller in it. That'll kill the fever.

WOYZECK. You know, Andres, when the carpenter nails those boards together, nobody knows who'll be laying his head on them.[8]

[SCENE 18]—*Street.*

MARIE *with girls in front of the house door.* [GRANDMOTHER. *Then* WOYZECK.]

GIRLS. How bright the sun on Candlemas Day,[9]
On Fields of golden grain.
As two by two they marched along
Down the country lane.
The pipers up in front,
The fiddlers in a chain.
Their red socks. . .

FIRST CHILD. That's nice.

SECOND CHILD. What do you want, anyway?

[OTHERS.] Why'd you start it?

Yeah, why?

I can't.

Because!

Who's going to sing?

Why because?

Marie, you sing to us.

MARIE. Come, you little shrimps.

[*Children's games: "Ring-around-a-rosy" and "King Herod."*]

Grandmother, tell a story.

GRANDMOTHER. Once upon a time there was a poor child with no father and no mother, everything was dead, and no one was left in the whole world. Everything was dead, and it went and searched day and night. And since nobody was left on the earth, it wanted to go up to the heavens, and the moon was looking at it so friendly, and when it finally got to the moon, the moon was a piece of rotten wood and then it went to the sun and when it got there, the sun was a wilted sunflower and when it got to the stars, they were little golden flies stuck up there like the shrike sticks 'em on the blackthorn and when it wanted to go back down to the earth, the

7. Büchner inserted here: "on the Feast of the Annunciation, the 20th of July" (actually March 25). [Translator's note] 8. Büchner's revision ends here. The remaining scenes are from his first draft. 9. February 2.

earth was an overturned pot and was all alone and it sat down and cried and there it sits to this day, all alone.

WOYZECK. Marie!

MARIE. [*Startled.*] What is it?

WOYZECK. Marie, we have to go. It's time.

MARIE. Where to?

WOYZECK. How do I know?

[SCENE 19]—MARIE *and* WOYZECK.

MARIE. So the town is over there—it's dark.

WOYZECK. Stay here. Come on, sit down.

MARIE. But I have to get back.

WOYZECK. You won't get sore feet.

MARIE. What's gotten into you!

WOYZECK. Do you know how long it's been, Marie?

MARIE. Two years since Pentecost.[1]

WOYZECK. And do you know how long it's going to be?

MARIE. I've got to go, the evening dew is falling.

WOYZECK. Are you freezing, Marie? But you're warm. How hot your lips are!—Hot, the hot breath of a whore—and yet I'd give heaven and earth to kiss them once more. And when you're cold, you don't freeze anymore. The morning dew won't make you freeze.

MARIE. What are you talking about?

WOYZECK. Nothing. [*Silence.*]

MARIE. Look how red the moon is.

WOYZECK. Like a bloody blade.

MARIE. What are you up to? Franz, you're so pale. [He pulls out the knife.] Franz—wait! For God's sake—help!

WOYZECK. Take that and that! Can't you die? There! There! Ah—she's still twitching—not yet? Not yet? Still alive? [*Stabs once again.*] Are you dead? Dead! Dead! [*People approach, he runs off.*]

[SCENE 20]—*Two people.*

FIRST PERSON. Wait!

SECOND PERSON. You hear it? Shh! Over there.

FIRST PERSON. Ooh! There! What a sound.

SECOND PERSON. That's the water, it's calling. Nobody has drowned for a long time. Let's go—it's bad to hear things like that.

FIRST PERSON. Ooh! There it is again. Like someone dying.

SECOND PERSON. It's weird. It's so fragrant—some gray fog, and the beetles humming like broken bells. Let's get out of here!

FIRST PERSON. No—it's too clear, too loud. Up this way. Come on.

1. Church holiday seven Sundays after Easter.

[SCENE *21*]—*The inn.*

[WOYZECK. KATEY. KARL. INNKEEPER. *People.*]

WOYZECK. Dance, all of you, on and on, sweat and stink—he'll get you all in the end. [*Sings.*]

Our hostess has a pretty maid,
She's in her garden night and day,
She sits inside her garden,
Until the bells have all struck twelve,
And stares at all the soldiers.

[*He dances.*] Come on, Katey! Sit down! I'm hot! Hot. [*He takes off his jacket.*] That's the way it is: the devil takes one and lets the other go. Katey, you're hot! Why? Katey, you'll be cold someday, too. Be reasonable. Can't you sing something?

KATEY. For Swabian[2] hills I do not yearn,
And flowing gowns I always spurn,
For flowing gowns and pointed shoes
A servant girl should never choose.

WOYZECK. No, no shoes—you can go to hell without shoes, too.

KATEY. For shame, my love, I'm not your own,
Just keep your money and sleep alone.

WOYZECK. Yes, that's right, I don't want to make myself bloody.

KATEY. But what's that on your hand?

WOYZECK. Who? Me?

KATEY. Red! Blood! [*People gather around.*]

WOYZECK. Blood? Blood?

INNKEEPER. Ooh, blood.

WOYZECK. I guess I must have cut myself, there on my right hand.

INNKEEPER. But how'd it get on your elbow?

WOYZECK. I wiped it off.

INNKEEPER. What, with your right hand on your right elbow? You're talented.

KARL. And then the giant said: I smell, I smell, I smell human flesh.[3] Phew! That stinks already.

WOYZECK. Damn it, what do you want? What's it got to do with you? Get away, or the first one who—damn it! You think I killed someone? Am I a murderer? What are you staring at? Look at yourselves! Out of my way! [*He runs out.*]

[SCENE 22]—*Children.*

FIRST CHILD. Come on! Marie!

SECOND CHILD. What is it?

FIRST CHILD. Don't you know? Everybody's gone out there already. Someone's lying there!

2. Region of southwest Germany. 3. Alludes to the Grimm fairy tale "The Seven Ravens."

SECOND CHILD. Where?

FIRST CHILD. To the left through the trench, near the red cross.

SECOND CHILD. Let's go, so we can still see something. Otherwise they'll carry her away.

[SCENE 23]—WOYZECK *alone.*

WOYZECK. The knife? Where's the knife? Here's where I left it. It'll give me away! Closer, still closer! What kind of a place is this? What's that I hear? Something's moving. Shh! Over there. Marie? Ah—Marie! Quiet. Everything's quiet! Why are you so pale, Marie? Why is that red thread around your neck? Who helped you earn that necklace, with your sins? They made you black, black! Now I've made you white. Why does your black hair hang so wild? Didn't you do your braids today? Something's lying over there! Cold, wet, still. Got to get away from here. The knife, the knife—is that it? There! People—over there. [*He runs off.*]

[SCENE 24]—WOYZECK *at a pond.*

WOYZECK. Down it goes! [*He throws the knife in.*] It sinks into the dark water like a stone! The moon is like a bloody blade! Is the whole world going to give me away? No, it's too far in front—when people go swimming—[*He goes into the pond and throws it far out.*] All right, now—but in the summer, when they go diving for shells—bah, it'll rust. Who'll recognize it? I wish I'd smashed it! Am I still bloody? I've got to wash myself. There's a spot—and there's another.

[SCENE 25]—COURT CLERK. BARBER. DOCTOR. JUDGE.

[CLERK.] A good murder, a real murder, a beautiful murder—as good a murder as you'd ever want to see. We haven't had one like this for a long time.

HENRIK IBSEN

1828–1906

Henrik Ibsen was the foremost playwright of his time, treating social themes and ideas (the subjection of women, hereditary disease, man's illusions and self-delusions) and often satirizing the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie—not only in Norway, his native land. His plays may be viewed historically as the culmination point of the *bourgeois* drama which has flourished fitfully, in France and Germany particularly, since the eighteenth century, when Diderot advocated and wrote plays about the middle classes, their "conditions" and problems. But they may also be seen as the fountainhead of much modern

drama—of the plays of Shaw and Galsworthy, who discuss social problems, and of Maeterlinck and Chekhov, who learned from the later "symbolist" Ibsen.

Ibsen was born at Skien, in Norway, on March 20, 1828. His family had sunk into poverty and finally complete bankruptcy. In 1844, at the age of sixteen, he was sent to Grimstad, another small coastal town, as an apothecary's apprentice. There he lived in almost complete isolation and cut himself off from his family, except for his sister Hedvig. In 1850 he managed to get to Oslo (then Christiana) and to enroll at the university. But he never passed his examinations and in the following year left for Bergen, where he had acquired the position of playwright and assistant stage manager at the newly founded Norwegian Theater. Ibsen supplied the small theater with several historical and romantic plays. In 1857 he was appointed artistic director at the Mollergate Theater in Christiana, and a year later he married Susannah Thoresen. *Love's Comedy* (1862) was his first major success on the stage. Ibsen was then deeply affected by Scandinavianism, the movement for the solidarity of the Northern nations, and when in 1864 Norway refused to do anything to support Denmark in her war with Prussia and Austria over Schleswig-Holstein, he was so disgusted with his country that he left it for what he thought would be permanent exile. After that, Ibsen led a life of wandering. He lived in Rome, in Dresden, in Munich, and in smaller summer resorts, and during this time wrote all his later plays.

After a long period of incubation and experimentation with romantic and historical themes, Ibsen wrote a series of "problem" plays, beginning with *The Pillars of Society* (1877), which in their time created a furor by their fearless criticism of the nineteenth-century social scene: the subjection of women, hypocrisy, hereditary disease, seamy politics, and corrupt journalism. He wrote these plays using naturalistic modes of presentation: ordinary colloquial speech, a simple setting in a drawing room or study, a natural way of introducing or dismissing characters. Ibsen had learned from the "well-made" Parisian play (typified by those of Scribe) how to confine his action to one climactic situation and how gradually to uncover the past by retrogressive exposition. But he went far beyond it in technical skill and intellectual honesty.

The success of Ibsen's problem plays was international. But we must not forget that he was a Norwegian, the first writer of his small nation (its population at that time was less than two million) to win a reputation outside of Norway. Ibsen more than anyone else widened the scope of world literature beyond the confines of the great modern nations, which had entered its community roughly in this order: Italy, Spain, France, England, Germany, Russia. Since the time of Ibsen, the other small nations have begun to play their part in the concert of European literature. Paradoxically, however, Ibsen rejected his own land. He had dreamed of becoming a great national poet. Instead, the plays he wrote during his voluntary exile depicted Norwegian society as consisting largely of a stuffy, provincial middle class, redeemed by a few upright, even fiery, individuals of initiative and courage. Only in 1891, when he was sixty-three, did Ibsen return to Christiana for good. He was then famous and widely honored, but lived a very retired life. In 1900 he suffered a stroke which made him a complete invalid for the last

years of his life. He died on May 23, 1906, at Christiana.

Ibsen could hardly have survived his time if he had been merely a painter of society, a dialectician of social issues, and a magnificent technician of the theater. True, many of his discussions are now dated. We smile at some of the doings in *A Doll's House* (1879) and *Ghosts* (1881). His stagecraft is not unusual, even on Broadway. But Ibsen stays with us because he has more to offer—because he was an artist who managed to create, at his best, works of poetry which, under their mask of sardonic humor, express his dream of humanity reborn by intelligence and self-sacrifice.

Hedda Gabler (1890) surprised and puzzled the large audience all over Europe that Ibsen had won in the 1880s. The play shows nothing of Ibsen's reforming zeal: no general theme emerges which could be used in spreading progressive ideas such as the emancipation of women dramatized in *A Doll's House* (1879), nor is the play an example of Ibsen's peculiar technique of retrospective revelation exhibited in *Rosmersholm* (1886). At first glance it seems mainly a study of a complex, exceptional, and even unique woman. Henry James, reviewing the first English performance, saw it as the picture of "a state of nerves as well as of soul, a state of temper, of health, of chagrin, of despair." Undoubtedly, Hedda is the central figure of the play, but she is no conventional heroine. She behaves atrociously to everyone with whom she comes in contact, and her moral sense is thoroughly defective: she is perverse, egotistical, sadistic, callous, even evil and demonic, truly a *femme fatale*. Still, this impression, while not mistaken, ignores another side of her personality and her situation. The play is, after all, a tragedy (though there are comic touches) and we are to feel pity and terror. Hedda is not simply evil and perverse. We must imagine her as distinguished, well-bred, proud, beautiful, and even grand in her defiance of her surroundings and in the final gesture of her suicide. Not for nothing have great actresses excelled in this role. We must pity her as a tortured, tormented creature caught in a web of circumstance, as a victim, in spite of her lashings-out to dominate and control the fate of those around her.

We are carefully prepared to understand her heritage. She is General Gabler's daughter. Ibsen tells us himself (in a letter to Count Moritz Prozor, 4 December 1890) that "I intended to indicate thereby that as a personality she is to be regarded rather as her father's daughter than as her husband's wife." She has inherited an aristocratic view of life. Her father's portrait hangs in her apartment. His pistols tell of the code of honor and the ready escape they offer in a self-inflicted death. Hedda lives in Ibsen's Norway, a stuffy, provincial, middle-class society, and is acutely, even morbidly afraid of scandal. She has, to her own regret, rejected the advances of Eilert, theatrically threatening him with her father's pistol. She envies Thea for the boldness with which she deserted her husband to follow Eilert. She admires Eilert for his escapades, which she romanticizes with the recurrent metaphor of his returning with "vine-leaves in his hair." But she cannot break out of the narrow confines of her society. She is not an emancipated woman.

When she is almost thirty, in reduced circumstances, she accepts a suitable husband, George Tesman. The marriage of convenience turns out to be a ghastly error for which she cannot forgive herself: Tesman is an amiable bore absorbed in his research into the "Domestic Industries of Brabant Dur-

ing the Middle Ages." His expectations of a professorship in his home town turn out to be uncertain. He has gone into debt, even to his guileless old aunt, in renting an expensive house and, supreme humiliation for her, Hedda is with child by him. The dream of luxury, of becoming a hostess, of keeping thoroughbred horses, is shattered the very first day after their return from the prolonged honeymoon which for Tesman was also a trip to rummage around in archives. Hedda is deeply stirred by the return of Eilert, her first suitor. She seems vaguely to think of a new relationship, at least, by spoiling his friendship with Thea. She plays with the attentions of Judge Brack. But everything quickly comes to nought: she is trapped in her marriage, unable and unwilling to become unfaithful to her husband; she is deeply disappointed by Eilert's ugly death, saying, "Everything I touch seems destined to turn into something mean and farcical." She fears the scandal which will follow when her role in Eilert's suicide is discovered and she is called before the police; she can avoid it only by coming under the power of Judge Brack, who is prepared to blackmail her with his knowledge of the circumstances. Her plot to destroy Thea and Eilert's brainchild is frustrated by Thea's having preserved notes and drafts which Thea eagerly starts to reconstruct with the help of Tesman. Still, while Hedda is in a terrible *impasse*, her suicide remains a shock, an abrupt, even absurd deed, eliciting the final line from the commonsensical Judge Brack: "Good God—people don't do things like that!" But we must assume that Hedda had pondered suicide long before: the pistol she gave to Eilert implies an unspoken suicide pact. He bungled it; she does it the right way, dying in beauty, shot in the temple and not in the abdomen.

The play is not, however, simply a character study, though Hedda is an extraordinarily complex, contradictory, subtle woman whose portrait, at least on the stage, could not be easily paralleled before Ibsen. It is also an extremely effective, swiftly moving play of action, deftly plotted in its clashes and climaxes. At the end of act 1 Hedda seems to have won. The Tesmans, husband and aunt, are put in their place. Thea is lured into making confidences. The scene in act 2 in which Hedda appeals to Eilert's pride in his independence and induces him to join in Judge Brack's party is a superb display of Hedda's power and skill. Act 2 ends with Eilert going off and the two women left alone in their tense though suppressed antagonism. Act 3 ends with Hedda alone, burning the precious manuscript about the "forces that will shape our civilization and the direction in which that civilization may develop," an obvious contrast to Tesman's research into an irrelevant past. (Ibsen himself always believed in progress, in a utopia he called "the Third Realm.")

The action is compressed into about thirty-six hours and located in a house where only the moving of furniture (the piano into the back room) or the change of light or costumes indicates the passing of time. Tesman is something of a fool. He is totally unaware of Hedda's inner turmoil, he obtusely misunderstands allusions to her pregnancy, he comically encourages the advances of Judge Brack, he complacently settles down to the task of assembling the fragments of Eilert's manuscript, recognizing that "putting other people's papers into order is rather my specialty." Though he seems amiably domestic in his love for his aunts, proud of having won Hedda,

ambitious to provide an elegant home for her, his behavior is by no means above reproach. He envies and fears Eilert, gloats over his bad reputation, surreptitiously brings home the lost manuscript, conceals its recovery from Thea; when Hedda tells of its being burned, he is at first shocked, reacting comically with the legal phrase about "appropriating lost property," but is then easily persuaded to accept it when Hedda tells him that she did it for his sake and completely won over when she reveals her pregnancy. After Eilert's death he feels, however, some guilt and tries to make up by helping in the reconstruction of the manuscript, now that his rival no longer threatens his career. Tesman is given strong speech mannerisms: the frequent use of "what?" which Hedda, commenting at the end on the progress of the work on the manuscript, imitates sarcastically, and the use of "fancy that." His last inappropriate words, "She's shot herself! Shot herself in the head! Fancy that!" lend a grotesque touch to the tragic end. Aunt Juliana belongs with him: she is a fussy, kindly person, proud of her nephew, awed by his new wife, eager to help with the expected baby, but also easily consoled after the death of her sister: "There's always some poor invalid who needs care and attention."

Judge Brack is a "man of the world," a sensualist who hardly conceals his desire to make Hedda his mistress, by blackmail if necessary, and is dismayed when she escapes his clutches: in his easy-going philosophy "people usually learn to accept the inevitable."

The other pair, Eilert Loevborg and Thea Elvsted, are sharply contrasted. Thea had the courage to leave her husband; she is devoted to Eilert and seems to have cured him of his addiction to drink but fears that he cannot resist a new temptation. Eilert tells Hedda unkindly that Thea is "stupid," and there is some truth to that, inasmuch as she is so easily taken in by Hedda. Her quick settling down to work on the manuscript after Eilert's death suggests some obtuseness, though we must, presumably, excuse it as a theatrical foreshortening.

Eilert, we must assume, is some kind of genius. His book, we have to take on trust, is an important work. We are told that he had squandered an inheritance, had engaged in orgies, and had regaled Hedda with tales of his exploits before she chased him with her pistol. When he comes back to town, ostensibly reformed, dressed conventionally, he immediately starts courting Hedda again. Stung by her contempt for his abstinence, he rushes off to Brack's party, which degenerates into a disgraceful brawl in a house of ill fame. His relapse and the loss of the manuscript destroy his self-esteem and hope for any future. He accepts Hedda's pistol but dies an ignominious, ugly death. We see Eilert mainly reflected in Hedda's imagination as a figure of pagan freedom who, she thinks, has done something noble, beautiful, and courageous in "rising from the feast of life so early." She dies in beauty as she wanted Eilert to die.

This aesthetic suicide must seem to us a supremely futile gesture of revolt. Ibsen always admired the great rebels, the fighters for freedom, but *Hedda Gabler* will appear almost a parodic version of his persistent theme: the individual against society, defying it and escaping it in death.

J. W. McFarlane, ed., *Discussions of Henrik Ibsen* (1962), contains Henry James, "On the Occasion of 'Hedda Gabler.' " John Northam, *Ibsen: A Crit-*

ical Study (1973), has a chapter on *Hedda Gabler*, as do Bernard Shaw, *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* (1913), and Hermann J. Weigand, *The Modern Ibsen* (1925).

Hedda Gabler[1]

Characters

GEORGE TESMAN, *research graduate in cultural history*
HEDDA, *his wife*
MISS JULIANA TESMAN, *his aunt*
MRS. ELVSTED
JUDGE BRACK
EILERT LOEVBORG
BERTHA, *a maid*

The action takes place in TESMAN'S *villa in the fashionable quarter of town.*

Act I

SCENE—*A large drawing room, handsomely and tastefully furnished; decorated in dark colors. In the rear wall is a broad open doorway, with curtains drawn back to either side. It leads to a smaller room, decorated in the same style as the drawing room. In the right-hand wall of the drawing room, a folding door leads out to the hall. The opposite wall, on the left, contains french windows, also with curtains drawn back on either side. Through the glass we can see part of a verandah, and trees in autumn colors. Downstage stands an oval table, covered by a cloth and surrounded by chairs. Downstage right, against the wall, is a broad stove tiled with dark porcelain; in front of it stand a high-backed armchair, a cushioned footrest, and two footstools. Upstage right, in an alcove, is a corner sofa, with a small, round table. Downstage left, a little away from the wall, is another sofa. Upstage of the french windows, a piano. On either side of the open doorway in the rear wall stand what-nots holding ornaments of terra cotta and majolica. Against the rear wall of the smaller room can be seen a sofa, a table, and a couple of chairs. Above this sofa hangs the portrait of a handsome old man in general's uniform. Above the table a lamp hangs from the ceiling, with a shade of opalescent, milky glass. All round the drawing room bunches of flowers stand in vases and glasses. More bunches lie on the tables. The floors of both rooms are covered with thick carpets. Morning light. The sun shines in through the french windows.*

MISS JULIANA TESMAN, *wearing a hat and carrying a parasol, enters from the hall, followed by* BERTHA, *who is carrying a bunch of flow-*

1. Translated by Michael Meyer.

ers wrapped in paper. MISS TESMAN *is about sixty-five, of pleasant and kindly appearance. She is neatly but simply dressed in grey outdoor clothes.* BERTHA, *the maid, is rather simple and rustic-looking. She is getting on in years.*

MISS TESMAN. [*Stops just inside the door, listens, and says in a hushed voice*] No, bless my soul! They're not up yet.

BERTHA. [*Also in hushed tones*] What did I tell you, miss? The boat didn't get in till midnight. And when they did turn up—Jesus, miss, you should have seen all the things Madam made me unpack before she'd go to bed!

MISS TESMAN. Ah, well. Let them have a good lie in. But let's have some nice fresh air waiting for them when they do come down.

[*Goes to the french windows and throws them wide open*]

BERTHA. [*Bewildered at the table, the bunch of flowers in her hand*] I'm blessed if there's a square inch left to put anything. I'll have to let it lie here, miss.

[*Puts it on the piano*]

MISS TESMAN. Well, Bertha dear, so now you have a new mistress. Heaven knows it nearly broke my heart to have to part with you.

BERTHA. [*Snivels*] What about me, Miss Juju? How do you suppose I felt? After all the happy years I've spent with you and Miss Rena?

MISS TESMAN. We must accept it bravely, Bertha. It was the only way. George needs you to take care of him. He could never manage without you. You've looked after him ever since he was a tiny boy.

BERTHA. Oh, but Miss Juju, I can't help thinking about Miss Rena, lying there all helpless, poor dear. And that new girl! She'll never learn the proper way to handle an invalid.

MISS TESMAN. Oh, I'll manage to train her. I'll do most of the work myself, you know. You needn't worry about my poor sister, Bertha dear.

BERTHA. But Miss Juju, there's another thing. I'm frightened Madam may not find me suitable.

MISS TESMAN. Oh, nonsense, Bertha. There may be one or two little things to begin with——

BERTHA. She's a real lady. Wants everything just so.

MISS TESMAN. But of course she does! General Gabler's daughter! Think of what she was accustomed to when the General was alive. You remember how we used to see her out riding with her father? In that long black skirt? With the feather in her hat?

BERTHA. Oh, yes, miss. As if I could forget! But, Lord! I never dreamed I'd live to see a match between her and Master Georgie.

MISS TESMAN. Neither did I. By the way, Bertha, from now on you must stop calling him Master Georgie. You must say: Dr. Tesman.

BERTHA. Yes, Madam said something about that too. Last night—the moment they'd set foot inside the door. Is it true, then, miss?

MISS TESMAN. Indeed it is. Just imagine, Bertha, some foreigners have made him a doctor. It happened while they were away. I had no idea till he told me when they got off the boat.

BERTHA. Well, I suppose there's no limit to what he won't become. He's that clever. I never thought he'd go in for hospital work, though.

MISS TESMAN. No, he's not that kind of doctor. [*Nods impressively*] In any case, you may soon have to address him by an even grander title.

BERTHA. You don't say! What might that be, miss?

MISS TESMAN. [*Smiles*] Ah! If you only knew! [*Moved*] Dear God, if only poor dear Joachim could rise out of his grave and see what his little son has grown into! [*Looks round*] But Bertha, why have you done this? Taken the chintz covers off all the furniture!

BERTHA. Madam said I was to. Can't stand chintz covers on chairs, she said.

MISS TESMAN. But surely they're not going to use this room as a parlor?

BERTHA. So I gathered, miss. From what Madam said. He didn't say anything. The Doctor.

[GEORGE TESMAN *comes into the rear room, from the right, humming, with an open, empty travelling bag in his hand. He is about thirty-three, of medium height and youthful appearance, rather plump, with an open, round, contented face, and fair hair and beard. He wears spectacles, and is dressed in comfortable, indoor clothes.*]

MISS TESMAN. Good morning! Good morning, George!

TESMAN. [*In open doorway*] Auntie Juju! Dear Auntie Juju! [*Comes forward and shakes her hand*] You've come all the way out here! And so early! What?

MISS TESMAN. Well, I had to make sure you'd settled in comfortably.

TESMAN. But you can't have had a proper night's sleep.

MISS TESMAN. Oh, never mind that.

TESMAN. We were so sorry we couldn't give you a lift. But you saw how it was—Hedda had so much luggage—and she insisted on having it all with her.

MISS TESMAN. Yes, I've never seen so much luggage.

BERTHA. [*To* TESMAN] Shall I go and ask Madam if there's anything I can lend her a hand with?

TESMAN. Er—thank you, Bertha; no, you needn't bother. She says if she wants you for anything she'll ring.

BERTHA. [*Over to right*] Oh. Very good.

TESMAN. Oh, Bertha—take this bag, will you?

BERTHA. [*Takes it.*] I'll put it in the attic.

[*Goes out into the hall*]

TESMAN. Just fancy, Auntie Juju, I filled that whole bag with notes for my book. You know, it's really incredible what I've managed to find rooting through those archives. By Jove! Wonderful old things no one even knew existed——

MISS TESMAN. I'm sure you didn't waste a single moment of your honeymoon, George dear.

TESMAN. No, I think I can truthfully claim that. But, Auntie Juju, do take your hat off. Here. Let me untie it for you. What?

MISS TESMAN. [*As he does so*] Oh dear, oh dear! It's just as if you were still living at home with us.

TESMAN. [*Turns the hat in his hand and looks at it*] I say! What a splendid new hat!

MISS TESMAN. I bought it for Hedda's sake.

TESMAN. For Hedda's sake? What?

MISS TESMAN. So that Hedda needn't be ashamed of me, in case we ever go for a walk together.

TESMAN. [*Pats her cheek*] You still think of everything, don't you, Auntie Juju? [*Puts the hat down on a chair by the table*] Come on, let's sit down here on the sofa. And have a little chat while we wait for Hedda.

[*They sit. She puts her parasol in the corner of the sofa.*]

MISS TESMAN. [*Clasps both his hands and looks at him*] Oh, George, it's so wonderful to have you back, and be able to see you with my own eyes again! Poor dear Joachim's own son!

TESMAN. What about me! It's wonderful for me to see you again, Auntie Juju. You've been a mother to me. And a father, too.

MISS TESMAN. You'll always keep a soft spot in your heart for your old aunties, won't you, George dear?

TESMAN. I suppose Auntie Rena's no better? What?

MISS TESMAN. Alas, no. I'm afraid she'll never get better, poor dear. She's lying there just as she has for all these years. Please God I may be allowed to keep her for a little longer. If I lost her I don't know what I'd do. Especially now I haven't you to look after.

TESMAN. [*Pats her on the back*] There, there, there!

MISS TESMAN. [*With a sudden change of mood*] Oh but George, fancy you being a married man! And to think it's you who've won Hedda Gabler! The beautiful Hedda Gabler! Fancy! She was always so surrounded by admirers.

TESMAN. [*Hums a little and smiles contentedly*] Yes, I suppose there are quite a few people in this town who wouldn't mind being in my shoes. What?

MISS TESMAN. And what a honeymoon! Five months! Nearly six.

TESMAN. Well, I've done a lot of work, you know. All those archives

to go through. And I've had to read lots of books.

MISS TESMAN. Yes, dear, of course. [*Lowers her voice confidentially*] But tell me, George—haven't you any—any extra little piece of news to give me?

TESMAN. You mean, arising out of the honeymoon?

MISS TESMAN. Yes.

TESMAN. No, I don't think there's anything I didn't tell you in my letters. My doctorate, of course—but I told you about that last night, didn't I?

MISS TESMAN. Yes, yes, I didn't mean that kind of thing. I was just wondering—are you—are you expecting——?

TESMAN. Expecting what?

MISS TESMAN. Oh, come on George, I'm your old aunt!

TESMAN. Well actually—yes, I am expecting something.

MISS TESMAN. I knew it!

TESMAN. You'll be happy to hear that before very long I expect to become a professor.

MISS TESMAN. Professor?

TESMAN. I think I may say that the matter has been decided. But, Auntie Juju, you know about this.

MISS TESMAN. [*Gives a little laugh*] Yes, of course. I'd forgotten. [*Changes her tone*] But we were talking about your honeymoon. It must have cost a dreadful amount of money, George?

TESMAN. Oh well, you know, that big research grant I got helped a good deal.

MISS TESMAN. But how on earth did you manage to make it do for two?

TESMAN. Well, to tell the truth it was a bit tricky. What?

MISS TESMAN. Especially when one's traveling with a lady. A little bird tells me that makes things very much more expensive.

TESMAN. Well, yes, of course it does make things a little more expensive. But Hedda has to do things in style, Auntie Juju. I mean, she has to. Anything less grand wouldn't have suited her.

MISS TESMAN. No, no, I suppose not. A honeymoon abroad seems to be the vogue nowadays. But tell me, have you had time to look round the house?

TESMAN. You bet. I've been up since the crack of dawn.

MISS TESMAN. Well, what do you think of it?

TESMAN. Splendid. Absolutely splendid. I'm only wondering what we're going to do with those two empty rooms between that little one and Hedda's bedroom.

MISS TESMAN. [*Laughs slyly*] Ah, George dear, I'm sure you'll manage to find some use for them—in time.

TESMAN. Yes, of course, Auntie Juju, how stupid of me. You're thinking of my books. What?

MISS TESMAN. Yes, yes, dear boy. I was thinking of your books.

TESMAN. You know, I'm so happy for Hedda's sake that we've managed to get this house. Before we became engaged she often used to say this was the only house in town she felt she could really bear to live in. It used to belong to Mrs. Falk—you know, the Prime Minister's widow.

MISS TESMAN. Fancy that! And what a stroke of luck it happened to come into the market. Just as you'd left on your honeymoon.

TESMAN. Yes, Auntie Juju, we've certainly had all the luck with us. What?

MISS TESMAN. But, George dear, the expense! It's going to make a dreadful hole in your pocket, all this.

TESMAN. [*A little downcast*] Yes, I—I suppose it will, won't it?

MISS TESMAN. Oh, George, really!

TESMAN. How much do you think it'll cost? Roughly, I mean? What?

MISS TESMAN. I can't possibly say till I see the bills.

TESMAN. Well, luckily Judge Brack's managed to get it on very favorable terms. He wrote and told Hedda so.

MISS TESMAN. Don't you worry, George dear. Anyway I've stood security for all the furniture and carpets.

TESMAN. Security? But dear, sweet Auntie Juju, how could you possibly stand security?

MISS TESMAN. I've arranged a mortgage on our annuity.

TESMAN. [*jumps up*] What? On your annuity? And—Auntie Rena's?

MISS TESMAN. Yes. Well, I couldn't think of any other way.

TESMAN. [*Stands in front of her*] Auntie Juju, have you gone completely out of your mind? That annuity's all you and Auntie Rena have.

MISS TESMAN. All right, there's no need to get so excited about it. It's a pure formality, you know. Judge Brack told me so. He was so kind as to arrange it all for me. A pure formality; those were his very words.

TESMAN. I dare say. All the same——

MISS TESMAN. Anyway, you'll have a salary of your own now. And, good heavens, even if we did have to fork out a little—tighten our belts for a week or two—why, we'd be happy to do so for your sake.

TESMAN. Oh, Auntie Juju! Will you never stop sacrificing yourself for me?

MISS TESMAN. [*Gets up and puts her hands on his shoulders*] What else have I to live for but to smooth your road a little, my dear boy? You've never had any mother or father to turn to. And now at last we've achieved our goal. I won't deny we've had our little difficulties now and then. But now, thank the good Lord, George dear, all your worries are past.

TESMAN. Yes, it's wonderful really how everything's gone just right for me.

MISS TESMAN. Yes! And the enemies who tried to bar your way have been struck down. They have been made to bite the dust. The man who was your most dangerous rival has had the mightiest fall. And now he's lying there in the pit he dug for himself, poor misguided creature.

TESMAN. Have you heard any news of Eilert? Since I went away?

MISS TESMAN. Only that he's said to have published a new book.

TESMAN. What! Eilert Loevborg? You mean—just recently? What?

MISS TESMAN. So they say. I don't imagine it can be of any value, do you? When your new book comes out, that'll be another story. What's it going to be about?

TESMAN. The domestic industries of Brabant[2] in the Middle Ages.

MISS TESMAN. Oh, George! The things you know about!

TESMAN. Mind you, it may be some time before I actually get down to writing it. I've made these very extensive notes, and I've got to file and index them first.

MISS TESMAN. Ah, yes! Making notes; filing and indexing; you've always been wonderful at that. Poor dear Joachim was just the same.

TESMAN. I'm looking forward so much to getting down to that. Especially now I've a home of my own to work in.

MISS TESMAN. And above all, now that you have the girl you set your heart on, George dear.

TESMAN. [*Embraces her*] Oh, yes, Auntie Juju, yes! Hedda's the loveliest thing of all! [*Looks towards the doorway*] I think I hear her coming. What?

[HEDDA *enters the rear room from the left, and comes into the drawing room. She is a woman of twenty-nine. Distinguished, aristocratic face and figure. Her complexion is pale and opalescent. Her eyes are steel-grey, with an expression of cold, calm serenity. Her hair is of a handsome auburn color, but is not especially abundant. She is dressed in an elegant, somewhat loose-fitting morning gown.*]

MISS TESMAN. [*Goes to greet her*] Good morning, Hedda dear! Good morning!

HEDDA. [*Holds out her hand*] Good morning, dear Miss Tesman. What an early hour to call. So kind of you.

MISS TESMAN. [*Seems somewhat embarrassed*] And has the young bride slept well in her new home?

HEDDA. Oh—thank you, yes. Passably well.

TESMAN. [*Laughs*] Passably. I say, Hedda, that's good! When I jumped

2. In the Middle Ages, a duchy located in parts of what are now Belgium and the Netherlands.

out of bed, you were sleeping like a top.

HEDDA. Yes. Fortunately. One has to accustom oneself to anything new, Miss Tesman. It takes time. [*Looks left*] Oh, that maid's left the french windows open. This room's flooded with sun.

MISS TESMAN. [*Goes towards the windows*] Oh—let me close them.

HEDDA. No, no, don't do that. Tesman dear, draw the curtains. This light's blinding me.

TESMAN. [*At the windows*] Yes, yes, dear. There, Hedda, now you've got shade and fresh air.

HEDDA. This room needs fresh air. All these flowers—But my dear Miss Tesman, won't you take a seat?

MISS TESMAN. No, really not, thank you. I just wanted to make sure you have everything you need. I must see about getting back home. My poor dear sister will be waiting for me.

TESMAN. Be sure to give her my love, won't you? Tell her I'll run over and see her later today.

MISS TESMAN. Oh yes, I'll tell her that. Oh, George——[*Fumbles in the pocket of her skirt*] I almost forgot. I've brought something for you.

TESMAN. What's that, Auntie Juju? What?

MISS TESMAN. [*Pulls out a flat package wrapped in newspaper and gives it to him*] Open and see, dear boy.

TESMAN. [*Opens the package*] Good heavens! Auntie Juju, you've kept them! Hedda, this is really very touching. What?

HEDDA. [*By the what-nots, on the right*] What is it, Tesman?

TESMAN. My old shoes! My slippers, Hedda!

HEDDA. Oh, them. I remember you kept talking about them on our honeymoon.

TESMAN. Yes, I missed them dreadfully. [*Goes over to her*] Here, Hedda, take a look.

HEDDA. [*Goes away towards the stove*] Thanks, I won't bother.

TESMAN. [*Follows her*] Fancy, Hedda, Auntie Rena's embroidered them for me. Despite her being so ill. Oh, you can't imagine what memories they have for me.

HEDDA. [*By the table*] Not for me.

MISS TESMAN. No, Hedda's right there, George.

TESMAN. Yes, but I thought since she's one of the family now——

HEDDA. [*Interrupts*] Tesman, we really can't go on keeping this maid.

MISS TESMAN. Not keep Bertha?

TESMAN. What makes you say that, dear? What?

HEDDA. [*Points*] Look at that! She's left her old hat lying on the chair.

TESMAN. [*Appalled, drops his slippers on the floor*] But, Hedda——!

HEDDA. Suppose someone came in and saw it?

TESMAN. But Hedda—that's Auntie Juju's hat.

HEDDA. Oh?

MISS TESMAN. [*Picks up the hat*] Indeed it's mine. And it doesn't happen to be old, Hedda dear.

HEDDA. I didn't look at it very closely, Miss Tesman.

MISS TESMAN. [*Tying on the hat*] As a matter of fact, it's the first time I've worn it. As the good Lord is my witness.

TESMAN. It's very pretty, too. Really smart.

MISS TESMAN. Oh, I'm afraid it's nothing much really. [*Looks round*] My parasol? Ah, here it is. [*Takes it*] This is mine, too. [*Murmurs*] Not Bertha's.

TESMAN. A new hat and a new parasol! I say, Hedda, fancy that!

HEDDA. Very pretty and charming.

TESMAN. Yes, isn't it? What? But Auntie Juju, take a good look at Hedda before you go. Isn't she pretty and charming?

MISS TESMAN. Dear boy, there's nothing new in that. Hedda's been a beauty ever since the day she was born.

[*Nods and goes right.*]

TESMAN. [*Follows her*] Yes, but have you noticed how strong and healthy she's looking? And how she's filled out since we went away?

MISS TESMAN. [*Stops and turns*] Filled out?

HEDDA. [*Walks across the room*] Oh, can't we forget it?

TESMAN. Yes, Auntie Juju—you can't see it so clearly with that dress on. But I've good reason to know——

HEDDA. [*By the french windows, impatiently*] You haven't good reason to know anything.

TESMAN. It must have been the mountain air up there in the Tyrol——

HEDDA. [*Curtly, interrupts him*] I'm exactly the same as when I went away.

TESMAN. You keep on saying so. But you're not. I'm right, aren't I, Auntie Juju?

MISS TESMAN. [*Has folded her hands and is gazing at her*] She's beautiful—beautiful. Hedda is beautiful. [*Goes over to* HEDDA, *takes her head between her hands, draws it down and kisses her hair*] God bless and keep you, Hedda Tesman. For George's sake.

HEDDA. [*Frees herself politely*] Oh—let me go, please.

MISS TESMAN. [*Quietly, emotionally*] I shall come see you both every day.

TESMAN. Yes, Auntie Juju, please do. What?

MISS TESMAN. Good-bye! Good-bye!

[*She goes out into the hall.* TESMAN *follows her. The door remains open.* TESMAN *is heard sending his love to* AUNT RENA *and thanking* MISS TESMAN *for his slippers. Meanwhile* HEDDA *walks up and down the room raising her arms and clenching her fists as though in desperation. Then she throws aside the curtains from the french windows and stands there, looking out. A few*

moments later, TESMAN *returns and closes the door behind him.*]

TESMAN. [*Picks up his slippers from the floor*] What are you looking at, Hedda?

HEDDA. [*Calm and controlled again*] Only the leaves. They're so golden. And withered.

TESMAN. [*Wraps up the slippers and lays them on the table*] Well, we're in September now.

HEDDA. [*Restless again*] Yes. We're already into September.

TESMAN. Auntie Juju was behaving rather oddly, I thought, didn't you? Almost as though she was in church or something. I wonder what came over her. Any idea?

HEDDA. I hardly know her. Does she often act like that?

TESMAN. Not to the extent she did today.

HEDDA. [*Goes away from the french windows*] Do you think she was hurt by what I said about the hat?

TESMAN. Oh, I don't think so. A little at first, perhaps——

HEDDA. But what a thing to do, throw her hat down in someone's drawing room. People don't do such things.

TESMAN. I'm sure Auntie Juju doesn't do it very often.

HEDDA. Oh well, I'll make it up with her.

TESMAN. Oh Hedda, would you?

HEDDA. When you see them this afternoon invite her to come out here this evening.

TESMAN. You bet I will! I say, there's another thing which would please her enormously.

HEDDA. Oh?

TESMAN. If you could bring yourself to call her Auntie Juju. For my sake, Hedda? What?

HEDDA. Oh no, really Tesman, you mustn't ask me to do that. I've told you so once before. I'll try to call her Aunt Juliana. That's as far as I'll go.

TESMAN. [*After a moment*] I say, Hedda, is anything wrong? What?

HEDDA. I'm just looking at my old piano. It doesn't really go with all this.

TESMAN. As soon as I start getting my salary we'll see about changing it.

HEDDA. No, no, don't let's change it. I don't want to part with it. We can move it into that little room and get another one to put in here.

TESMAN. [*A little downcast*] Yes, we—might do that.

HEDDA. [*Picks up the bunch of flowers from the piano*] These flowers weren't here when we arrived last night.

TESMAN. I expect Auntie Juju brought them.

HEDDA. Here's a card. [*Takes it out and reads*] "Will come back later today." Guess who it's from?

TESMAN. No idea. Who? What?

HEDDA. It says: "Mrs. Elvsted."

TESMAN. No, really? Mrs. Elvsted! She used to be Miss Rysing, didn't she?

HEDDA. Yes. She was the one with that irritating hair she was always showing off. I hear she used to be an old flame of yours.

TESMAN. [*Laughs*] That didn't last long. Anyway, that was before I got to know you, Hedda. By Jove, fancy her being in town!

HEDDA. Strange she should call. I only knew her at school.

TESMAN. Yes, I haven't seen her for—oh, heaven knows how long. I don't know how she manages to stick it out up there in the north. What?

HEDDA. [*Thinks for a moment, then says suddenly*] Tell me, Tesman, doesn't he live somewhere up in those parts? You know—Eilert Loevborg?

TESMAN. Yes, that's right. So he does.

[BERTHA *enters from the hall.*]

BERTHA. She's here again, madam. The lady who came and left the flowers. [*Points*] The ones you're holding.

HEDDA. Oh, is she? Well, show her in.

[BERTHA *opens the door for* MRS. ELVSTED *and goes out.* MRS. ELVSTED *is a delicately built woman with gentle, attractive features. Her eyes are light blue, large, and somewhat prominent, with a frightened, questioning expression. Her hair is extremely fair, almost flaxen, and is exceptionally wavy and abundant. She is two or three years younger than* HEDDA. *She is wearing a dark visiting dress, in good taste but not quite in the latest fashion.*]

HEDDA. [*Goes cordially to greet her*] Dear Mrs. Elvsted, good morning. How delightful to see you again after all this time.

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Nervously, trying to control herself*] Yes, it's many years since we met.

TESMAN. And since *we* met. What?

HEDDA. Thank you for your lovely flowers.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, please—I wanted to come yesterday afternoon. But they told me you were away——

TESMAN. You've only just arrived in town, then? What?

MRS. ELVSTED. I got here yesterday, around midday. Oh, I became almost desperate when I heard you weren't here.

HEDDA. Desperate? Why?

TESMAN. My dear Mrs. Rysing—Elvsted——

HEDDA. There's nothing wrong, I hope?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, there is. And I don't know anyone else here whom I can turn to.

HEDDA. [*Puts the flowers down on the table*] Come and sit with me on the sofa——

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, I feel too restless to sit down.

HEDDA. You must. Come along, now.

[*She pulls* MRS. ELVSTED *down on to the sofa and sits beside her.*]

TESMAN. Well? Tell us, Mrs.—er——

HEDDA. Has something happened at home?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes—that is, yes and no. Oh, I do hope you won't misunderstand me——

HEDDA. Then you'd better tell us the whole story, Mrs. Elvsted.

TESMAN. That's why you've come. What?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes—yes, it is. Well, then—in case you don't already know—Eilert Loevborg is in town.

HEDDA. Loevborg here?

TESMAN. Eilert back in town? By Jove, Hedda, did you hear that?

HEDDA. Yes, of course I heard.

MRS. ELVSTED. He's been here a week. A whole week! In this city. Alone. With all those dreadful people——

HEDDA. But my dear Mrs. Elvsted, what concern is he of yours?

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Gives her a frightened look and says quickly*] He's been tutoring the children.

HEDDA. Your children?

MRS. ELVSTED. My husband's. I have none.

HEDDA. Oh, you mean your stepchildren.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes.

TESMAN. [*Gropingly*] But was he sufficiently—I don't know how to put it—sufficiently regular in his habits to be suited to such a post? What?

MRS. ELVSTED. For the past two to three years he has been living irreproachably.

TESMAN. You don't say! By Jove, Hedda, hear that?

HEDDA. I hear.

MRS. ELVSTED. Quite irreproachably, I assure you. In every respect. All the same—in this big city—with money in his pockets—I'm so dreadfully frightened something may happen to him.

TESMAN. But why didn't he stay up there with you and your husband?

MRS. ELVSTED. Once his book had come out, he became restless.

TESMAN. Oh, yes—Auntie Juju said he's brought out a new book.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, a big new book about the history of civilization. A kind of general survey. It came out a fortnight ago. Everyone's been buying it and reading it—it's created a tremendous stir——

TESMAN. Has it really? It must be something he's dug up, then.

MRS. ELVSTED. You mean from the old days?

TESMAN. Yes.

MRS. ELVSTED. No, he's written it all since he came to live with us.

TESMAN. Well, that's splendid news, Hedda. Fancy that!

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, yes! If only he can go on like this!

HEDDA. Have you met him since you came here?

MRS. ELVSTED. No, not yet, I had such dreadful difficulty finding his address. But this morning I managed to track him down at last.

HEDDA. [*Looks searchingly at her*] I must say I find it a little strange that your husband—hm——

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Starts nervously*] My husband! What do you mean?

HEDDA. That he should send you all the way here on an errand of this kind. I'm surprised he didn't come himself to keep an eye on his friend.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, no, no—my husband hasn't the time. Besides, I—er—wanted to do some shopping here.

HEDDA. [*With a slight smile*] Ah. Well, that's different.

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Gets up quickly, restlessly*] Please, Mr. Tesman, I beg you—be kind to Eilert Loevborg if he comes here. I'm sure he will. I mean, you used to be such good friends in the old days. And you're both studying the same subject, as far as I can understand. You're in the same field, aren't you?

TESMAN. Well, we used to be, anyway.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes—so I beg you earnestly, do please, please, keep an eye on him. Oh, Mr. Tesman, do promise me you will.

TESMAN. I shall be only too happy to do so, Mrs. Rysing.

HEDDA. Elvsted.

TESMAN. I'll do everything for Eilert that lies in my power. You can rely on that.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, how good and kind you are! [*Presses his hands*] Thank you, thank you, thank you. [*Frightened*] My husband's so fond of him, you see.

HEDDA. [*Gets up*] You'd better send him a note, Tesman. He may not come to you of his own accord.

TESMAN. Yes, that'd probably be the best plan, Hedda. What?

HEDDA. The sooner the better. Why not do it now?

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Pleadingly*] Oh yes, if only you would!

TESMAN. I'll do it this very moment. Do you have his address, Mrs.—er—Elvsted?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes.

[*Takes a small piece of paper from her pocket and gives it to him.*]

TESMAN. Good, good. Right, well I'll go inside and——[*Looks round*] Where are my slippers? Oh yes, here.

[*Picks up the package and is about to go*]

HEDDA. Try to sound friendly. Make it a nice long letter.

TESMAN. Right, I will.

MRS. ELVSTED. Please don't say anything about my having seen you.

TESMAN. Good heavens no, of course not. What?
[*Goes out through the rear room to the right*]
HEDDA. [*Goes over to* MRS. ELVSTED, *smiles, and says softly*] Well! Now we've killed two birds with one stone.
MRS. ELVSTED. What do you mean?
HEDDA. Didn't you realize I wanted to get him out of the room?
MRS. ELVSTED. So that he could write the letter?
HEDDA. And so that I could talk to you alone.
MRS. ELVSTED. [*Confused*] About this?
HEDDA. Yes, about this.
MRS. ELVSTED. [*In alarm*] But there's nothing more to tell, Mrs. Tesman. Really there isn't.
HEDDA. Oh, yes there is. There's a lot more. I can see that. Come along, let's sit down and have a little chat.
[*She pushes* MRS. ELVSTED *down into the armchair by the stove and seats herself on one of the footstools.*]
MRS. ELVSTED. [*Looks anxiously at her watch*] Really, Mrs. Tesman, I think I ought to be going now.
HEDDA. There's no hurry. Well? How are things at home?
MRS. ELVSTED. I'd rather not speak about that.
HEDDA. But my dear, you can tell me. Good heavens, we were at school together.
MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, but you were a year senior to me. Oh, I used to be terribly frightened of you in those days.
HEDDA. Frightened of me?
MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, terribly frightened. Whenever you met me on the staircase you used to pull my hair.
HEDDA. No, did I?
MRS. ELVSTED. Yes. And once you said you'd burn it all off.
HEDDA. Oh, that was only in fun.
MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, but I was so silly in those days. And then afterwards—I mean, we've drifted so far apart. Our backgrounds were so different.
HEDDA. Well, now we must try to drift together again. Now listen. When we were at school we used to call each other by our Christian names——
MRS. ELVSTED. No, I'm sure you're mistaken.
HEDDA. I'm sure I'm not. I remember it quite clearly. Let's tell each other our secrets, as we used to in the old days. [*Moves closer on her footstool*] There, now. [*Kisses her on the cheek*] You must call me Hedda.
MRS. ELVSTED. [*Squeezes her hands and pats them*] Oh, you're so kind. I'm not used to people being so nice to me.
HEDDA. Now, now, now. And I shall call you Tora, the way I used to.

MRS. ELVSTED. My name is Thea.

HEDDA. Yes, of course. Of course. I meant Thea. [*Looks at her sympathetically*] So you're not used to kindness, Thea? In your own home?

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, if only I had a home! But I haven't. I've never had one.

HEDDA. [*Looks at her for a moment*] I thought that was it.

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Stares blankly and helplessly*] Yes—yes—yes.

HEDDA. I can't remember exactly now, but didn't you first go to Mr. Elvsted as a housekeeper?

MRS. ELVSTED. Governess, actually. But his wife—at the time, I mean—she was an invalid, and had to spend most of her time in bed. So I had to look after the house too.

HEDDA. But in the end, you became mistress of the house.

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Sadly*] Yes, I did.

HEDDA. Let me see. Roughly how long ago was that?

MRS. ELVSTED. When I got married, you mean?

HEDDA. Yes.

MRS. ELVSTED. About five years.

HEDDA. Yes; it must be about that.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, those five years! Especially that last two or three. Oh, Mrs. Tesman, if you only knew——

HEDDA. [*Slaps her hand gently*] Mrs. Tesman? Oh, Thea!

MRS. ELVSTED. I'm sorry, I'll try to remember. Yes—if you had any idea——

HEDDA. [*Casually*] Eilert Loevborg's been up here too, for about three years, hasn't he?

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Looks at her uncertainly*] Eilert Loevborg? Yes, he has.

HEDDA. Did you know him before? When you were here?

MRS. ELVSTED. No, not really. That is—I knew him by name, of course.

HEDDA. But up there, he used to visit you?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, he used to come and see us every day. To give the children lessons. I found I couldn't do that as well as manage the house.

HEDDA. I'm sure you couldn't. And your husband——? I suppose being a magistrate he has to be away from home a good deal?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes. You see, Mrs.——you see, Hedda, he has to cover the whole district.

HEDDA. [*Leans against the arm of* MRS. ELVSTED'S *chair*] Poor, pretty little Thea! Now you must tell me the whole story. From beginning to end.

MRS. ELVSTED. Well—what do you want to know?

HEDDA. What kind of a man is your husband, Thea? I mean, as a person. Is he kind to you?

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Evasively*] I'm sure he does his best to be.

HEDDA. I only wonder if he isn't too old for you. There's more than twenty years between you, isn't there?

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Irritably*] Yes, there's that too. Oh, there are so many things. We're different in every way. We've nothing in common. Nothing whatever.

HEDDA. But he loves you, surely? In his own way?

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, I don't know. I think he just finds me useful. And then I don't cost much to keep. I'm cheap.

HEDDA. Now you're being stupid.

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Shakes her head*] It can't be any different. With him. He doesn't love anyone except himself. And perhaps the children—a little.

HEDDA. He must be fond of Eilert Loevborg, Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Looks at her*] Eilert Loevborg? What makes you think that?

HEDDA. Well, if he sends you all the way down here to look for him——[*Smiles almost imperceptibly*] Besides, you said so yourself to Tesman.

MRS. ELVSTED. [*With a nervous twitch*] Did I? Oh yes, I suppose I did. [*Impulsively, but keeping her voice low*] Well, I might as well tell you the whole story. It's bound to come out sooner or later.

HEDDA. But my dear Thea——?

MRS. ELVSTED. My husband had no idea I was coming here.

HEDDA. What? Your husband didn't know?

MRS. ELVSTED. No, of course not. As a matter of fact, he wasn't even there. He was away at the assizes. Oh, I couldn't stand it any longer, Hedda! I just couldn't. I'd be so dreadfully lonely up there now.

HEDDA. Go on.

MRS. ELVSTED. So I packed a few things. Secretly. And went.

HEDDA. Without telling anyone?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes. I caught the train and came straight here.

HEDDA. But my dear Thea! How brave of you!

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Gets up and walks across the room*] Well, what else could I do?

HEDDA. But what do you suppose your husband will say when you get back?

MRS. ELVSTED. [*By the table, looks at her*] Back there? To him?

HEDDA. Yes. Surely——?

MRS. ELVSTED. I shall never go back to him.

HEDDA. [*Gets up and goes closer*] You mean you've left your home for good?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes. I didn't see what else I could do.

HEDDA. But to do it so openly!

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, it's no use trying to keep a thing like that secret.

HEDDA. But what do you suppose people will say?

MRS. ELVSTED. They can say what they like. [*Sits sadly, wearily on the sofa*] I had to do it.

HEDDA. [*After a short silence*] What do you intend to do now? How are you going to live?

MRS. ELVSTED. I don't know. I only know that I must live wherever Eilert Loevborg is. If I am to go on living.

HEDDA. [*Moves a chair from the table, sits on it near* MRS. ELVSTED *and strokes her hands*] Tell me, Thea, how did this—friendship between you and Eilert Loevborg begin?

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, it came about gradually. I developed a kind of—power over him.

HEDDA. Oh?

MRS. ELVSTED. He gave up his old habits. Not because I asked him to. I'd never have dared to do that. I suppose he just noticed I didn't like that kind of thing. So he gave it up.

HEDDA. [*Hides a smile*] So you've made a new man of him. Clever little Thea!

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes—anyway, he says I have. And he's made a —sort of—real person of me. Taught me to think—and to understand all kinds of things.

HEDDA. Did he give you lessons too?

MRS. ELVSTED. Not exactly lessons. But he talked to me. About—oh, you've no idea—so many things! And then he let me work with him. Oh, it was wonderful.I was so happy to be allowed to help him.

HEDDA. Did he allow you to help him!

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes. Whenever he wrote anything we always—did it together.

HEDDA. Like good pals?

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Eagerly*] Pals! Yes—why, Hedda, that's exactly the word he used! Oh, I ought to feel so happy. But I can't. I don't know if it will last.

HEDDA. You don't seem very sure of him.

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Sadly*] Something stands between Eilert Loevberg and me. The shadow of another woman.

HEDDA. Who can that be?

MRS. ELVSTED. I don't know. Someone he used to be friendly with in—in the old days. Someone he's never been able to forget.

HEDDA. What has he told you about her?

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, he only mentioned her once, casually.

HEDDA. Well! What did he say?

MRS. ELVSTED. He said when he left her she tried to shoot him with a pistol.

HEDDA. [*Cold, controlled*] What nonsense. People don't do such

things. The kind of people we know.

MRS. ELVSTED. No, I think it must have been that red-haired singer he used to——

HEDDA. Ah yes, very probably.

MRS. ELVSTED. I remember they used to say she always carried a loaded pistol.

HEDDA. Well then, it must be her.

MRS. ELVSTED. But Hedda, I hear she's come back, and is living here. Oh, I'm so desperate——!

HEDDA. [*Glances toward the rear room*] Ssh! Tesman's coming. [*Gets up and whispers*] Thea, we mustn't breathe a word about this to anyone.

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Jumps up*] Oh, no, no! Please don't!

[GEORGE TESMAN *appears from the right in the rear room with a letter in his hand, and comes into the drawing room.*]

TESMAN. Well, here's my little epistle all signed and sealed.

HEDDA. Good. I think Mrs. Elvsted wants to go now. Wait a moment—I'll see you as far as the garden gate.

TESMAN. Er—Hedda, do you think Bertha could deal with this?

HEDDA. [*Takes the letter*] I'll give her instructions.

[BERTHA *enters from the hall.*]

BERTHA. Judge Brack is here and asks if he may pay his respects to Madam and the Doctor.

HEDDA. Yes, ask him to be so good as to come in. And—wait a moment—drop this letter in the post box.

BERTHA. [*Takes the letter*] Very good, madam.

[*She opens the door for* JUDGE BRACK, *and goes out.* JUDGE BRACK *is forty-five; rather short, but well-built, and elastic in his movements. He has a roundish face with an aristocratic profile. His hair, cut short, is still almost black, and is carefully barbered. Eyes lively and humorous. Thick eyebrows. His moustache is also thick, and is trimmed square at the ends. He is wearing outdoor clothes which are elegant but a little too youthful for him. He has a monocle in one eye; now and then he lets it drop.*]

BRACK. [*Hat in hand, bows*] May one presume to call so early?

HEDDA. One may presume.

TESMAN. [*Shakes his hand*] You're welcome here any time. Judge Brack—Mrs. Rysing.

[HEDDA *sighs.*]

BRACK. [*Bows*] Ah—charmed——

HEDDA. [*Looks at him and laughs*] What fun to be able to see you by daylight for once, Judge.

BRACK. Do I look—different?

HEDDA. Yes. A little younger, I think.

BRACK. Obliged.

TESMAN. Well, what do you think of Hedda? What? Doesn't she look well? Hasn't she filled out——?

HEDDA. Oh, do stop it. You ought to be thanking Judge Brack for all the inconvenience he's put himself to——

BRACK. Nonsense, it was a pleasure——

HEDDA. You're a loyal friend. But my other friend is pining to get away. Au revoir, Judge. I won't be a minute.

[*Mutual salutations.* MRS. ELVSTED *and* HEDDA *go out through the hall.*]

BRACK. Well, is your wife satisfied with everything?

TESMAN. Yes, we can't thank you enough. That is—we may have to shift one or two things around, she tells me. And we're short of one or two little items we'll have to purchase.

BRACK. Oh? Really?

TESMAN. But you musn't worry your head about that. Hedda says she'll get what's needed. I say, why don't we sit down? What?

BRACK. Thanks, just for a moment. [*Sits at the table*] There's something I'd like to talk to you about, my dear Tesman.

TESMAN. Oh? Ah yes, of course. [*Sits*] After the feast comes the reckoning. What?

BRACK. Oh, never mind about the financial side—there's no hurry about that. Though I could wish we'd arranged things a little less palatially.

TESMAN. Good heavens, that'd never have done. Think of Hedda, my dear chap. You know her. I couldn't possibly ask her to live like a suburban housewife.

BRACK. No, no—that's just the problem.

TESMAN. Anyway, it can't be long now before my nomination[3] comes through.

BRACK. Well, you know, these things often take time.

TESMAN. Have you heard any more news? What?

BRACK. Nothing definite. [*Changing the subject*] Oh, by the way, I have one piece of news for you.

TESMAN. What?

BRACK. Your old friend Eilert Loevborg is back in town.

TESMAN. I know that already.

BRACK. Oh? How did you hear that?

TESMAN. She told me. That lady who went out with Hedda.

BRACK. I see. What was her name? I didn't catch it.

TESMAN. Mrs. Elvsted.

BRACK. Oh, the magistrate's wife. Yes, Loevborg's been living up near them, hasn't he?

3. For the professorship. Professors at European universities were less numerous and more socially prominent than their contemporary American counterparts.

TESMAN. I'm delighted to hear he's become a decent human being again.

BRACK. Yes, so they say.

TESMAN. I gather he's published a new book, too. What?

BRACK. Indeed he has.

TESMAN. I hear it's created rather a stir.

BRACK. Quite an unusual stir.

TESMAN. I say, isn't that splendid news! He's such a gifted chap—and I was afraid he'd gone to the dogs for good.

BRACK. Most people thought he had.

TESMAN. But I can't think what he'll do now. How on earth will he manage to make ends meet? What?

[*As he speaks his last words,* HEDDA *enters from the hall.*]

HEDDA. [*To* BRACK, *laughs slightly scornfully*] Tesman is always worrying about making ends meet.

TESMAN. We were talking about poor Eilert Loevborg, Hedda dear.

HEDDA. [*Gives him a quick look*] Oh, were you? [*Sits in the armchair by the stove and asks casually*] Is he in trouble?

TESMAN. Well, he must have run through his inheritance long ago by now. And he can't write a new book every year. What? So I'm wondering what's going to become of him.

BRACK. I may be able to enlighten you there.

TESMAN. Oh?

BRACK. You mustn't forget he has relatives who wield a good deal of influence.

TESMAN. Relatives? Oh, they've quite washed their hands of him, I'm afraid.

BRACK. They used to regard him as the hope of the family.

TESMAN. Used to, yes. But he's put an end to that.

HEDDA. Who knows? [*With a little smile*] I hear the Elvsteds have made a new man of him.

BRACK. And then this book he's just published——

TESMAN. Well, let's hope they find something for him. I've just written him a note. Oh, by the way, Hedda, I asked him to come over and see us this evening.

BRACK. But my dear chap, you're coming to me this evening. My bachelor party.[4] You promised me last night when I met you at the boat.

HEDDA. Had you forgotten, Tesman?

TESMAN. Good heavens, yes, I'd quite forgotten.

BRACK. Anyway, you can be quite sure he won't turn up here.

TESMAN. Why do you think that? What?

BRACK. [*A little unwillingly, gets up and rests his hands on the back of his chair*] My dear Tesman—and you, too, Mrs. Tesman—

4. A party for men only, whether single or married.

there's something I feel you ought to know.

TESMAN. Concerning Eilert?

BRACK. Concerning him and you.

TESMAN. Well, my dear Judge, tell us, please!

BRACK. You must be prepared for your nomination not to come through quite as quickly as you hope and expect.

TESMAN. [*Jumps up uneasily*] Is anything wrong? What?

BRACK. There's a possibility that the appointment may be decided by competition——

TESMAN. Competition! By Jove, Hedda, fancy that!

HEDDA. [*Leans further back in her chair*] Ah! How interesting!

TESMAN. But who else——? I say, you don't mean——?

BRACK. Exactly. By competition with Eilert Loevborg.

TESMAN. [*Clasps his hands in alarm*] No, no, but this is inconceivable! It's absolutely impossible! What?

BRACK. Hm. We may find it'll happen, all the same.

TESMAN. No, but—Judge Brack, they couldn't be so inconsiderate toward me! [*Waves his arms*] I mean, by Jove, I—I'm a married man! It was on the strength of this that Hedda and I *got* married! We ran up some pretty hefty debts. And borrowed money from Auntie Juju! I mean, good heavens, they practically promised me the appointment. What?

BRACK. Well, well, I'm sure you'll get it. But you'll have to go through a competition.

HEDDA. [*Motionless in her armchair*] How exciting, Tesman. It'll be a kind of duel, by Jove.

TESMAN. My dear Hedda, how can you take it so lightly?

HEDDA. [*As before*] I'm not. I can't wait to see who's going to win.

BRACK. In any case, Mrs. Tesman, it's best you should know how things stand. I mean before you commit yourself to these little items I hear you're threatening to purchase.

HEDDA. I can't allow this to alter my plans.

BRACK. Indeed? Well, that's your business. Good-bye. [*To* TESMAN] I'll come and collect you on the way home from my afternoon walk.

TESMAN. Oh, yes, yes. I'm sorry, I'm all upside down just now.

HEDDA. [*Lying in her chair, holds out her hand*] Good-bye, Judge. See you this afternoon.

BRACK. Thank you. Good-bye, good-bye.

TESMAN. [*Sees him to the door*] Good-bye, my dear Judge. You will excuse me, won't you?

[JUDGE BRACK *goes out through the hall.*]

TESMAN. [*Pacing up and down*] Oh, Hedda! One oughtn't to go plunging off on wild adventures. What?

HEDDA. [*Looks at him and smiles*] Like you're doing?

TESMAN. Yes. I mean, there's no denying it, it was a pretty big adven-

ture to go off and get married and set up house merely on expectation.

HEDDA. Perhaps you're right.

TESMAN. Well, anyway, we have our home, Hedda. By Jove, yes. The home we dreamed of. And set our hearts on. What?

HEDDA. [*Gets up slowly, wearily*] You agreed that we should enter society. And keep open house. That was the bargain.

TESMAN. Yes. Good heavens, I was looking forward to it all so much. To seeing you play hostess to a select circle! By Jove! What? Ah, well, for the time being we shall have to make do with each other's company, Hedda. Perhaps have Auntie Juju in now and then. Oh dear, this wasn't all what you had in mind——

HEDDA. I won't be able to have a liveried footman.[5] For a start.

TESMAN. Oh no, we couldn't possibly afford a footman.

HEDDA. And that thoroughbred horse you promised me——

TESMAN. [*Fearfully*] Thoroughbred horse!

HEDDA. I mustn't even think of that now.

TESMAN. Heaven forbid!

HEDDA. [*Walks across the room*] Ah, well. I still have one thing left to amuse myself with.

TESMAN. [*Joyfully*] Thank goodness for that. What's that, Hedda? What?

HEDDA. [*In the open doorway, looks at him with concealed scorn*] My pistols, George darling.

TESMAN. [*Alarmed*] Pistols!

HEDDA. [*Her eyes cold*] General Gabler's pistols.

[*She goes into the rear room and disappears.*]

TESMAN. [*Runs to the doorway and calls after her*] For heaven's sake, Hedda dear, don't touch those things. They're dangerous. Hedda—please—for my sake! What?

Act II

SCENE—*The same as in Act I except that the piano has been removed and an elegant little writing table, with a bookcase, stands in its place. By the sofa on the left a smaller table has been placed. Most of the flowers have been removed.* MRS. ELVSTED's *bouquet stands on the larger table, downstage. It is afternoon.*

HEDDA, *dressed to receive callers, is alone in the room. She is standing by the open french windows, loading a revolver. The pair to it is lying in an open pistol case on the writing table.*

HEDDA. [*Looks down into the garden and calls*] Good afternoon, Judge.

BRACK. [*In the distance, below*] Afternoon, Mrs. Tesman.

5. A uniformed servant.

HEDDA. [*Raises the pistol and takes aim*] I'm going to shoot you, Judge Brack.

BRACK. [*Shouts from below*] No no, no! Don't aim that thing at me!

HEDDA. This'll teach you to enter houses by the back door. [*Fires*]

BRACK. [*Below*] Have you gone completely out of your mind?

HEDDA. Oh dear! Did I hit you?

BRACK. [*Still outside*] Stop playing these silly tricks.

HEDDA. All right, Judge. Come along in.

[JUDGE BRACK, *dressed for a bachelor party, enters through the french windows. He has a light overcoat on his arm.*]

BRACK. For God's sake! Haven't you stopped fooling around with those things yet? What are you trying to hit?

HEDDA. Oh, I was just shooting at the sky.

BRACK. [*Takes the pistol gently from her hand*] By your leave, ma'am. [*Looks at it*] Ah, yes—I know this old friend well. [*Looks around*] Where's the case? Oh, yes. [*Puts the pistol in the case and closes it*] That's enough of that little game for today.

HEDDA. Well, what on earth *am* I to do?

BRACK. You haven't had any visitors?

HEDDA. [*Closes the french windows*] Not one. I suppose the best people are all still in the country.

BRACK. Your husband isn't home yet?

HEDDA. [*Locks the pistol case away in a drawer of the writing table*] No. The moment he'd finished eating he ran off to his aunties. He wasn't expecting you so early.

BRACK. Ah, why didn't I think of that? How stupid of me.

HEDDA. [*Turns her head and looks at him*] Why stupid?

BRACK. I'd have come a little sooner.

HEDDA. [*Walks across the room*] There'd have been no one to receive you. I've been in my room since lunch, dressing.

BRACK. You haven't a tiny crack in the door through which we might have negotiated?

HEDDA. You forgot to arrange one.

BRACK. Another stupidity.

HEDDA. Well, we'll have to sit down here. And wait. Tesman won't be back for some time.

BRACK. Sad. Well, I'll be patient.

[HEDDA *sits on the corner of the sofa.* BRACK *puts his coat over the back of the nearest chair and seats himself, keeping his hat in his hand. Short pause. They look at each other.*]

HEDDA. Well?

BRACK. [*In the same tone of voice*] Well?

HEDDA. I asked first.

BRACK. [*Leans forward slightly*] Yes, well, now we can enjoy a nice, cosy little chat—Mrs. Hedda.

HEDDA. [*Leans further back in her chair*] It seems such ages since we had a talk. I don't count last night or this morning.

BRACK. You mean: *à deux?*[6]

HEDDA. Mm—yes. That's roughly what I meant.

BRACK. I've been longing so much for you to come home.

HEDDA. So have I.

BRACK. You? Really, Mrs. Hedda? And I thought you were having such a wonderful honeymoon.

HEDDA. Oh, yes. Wonderful!

BRACK. But your husband wrote such ecstatic letters.

HEDDA. He! Oh, yes! He thinks life has nothing better to offer than rooting around in libraries and copying old pieces of parchment, or whatever it is he does.

BRACK. [*A little maliciously*] Well, that *is* his life. Most of it, anyway.

HEDDA. Yes, I know. Well, it's all right for him. But for me! Oh no, my dear Judge. I've been bored to death.

BRACK. [*Sympathetically*] Do you mean that? Seriously?

HEDDA. Yes. Can you imagine? Six whole months without ever meeting a single person who was one of us, and to whom I could talk about the kind of things we talk about.

BRACK. Yes, I can understand. I'd miss that, too.

HEDDA. That wasn't the worst, though.

BRACK. What was?

HEDDA. Having to spend every minute of one's life with—with the same person.

BRACK. [*Nods*] Yes. What a thought! Morning; noon; and——

HEDDA. [*Coldly*] As I said: every minute of one's life.

BRACK. I stand corrected. But dear Tesman is such a clever fellow, I should have thought one ought to be able——

HEDDA. Tesman is only interested in one thing, my dear Judge. His special subject.

BRACK. True.

HEDDA. And people who are only interested in one thing don't make the most amusing company. Not for long, anyway.

BRACK. Not even when they happen to be the person one loves?

HEDDA. Oh, don't use that sickly, stupid word.

BRACK. [*Starts*] But, Mrs. Hedda——!

HEDDA. [*Half laughing, half annoyed*] You just try it, Judge. Listening to the history of civilization morning, noon and——

BRACK. [*Corrects her*] Every minute of one's life.

HEDDA. All right. Oh, and those domestic industries of Brabant in the Middle Ages! That really is beyond the limit.

BRACK. [*Looks at her searchingly*] But, tell me—if you feel like this

6. Just the two of us.

why on earth did you—? Ha——

HEDDA. Why on earth did I marry George Tesman?

BRACK. If you like to put it that way.

HEDDA. Do you think it so very strange?

BRACK. Yes—and no, Mrs. Hedda.

HEDDA. I'd danced myself tired, Judge. I felt my time was up—— [*Gives a slight shudder*] No, I mustn't say that. Or even think it.

BRACK. You've no rational cause to think it.

HEDDA. Oh—cause, cause——[*Looks searchingly at him*] After all, George Tesman—well, I mean, he's a very respectable man.

BRACK. Very respectable, sound as a rock. No denying that.

HEDDA. And there's nothing exactly ridiculous about him. Is there?

BRACK. Ridiculous? No-no, I wouldn't say that.

HEDDA. Mm. He's very clever at collecting material and all that, isn't he? I mean, he may go quite far in time.

BRACK. [*Looks at her a little uncertainly*] I thought you believed, like everyone else, that he would become a very prominent man.

HEDDA. [*Looks tired*] Yes, I did. And when he came and begged me on his bended knees to be allowed to love and to cherish me, I didn't see why I shouldn't let him.

BRACK. No, well—if one looks at it like that——

HEDDA. It was more than my other admirers were prepared to do, Judge dear.

BRACK. [*Laughs*] Well, I can't answer for the others. As far as I myself am concerned, you know I've always had a considerable respect for the institution of marriage. As an institution.

HEDDA. [*Lightly*] Oh, I've never entertained any hopes of you.

BRACK. All I want is to have a circle of friends whom I can trust, whom I can help with advice or—or by any other means, and into whose houses I may come and go as a—trusted friend.

HEDDA. Of the husband?

BRACK. [*Bows*] Preferably, to be frank, of the wife. And of the husband too, of course. Yes, you know, this kind of—triangle is a delightful arrangement for all parties concerned.

HEDDA. Yes, I often longed for a third person while I was away. Oh, those hours we spent alone in railway compartments——

BRACK. Fortunately your honeymoon is now over.

HEDDA. [*Shakes her head*] There's a long way still to go. I've only reached a stop on the line.

BRACK. Why not jump out and stretch your legs a little, Mrs. Hedda?

HEDDA. I'm not the jumping sort.

BRACK. Aren't you?

HEDDA. No. There's always someone around who——

BRACK. [*Laughs*] Who looks at one's legs?

HEDDA. Yes. Exactly.

BRACK. Well, but surely——

HEDDA. [*With a gesture of rejection*] I don't like it. I'd rather stay where I am. Sitting in the compartment. *À deux.*

BRACK. But suppose a third person were to step into the compartment?

HEDDA. That would be different.

BRACK. A trusted friend—someone who understood——

HEDDA. And was lively and amusing——

BRACK. And interested in—more subjects than one——

HEDDA. [*Sighs audibly*] Yes, that'd be a relief.

BRACK. [*Hears the front door open and shut*] The triangle is completed.

HEDDA. [*Half under breath*] And the train goes on.

[GEORGE TESMAN, *in grey walking dress with a soft felt hat, enters from the hall. He has a number of paper-covered books under his arm and in his pockets.*]

TESMAN. [*Goes over to the table by the corner sofa*] Phew! It's too hot to be lugging all this around. [*Puts the books down*] I'm positively sweating, Hedda. Why, hullo, hullo! You here already, Judge? What? Bertha didn't tell me.

BRACK. [*Gets up*] I came in through the garden.

HEDDA. What are all those books you've got there?

TESMAN. [*Stands glancing through them*] Oh, some new publications dealing with my special subject. I had to buy them.

HEDDA. Your special subject?

BRACK. His special subject, Mrs. Tesman.

[BRACK *and* HEDDA *exchange a smile.*]

HEDDA. Haven't you collected enough material on your special subject?

TESMAN. My dear Hedda, one can never have too much. One must keep abreast of what other people are writing.

HEDDA. Yes. Of course.

TESMAN. [*Rooting among the books*] Look—I bought a copy of Eilert Loevborg's new book, too. [*Holds it out to her*] Perhaps you'd like to have a look at it, Hedda? What?

HEDDA. No, thank you. Er—yes, perhaps I will, later.

TESMAN. I glanced through it on my way home.

BRACK. What's your opinion—as a specialist on the subject?

TESMAN. I'm amazed how sound and balanced it is. He never used to write like that. [*Gathers his books together*] Well, I must get down to these at once. I can hardly wait to cut the pages.[7] Oh, I've got to change, too. [*To* BRACK] We don't have to be off just yet, do we? What?

7. Books used to be sold with the pages folded but uncut as they came from the printing press; the owner had to cut the pages in order to read the book.

BRACK. Heavens, no. We've plenty of time yet.

TESMAN. Good, I needn't hurry, then. [*Goes with his books, but stops and turns in the doorway*] Oh, by the way, Hedda, Auntie Juju won't be coming to see you this evening.

HEDDA. Won't she? Oh—the hat, I suppose.

TESMAN. Good heavens, no. How could you think such a thing of Auntie Juju? Fancy——! No, Auntie Rena's very ill.

HEDDA. She always is.

TESMAN. Yes, but today she's been taken really bad.

HEDDA. Oh, then it's quite understandable that the other one should want to stay with her. Well, I shall have to swallow my disappointment.

TESMAN. You can't imagine how happy Auntie Juju was in spite of everything. At your looking so well after the honeymoon!

HEDDA. [*Half beneath her breath, as she rises*] Oh, these everlasting aunts!

TESMAN. What?

HEDDA. [*Goes over to the french windows*] Nothing.

TESMAN. Oh. All right.

[*Goes into the rear room and out of sight*]

BRACK. What was that about the hat?

HEDDA. Oh, something that happened with Miss Tesman this morning. She'd put her hat down on a chair. [*Looks at him and smiles*] And I pretended to think it was the servant's.

BRACK. [*Shakes his head*] But my dear Mrs. Hedda, how could you do such a thing? To that poor old lady?

HEDDA. [*Nervously, walking across the room*] Sometimes a mood like that hits me. And I can't stop myself. [*Throws herself down in the armchair by the stove*] Oh, I don't know how to explain it.

BRACK. [*Behind her chair*] You're not really happy. That's the answer.

HEDDA. [*Stares ahead of her*] Why on earth should I be happy? Can you give me a reason?

BRACK. Yes. For one thing you've got the home you always wanted.

HEDDA. [*Looks at him*] You really believe that story?

BRACK. You mean it isn't true?

HEDDA. Oh, yes, it's partly true.

BRACK. Well?

HEDDA. It's true I got Tesman to see me home from parties last summer——

BRACK. It was a pity my home lay in another direction.

HEDDA. Yes. Your interests lay in another direction, too.

BRACK. [*Laughs*] That's naughty of you, Mrs. Hedda. But to return to you and Tesman——

HEDDA. Well, we walked past this house one evening. And poor Tesman was fidgeting in his boots trying to find something to talk

about. I felt sorry for the great scholar——

BRACK. [*Smiles incredulously*] Did you? Hm.

HEDDA. Yes, honestly I did. Well, to help him out of his misery, I happened to say quite frivolously how much I'd love to live in this house.

BRACK. Was that all?

HEDDA. That evening, yes.

BRACK. But—afterwards?

HEDDA. Yes. My little frivolity had its consequences, my dear Judge.

BRACK. Our little frivolities do. Much too often, unfortunately.

HEDDA. Thank you. Well, it was our mutual admiration for the late Prime Minister's house that brought George Tesman and me together on common ground. So we got engaged, and we got married, and we went on our honeymoon, and—Ah well, Judge, I've—made my bed and I must lie in it, I was about to say.

BRACK. How utterly fantastic! And you didn't really care in the least about the house?

HEDDA. God knows I didn't.

BRACK. Yes, but now that we've furnished it so beautifully for you?

HEDDA. Ugh—all the rooms smell of lavender and dried roses. But perhaps Auntie Juju brought that in.

BRACK. [*Laughs*] More likely the Prime Minister's widow, rest her soul.

HEDDA. Yes, it's got the odor of death about it. It reminds me of the flowers one has worn at a ball—the morning after. [*Clasps her hands behind her neck, leans back in the chair and looks up at him*] Oh, my dear Judge, you've no idea how hideously bored I'm going to be out here.

BRACK. Couldn't you find some kind of occupation, Mrs. Hedda? Like your husband?

HEDDA. Occupation? That'd interest me?

BRACK. Well—preferably.

HEDDA. God knows what. I've often thought——[*Breaks off*] No, that wouldn't work either.

BRACK. Who knows? Tell me about it.

HEDDA. I was thinking—if I could persuade Tesman to go into politics, for example.

BRACK. [*Laughs*] Tesman! No, honestly, I don't think he's quite cut out to be a politician.

HEDDA. Perhaps not. But if I could persuade him to have a go at it?

BRACK. What satisfaction would that give you? If he turned out to be no good? Why do you want to make him do that?

HEDDA. Because I'm bored. [*After a moment*] You feel there's absolutely no possibility of Tesman becoming Prime Minister, then?

BRACK. Well, you know, Mrs. Hedda, for one thing he'd have to be

pretty well off before he could become that.

HEDDA. [*Gets up impatiently*] There you are! [*Walks across the room*] It's this wretched poverty that makes life so hateful. And ludicrous. Well, it is!

BRACK. I don't think that's the real cause.

HEDDA. What is, then?

BRACK. Nothing really exciting has ever happened to you.

HEDDA. Nothing serious, you mean?

BRACK. Call it that if you like. But now perhaps it may.

HEDDA. [*Tosses her head*] Oh, you're thinking of this competition for that wretched professorship? That's Tesman's affair. I'm not going to waste my time worrying about that.

BRACK. Very well, let's forget about that then. But suppose you were to find yourself faced with what people call—to use the conventional phrase—the most solemn of human responsibilities? [*Smiles*] A new responsibility, little Mrs. Hedda.

HEDDA. [*Angrily*] Be quiet! Nothing like that's going to happen.

BRACK. [*Warily*] We'll talk about it again in a year's time. If not earlier.

HEDDA. [*Curtly*] I've no leanings in that direction, Judge. I don't want any—responsibilities.

BRACK. But surely you must feel some inclination to make use of that—natural talent which every woman—

HEDDA. [*Over by the french windows*] Oh, be quiet, I say! I often think there's only one thing for which I have any natural talent.

BRACK. [*Goes closer*] And what is that, if I may be so bold as to ask?

HEDDA. [*Stands looking out*] For boring myself to death. Now you know. [*Turns, looks toward the rear room and laughs*] Talking of boring, here comes the Professor.

BRACK. [*Quietly, warningly*] Now, now, now, Mrs. Hedda!

[GEORGE TESMAN, *in evening dress, with gloves and hat in his hand, enters through the rear room from the right.*]

TESMAN. Hedda, hasn't any message come from Eilert? What?

HEDDA. No.

TESMAN. Ah, then we'll have him here presently. You wait and see.

BRACK. You really think he'll come?

TESMAN. Yes, I'm almost sure he will. What you were saying about him this morning is just gossip.

BRACK. Oh?

TESMAN. Yes. Auntie Juju said she didn't believe he'd ever dare to stand in my way again. Fancy that!

BRACK. Then everything in the garden's lovely.

TESMAN. [*Puts his hat, with his gloves in it, on a chair, right*] Yes, but you really must let me wait for him as long as possible.

BRACK. We've plenty of time. No one'll be turning up at my place before seven or half past.

TESMAN. Ah, then we can keep Hedda company a little longer. And see if he turns up. What?

HEDDA. [*Picks up* BRACK's *coat and hat and carries them over to the corner sofa*] And if the worst comes to the worst, Mr. Loevborg can sit here and talk to me.

BRACK [*Offering to take his things from her*] No, please. What do you mean by "if the worst comes to the worst"?

HEDDA. If he doesn't want to go with you and Tesman.

TESMAN. [*Looks doubtfully at her*] I say, Hedda, do you think it'll be all right for him to stay here with you? What? Remember Auntie Juju isn't coming.

HEDDA. Yes, but Mrs. Elvsted is. The three of us can have a cup of tea together.

TESMAN. Ah, that'll be all right then.

BRACK. [*Smiles*] It's probably the safest solution as far as he's concerned.

HEDDA. Why?

BRACK. My dear Mrs. Tesman, you always say of my little bachelor parties that they should be attended only by men of the strongest principles.

HEDDA. But Mr. Loevborg is a man of principle now. You know what they say about a reformed sinner——

[BERTHA *enters from the hall.*]

BERTHA. Madam, there's a gentleman here who wants to see you——

HEDDA. Ask him to come in.

TESMAN. [*Quietly*] I'm sure it's him. By Jove. Fancy that!

[EILERT LOEVBORG *enters from the hall. He is slim and lean, of the same age as* TESMAN, *but looks older and somewhat haggard. His hair and beard are of a blackish-brown; his face is long and pale, but with a couple of reddish patches on his cheekbones. He is dressed in an elegant and fairly new black suit, and carries black gloves and a top hat in his hand. He stops just inside the door and bows abruptly. He seems somewhat embarrassed.*]

TESMAN. [*Goes over and shakes his hand*] My dear Eilert! How grand to see you again after all these years!

EILERT LOEVBORG. [*Speaks softly*] It was good of you to write, George. [*Goes nearer to* HEDDA] May I shake hands with you, too, Mrs. Tesman?

HEDDA. [*Accepts his hand*] Delighted to see you, Mr. Loevborg. [*With a gesture*] I don't know if you two gentlemen——

LOEVBORG. [*Bows slightly*] Judge Brack, I believe.

BRACK. [*Also with a slight bow*] Correct. We—met some years ago——

TESMAN. [*Puts his hands on* LOEVBORG'S *shoulders*] Now you're to treat this house just as though it were your own home, Eilert. Isn't that right, Hedda? I hear you've decided to settle here again? What?

LOEVBORG. Yes, I have.

TESMAN. Quite understandable. Oh, by the bye—I've just bought your new book. Though to tell the truth I haven't found time to read it yet.

LOEVBORG. You needn't bother.

TESMAN. Oh? Why?

LOEVBORG. There's nothing much in it.

TESMAN. By Jove, fancy hearing that from you!

BRACK. But everyone's praising it.

LOEVBORG. That was exactly what I wanted to happen. So I only wrote what I knew everyone would agree with.

BRACK. Very sensible.

TESMAN. Yes, but my dear Eilert——

LOEVBORG. I want to try to re-establish myself. To begin again—from the beginning.

TESMAN. [*A little embarrassed*] Yes, I—er—suppose you do. What?

LOEVBORG. [*Smiles, puts down his hat and takes a package wrapped in paper from his coat pocket*] But when this gets published—George Tesman—read it. This is my real book. The one in which I have spoken with my own voice.

TESMAN. Oh, really? What's it about?

LOEVBORG. It's the sequel.

TESMAN. Sequel? To what?

LOEVBORG. To the other book.

TESMAN. The one that's just come out?

LOEVBORG. Yes.

TESMAN. But my dear Eilert, that covers the subject right up to the present day.

LOEVBORG. It does. But this is about the future.

TESMAN. The future! But, I say, we don't know anything about that.

LOEVBORG. No. But there are one or two things that need to be said about it. [*Opens the package*] Here, have a look.

TESMAN. Surely that's not your handwriting?

LOEVBORG. I dictated it. [*Turns the pages*] It's in two parts. The first deals with the forces that will shape our civilization. [*Turns further on towards the end*] And the second indicates the direction in which that civilization may develop.

TESMAN. Amazing! I'd never think of writing about anything like that.

HEDDA. [*By the french windows, drumming on the pane*] No. You wouldn't.

LOEVBORG. [*Puts the pages back into their cover and lays the package on the table*] I brought it because I thought I might possibly read you a few pages this evening.

TESMAN. I say, what a kind idea! Oh, but this evening——? [*Glances at* BRACK] I'm not quite sure whether——

LOEVBORG. Well, some other time, then. There's no hurry.

BRACK. The truth is, Mr. Loevborg, I'm giving a little dinner this evening. In Tesman's honor, you know.

LOEVBORG. [*Looks round for his hat*] Oh—then I mustn't——

BRACK. No, wait a minute. Won't you do me the honor of joining us?

LOEVBORG. [*Curtly, with decision*] No I can't. Thank you so much.

BRACK. Oh, nonsense. Do—please. There'll only be a few of us. And I can promise you we shall have some good sport, as Mrs. Hed—as Mrs. Tesman puts it.

LOEVBORG. I've no doubt. Nevertheless——

BRACK. You could bring your manuscript along and read it to Tesman at my place. I could lend you a room.

TESMAN. By Jove, Eilert, that's an idea. What?

HEDDA. [*Interposes*] But Tesman, Mr. Loevborg doesn't want to go. I'm sure Mr. Loevborg would much rather sit here and have supper with me.

LOEVBORG. [*Looks at her*] With you, Mrs. Tesman?

HEDDA. And Mrs. Elvsted.

LOEVBORG. Oh. [*Casually*] I ran into her this afternoon.

HEDDA. Did you? Well, she's coming here this evening. So you really must stay, Mr. Loevborg. Otherwise she'll have no one to see her home.

LOEVBORG. That's true. Well—thank you, Mrs. Tesman, I'll stay then.

HEDDA. I'll just tell the servant.

[*She goes to the door which leads into the hall, and rings.* BERTHA *enters.* HEDDA *talks softly to her and points towards the rear room.* BERTHA *nods and goes out.*]

TESMAN. [*To* LOEVBORG, *as* HEDDA *does this*] I say, Eilert. This new subject of yours—the—er—future—is that the one you're going to lecture about?

LOEVBORG. Yes.

TESMAN. They told me down at the bookshop that you're going to hold a series of lectures here during the autumn.

LOEVBORG. Yes, I am, I—hope you don't mind, Tesman.

TESMAN. Good heavens, no! But——?

LOEVBORG. I can quite understand it might queer your pitch a little.

TESMAN. [*Dejectedly*] Oh well, I can't expect you to put them off for my sake.

LOEVBORG. I'll wait till your appointment's been announced.

TESMAN. You'll wait! But—but—aren't you going to compete with me for the post? What?

LOEVBORG. No. I only want to defeat you in the eyes of the world.

TESMAN. Good heavens! Then Auntie Juju was right after all! Oh, I knew it, I knew it! Hear that, Hedda? Fancy! Eilert *doesn't* want to stand in our way.

HEDDA. [*Curtly*] Our? Leave me out of it, please.

[*She goes towards the rear room, where* BERTHA *is setting a tray with decanters and glasses on the table.* HEDDA *nods approval, and comes back into the drawing room.* BERTHA *goes out.*]

TESMAN. [*While this is happening*] Judge Brack, what do you think about all this? What?

BRACK. Oh, I think honor and victory can be very splendid things——

TESMAN. Of course they can. Still——

HEDDA. [*Looks at* TESMAN *with a cold smile*] You look as if you'd been hit by a thunderbolt.

TESMAN. Yes, I feel rather like it.

BRACK. There was a black cloud looming up, Mrs. Tesman. But it seems to have passed over.

HEDDA. [*Points toward the rear room*] Well, gentlemen, won't you go in and take a glass of cold punch?

BRACK. [*Glances at his watch*] A stirrup cup?[8] Yes, why not?

TESMAN. An admirable suggestion, Hedda. Admirable! Oh, I feel so relieved!

HEDDA. Won't you have one, too, Mr. Loevborg?

LOEVBORG. No, thank you. I'd rather not.

BRACK. Great heavens, man, cold punch isn't poison. Take my word for it.

LOEVBORG. Not for everyone, perhaps.

HEDDA. I'll keep Mr. Loevborg company while you drink.

TESMAN. Yes, Hedda dear, would you?

[*He and* BRACK *go into the rear room, sit down, drink punch, smoke cigarettes and talk cheerfully during the following scene.* EILERT LOEVBORG *remains standing by the stove.* HEDDA *goes to the writing table.*]

HEDDA [*Raising her voice slightly*] I've some photographs I'd like to show you, if you'd care to see them. Tesman and I visited the Tyrol on our way home.

8. A drink before parting. (Originally, it was taken by riders on horseback just before setting forth.)

[She comes back with an album, places it on the table by the sofa and sits in the upstage corner of the sofa. EILERT LOEVBORG *comes toward her, stops and looks at her. Then he takes a chair and sits down on her left, with his back toward the rear room.]*

HEDDA. [*Opens the album*] You see these mountains, Mr. Loevborg? That's the Ortler group. Tesman has written the name underneath. You see: "The Ortler Group near Meran."[9]

LOEVBORG. [*Has not taken his eyes from her; says softly, slowly*] Hedda—Gabler!

HEDDA. [*Gives him a quick glance*] Ssh!

LOEVBORG. [*Repeats softly*] Hedda Gabler!

HEDDA. [*Looks at the album*] Yes, that used to be my name. When we first knew each other.

LOEVBORG. And from now on—for the rest of my life—I must teach myself never to say: Hedda Gabler.

HEDDA. [*Still turning the pages*] Yes, you must. You'd better start getting into practice. The sooner the better.

LOEVBORG. [*Bitterly*] Hedda Gabler married? And to George Tesman?

HEDDA. Yes. Well—that's life.

LOEVBORG. Oh, Hedda, Hedda! How could you throw yourself away like that?

HEDDA. [*Looks sharply at him*] Stop it.

LOEVBORG. What do you mean?

[TESMAN *comes in and goes toward the sofa.*]

HEDDA. [*Hears him coming and says casually*] And this, Mr. Loevborg, is the view from the Ampezzo valley. Look at those mountains. [*Glances affectionately up at* TESMAN] What did you say those curious mountains were called, dear?

TESMAN. Let me have a look. Oh, those are the Dolomites.

HEDDA. Of course. Those are the Dolomites, Mr. Loevborg.

TESMAN. Hedda, I just wanted to ask you, can't we bring some punch in here? A glass for you, anyway. What?

HEDDA. Thank you, yes. And a biscuit[1] or two, perhaps.

TESMAN. You wouldn't like a cigarette?

HEDDA. No.

TESMAN. Right.

[He goes into the rear room and over to the right. BRACK *is sitting there, glancing occasionally at* HEDDA *and* LOEVBORG.]

LOEVBORG. [*Softly, as before*] Answer me, Hedda. How could you do it?

9. Or Merano, a city in the Austrian Tyrol, since 1918 in Italy. The scenic features mentioned here and later are tourist attractions. The Ortler Group and the Dolomites are ranges of the Alps; the Ampezzo Valley lies beyond the Dolomites to the east; and the Brenner Pass is a major route through the Alps to Austria. 1. Tea biscuit, or cookie.

HEDDA. [*Apparently absorbed in the album*] If you go on calling me Hedda I won't talk to you any more.

LOEVBORG. Mayn't I even when we're alone?

HEDDA. No. You can think it. But you mustn't say it.

LOEVBORG. Oh, I see. Because you love George Tesman.

HEDDA. [*Glances at him and smiles*] Love? Don't be funny.

LOEVBORG. You don't love him?

HEDDA. I don't intend to be unfaithful to him. That's not what I want.

LOEVBORG. Hedda—just tell me one thing——

HEDDA. Ssh!

[TESMAN *enters from the rear room, carrying a tray.*]

TESMAN. Here we are! Here come the goodies!

[*Puts the tray down on the table*]

HEDDA. Why didn't you ask the servant to bring it in?

TESMAN. [*Fills the glasses*] I like waiting on you, Hedda.

HEDDA. But you've filled both glasses. Mr. Loevborg doesn't want to drink.

TESMAN. Yes, but Mrs. Elvsted'll be here soon.

HEDDA. Oh yes, that's true. Mrs. Elvsted——

TESMAN. Had you forgotten her? What?

HEDDA. We're so absorbed with these photographs. [*Shows him one*] You remember this little village?

TESMAN. Oh, that one down by the Brenner Pass. We spent a night there——

HEDDA. Yes, and met all those amusing people.

TESMAN. Oh yes, it was there, wasn't it? By Jove, if only we could have had you with us, Eilert! Ah, well.

[*Goes back into the other room and sits down with* BRACK]

LOEVBORG. Tell me one thing, Hedda.

HEDDA. Yes?

LOEVBORG. Didn't you love me either? Not—just a little?

HEDDA. Well now, I wonder? No, I think we were just good pals—Really good pals who could tell each other anything. [*Smiles*] You certainly poured your heart out to me.

LOEVBORG. You bégged me to.

HEDDA. Looking back on it, there was something beautiful and fascinating—and brave—about the way we told each other everything. That secret friendship no one else knew about.

LOEVBORG. Yes, Hedda, yes! Do you remember? How I used to come up to your father's house in the afternoon—and the General sat by the window and read his newspapers—with his back toward us——

HEDDA. And we sat on the sofa in the corner——

LOEVBORG. Always reading the same illustrated magazine——

HEDDA. We hadn't any photograph album.

LOEVBORG. Yes, Hedda. I regarded you as a kind of confessor. Told you things about myself which no one else knew about—then. Those days and nights of drinking and— Oh, Hedda, what power did you have to make me confess such things?

HEDDA. Power? You think I had some power over you?

LOEVBORG. Yes—I don't know how else to explain it. And all those—oblique questions you asked me——

HEDDA. You knew what they meant.

LOEVBORG. But that you could sit there and ask me such questions! So unashamedly——

HEDDA. I thought you said they were oblique.

LOEVBORG. Yes, but you asked them so unashamedly. That you could question me about—about that kind of thing!

HEDDA. You answered willingly enough.

LOEVBORG. Yes—that's what I can't understand—looking back on it. But tell me, Hedda—what you felt for me—wasn't that—love? When you asked me those questions and made me confess my sins to you, wasn't it because you wanted to wash me clean?

HEDDA. No, not exactly.

LOEVBORG. Why did you do it, then?

HEDDA. Do you find it so incredible that a young girl, given the chance to do so without anyone knowing, should want to be allowed a glimpse into a forbidden world of whose existence she is supposed to be ignorant?

LOEVBORG. So that was it?

HEDDA. One reason. One reason—I think.

LOEVBORG. You didn't love me, then. You just wanted—knowledge. But if that was so, why did you break it off?

HEDDA. That was your fault.

LOEVBORG. It was you who put an end to it.

HEDDA. Yes, when I realized that our friendship was threatening to develop into something—something else. Shame on you, Eilert Loevborg! How could you abuse the trust of your dearest friend?

LOEVBORG. [*Clenches his fists*] Oh, why didn't you do it? Why didn't you shoot me dead? As you threatened to?

HEDDA. I was afraid. Of the scandal.

LOEVBORG. Yes, Hedda. You're a coward at heart.

HEDDA. A dreadful coward. [*Changes her tone*] Luckily for you. Well, now you've found consolation with the Elvsteds.

LOEVBORG. I know what Thea's been telling you.

HEDDA. I dare say you told her about us.

LOEVBORG. Not a word. She's too silly to understand that kind of thing.

HEDDA. Silly?

LOEVBORG. She's silly about that kind of thing.

HEDDA. And I am a coward. [*Leans closer to him, without looking him in the eyes, and says quietly*] But let me tell you something. Something you don't know.

LOEVBORG. [*Tensely*] Yes?

HEDDA. My failure to shoot you wasn't my worst act of cowardice that evening.

LOEVBORG. [*Looks at her for a moment, realizes her meaning and whispers passionately*] Oh, Hedda! Hedda Gabler! Now I see what was behind those questions. Yes! It wasn't knowledge you wanted! It was life!

HEDDA. [*Flashes a look at him and says quietly*] Take care! Don't you delude yourself!

[*It has begun to grow dark.* BERTHA, *from outside, opens the door leading into the hall.*]

HEDDA. [*Closes the album with a snap and cries, smiling*] Ah, at last! Come in, Thea dear!

[MRS. ELVSTED *enters from the hall, in evening dress. The door is closed behind her.*]

HEDDA. [*On the sofa, stretches out her arms toward her*] Thea darling, I thought you were never coming!

[MRS. ELVSTED *makes a slight bow to the gentlemen in the rear room as she passes the open doorway, and they to her. Then she goes to the table and holds out her hand to* HEDDA. EILERT LOEVBORG *has risen from his chair. He and* MRS. ELVSTED *nod silently to each other.*]

MRS. ELVSTED. Perhaps I ought to go in and say a few words to your husband?

HEDDA. Oh, there's no need. They're happy by themselves. They'll be going soon.

MRS. ELVSTED. Going?

HEDDA. Yes, they're off on a spree this evening.

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Quickly, to* LOEVBORG] You're not going with them?

LOEVBORG. No.

HEDDA. Mr. Loevborg is staying here with us.

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Takes a chair and is about to sit down beside him*] Oh, how nice it is to be here!

HEDDA. No, Thea darling, not there. Come over here and sit beside me. I want to be in the middle.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, just as you wish.

[*She goes right of the table and sits on the sofa, on* HEDDA's *right.* LOEVBORG *sits down again in his chair.*]

LOEVBORG. [*After a short pause, to* HEDDA] Isn't she lovely to look at?

HEDDA. [*Strokes her hair gently*] Only to look at?

LOEVBORG. Yes. We're just good pals. We trust each other implicitly.

We can talk to each other quite unashamedly.

HEDDA. No need to be oblique?

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Nestles close to* HEDDA *and says quietly*] Oh, Hedda I'm so happy. Imagine—he says I've inspired him!

HEDDA. [*Looks at her with a smile*] Dear Thea! Does he really?

LOEVBORG. She has the courage of her convictions, Mrs. Tesman.

MRS. ELVSTED. I? Courage?

LOEVBORG. Absolute courage. Where friendship is concerned.

HEDDA. Yes. Courage. Yes. If only one had that——

LOEVBORG. Yes?

HEDDA. One might be able to live. In spite of everything. [*Changes her tone suddenly*] Well, Thea darling, now you're going to drink a nice glass of cold punch.

MRS. ELVSTED. No, thank you. I never drink anything like that.

HEDDA. Oh. You, Mr. Loevborg?

LOEVBORG. Thank you, I don't either.

MRS. ELVSTED. No, he doesn't, either.

HEDDA. [*Looks into his eyes*] But if I want you to?

LOEVBORG. That doesn't make any difference.

HEDDA. [*Laughs*] Have I no power over you at all? Poor me!

LOEVBORG. Not where this is concerned.

HEDDA. Seriously, I think you should. For your own sake.

MRS. ELVSTED. Hedda!

LOEVBORG. Why?

HEDDA. Or perhaps I should say for other people's sake.

LOEVBORG. What do you mean?

HEDDA. People might think you didn't feel absolutely and unashamedly sure of yourself. In your heart of hearts.

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Quietly*] Oh, Hedda, no!

LOEVBORG. People can think what they like. For the present.

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Happily*] Yes, that's true.

HEDDA. I saw it so clearly in Judge Brack a few minutes ago.

LOEVBORG. Oh. What did you see?

HEDDA. He smiled so scornfully when he saw you were afraid to go in there and drink with them.

LOEVBORG. Afraid! I wanted to stay here and talk to you.

MRS. ELVSTED. That was only natural, Hedda.

HEDDA. But the Judge wasn't to know that. I saw him wink at Tesman when you showed you didn't dare to join their wretched little party.

LOEVBORG. Didn't dare! Are you saying I didn't dare?

HEDDA. I'm not saying so. But that was what Judge Brack thought.

LOEVBORG. Well, let him.

HEDDA. You're not going, then?

LOEVBORG. I'm staying here with you and Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, Hedda, of course he is.

HEDDA. [*Smiles, and nods approvingly to* LOEVBORG] Firm as a rock! A man of principle! That's how a man should be! [*Turns to* MRS. ELVSTED *and strokes her cheek*] Didn't I tell you so this morning when you came here in such a panic——

LOEVBORG. [*Starts*] Panic?

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Frightened*] Hedda! But—Hedda!

HEDDA. Well, now you can see for yourself. There's no earthly need for you to get scared to death just because——[*Stops*] Well! Let's all three cheer up and enjoy ourselves.

LOEVBORG. Mrs. Tesman, would you mind explaining to me what this is all about?

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, my God, my God, Hedda, what are you saying? What are you doing?

HEDDA. Keep calm. That horrid Judge has his eye on you.

LOEVBORG. Scared to death, were you? For my sake?

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Quietly, trembling*] Oh, Hedda! You've made me so unhappy!

LOEVBORG. [*Looks coldly at her for a moment. His face is distorted.*] So that was how much you trusted me.

MRS. ELVSTED. Eilert dear, please listen to me——

LOEVBORG. [*Takes one of the glasses of punch, raises it and says quietly, hoarsely*] Skoal, Thea!

[*Empties the glass, puts it down and picks up one of the others.*]

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Quietly*] Hedda, Hedda! Why did you want this to happen?

HEDDA. I—want it? Are you mad?

LOEVBORG. Skoal to you too, Mrs. Tesman. Thanks for telling me the truth. Here's to the truth!

[*Empties his glass and refills it*]

HEDDA. [*Puts her hand on his arm*] Steady. That's enough for now. Don't forget the party.

MRS. ELVSTED. No, no, no!

HEDDA. Ssh! They're looking at you.

LOEVBORG. [*Puts down his glass*] Thea, tell me the truth——

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes!

LOEVBORG. Did your husband know you were following me?

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, Hedda!

LOEVBORG. Did you and he have an agreement that you should come here and keep an eye on me? Perhaps he gave you the idea? After all, he's a magistrate.[2] I suppose he needed me back in his office. Or did he miss my companionship at the card table?

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Quietly, sobbing*] Eilert, Eilert!

2. Also translated *sheriff*. A civil official with duties associated with the courts.

LOEVBORG. [*Seizes a glass and is about to fill it*] Let's drink to him, too.

HEDDA. No more now. Remember you're going to read your book to Tesman.

LOEVBORG. [*Calm again, puts down his glass*] That was silly of me, Thea. To take it like that, I mean. Don't be angry with me, my dear. You'll see—yes, and they'll see, too—that though I fell, I—I have raised myself up again. With your help, Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Happily*] Oh, thank God!

[BRACK *has meanwhile glanced at his watch. He and* TESMAN *get up and come into the drawing room.*]

BRACK. [*Takes his hat and overcoat*] Well, Mrs. Tesman. It's time for us to go.

HEDDA. Yes, I suppose it must be.

LOEVBORG. [*Gets up*] Time for me too, Judge.

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Quietly, pleadingly*] Eilert, please don't!

HEDDA. [*Pinches her arm*] They can hear you.

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Gives a little cry*] Oh!

LOEVBORG. [*To* BRACK] You were kind enough to ask me to join you.

BRACK. Are you coming?

LOEVBORG. If I may.

BRACK. Delighted.

LOEVBORG. [*Puts the paper package in his pocket and says to* TESMAN] I'd like to show you one or two things before I send it off to the printer.

TESMAN. I say, that'll be fun. Fancy——! Oh, but Hedda, how'll Mrs. Elvsted get home? What?

HEDDA. Oh, we'll manage somehow.

LOEVBORG. [*Glances over toward the ladies*] Mrs. Elvsted? I shall come back and collect her, naturally. [*Goes closer*] About ten o'clock, Mrs. Tesman? Will that suit you?

HEDDA. Yes. That'll suit me admirably.

TESMAN. Good, that's settled. But you mustn't expect me back so early, Hedda.

HEDDA. Stay as long as you c—as long as you like, dear.

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Trying to hide her anxiety*] Well then, Mr. Loevborg, I'll wait here till you come.

LOEVBORG. [*His hat in his hand*] Pray do, Mrs. Elvsted.

BRACK. Well, gentlemen, now the party begins. I trust that, in the words of a certain fair lady, we shall enjoy good sport.

HEDDA. What a pity the fair lady can't be there, invisible.

BRACK. Why invisible?

HEDDA. So as to be able to hear some of your uncensored witticisms, your honor.

BRACK. [*Laughs*] Oh, I shouldn't advise the fair lady to do that.

TESMAN. [*Laughs too*] I say, Hedda, that's good. By Jove! Fancy that!

BRACK. Well, good night, ladies, good night!

LOEVBORG. [*Bows farewell*] About ten o'clock, then.

[BRACK, LOEVBORG *and* TESMAN *go out through the hall. As they do so* BERTHA *enters from the rear room with a lighted lamp. She puts it on the drawing-room table, then goes out the way she came.*]

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Has got up and is walking uneasily to and fro*] Oh Hedda, Hedda! How is all this going to end?

HEDDA. At ten o'clock, then. He'll be here. I can see him. With a crown of vine-leaves in his hair.[3] Burning and unashamed!

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, I do hope so!

HEDDA. Can't you see? Then he'll be himself again! He'll be a free man for the rest of his days!

MRS. ELVSTED. Please God you're right.

HEDDA. That's how he'll come! [*Gets up and goes closer*] You can doubt him as much as you like. I believe in him! Now we'll see which of us——

MRS. ELVSTED. You're after something, Hedda.

HEDDA. Yes, I am. For once in my life I want to have the power to shape a man's destiny.

MRS. ELVSTED. Haven't you that power already?

HEDDA. No, I haven't. I've never had it.

MRS. ELVSTED. What about your husband?

HEDDA. Him! Oh, if you could only understand how poor I am. And you're allowed to be so rich, so rich! [*Clasps her passionately*] I think I'll burn your hair off after all!

MRS. ELVSTED. Let me go! Let me go! You frighten me, Hedda!

BERTHA. [*In the open doorway*] I've laid tea in the dining room, madam.

HEDDA. Good, we're coming.

MRS. ELVSTED. No, no, no! I'd rather go home alone! Now—at once!

HEDDA. Rubbish! First you're going to have some tea, you little idiot. And then—at ten o'clock—Eilert Loevborg will come. With a crown of vine-leaves in his hair!

[*She drags* MRS. ELVSTED *almost forcibly toward the open doorway.*]

Act III

SCENE—*The same. The curtains are drawn across the open doorway, and also across the french windows. The lamp, half turned down, with a shade over it, is burning on the table. In the stove, the*

3. Like Bacchus, the god of wine, and his followers.

door of which is open, a fire has been burning, but it is now almost out.

MRS. ELVSTED, *wrapped in a large shawl and with her feet resting on a footstool, is sitting near the stove, huddled in the armchair.* HEDDA *is lying asleep on this sofa, fully dressed, with a blanket over her.*

MRS. ELVSTED. [*After a pause, suddenly sits up in her chair and listens tensely. Then she sinks wearily back again and sighs.*] Not back yet! Oh, God! Oh, God! Not back yet!

[BERTHA *tiptoes cautiously in from the hall. She has a letter in her hand.*]

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Turns and whispers*] What is it? Has someone come?

BERTHA. [*Quietly*] Yes, a servant's just called with this letter.

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Quickly, holding out her hand*] A letter! Give it to me!

BERTHA. But it's for the Doctor, madam.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh. I see.

BERTHA. Miss Tesman's maid brought it. I'll leave it here on the table.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, do.

BERTHA. [*Puts down the letter*] I'd better put the lamp out. It's starting to smoke.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, put it out. It'll soon be daylight.

BERTHA. [*Puts out the lamp*] It's daylight already, madam.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes. Broad day. And not home yet.

BERTHA. Oh dear, I was afraid this would happen.

MRS. ELVSTED. Were you?

BERTHA. Yes. When I heard that a certain gentleman had returned to town, and saw him go off with them. I've heard all about him.

MRS. ELVSTED. Don't talk so loud. You'll wake your mistress.

BERTHA. [*Looks at the sofa and sighs*] Yes. Let her go on sleeping, poor dear. Shall I put some more wood on the fire?

MRS. ELVSTED. Thank you, don't bother on my account.

BERTHA. Very good.

[*Goes quietly out through the hall*]

HEDDA. [*Wakes as the door closes and looks up*] What's that?

MRS. ELVSTED. It was only the maid.

HEDDA. [*Looks round*] What am I doing here? Oh, now I remember. [*Sits up on the sofa, stretches herself and rubs her eyes*] What time is it, Thea?

MRS. ELVSTED. It's gone seven.

HEDDA. When did Tesman get back?

MRS. ELVSTED. He's not back yet.

HEDDA. Not home yet?

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Gets up*] No one's come.

HEDDA. And we sat up waiting for them till four o'clock.

MRS. ELVSTED. God! How I waited for him!

HEDDA. [*Yawns and says with her hand in front of her mouth*] Oh, dear. We might have saved ourselves the trouble.

MRS. ELVSTED. Did you manage to sleep?

HEDDA. Oh, yes. Quite well, I think. Didn't you get any?

MRS. ELVSTED. Not a wink. I couldn't, Hedda. I just couldn't.

HEDDA. [*Gets up and comes over to her*] Now, now, now. There's nothing to worry about. I know what's happened.

MRS. ELVSTED. What? Please tell me.

HEDDA. Well, obviously the party went on very late——

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh dear, I suppose it must have. But——

HEDDA. And Tesman didn't want to come home and wake us all up in the middle of the night. [*Laughs*] Probably wasn't too keen to show his face either, after a spree like that.

MRS. ELVSTED. But where could he have gone?

HEDDA. I should think he's probably slept at his aunts'. They keep his old room for him.

MRS. ELVSTED. No, he can't be with them. A letter came for him just now from Miss Tesman. It's over there.

HEDDA. Oh? [*Looks at the envelope*] Yes, it's Auntie Juju's handwriting. Well, he must still be at Judge Brack's, then. And Eilert Loevborg is sitting there, reading to him. With a crown of vine-leaves in his hair.

MRS. ELVSTED. Hedda, you're only saying that. You don't believe it.

HEDDA. Thea, you really are a little fool.

MRS. ELVSTED. Perhaps I am.

HEDDA. You look tired to death.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes. I am tired to death.

HEDDA. Go to my room and lie down for a little. Do as I say, now; don't argue.

MRS. ELVSTED. No, no. I couldn't possibly sleep.

HEDDA. Of course you can.

MRS. ELVSTED. But your husband'll be home soon. And I must know at once——

HEDDA. I'll tell you when he comes.

MRS. ELVSTED. Promise me, Hedda?

HEDDA. Yes, don't worry. Go and get some sleep.

MRS. ELVSTED. Thank you. All right, I'll try.

[*She goes out through the rear room.* HEDDA *goes to the french windows and draws the curtains. Broad daylight floods into the room. She goes to the writing table, takes a small hand mirror from it and arranges her hair. Then she goes to the door leading into the hall and presses the bell. After a few moments,* BERTHA *enters.*]

BERTHA. Did you want anything, madam?

HEDDA. Yes, put some more wood on the fire. I'm freezing.

BERTHA. Bless you, I'll soon have this room warmed up. [*She rakes the embers together and puts a fresh piece of wood on them. Suddenly she stops and listens.*] There's someone at the front door, madam.

HEDDA. Well, go and open it. I'll see to the fire.

BERTHA. It'll burn up in a moment.

[*She goes out through the hall.* HEDDA *kneels on the footstool and puts more wood in the stove. After a few seconds,* GEORGE TESMAN *enters from the hall. He looks tired, and rather worried. He tiptoes toward the open doorway and is about to slip through the curtains.*]

HEDDA. [*At the stove, without looking up*] Good morning.

TESMAN. [*Turns*] Hedda! [*Comes nearer*] Good heavens, are you up already? What?

HEDDA. Yes, I got up very early this morning.

TESMAN. I was sure you'd still be sleeping. Fancy that!

HEDDA. Don't talk so loud. Mrs. Elvsted's asleep in my room.

TESMAN. Mrs. Elvsted? Has she stayed the night here?

HEDDA. Yes. No one came to escort her home.

TESMAN. Oh. No, I suppose not.

HEDDA. [*Closes the door of the stove and gets up*] Well. Was it fun?

TESMAN. Have you been anxious about me? What?

HEDDA. Not in the least. I asked if you'd had fun.

TESMAN. Oh yes, rather! Well, I thought, for once in a while—The first part was the best; when Eilert read his book to me. We arrived over an hour too early—what about that, eh? By Jove! Brack had a lot of things to see to, so Eilert read to me.

HEDDA. [*Sits at the right-hand side of the table*] Well? Tell me about it.

TESMAN. [*Sits on a footstool by the stove*] Honestly, Hedda, you've no idea what a book that's going to be. It's really one of the most remarkable things that's ever been written. By Jove!

HEDDA. Oh, never mind about the book——

TESMAN. I'm going to make a confession to you, Hedda. When he'd finished reading a sort of beastly feeling came over me.

HEDDA. Beastly feeling?

TESMAN. I found myself envying Eilert for being able to write like that. Imagine that, Hedda!

HEDDA. Yes. I can imagine.

TESMAN. What a tragedy that with all those gifts he should be so incorrigible.

HEDDA. You mean he's less afraid of life than most men?

TESMAN. Good heavens, no. He just doesn't know the meaning of the word moderation.

HEDDA. What happened afterwards?

TESMAN. Well, looking back on it I suppose you might almost call it an orgy, Hedda.

HEDDA. Had he vine-leaves in his hair?

TESMAN. Vine-leaves? No, I didn't see any of them. He made a long, rambling oration in honor of the woman who'd inspired him to write this book. Yes, those were the words he used.

HEDDA. Did he name her?

TESMAN. No. But I suppose it must be Mrs. Elvsted. You wait and see!

HEDDA. Where did you leave him?

TESMAN. On the way home. We left in a bunch—the last of us, that is—and Brack came with us to get a little fresh air. Well, then, you see, we agreed we ought to see Eilert home. He'd had a drop too much.

HEDDA. You don't say?

TESMAN. But now comes the funny part, Hedda. Or I should really say the tragic part. Oh, I'm almost ashamed to tell you. For Eilert's sake, I mean——

HEDDA. Why, what happened?

TESMAN. Well, you see, as we were walking toward town I happened to drop behind for a minute. Only for a minute—er—you understand——

HEDDA. Yes, yes——?

TESMAN. Well then, when I ran on to catch them up, what do you think I found by the roadside. What?

HEDDA. How on earth should I know?

TESMAN. You mustn't tell anyone, Hedda. What? Promise me that—for Eilert's sake. [*Takes a package wrapped in paper from his coat pocket*] Just fancy! I found this.

HEDDA. Isn't this the one he brought here yesterday?

TESMAN. Yes! The whole of that precious, irreplaceable manuscript! And he went and lost it! Didn't even notice! What about that? By Jove! Tragic.

HEDDA. But why didn't you give it back to him?

TESMAN. I didn't dare to, in the state he was in.

HEDDA. Didn't you tell any of the others?

TESMAN. Good heavens, no. I didn't want to do that. For Eilert's sake, you understand.

HEDDA. Then no one else knows you have his manuscript?

TESMAN. No. And no one must be allowed to know.

HEDDA. Didn't it come up in the conversation later?

TESMAN. I didn't get a chance to talk to him any more. As soon as we got into the outskirts of town, he and one or two of the others gave us the slip. Disappeared, by Jove!

HEDDA. Oh? I suppose they took him home.

TESMAN. Yes, I imagine that was the idea. Brack left us, too.

HEDDA. And what have you been up to since then?

TESMAN. Well, I and one or two of the others—awfully jolly chaps, they were—went back to where one of them lived, and had a cup of morning coffee. Morning-after coffee—what? Ah, well. I'll just lie down for a bit and give Eilert time to sleep it off, poor chap, then I'll run over and give this back to him.

HEDDA. [*Holds out her hand for the package*] No, don't do that. Not just yet. Let me read it first.

TESMAN. Oh no, really, Hedda dear, honestly, I daren't do that.

HEDDA. Daren't?

TESMAN. No—imagine how desperate he'll be when he wakes up and finds his manuscript's missing. He hasn't any copy, you see. He told me so himself.

HEDDA. Can't a thing like that be rewritten?

TESMAN. Oh no, not possibly, I shouldn't think. I mean, the inspiration, you know——

HEDDA. Oh, yes. I'd forgotten that. [*Casually*] By the way, there's a letter for you.

TESMAN. Is there? Fancy that!

HEDDA. [*Holds it out to him*] It came early this morning.

TESMAN. I say, it's from Auntie Juju! What on earth can it be? [*Puts the package on the other footstool, opens the letter, reads it and jumps up*] Oh, Hedda! She says poor Auntie Rena's dying.

HEDDA. Well, we've been expecting that.

TESMAN. She says if I want to see her I must go quickly. I'll run over at once.

HEDDA. [*Hides a smile*] Run?

TESMAN. Hedda dear, I suppose you wouldn't like to come with me? What about that, eh?

HEDDA. [*Gets up and says wearily and with repulsion*] No, no, don't ask me to do anything like that. I can't bear illness or death. I loathe anything ugly.

TESMAN. Yes, yes. Of course. [*In a dither*] My hat? My overcoat? Oh yes, in the hall. I do hope I won't get there too late, Hedda? What?

HEDDA. You'll be all right if you run.

[BERTHA *enters from the hall.*]

BERTHA. Judge Brack's outside and wants to know if he can come in.

TESMAN. At this hour? No, I can't possibly receive him now.

HEDDA. I can. [*To* BERTHA] Ask his honor to come in.

[BERTHA *goes.*]

HEDDA. [*Whispers quickly*] The manuscript, Tesman.

[*She snatches it from the footstool.*]

TESMAN. Yes, give it to me.

HEDDA. No, I'll look after it for now.

[*She goes over to the writing table and puts it in the bookcase.* TESMAN *stands dithering, unable to get his gloves on.* JUDGE BRACK enters from the hall.]

HEDDA. [*Nods to him*] Well, you're an early bird.

BRACK. Yes, aren't I? [*To* TESMAN] Are you up and about, too?

TESMAN. Yes, I've got to go and see my aunts. Poor Auntie Rena's dying.

BRACK. Oh dear, is she? Then you mustn't let me detain you. At so tragic a——

TESMAN. Yes, I really must run. Good-bye! Good-bye!

[*Runs out through the hall*]

HEDDA. [*Goes nearer*] You seem to have had excellent sport last night—Judge.

BRACK. Indeed yes, Mrs. Hedda. I haven't even had time to take my clothes off.

HEDDA. *You* haven't either?

BRACK. As you see. What's Tesman told you about last night's escapades?

HEDDA. Oh, only some boring story about having gone and drunk coffee somewhere.

BRACK. Yes, I've heard about that coffee party. Eilert Loevborg wasn't with them, I gather?

HEDDA. No, they took him home first.

BRACK. Did Tesman go with him?

HEDDA. No, one or two of the others, he said.

BRACK. [*Smiles*] George Tesman is a credulous man, Mrs. Hedda.

HEDDA. God knows. But—has something happened?

BRACK. Well, yes, I'm afraid it has.

HEDDA. I see. Sit down and tell me.

[*She sits on the left of the table,* BRACK *at the long side of it, near her.*]

HEDDA. Well?

BRACK. I had a special reason for keeping track of my guests last night. Or perhaps I should say some of my guests.

HEDDA. Including Eilert Loevborg?

BRACK. I must confess—yes.

HEDDA. You're beginning to make me curious.

BRACK. Do you know where he and some of my other guests spent the latter half of last night, Mrs. Hedda?

HEDDA. Tell me. If it won't shock me.

BRACK. Oh, I don't think it'll shock you. They found themselves participating in an exceedingly animated *soirée.*[4]

4. Evening party.

HEDDA. Of a sporting character?

BRACK. Of a highly sporting character.

HEDDA. Tell me more.

BRACK. Loevborg had received an invitation in advance—as had the others. I knew all about that. But he had refused. As you know, he's become a new man.

HEDDA. Up at the Elvsteds', yes. But he went?

BRACK. Well, you see, Mrs. Hedda, last night at my house, unhappily, the spirit moved him.

HEDDA. Yes, I hear he became inspired.

BRACK. Somewhat violently inspired. And as a result, I suppose, his thoughts strayed. We men, alas, don't always stick to our principles as firmly as we should.

HEDDA. I'm sure you're an exception, Judge Brack. But go on about Loevborg.

BRACK. Well, to cut a long story short, he ended up in the establishment of a certain Mademoiselle Danielle.

HEDDA. Mademoiselle Danielle?

BRACK. She was holding the *soirée.* For a selected circle of friends and admirers.

HEDDA. Has she got red hair?

BRACK. She has.

HEDDA. A singer of some kind?

BRACK. Yes—among other accomplishments. She's also a celebrated huntress—of men, Mrs. Hedda. I'm sure you've heard about her. Eilert Loevborg used to be one of her most ardent patrons. In his salad days.[5]

HEDDA. And how did all this end?

BRACK. Not entirely amicably, from all accounts. Mademoiselle Danielle began by receiving him with the utmost tenderness and ended by resorting to her fists.

HEDDA. Against Loevborg?

BRACK. Yes. He accused her, or her friends, of having robbed him. He claimed his pocketbook had been stolen. Among other things. In short, he seems to have made a bloodthirsty scene.

HEDDA. And what did this lead to?

BRACK. It led to a general free-for-all, in which both sexes participated. Fortunately, in the end the police arrived.

HEDDA. The police too?

BRACK. Yes. I'm afraid it may turn out to be rather an expensive joke for Master Eilert. Crazy fool!

HEDDA. Oh?

5. Indiscreet youth.

BRACK. Apparently he put up a very violent resistance. Hit one of the constables on the ear and tore his uniform. He had to accompany them to the police station.

HEDDA. Where did you learn all this?

BRACK. From the police.

HEDDA. [*To herself*] So that's what happened. He didn't have a crown of vine-leaves in his hair.

BRACK. Vine-leaves, Mrs. Hedda?

HEDDA. [*In her normal voice again*] But, tell me, Judge, why do you take such a close interest in Eilert Loevborg?

BRACK. For one thing it'll hardly be a matter of complete indifference to me if it's revealed in court that he came there straight from my house.

HEDDA. Will it come to court?

BRACK. Of course. Well, I don't regard that as particularly serious. Still, I thought it my duty, as a friend of the family, to give you and your husband a full account of his nocturnal adventures.

HEDDA. Why?

BRACK. Because I've a shrewd suspicion that he's hoping to use you as a kind of screen.

HEDDA. What makes you think that?

BRACK. Oh, for heaven's sake, Mrs. Hedda, we're not blind. You wait and see. This Mrs. Elvsted won't be going back to her husband just yet.

HEDDA. Well, if there were anything between those two there are plenty of other places where they could meet.

BRACK. Not in anyone's home. From now on every respectable house will once again be closed to Eilert Loevborg.

HEDDA. And mine should be too, you mean?

BRACK. Yes. I confess I should find it more than irksome if this gentleman were to be granted unrestricted access to this house. If he were superfluously to intrude into——

HEDDA. The triangle?

BRACK. Precisely. For me it would be like losing a home.

HEDDA. [*Looks at him and smiles*] I see. You want to be the cock of the walk.

BRACK. [*Nods slowly and lowers his voice*] Yes, that is my aim. And I shall fight for it with—every weapon at my disposal.

HEDDA. [*As her smile fades*] You're a dangerous man, aren't you? When you really want something.

BRACK. You think so?

HEDDA. Yes. I'm beginning to think so. I'm deeply thankful you haven't any kind of hold over me.

BRACK. [*Laughs equivocally*] Well, well, Mrs. Hedda—perhaps you're right. If I had, who knows what I might not think up?

HEDDA. Come, Judge Brack. That sounds almost like a threat.

BRACK. [*Gets up*] Heaven forbid! In the creation of a triangle—and its continuance—the question of compulsion should never arise.

HEDDA. Exactly what I was thinking.

BRACK. Well, I've said what I came to say. I must be getting back. Good-bye, Mrs. Hedda.

[*Goes toward the french windows*]

HEDDA. [*Gets up*] Are you going out through the garden?

BRACK. Yes, it's shorter.

HEDDA. Yes. And it's the back door, isn't it?

BRACK. I've nothing against back doors. They can be quite intriguing—sometimes.

HEDDA. When people fire pistols out of them, for example?

BRACK. [*In the doorway, laughs*] Oh, people don't shoot tame cocks.

HEDDA. [*Laughs too*] I suppose not. When they've only got one.

[*They nod good-bye, laughing. He goes. She closes the french windows behind him, and stands for a moment, looking out pensively. Then she walks across the room and glances through the curtains in the open doorway. Goes to the writing table, takes* LOEVBORG's *package from the bookcase and is about to leaf through the pages when* BERTHA *is heard remonstrating loudly in the hall.* HEDDA *turns and listens. She hastily puts the package back in the drawer, locks it and puts the key on the inkstand.* EILERT LOEVBORG, *with his overcoat on and his hat in his hand, throws the door open. He looks somewhat confused and excited.*]

LOEVBORG. [*Shouts as he enters*] I must come in, I tell you! Let me pass!

[*He closes the door, turns, sees* HEDDA, *controls himself immediately and bows.*]

HEDDA. [*At the writing table*] Well, Mr. Loevborg, this is rather a late hour to be collecting Thea.

LOEVBORG. And an early hour to call on you. Please forgive me.

HEDDA. How do you know she's still here?

LOEVBORG. They told me at her lodgings that she has been out all night.

HEDDA. [*Goes to the table*] Did you notice anything about their behavior when they told you?

LOEVBORG. [*Looks at her, puzzled*] Notice anything?

HEDDA. Did they sound as if they thought it—strange?

LOEVBORG. [*Suddenly understands*] Oh, I see what you mean. I'm dragging her down with me. No, as a matter of fact I didn't notice anything. I suppose Tesman isn't up yet?

HEDDA. No, I don't think so.

LOEVBORG. When did he get home?

HEDDA. Very late.

LOEVBORG. Did he tell you anything?

HEDDA. Yes. I gather you had a merry party at Judge Brack's last night.

LOEVBORG. He didn't tell you anything else?

HEDDA. I don't think so. I was so terribly sleepy——

[MRS. ELVSTED *comes through the curtains in the open doorway.*]

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Runs toward him*] Oh, Eilert! At last!

LOEVBORG. Yes—at last. And too late.

MRS. ELVSTED. What is too late?

LOEVBORG. Everything—now. I'm finished, Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, no, no! Don't say that!

LOEVBORG. You'll say it yourself, when you've heard what I——

MRS. ELVSTED. I don't want to hear anything!

HEDDA. Perhaps you'd rather speak to her alone? I'd better go.

LOEVBORG. No, stay.

MRS. ELVSTED. But I don't want to hear anything, I tell you!

LOEVBORG. It's not about last night.

MRS. ELVSTED. Then what——?

LOEVBORG. I want to tell you that from now on we must stop seeing each other.

MRS. ELVSTED. Stop seeing each other!

HEDDA. [*Involuntarily*] I knew it!

LOEVBORG. I have no further use for you, Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED. You can stand there and say that! No further use for me! Surely I can go on helping you? We'll go on working together, won't we?

LOEVBORG. I don't intend to do any more work from now on.

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Desperately*] Then what use have I for my life?

LOEVBORG. You must try to live as if you had never known me.

MRS. ELVSTED. But I can't!

LOEVBORG. Try to, Thea. Go back home——

MRS. ELVSTED. Never! I want to be wherever you are! I won't let myself be driven away like this! I want to stay here—and be with you when the book comes out.

HEDDA. [*Whispers*] Ah, yes! The book!

LOEVBORG. [*Looks at her*] Our book; Thea's and mine. It belongs to both of us.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, yes! I feel that, too! And I've a right to be with you when it comes into the world. I want to see people respect and honor you again. And the joy! The joy! I want to share it with you!

LOEVBORG. Thea—our book will never come into the world.

HEDDA. Ah!

MRS. ELVSTED. Not——?

LOEVBORG. It cannot. Ever.

MRS. ELVSTED. Eilert—what have you done with the manuscript? Where is it?

LOEVBORG. Oh Thea, please don't ask me that!

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, yes—I must know. I've a right to know. Now!

LOEVBORG. The manuscript. I've torn it up.

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Screams*] No, no!

HEDDA. [*Involuntarily*] But that's not——!

LOEVBORG. [*Looks at her*] Not true, you think?

HEDDA. [*Controls herself*] Why—yes, of course it is, if you say so. It just sounded so incredible——

LOEVBORG. It's true, nevertheless.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, my God, my God, Hedda—he's destroyed his own book!

LOEVBORG. I have destroyed my life. Why not my life's work, too?

MRS. ELVSTED. And you—did this last night?

LOEVBORG. Yes, Thea. I tore it into a thousand pieces. And scattered them out across the fjord.[6] It's good, clean, salt water. Let it carry them away; let them drift in the current and the wind. And in a little while, they will sink. Deeper and deeper. As I shall, Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED. Do you know, Eilert—this book—all my life I shall feel as though you'd killed a little child?

LOEVBORG. You're right. It is like killing a child.

MRS. ELVSTED. But how could you? It was my child, too!

HEDDA. [*Almost inaudibly*] Oh—the child——!

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Breathes heavily*] It's all over, then. Well—I'll go now, Hedda.

HEDDA. You're not leaving town?

MRS. ELVSTED. I don't know what I'm going to do. I can't see anything except—darkness.

[*She goes out through the hall.*]

HEDDA. [*Waits a moment*] Aren't you going to escort her home, Mr. Loevborg?

LOEVBORG. I? Through the streets? Do you want me to let people see her with me?

HEDDA. Of course I don't know what else may have happened last night. But is it so utterly beyond redress?

LOEVBORG. It isn't just last night. It'll go on happening. I know it. But the curse of it is, I don't want to live that kind of life. I don't want to start all that again. She's broken my courage. I can't spit in the eyes of the world any longer.

HEDDA. [*As though to herself*] That pretty little fool's been trying to

6. Inlet of the sea (pronounced *fyord*).

shape a man's destiny. [*Looks at him*] But how could you be so heartless toward her?

LOEVBORG. Don't call me heartless!

HEDDA. To go and destroy the one thing that's made her life worth living? You don't call that heartless?

LOEVBORG. Do you want to know the truth, Hedda?

HEDDA. The truth?

LOEVBORG. Promise me first—give me your word—that you'll never let Thea know about this.

HEDDA. I give you my word.

LOEVBORG. Good. Well; what I told her just now was a lie.

HEDDA. About the manuscript?

LOEVBORG. Yes. I didn't tear it up. Or throw it in the fjord.

HEDDA. You didn't? But where is it, then?

LOEVBORG. I destroyed it, all the same. I destroyed it, Hedda!

HEDDA. I don't understand.

LOEVBORG. Thea said that what I had done was like killing a child.

HEDDA. Yes. That's what she said.

LOEVBORG. But to kill a child isn't the worst thing a father can do to it.

HEDDA. What could be worse than that?

LOEVBORG. Hedda—suppose a man came home one morning, after a night of debauchery, and said to the mother of his child: "Look here. I've been wandering round all night. I've been to—such-and-such a place and such-and-such a place. And I had our child with me. I took him to—these places. And I've lost him. Just—lost him. God knows where he is or whose hands he's fallen into."

HEDDA. I see. But when all's said and done, this was only a book——

LOEVBORG. Thea's heart and soul were in that book. It was her whole life.

HEDDA. Yes. I understand.

LOEVBORG. Well, then you must also understand that she and I cannot possibly ever see each other again.

HEDDA. Where will you go?

LOEVBORG. Nowhere. I just want to put an end to it all. As soon as possible.

HEDDA. [*Takes a step toward him*] Eilert Loevborg, listen to me. Do it—beautifully!

LOEVBORG. Beautifully? [*Smiles*] With a crown of vine-leaves in my hair? The way you used to dream of me—in the old days?

HEDDA. No. I don't believe in that crown any longer. But—do it beautifully, all the same. Just this once. Good-bye. You must go now. And don't come back.

LOEVBORG. Adieu, madam. Give my love to George Tesman.

[*Turns to go*]

HEDDA. Wait. I want to give you a souvenir to take with you.

[*She goes over to the writing table, opens the drawer and the pistol-case, and comes back to* LOEVBORG *with one of the pistols.*]

LOEVBORG. [*Looks at her*] This? Is this the souvenir?

HEDDA. [*Nods slowly*] You recognize it? You looked down its barrel once.

LOEVBORG. You should have used it then.

HEDDA. Here! Use it now!

LOEVBORG. [*Puts the pistol in his breast pocket*] Thank you.

HEDDA. Do it beautifully, Eilert Loevborg. Only promise me that!

LOEVBORG. Good-bye, Hedda Gabler.

[*He goes out through the hall.* HEDDA *stands by the door for a moment, listening. Then she goes over to the writing table, takes out the package containing the manuscript, glances inside it, pulls some of the pages half out and looks at them. Then she takes it to the armchair by the stove and sits down with the package in her lap. After a moment, she opens the door of the stove; then she opens the packet.*]

HEDDA. [*Throws one of the pages into the stove and whispers to herself*] I'm burning your child, Thea! You with your beautiful wavy hair! [*She throws a few more pages into the stove.*] The child Eilert Loevborg gave you. [*Throws the rest of the manuscript in*] I'm burning it! I'm burning your child!

Act IV

SCENE—*The same. It is evening. The drawing room is in darkness. The small room is illuminated by the hanging lamp over the table. The curtains are drawn across the french windows.* HEDDA, *dressed in black, is walking up and down in the darkened room. Then she goes into the small room and crosses to the left. A few chords are heard from the piano. She comes back into the drawing room.*

BERTHA *comes through the small room from the right with a lighted lamp, which she places on the table in front of the corner sofa in the drawing room. Her eyes are red with crying, and she has black ribbons on her cap. She goes quietly out, right.* HEDDA *goes over to the french windows, draws the curtains slightly to one side and looks out into the darkness.*

A few moments later, MISS TESMAN *enters from the hall. She is dressed in mourning, with a black hat and veil.* HEDDA *goes to meet her and holds out her hand.*

MISS TESMAN. Well, Hedda, here I am in the weeds of sorrow. My poor sister has ended her struggles at last.

HEDDA. I've already heard. Tesman sent me a card.

MISS TESMAN. Yes, he promised me he would. But I thought, no, I must go and break the news of death to Hedda myself—here, in the house of life.

HEDDA. It's very kind of you.

MISS TESMAN. Ah, Rena shouldn't have chosen a time like this to pass away. This is no moment for Hedda's house to be a place of mourning.

HEDDA. [*Changing the subject*] She died peacefully, Miss Tesman?

MISS TESMAN. Oh, it was quite beautiful! The end came so calmly. And she was so happy at being able to see George once again. And say good-bye to him. Hasn't he come home yet?

HEDDA. No. He wrote that I mustn't expect him too soon. But please sit down.

MISS TESMAN. No, thank you, Hedda dear—bless you. I'd like to. But I've so little time. I must dress her and lay her out as well as I can. She shall go to her grave looking really beautiful.

HEDDA. Can't I help with anything?

MISS TESMAN. Why, you mustn't think of such a thing! Hedda Tesman mustn't let her hands be soiled by contact with death. Or her thoughts. Not at this time.

HEDDA. One can't always control one's thoughts.

MISS TESMAN. [*Continues*] Ah, well, that's life. Now we must start to sew poor Rena's shroud. There'll be sewing to be done in this house too before long, I shouldn't wonder. But not for a shroud, praise God.

[GEORGE TESMAN *enters from the hall.*]

HEDDA. You've come at last! Thank heavens!

TESMAN. Are you here, Auntie Juju? With Hedda? Fancy that!

MISS TESMAN. I was just on the point of leaving, dear boy. Well, have you done everything you promised me?

TESMAN. No, I'm afraid I forgot half of it. I'll have to run over again tomorrow. My head's in a complete whirl today. I can't collect my thoughts.

MISS TESMAN. But George dear, you mustn't take it like this.

TESMAN. Oh? Well—er—how should I?

MISS TESMAN. You must be happy in your grief. Happy for what's happened. As I am.

TESMAN. Oh, yes, yes. You're thinking of Aunt Rena.

HEDDA. It'll be lonely for you now, Miss Tesman.

MISS TESMAN. For the first few days, yes. But it won't last long, I hope. Poor dear Rena's little room isn't going to stay empty.

TESMAN. Oh? Whom are you going to move in there? What?

MISS TESMAN. Oh, there's always some poor invalid who needs care and attention.

HEDDA. Do you really want another cross like that to bear?

MISS TESMAN. Cross! God forgive you, child. It's been no cross for me.

HEDDA. But now—if a complete stranger comes to live with you——?

MISS TESMAN. Oh, one soon makes friends with invalids. And I need so much to have someone to live for. Like you, my dear. Well, I expect there'll soon be work in this house too for an old aunt, praise God!

HEDDA. Oh—please!

TESMAN. By Jove, yes! What a splendid time the three of us could have together if——

HEDDA. If?

TESMAN. [*Uneasily*] Oh, never mind. It'll all work out. Let's hope so—what?

MISS TESMAN. Yes, yes. Well, I'm sure you two would like to be alone. [*Smiles*] Perhaps Hedda may have something to tell you, George. Good-bye. I must go home to Rena. [*Turns to the door*] Dear God, how strange! Now Rena is with me and with poor dear Joachim.

TESMAN. Fancy that. Yes, Auntie Juju! What?

[MISS TESMAN *goes out through the hall.*]

HEDDA. [*Follows* TESMAN *coldly and searchingly with her eyes*] I really believe this death distresses you more than it does her.

TESMAN. Oh, it isn't just Auntie Rena. It's Eilert I'm so worried about.

HEDDA. [*Quickly*] Is there any news of him?

TESMAN. I ran over to see him this afternoon. I wanted to tell him his manuscript was in safe hands.

HEDDA. Oh? You didn't find him?

TESMAN. No. He wasn't at home. But later I met Mrs. Elvsted and she told me he'd been here early this morning.

HEDDA. Yes, just after you'd left.

TESMAN. It seems he said he'd torn the manuscript up. What?

HEDDA. Yes, he claimed to have done so.

TESMAN. You told him we had it, of course?

HEDDA. No. [*Quickly*] Did you tell Mrs. Elvsted?

TESMAN. No, I didn't like to. But you ought to have told him. Think if he should go home and do something desperate! Give me the manuscript, Hedda. I'll run over to him with it right away. Where did you put it?

HEDDA. [*Cold and motionless, leaning against the armchair*] I haven't got it any longer.

TESMAN. Haven't got it? What on earth do you mean?

HEDDA. I've burned it.

TESMAN. [*Starts, terrified*] Burned it! Burned Eilert's manuscript!

HEDDA. Don't shout. The servant will hear you.

TESMAN. Burned it! But in heaven's name——! Oh, no, no, no! This is impossible!

HEDDA. Well, it's true.

TESMAN. But Hedda, do you realize what you've done? That's appropriating lost property! It's against the law! By Jove! You ask Judge Brack and see if I'm not right.

HEDDA. You'd be well advised not to talk about it to Judge Brack or anyone else.

TESMAN. But how could you go and do such a dreadful thing? What on earth put the idea into your head? What came over you? Answer me! What?

HEDDA. [*Represses an almost imperceptible smile*] I did it for your sake, George.

TESMAN. For my sake?

HEDDA. When you came home this morning and described how he'd read his book to you——

TESMAN. Yes, yes?

HEDDA. You admitted you were jealous of him.

TESMAN. But, good heavens, I didn't mean it literally!

HEDDA. No matter. I couldn't bear the thought that anyone else should push you into the background.

TESMAN. [*Torn between doubt and joy*] Hedda—is this true? But—but—but I never realized you loved me like that! Fancy——

HEDDA. Well, I suppose you'd better know. I'm going to have—— [*Breaks off and says violently*] No, no—you'd better ask your Auntie Juju. She'll tell you.

TESMAN. Hedda! I think I understand what you mean. [*Clasps his hands*] Good heavens, can it really be true! What?

HEDDA. Don't shout. The servant will hear you.

TESMAN. [*Laughing with joy*] The servant! I say, that's good! The servant! Why, that's Bertha! I'll run out and tell her at once!

HEDDA. [*Clenches her hands in despair*] Oh, it's destroying me, all this—it's destroying me!

TESMAN. I say, Hedda, what's up? What?

HEDDA. [*Cold, controlled*] Oh, it's all so—absurd—George.

TESMAN. Absurd? That I'm so happy? But surely——? Ah, well—perhaps I won't say anything to Bertha.

HEDDA. No, do. She might as well know too.

TESMAN. No, no, I won't tell her yet. But Auntie Juju—I must let her know! And you—you called me George! For the first time! Fancy that! Oh, it'll make Auntie Juju so happy, all this! So very happy!

HEDDA. Will she be happy when she hears I've burned Eilert Loevborg's manuscript—for your sake?

TESMAN. No, I'd forgotten about that. Of course no one must be

allowed to know about the manuscript. But that you're burning with love for me, Hedda, I must certainly let Auntie Juju know that. I say, I wonder if young wives often feel like that toward their husbands? What?

HEDDA. You might ask Auntie Juju about that too.

TESMAN. I will, as soon as I get the chance. [*Looks uneasy and thoughtful again*] But I say, you know, that manuscript. Dreadful business. Poor Eilert!

[MRS. ELVSTED, *dressed as on her first visit, with hat and overcoat, enters from the hall.*]

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Greets them hastily and tremulously*] Oh, Hedda dear, do please forgive me for coming here again.

HEDDA. Why, Thea, what's happened?

TESMAN. Is it anything to do with Eilert Loevborg? What?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes—I'm so dreadfully afraid he may have met with an accident.

HEDDA. [*Grips her arm*] You think so?

TESMAN. But, good heavens, Mrs. Elvsted, what makes you think that?

MRS. ELVSTED. I heard them talking about him at the boarding-house, as I went in. Oh, there are the most terrible rumors being spread about him in town today.

TESMAN. Fancy. Yes, I heard about them too. But I can testify that he went straight home to bed. Fancy that!

HEDDA. Well—what did they say in the boarding-house?

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, I couldn't find out anything. Either they didn't know, or else—— They stopped talking when they saw me. And I didn't dare to ask.

TESMAN. [*Fidgets uneasily*] We must hope—we must hope you misheard them, Mrs. Elvsted.

MRS. ELVSTED. No, no, I'm sure it was he they were talking about. I heard them say something about a hospital——

TESMAN. Hospital!

HEDDA. Oh no, surely that's impossible!

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, I became so afraid. So I went up to his rooms and asked to see him.

HEDDA. Do you think that was wise, Thea?

MRS. ELVSTED. Well, what else could I do? I couldn't bear the uncertainty any longer.

TESMAN. But you didn't manage to find him either? What?

MRS. ELVSTED. No. And they had no idea where he was. They said he hadn't been home since yesterday afternoon.

TESMAN. Since yesterday? Fancy that!

MRS. ELVSTED. I'm sure he must have met with an accident.

TESMAN. Hedda, I wonder if I ought to go into town and make one or two enquiries?

HEDDA. No, no, don't you get mixed up in this.

[JUDGE BRACK *enters from the hall, hat in hand.* BERTHA, *who has opened the door for him, closes it. He looks serious and greets them silently.*]

TESMAN. Hullo, my dear Judge. Fancy seeing you!

BRACK. I had to come and talk to you.

TESMAN. I can see Auntie Juju's told you the news.

BRACK. Yes, I've heard about that too.

TESMAN. Tragic, isn't it?

BRACK. Well, my dear chap, that depends how you look at it.

TESMAN. [*Looks uncertainly at him*] Has something else happened?

BRACK. Yes.

HEDDA. Another tragedy?

BRACK. That also depends on how you look at it, Mrs. Tesman.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, it's something to do with Eilert Loevborg!

BRACK. [*Looks at her for a moment*] How did you guess? Perhaps you've heard already——?

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Confused*] No, no, not at all—I——

TESMAN. For heaven's sake, tell us!

BRACK. [*Shrugs his shoulders*] Well, I'm afraid they've taken him to the hospital. He's dying.

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Screams*] Oh God, God!

TESMAN. The hospital! Dying!

HEDDA. [*Involuntarily*] So quickly!

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Weeping*] Oh, Hedda! And we parted enemies!

HEDDA. [*Whispers*] Thea—Thea!

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Ignoring her*] I must see him! I must see him before he dies!

BRACK. It's no use, Mrs. Elvsted. No one's allowed to see him now.

MRS. ELVSTED. But what's happened to him? You must tell me!

TESMAN. He hasn't tried to do anything to himself? What?

HEDDA. Yes, he has. I'm sure of it.

TESMAN. Hedda, how can you——?

BRACK. [*Who has not taken his eyes from her*] I'm afraid you've guessed correctly, Mrs. Tesman.

MRS. ELVSTED. How dreadful!

TESMAN. Attempted suicide! Fancy that!

HEDDA. Shot himself!

BRACK. Right again, Mrs. Tesman.

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Tries to compose herself*] When did this happen, Judge Brack?

BRACK. This afternoon. Between three and four.

TESMAN. But, good heavens—where? What?

BRACK. [*A little hesitantly*] Where? Why, my dear chap, in his rooms of course.

MRS. ELVSTED. No, that's impossible. I was there soon after six.

BRACK. Well, it must have been somewhere else, then. I don't know exactly. I only know that they found him. He'd shot himself—through the breast.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, how horrible! That he should end like that!

HEDDA. [*To* BRACK] Through the breast, you said?

BRACK. That is what I said.

HEDDA. Not through the head?

BRACK. Through the breast, Mrs. Tesman.

HEDDA. The breast. Yes; yes. That's good, too.

BRACK. Why, Mrs. Tesman?

HEDDA. Oh—no, I didn't mean anything.

TESMAN. And the wound's dangerous you say? What?

BRACK. Mortal. He's probably already dead.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, yes—I feel it! It's all over. All over. Oh Hedda——!

TESMAN. But, tell me, how did you manage to learn all this?

BRACK. [*Curtly*] From the police. I spoke to one of them.

HEDDA. [*Loudly, clearly*] At last! Oh, thank God!

TESMAN. [*Appalled*] For God's sake, Hedda, what are you saying?

HEDDA. I am saying there's beauty in what he has done.

BRACK. Mm—Mrs. Tesman——

TESMAN. Beauty! Oh, but I say!

MRS. ELVSTED. Hedda, how can you talk of beauty in connection with a thing like this?

HEDDA. Eilert Loevborg has settled his account with life. He's had the courage to do what—what he had to do.

MRS. ELVSTED. No, that's not why it happened. He did it because he was mad.

TESMAN. He did it because he was desperate.

HEDDA. You're wrong! I know!

MRS. ELVSTED. He must have been mad. The same as when he tore up the manuscript.

BRACK. [*Starts*] Manuscript? Did he tear it up?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes. Last night.

TESMAN. [*Whispers*] Oh, Hedda, we shall never be able to escape from this.

BRACK. Hm. Strange.

TESMAN. [*Wanders round the room*] To think of Eilert dying like that. And not leaving behind him the thing that would have made his name endure.

MRS. ELVSTED. If only it could be pieced together again!

TESMAN. Yes, fancy! If only it could! I'd give anything——

MRS. ELVSTED. Perhaps it can, Mr. Tesman.

TESMAN. What do you mean?

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Searches in the pocket of her dress*] Look! I kept the notes he dictated it from.

HEDDA. [*Takes a step nearer*] Ah!

TESMAN. You kept them, Mrs. Elvsted! What?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, here they are. I brought them with me when I left home. They've been in my pocket ever since.

TESMAN. Let me have a look.

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Hands him a wad of small sheets of paper*] They're in a terrible muddle. All mixed up.

TESMAN. I say, just fancy if we can sort them out! Perhaps if we work on them together——?

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, yes! Let's try, anyway!

TESMAN. We'll manage it. We must! I shall dedicate my life to this.

HEDDA. *You,* George? Your life?

TESMAN. Yes—well, all the time I can spare. My book'll have to wait. Hedda, you do understand? What? I owe it to Eilert's memory.

HEDDA. Perhaps.

TESMAN. Well, my dear Mrs. Elvsted, you and I'll have to pool our brains. No use crying over spilt milk, what? We must try to approach this matter calmly.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, yes, Mr. Tesman. I'll do my best.

TESMAN. Well, come over here and let's start looking at these notes right away. Where shall we sit? Here? No, the other room. You'll excuse us, won't you, Judge? Come along with me, Mrs. Elvsted.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, God! If only we can manage to do it!

[TESMAN *and* MRS. ELVSTED *go into the rear room. He takes off his hat and overcoat. They sit at the table beneath the hanging lamp and absorb themselves in the notes.* HEDDA *walks across to the stove and sits in the armchair. After a moment,* BRACK *goes over to her.*]

HEDDA. [*Half aloud*] Oh, Judge! This act of Eilert Loevborg's—doesn't it give one a sense of release!

BRACK. Release, Mrs. Hedda? Well, it's a release for him, of course——

HEDDA. Oh, I don't mean him—I mean me! The release of knowing that someone can do something really brave! Something beautiful!

BRACK. [*Smiles*] Hm—my dear Mrs. Hedda——

HEDDA. Oh, I know what you're going to say. You're a bourgeois at heart too, just like—ah, well!

BRACK. [*Looks at her*] Eilert Loevborg has meant more to you than you're willing to admit to yourself. Or am I wrong?

HEDDA. I'm not answering questions like that from you. I only know that Eilert Loevborg has had the courage to live according to his own principles. And now, at last, he's done something big! Something beautiful! To have the courage and the will to rise from the feast of life so early!

BRACK. It distresses me deeply, Mrs. Hedda, but I'm afraid I must rob you of that charming illusion.

HEDDA. Illusion?

BRACK. You wouldn't have been allowed to keep it for long, anyway.

HEDDA. What do you mean?

BRACK. He didn't shoot himself on purpose.

HEDDA. Not on purpose?

BRACK. No. It didn't happen quite the way I told you.

HEDDA. Have you been hiding something? What is it?

BRACK. In order to spare poor Mrs. Elvsted's feelings, I permitted myself one or two small—equivocations.

HEDDA. What?

BRACK. To begin with, he is already dead.

HEDDA. He died at the hospital?

BRACK. Yes. Without regaining consciousness.

HEDDA. What else haven't you told us?

BRACK. The incident didn't take place at his lodgings.

HEDDA. Well, that's utterly unimportant.

BRACK. Not utterly. The fact is, you see, that Eilert Loevborg was found shot in Mademoiselle Danielle's boudoir.

HEDDA. [*Almost jumps up, but instead sinks back in her chair*] That's impossible. He can't have been there today.

BRACK. He was there this afternoon. He went to ask for something he claimed they'd taken from him. Talked some crazy nonsense about a child which had got lost——

HEDDA. Oh! So that was the reason!

BRACK. I thought at first he might have been referring to his manuscript. But I hear he destroyed that himself. So he must have meant his pocketbook—I suppose.

HEDDA. Yes, I suppose so. So they found him there?

BRACK. Yes; there. With a discharged pistol in his breast pocket. The shot had wounded him mortally.

HEDDA. Yes. In the breast.

BRACK. No. In the—hm—stomach. The—lower part——

HEDDA. [*Looks at him with an expression of repulsion*] That too! Oh, why does everything I touch become mean and ludicrous? It's like a curse!

BRACK. There's something else, Mrs. Hedda. It's rather disagreeable, too.

HEDDA. What?

BRACK. The pistol he had on him——

HEDDA. Yes? What about it?

BRACK. He must have stolen it.

HEDDA. [*Jumps up*] Stolen it! That isn't true! He didn't!

BRACK. It's the only explanation. He must have stolen it. Ssh!

[TESMAN *and* MRS. ELVSTED *have got up from the table in the*

rear room and come into the drawing room.]

TESMAN. [*His hands full of papers*] Hedda, I can't see properly under that lamp. Think!

HEDDA. I am thinking.

TESMAN. Do you think we could possibly use your writing table for a little? What?

HEDDA. Yes, of course. [*Quickly*] No, wait! Let me tidy it up first.

TESMAN. Oh, don't you trouble about that. There's plenty of room.

HEDDA. No, no, let me tidy it up first, I say. I'll take this in and put them on the piano. Here.

[*She pulls an object, covered with sheets of music, out from under the bookcase, puts some more sheets on top and carries it all into the rear room and away to the left.* TESMAN *puts his papers on the writing table and moves the lamp over from the corner table. He and* MRS. ELVSTED *sit down and begin working again.* HEDDA *comes back.*]

HEDDA. [*Behind* MRS. ELVSTED*'s chair, ruffles her hair gently*] Well, my pretty Thea! And how is work progressing on Eilert Loevborg's memorial?

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Looks up at her, dejectedly*] Oh, it's going to be terribly difficult to get these into any order.

TESMAN. We've got to do it. We must! After all, putting other people's papers into order is rather my specialty, what?

[HEDDA *goes over to the stove and sits on one of the footstools.* BRACK *stands over her, leaning against the armchair.*]

HEDDA. [*Whispers*] What was that you were saying about the pistol?

BRACK. [*Softly*] I said he must have stolen it.

HEDDA. Why do you think that?

BRACK. Because any other explanation is unthinkable, Mrs. Hedda, or ought to be.

HEDDA. I see.

BRACK. [*Looks at her for a moment*] Eilert Loevborg was here this morning. Wasn't he?

HEDDA. Yes.

BRACK. Were you alone with him?

HEDDA. For a few moments.

BRACK. You didn't leave the room while he was here?

HEDDA. No.

BRACK. Think again. Are you sure you didn't go out for a moment?

HEDDA. Oh—yes, I might have gone into the hall. Just for a few seconds.

BRACK. And where was your pistol-case during this time?

HEDDA. I'd locked it in that——

BRACK. Er—Mrs. Hedda?

HEDDA. It was lying over there on my writing table.

BRACK. Have you looked to see if both the pistols are still there?

HEDDA. No.

BRACK. You needn't bother. I saw the pistol Loevborg had when they found him. I recognized it at once. From yesterday. And other occasions.

HEDDA. Have you got it?

BRACK. No. The police have it.

HEDDA. What will the police do with this pistol?

BRACK. Try to trace the owner.

HEDDA. Do you think they'll succeed?

BRACK. [*Leans down and whispers*] No, Hedda Gabler. Not as long as I hold my tongue.

HEDDA. [*Looks nervously at him*] And if you don't?

BRACK. [*Shrugs his shoulders*] You could always say he'd stolen it.

HEDDA. I'd rather die!

BRACK. [*Smiles*] People say that. They never do it.

HEDDA. [*Not replying*] And suppose the pistol wasn't stolen? And they trace the owner? What then?

BRACK. There'll be a scandal, Hedda.

HEDDA. A scandal!

BRACK. Yes, a scandal. The thing you're so frightened of. You'll have to appear in court. Together with Mademoiselle Danielle. She'll have to explain how it all happened. Was it an accident, or was it—homicide? Was he about to take the pistol from his pocket to threaten her? And did it go off? Or did she snatch the pistol from his hand, shoot him and then put it back in his pocket? She might quite easily have done it. She's a resourceful lady, is Mademoiselle Danielle.

HEDDA. But I had nothing to do with this repulsive business.

BRACK. No. But you'll have to answer one question. Why did you give Eilert Loevborg this pistol? And what conclusions will people draw when it is proved you did give it to him?

HEDDA. [*Bows her head*] That's true. I hadn't thought of that.

BRACK. Well, luckily there's no danger as long as I hold my tongue.

HEDDA. [*Looks up at him*] In other words, I'm in your power, Judge. From now on, you've got your hold over me.

BRACK. [*Whispers, more slowly*] Hedda, my dearest—believe me—I will not abuse my position.

HEDDA. Nevertheless, I'm in your power. Dependent on your will, and your demands. Not free. Still not free! [*Rises passionately*] No. I couldn't bear that. No.

BRACK. [*Looks half-derisively at her*] Most people resign themselves to the inevitable, sooner or later.

HEDDA. [*Returns his gaze*] Possibly they do.

[*She goes across to the writing table.*]

HEDDA. [*Represses an involuntary smile and says in* TESMAN*'s voice*] Well, George. Think you'll be able to manage? What?

TESMAN. Heaven knows, dear. This is going to take months and months.

HEDDA. [*In the same tone as before*] Fancy that, by Jove! [*Runs her hands gently through* MRS. ELVSTED*'s hair*] Doesn't it feel strange, Thea? Here you are working away with Tesman just the way you used to work with Eilert Loevborg.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh—if only I can inspire your husband too!

HEDDA. Oh, it'll come. In time.

TESMAN. Yes—do you know, Hedda, I really think I'm beginning to feel a bit—well—that way. But you go back and talk to Judge Brack.

HEDDA. Can't I be of use to you two in any way?

TESMAN. No, none at all. [*Turns his head*] You'll have to keep Hedda company from now on, Judge, and see she doesn't get bored. If you don't mind.

BRACK. [*Glances at* HEDDA] It'll be a pleasure.

HEDDA. Thank you. But I'm tired this evening. I think I'll lie down on the sofa in there for a little while.

TESMAN. Yes, dear—do. What?

[HEDDA *goes into the rear room and draws the curtain behind her. Short pause. Suddenly she begins to play a frenzied dance melody on the piano.*]

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Starts up from her chair*] Oh, what's that?

TESMAN. [*Runs to the doorway*] Hedda dear, please! Don't play dance music tonight! Think of Auntie Rena. And Eilert.

HEDDA. [*Puts her head out through the curtains*] And Auntie Juju. And all the rest of them. From now on I'll be quiet.

[*Closes the curtains behind her*]

TESMAN. [*At the writing table*] It distresses her to watch us doing this. I say, Mrs. Elvsted, I've an idea. Why don't you move in with Auntie Juju? I'll run over each evening, and we can sit and work there. What?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, that might be the best plan.

HEDDA. [*From the rear room*] I can hear what you're saying, Tesman. But how shall I spend the evenings out here?

TESMAN. [*Looking through his papers*] Oh, I'm sure Judge Brack'll be kind enough to come over and keep you company. You won't mind my not being here, Judge?

BRACK. [*In the armchair, calls gaily*] I'll be delighted, Mrs. Tesman. I'll be here every evening. We'll have great fun together, you and I.

HEDDA. [*Loud and clear*] Yes, that'll suit you, won't it, Judge? The only cock on the dunghill——!

[*A shot is heard from the rear room.* TESMAN, MRS. ELVSTED *and* JUDGE BRACK *start from their chairs.*]

TESMAN. Oh, she's playing with those pistols again.

[*He pulls the curtains aside and runs in.* MRS. ELVSTED *follows him.* HEDDA *is lying dead on the sofa. Confusion and shouting.* BERTHA *enters in alarm from the right.*]

TESMAN. [*Screams to* BRACK] She's shot herself! Shot herself in the head! By Jove! Fancy that!

BRACK. [*Half paralyzed in the armchair*] But, good God! People don't do such things!

ANTON CHEKHOV

1860–1904

In plays and stories Anton Chekhov depicts Russia around 1900 with great pity, gentleness, and kindness of heart. More important: with a deep humanity which has outlasted all the problems of his time he dramatizes universal and almost timeless feelings rather than ideas that date and pass. He differs sharply from the two giants of Russian literature. For one thing, his work is of smaller scope. With the exception of an immature, forgotten novel and a travel book, he never wrote anything but short stories and plays. He belongs, furthermore, to a very different moral and spiritual atmosphere. Chekhov had studied medicine, and practiced it for a time. He shared the scientific outlook of his age and had too skeptical a mind to believe in Christianity or in any metaphysical system. He confessed that an intelligent believer was a puzzle to him. His attitude toward his materials and characters is detached, "objective." He is thus much more in the stream of Western realism than either Tolstoy or Dostoevsky, and his affinities with Maupassant (to whom he is related also in technical matters) are obvious. But extended reading of Chekhov does convey an impression of his view of life. There is implied in his stories a philosophy of kindness and humanity, a sense of the unexplainable mystery of life, a sense, especially, of man's utter loneliness in this universe and among his fellow men. Chekhov's pessimism has nothing of the defiance of the universe or the horror at it which we meet in other writers with similar attitudes; it is somehow merely sad, pathetic, and yet also comforting and comfortable.

The Russia depicted in Chekhov's stories and plays is of a later period than that presented by Tolstoy and Dostoevsky. It seems to be nearing its end; there is a sense of decadence and frustration which heralds the approach of catastrophe. The aristocracy still keeps up a beautiful front, but is losing its fight without much resistance, resignedly. Officialdom is stupid and venal. The Church is backward and narrow-minded. The intelligentsia are hopelessly ineffectual, futile, lost in the provinces or absorbed in their egos. The peasants live subject to the lowest degradations of poverty and drink, apparently rather aggravated than improved since the much-heralded emancipa-

tion of the serfs in 1861. There seems no hope for society except in a gradual spread of enlightenment, good sense, and hygiene, for Chekhov is skeptical of the revolution and revolutionaries as well as of Tolstoy's followers.

Anton Pavlovich Chekhov was born on January 17, 1860, at Taganrog, a small town on the Sea of Azov. His father was a grocer and haberdasher; his grandfather, a serf who had bought his freedom. Chekhov's father went bankrupt in 1876, and the family moved to Moscow, leaving Anton to finish school in his home town. After his graduation in 1879, he followed his family to Moscow, where he studied medicine. In order to earn additional money for his family and himself, he started to write humorous sketches and stories for magazines. In 1884 he became a doctor and published his first collection of stories, *Tales of Melpomene*. In the same year he had his first hemorrhage. All the rest of his life he struggled against tuberculosis. His first play, *Ivanov*, was performed in 1887. Three years later, he undertook an arduous journey through Siberia to the island of Sakhalin (north of Japan) and back by boat through the Suez Canal. He saw there the Russian penal settlements and wrote a moving account of his trip in *Sakhalin Island* (1892). In 1898 his play *The Sea Gull* was a great success at the Moscow Art Theater. The next year he moved to Yalta, in the Crimea, and in 1901 married the actress Olga Knipper. He died on July 2, 1904, at Badenweiler in the Black Forest.

The plays of Chekhov seem to go furthest in the direction of naturalism, the depiction of a "slice of life" on stage. Compared to Ibsen's plays they seem plotless; they could be described as a succession of little scenes, composed like a mosaic or like the dots on an impressionist painting. The characters often do not engage in the usual dialogue; they speak often in little soliloquies, hardly justified by the situation and they often do not listen to the words of their ostensible partners. They seem alone even in a crowd. Human communication seems difficult and even impossible. There is no clear message, no zeal for social reform; life seems to flow quietly, even sluggishly, until interrupted by some desperate outbreak or even a pistol shot.

Chekhov's last play, *The Cherry Orchard* (composed in 1903, first performed at the Moscow Art Theater on January 17, 1904) differs, however, from this pattern in several respects. It has a strongly articulated central theme: the loss of the orchard, and it has a composition which roughly follows the traditional scheme of a well-made play. Arrival and departure from the very same room, the nursery, frame the two other acts: the outdoor idyll of act 2 and the dance in act 3. Act 3 is the turning point of the action: Lopahin appears and announces, somewhat shamefacedly, that he has bought the estate. The orchard was lost from the very beginning—there is no real struggle to prevent its sale—but still the news of Lopahin's purchase is a surprise as he had no intention of buying it but did so only when during the auction sale a rival seemed to have a chance of acquiring it. A leading action runs its course, and one may even argue, many—too many—subplots crisscross each other: the shy and awkward love affair of the student Trofimov and the gay daughter Anya; the love triangle among the three dependents, Yepihodov, the unlucky clerk, Dunyasha, the silly chambermaid, and Yasha, the conceited and insolent footman. Varya, the practical,

spinsterish stepdaughter, has her troubles with Lopahin, and Simeonov-Pishchik is beset by the same financial problems as the owners of the orchard and is rescued by the discovery of some white clay on his estate. The German governess Charlotta drifts around alluding to her obscure origins and past. There are undeveloped references to events preceding the action on stage: the lover in Paris, the drowned boy Grisha, but there is no revelation of the past as in Ibsen, no mystery, no intrigue.

While the events on the stage follow each other naturally, though hardly always in a logical, causal order, a symbolic device is used conspicuously: In act 2 after a pause, "suddenly a distant sound is heard, coming from the sky as it were, the sound of a snapping string, mournfully dying away." It occurs again at the very end of the play followed by "the stroke of an ax felling a tree far away in the orchard." An attempt is made to explain this sound at its first occurrence as a bucket's fall in a faraway pit, or as the cries of a heron or an owl, but the effect is weird and even supernatural; it establishes an ominous mood. Even the orchard carries more than its obvious meaning: It is white, drowned in blossoms when the party arrives in the spring; it is bare and desolate in the autumn when the axes are heard cutting it down. "The old bark on the trees gleams faintly, and the cherry trees seem to be dreaming of things that happened a hundred, two hundred years ago and to be tormented by painful visions," declaims Trofimov, defining his feeling for the orchard as a symbol of repression and serfdom. For Lubov Ranevskaya it is an image of her lost innocence and of the happier past, while Lopahin sees it only as an investment. It seems to draw together the meaning of the play.

But what is this meaning? Can we even decide whether it is a tragedy or a comedy? It has been commonly seen as the tragedy of the downfall of the Russian aristocracy (or more correctly, the landed gentry) victimized by the newly rich, upstart peasantry. One could see the play as depicting the defeat of a group of feckless people at the hand of a ruthless "developer" who destroys nature and natural beauty for profit. Or one can see it as prophesying, through the mouth of the student Trofimov, the approaching end of feudal Russia and the coming happier future. Soviet interpretations and performances lean that way.

Surely none of these interpretations can withstand inspection in the light of the actual play. They all run counter to Chekhov's professed intentions. He called the play a comedy. In a letter of September 15, 1903, he declared expressly that the play "has not turned out as drama but as comedy, in places even a farce" and a few days later (September 21, 1903) he wrote that "the whole play is gay and frivolous." Chekhov did not like the staging of the play at the Moscow Art Theater and complained of its tearful tone and its slow pace. He objected that "they obstinately call my play a drama in playbill and newspaper advertisements" while he had called it a comedy (April 10, 1904).

No doubt, there are many comical and even farcical characters and scenes in the play. Charlotta with her dog eating nuts, her card tricks, her ventriloquism, her disappearing acts, is a clownish figure. Gayev, the landowner, though "suave and elegant," is a windbag obsessed by his passion for billiards, constantly popping candy into his mouth, telling the waiters in a

restaurant about the "decadents" in Paris. Yepihodov, the clerk, carries a revolver and, threatening suicide, asks foolishly whether you have read Buckle (the English historian) and complains of his ill-luck: a spider on his chest, a cockroach in his drink. Simeonov-Pishchik empties a whole bottle of pills, eats a gallon and a half of cucumbers, quotes Nietzsche supposedly recommending the forging of banknotes and, fat as he is, puffs and prances at the dance ordering the "cavaliers à genoux." Even the serious characters are put into ludicrous predicaments: Trofimov falls down the stairs; Lopahin, coming to announce the purchase of the estate, is almost hit with a stick by Varya (and was hit in the original version). Lopahin, teasing his intended Varya, "moos like a cow." The ball with the Jewish orchestra, the hunting for the galoshes, and the champagne drinking by Yasha in the last act have all a touch of absurdity. The grand speeches, Gayev's addresses to the bookcase and to nature or Trofimov's about "mankind going forward" and "All Russia is our orchard," are undercut by the contrast between the sentiment and the character: Gayev is callous and shallow; the "eternal student," Trofimov never did a stitch of work. He is properly ridiculed and insulted by Lubov for his scant beard and his silly professions of being "above love." One can sympathize with Chekhov's irritation at the pervading gloom imposed by the Moscow production.

Still, I believe, we cannot, in spite of the author, completely dismiss the genuine pathos of the central situation and of the central figure, Lubov Ranevskaya. Whatever one may say about her recklessness in financial matters and her guilt in relation to her lover in France, we must feel her deep attachment to the house and the orchard, to the past and her lost innocence, clearly and unhumorously expressed in the first act on her arrival, again and again at the impending sale of the estate, and finally at the parting from her house: "Oh, my orchard—my dear, sweet, beautiful orchard! . . . My life, my youth, my happiness—Good-bye!" That Gayev, before the final parting, seems to have overcome the sense of loss and even looks forward to his job in the bank and that Lubov acknowledges that her "nerves are better" and that "she sleeps well" testifies to the indestructible spirit of brother and sister, but cannot minimize the sense of loss, the pathos of parting, the nostalgia for happier times. Nor is the conception of Lopahin simple. Chekhov emphasized, in a letter to Konstantin Stanislavsky who was to play the part, that "Lopahin is a decent person in the full sense of the word, and his bearing must be that of a completely dignified and intelligent man." He is not, he says, a profiteering peasant (*kulachok*, October 30, 1903). He admires Lubov and thinks of her with gratitude. He senses the beauty of the poppies in his fields. Even the scene of the abortive encounter with Varya at the end has its quiet pathos in spite of all its awkwardness and the comic touches such as the reference to the broken thermometer. Firs, the old valet, aged eighty-seven, may be grotesque in his deafness and his nostalgia for the good old days of serfdom, but the very last scene when we see him abandoned in the locked-up house surely concludes the play on a note of desolation and even despair.

Chekhov, we must conclude, achieved a highly original and even paradoxical blend of comedy and tragedy or rather of farce and pathos. The play gives a social picture firmly set in a specific historical time: the dissolution

of the landed gentry, the rise of the peasant, the encroachment of the city; but it does not propound an obvious social thesis. Chekhov, in his tolerance and tenderness, in his distrust of ideologies and heroics, extends his sympathy to all his characters (with the exception of the crudely ambitious valet Yasha). The glow of his humanity, untrammeled by time and place, keeps *The Cherry Orchard* alive in quite different social and political conditions, as it has the universalizing power of great art.

Francis Fergusson, "*Ghosts* and *The Cherry Orchard*" in *The Idea of the Theatre* (1949), presents a sensitive comparison of the two plays. Beverly Hahn, *Chekhov: A Study of Major Stories and Plays* (1977), and Harvey Pitcher, *The Chekhov Play: A New Interpretation* (1973) have good chapters on *Cherry Orchard*. Ernest J. Simmons, *Chekhov: A Biography* (1962), is the fullest biography in English. J. L. Styan, *Chekhov in Performance: A Commentary on the Major Plays* (1971), contains a detailed analysis of *Cherry Orchard*. René and N. D. Wellek, eds., *Chekhov: New Perspectives* (1984), is a selection from modern criticism with a sketch, by the editor, of Chekhov criticism in England and America.

The Cherry Orchard[1]

Characters

LUBOV ANDREYEVNA RANEVSKAYA, *a landowner*
ANYA, *her seventeen-year-old daughter*
VARYA, *her adopted daughter, twenty-four years old*
LEONID ANDREYEVICH GAYEV, *Mme. Ranevskaya's brother*
YERMOLAY ALEXEYEVICH LOPAHIN, *a merchant*
PYOTR SERGEYEVICH TROFIMOV, *a student*
SIMEONOV-PISHCHIK, *a landowner*
CHARLOTTA IVANOVNA, *a governess*
SEMYON YEPIHODOV, *a clerk*
DUNYASHA, *a maid*
FIRS (pronounced *fierce*), *a manservant, aged eighty-seven*
YASHA, *a young valet*
A TRAMP
STATIONMASTER
POST OFFICE CLERK
GUESTS
SERVANTS

The action takes place on Mme. Ranevskaya's estate.

Act I

A room that is still called the nursery. One of the doors leads into ANYA*'s room. Dawn, the sun will soon rise. It is May, the cherry*

1. Translated by Avraham Yarmolinsky.

trees are in blossom, but it is cold in the orchard; there is a morning frost. The windows are shut. Enter DUNYASHA *with a candle, and* LOPAHIN *with a book in his hand.*

LOPAHIN. The train is in, thank God. What time is it?

DUNYASHA. Nearly two. [*Puts out the candle.*] It's light already.

LOPAHIN. How late is the train, anyway? Two hours at least. [*Yawns and stretches.*] I'm a fine one! What a fool I've made of myself! I came here on purpose to meet them at the station, and then I went and overslept. I fell asleep in my chair. How annoying! You might have waked me . . .

DUNYASHA. I thought you'd left. [*Listens.*] I think they're coming!

LOPAHIN. [*Listens.*] No, they've got to get the luggage, and one thing and another . . . [*Pause.*] Lubov Andreyevna spent five years abroad, I don't know what she's like now. . . . She's a fine person—light-hearted, simple. I remember when I was a boy of fifteen, my poor father—he had a shop here in the village then—punched me in the face with his fist and made my nose bleed. We'd come into the yard, I don't know what for, and he'd had a drop too much. Lubov Andreyevna, I remember her as if it were yesterday—she was still young and so slim—led me to the wash-basin, in this very room . . . in the nursery. "Don't cry, little peasant," she said, "it'll heal in time for your wedding . . ." [*Pause.*] Little peasant . . . my father was a peasant, it's true, and here I am in a white waistcoat and yellow shoes. A pig in a pastry shop, you might say. It's true I'm rich. I've got a lot of money. . . . But when you look at it closely, I'm a peasant through and through. [*Pages the book.*] Here I've been reading this book and I didn't understand a word of it. . . . I was reading it and feel asleep . . . [*Pause.*]

DUNYASHA. And the dogs were awake all night, they feel that their masters are coming.

LOPAHIN. Dunyasha, why are you so—

DUNYASHA. My hands are trembling. I'm going to faint.

LOPAHIN. You're too soft, Dunyasha. You dress like a lady, and look at the way you do your hair. That's not right. One should remember one's place.

[*Enter* YEPIHODOV *with a bouquet; he wears a jacket and highly polished boots that squeak badly. He drops the bouquet as he comes in.*]

YEPIHODOV. [*Picking up the bouquet.*] Here, the gardener sent these, said you're to put them in the dining room. [*Hands the bouquet to* DUNYASHA.]

LOPAHIN. And bring me some kvass.

DUNYASHA. Yes, sir. [*Exits.*]

YEPIHODOV. There's a frost this morning—three degrees below—and

yet the cherries are all in blossom. I cannot approve of our climate. [*Sighs.*] I cannot. Our climate does not activate properly. And, Yermolay Alexeyevich, allow me to make a further remark. The other day I bought myself a pair of boots, and I make bold to assure you, they squeak so that it is really intolerable. What should I grease them with?

LOPAHIN. Oh, get out! I'm fed up with you.

YEPIHODOV. Every day I meet with misfortune. And I don't complain, I've got used to it, I even smile.

[DUNYASHA. *enters, hands* LOPAHIN *the kvass.*]

YEPIHODOV. I am leaving. [*Stumbles against a chair, which falls over.*] There! [*Triumphantly, as it were.*] There again, you see what sort of circumstance, pardon the expression. . . . It is absolutely phenomenal! [*Exits.*]

DUNYASHA. You know, Yermolay Alexeyevich, I must tell you, Yepihodov has proposed to me.

LOPAHIN. Ah!

DUNYASHA. I simply don't know . . . he's a quiet man, but sometimes when he starts talking, you can't make out what he means. He speaks nicely—and it's touching—but you can't understand it. I sort of like him though, and he is crazy about me. He's an unlucky man . . . every day something happens to him. They tease him about it here . . . they call him, Two-and-Twenty Troubles.

LOPAHIN. [*Listening.*] There! I think they're coming.

DUNYASHA. They *are* coming! What's the matter with me? I feel cold all over.

LOPAHIN. They really are coming. Let's go and meet them. Will she recognize me? We haven't seen each other for five years.

DUNYASHA. [*In a flutter.*] I'm going to faint this minute. . . . Oh, I'm going to faint!

[*Two carriages are heard driving up to the house.* LOPAHIN *and* DUNYASHA *go out quickly. The stage is left empty. There is a noise in the adjoining rooms.* FIRS, *who had driven to the station to meet* LUBOV ANDREYEVNA RANEVSKAYA, *crosses the stage hurriedly, leaning on a stick. He is wearing an old-fashioned livery and a tall hat. He mutters to himself indistinctly. The hubbub offstage increases.* A VOICE: "Come, let's go this way." *Enter* LUBOV ANDREYEVNA, ANYA, *and* CHARLOTTA IVANOVNA *with a pet dog on a leash, all in traveling dresses;* VARYA, *wearing a coat and kerchief;* GAYEV, SIMEONOV-PISHCHIK, LOPAHIN, DUNYASHA *with a bag and an umbrella, servants with luggage. All walk across the room.*]

ANYA. Let's go this way. Do you remember what room this is, Mamma?

MME. RANEVSKAYA. [*Joyfully, through her tears.*] The nursery!

VARYA. How cold it is! My hands are numb. [*To* MME. RANEVSKAYA.] Your rooms are just the same as they were, Mamma, the white one and the violet.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. The nursery! My darling, lovely room! I slept here when I was a child . . . [*Cries.*] And here I am, like a child again! [*Kisses her brother and* VARYA, *and then her brother again.*] Varya's just the same as ever, like a nun. And I recognized Dunyasha. [*Kisses* DUNYASHA.]

GAYEV. The train was two hours late. What do you think of that? What a way to manage things!

CHARLOTTA. [*To* PISHCHIK.] My dog eats nuts, too.

PISHCHIK. [*In amazement.*] You don't say!

[*All go out, except* ANYA *and* DUNYASHA.]

DUNYASHA. We've been waiting for you for hours. [*Takes* ANYA*'s hat and coat.*]

ANYA. I didn't sleep on the train for four nights and now I'm frozen . . .

DUNYASHA. It was Lent when you left; there was snow and frost, and now . . . My darling! [*Laughs and kisses her.*] I have been waiting for you, my sweet, my darling! But I must tell you something . . . I can't put it off another minute . . .

ANYA. [*Listlessly.*] What now?

DUNYASHA. The clerk, Yepihodov, proposed to me, just after Easter.

ANYA. There you are, at it again . . . [*Straightening her hair.*] I've lost all my hairpins . . . [*She is staggering with exhaustion.*]

DUNYASHA. Really, I don't know what to think. He loves me—he loves me so!

ANYA. [*Looking toward the door of her room, tenderly.*] My own room, my windows, just as though I'd never been away. I'm home! Tomorrow morning I'll get up and run into the orchard. Oh, if I could only get some sleep. I didn't close my eyes during the whole journey—I was so anxious.

DUNYASHA. Pyotr Sergeyevich came the day before yesterday.

ANYA. [*Joyfully.*] Petya!

DUNYASHA. He's asleep in the bathhouse. He has settled there. He said he was afraid of being in the way. [*Looks at her watch.*] I should wake him, but Miss Varya told me not to. "Don't you wake him," she said.

[*Enter* VARYA *with a bunch of keys at her belt.*]

VARYA. Dunyasha, coffee, and be quick. . . . Mamma's asking for coffee.

DUNYASHA. In a minute. [*Exits.*]

VARYA. Well, thank God, you've come. You're home again. [*Fondling* ANYA.] My darling is here again. My pretty one is back.

ANYA. Oh, what I've been through!

VARYA. I can imagine.

ANYA. When we left, it was Holy Week, it was cold then, and all the way Charlotta chattered and did her tricks. Why did you have to saddle me with Charlotta?

VARYA. You couldn't have travelled all alone, darling—at seventeen!

ANYA. We got to Paris, it was cold there, snowing. My French is dreadful. Mamma lived on the fifth floor; I went up there, and found all kinds of Frenchmen, ladies, an old priest with a book. The place was full of tobacco smoke, and so bleak. Suddenly I felt sorry for Mamma, so sorry, I took her head in my arms and hugged her and couldn't let go of her. Afterward Mamma kept fondling me and crying . . .

VARYA. [*Through tears.*] Don't speak of it . . . don't.

ANYA. She had already sold her villa at Mentone, she had nothing left, nothing. I hadn't a kopeck left either, we had only just enough to get home. And Mamma wouldn't understand! When we had dinner at the stations, she always ordered the most expensive dishes, and tipped the waiters a whole ruble. Charlotta, too. And Yasha kept ordering, too—it was simply awful. You know Yasha's Mamma's footman now, we brought him here with us.

VARYA. Yes, I've seen the blackguard.

ANYA. Well, tell me—have you paid the interest?

VARYA. How could we?

ANYA. Good heavens, good heavens!

VARYA. In August the estate will be put up for sale.

ANYA. My God!

LOPAHIN. [*Peeps in at the door and bleats*]. Meh-h-h. [*Disappears.*]

VARYA. [*Through tears*]. What I couldn't do to him! [*Shakes her fist threateningly.*]

ANYA. [*Embracing* VARYA, *gently.*] Varya, has he proposed to you? [VARYA *shakes her head.*] But he loves you. Why don't you come to an undersatanding? What are you waiting for?

VARYA. Oh, I don't think anything will ever come of it. He's too busy, he has no time for me . . . pays no attention to me. I've washed my hands of him—I can't bear the sight of him. They all talk about our getting married, they all congratulate me—and all the time there's really nothing to it—it's all like a dream. [*In another tone.*] You have a new brooch—like a bee.

ANYA. [*Sadly.*] Mamma bought it. [*She goes into her own room and speaks gaily like a child.*] And you know, in Paris I went up in a balloon.

VARYA. My darling's home, my pretty one is back! [DUNYASHA *returns*

with the coffeepot and prepares coffee. VARYA *stands at the door of* ANYA*'s room.*] All day long, darling, as I go about the house, I keep dreaming. If only we could marry you off to a rich man, I should feel at ease. Then I would go into a convent, and afterward to Kiev, to Moscow . . . I would spend my life going from one holy place to another . . . I'd go on and on. . . . What a blessing that would be!

ANYA. The birds are singing in the orchard. What time is it?

VARYA. It must be after two. Time you were asleep, darling. [*Goes into* ANYA*'s room.*] What a blessing that would be!

[YASHA *enters with a plaid and a traveling bag, crosses the stage.*]

YASHA. [*Finically.*] May I pass this way, please?

DUNYASHA. A person could hardly recognize you, Yasha. Your stay abroad has certainly done wonders for you.

YASHA. Hm-m . . . and who are you?

DUNYASHA. When you went away I was that high—[*Indicating with her hand.*] I'm Dunyasha—Fyodor Kozoyedev's daughter. Don't you remember?

YASHA. Hm! What a peach! [*He looks round and embraces her. She cries out and drops a saucer.* YASHA *leaves quickly.*]

VARYA. [*In the doorway, in a tone of annoyance.*] What's going on here?

DUNYASHA. [*Through tears.*] I've broken a saucer.

VARYA. Well, that's good luck.

ANYA. [*Coming out of her room.*] We ought to warn Mamma that Petya's here.

VARYA. I left orders not to wake him.

ANYA. [*Musingly.*] Six years ago father died. A month later brother Grisha was drowned in the river. . . . Such a pretty little boy he was—only seven. It was more than Mamma could bear, so she went away, went away without looking back . . . [*Shudders.*] How well I understand her, if she only knew! [*Pause.*] And Petya Trofimov was Grisha's tutor, he may remind her of it all . . .

[*Enter* FIRS, *wearing a jacket and a white waistcoat. He goes up to the coffeepot.*]

FIRS. [*Anxiously.*] The mistress will have her coffee here. [*Puts on white gloves.*] Is the coffee ready? [*Sternly, to* DUNYASHA.] Here, you! And where's the cream?

DUNYASHA. Oh, my God! [*Exits quickly.*]

FIRS. [*Fussing over the coffeepot.*] Hah! the addlehead! [*Mutters to himself.*] Home from Paris. And the old master used to go to Paris too . . . by carriage. [*Laughs.*]

VARYA. What is it, Firs?

FIRS. What is your pleasure, Miss? [*Joyfully.*] My mistress has come

home, and I've seen her at last! Now I can die. [*Weeps with joy.*]

[*Enter* MME. RANEVSKAYA, GAYEV, *and* SIMEONOV-PISHCHIK. *The latter is wearing a tight-waisted, pleated coat of fine cloth, and full trousers.* GAYEV, *as he comes in, goes through the motions of a billiard player with his arms and body.*]

MME. RANEVSKAYA. Let's see, how does it go? Yellow ball in the corner! Bank shot in the side pocket!

GAYEV. I'll tip it in the corner! There was a time, Sister, when you and I used to sleep in this very room and now I'm fifty-one, strange as it may seem.

LOPAHIN. Yes, time flies.

GAYEV. Who?

LOPAHIN. I say, time flies.

GAYEV. It smells of patchouli here.

ANYA. I'm going to bed. Good night, Mamma. [*Kisses her mother.*]

MME. RANEVSKAYA: My darling child! [*Kisses her hands.*] Are you happy to be home? I can't come to my senses.

ANYA. Good night, Uncle.

GAYEV. [*Kissing her face and hands.*] God bless you, how like your mother you are! [*To his sister.*] At her age, Luba, you were just like her.

[ANYA *shakes hands with* LOPAHIN *and* PISHCHIK, *then goes out, shutting the door behind her.*]

MME. RANEVSKAYA. She's very tired.

PISHCHIK. Well, it was a long journey.

VARYA. [*To* LOPAHIN and PISHCHIK.] How about it, gentlemen? It's past two o'clock—isn't it time for you to go?

MME. RANEVSKAYA. [*Laughs.*] You're just the same as ever, Varya. [*Draws her close and kisses her.*] I'll have my coffee and then we'll all go. [FIRS *puts a small cushion under her feet.*] Thank you, my dear. I've got used to coffee. I drink it day and night. Thanks, my dear old man. [*Kisses him.*]

VARYA. I'd better see if all the luggage has been brought in. [*Exits.*]

MME. RANEVSKAYA. Can it really be I sitting here? [*Laughs.*] I feel like dancing, waving my arms about. [*Covers her face with her hands.*] But maybe I am dreaming! God knows I love my country, I love it tenderly; I couldn't look out of the window in the train, I kept crying so. [*Through tears.*] But I must have my coffee. Thank you, Firs, thank you, dear old man. I'm so happy that you're still alive.

FIRS. Day before yesterday.

GAYEV. He's hard of hearing.

LOPAHIN. I must go soon, I'm leaving for Kharkov about five o'clock. How annoying! I'd like to have a good look at you, talk to you.

. . . You're just as splendid as ever.

PISHCHIK. [*Breathing heavily.*] She's even better-looking. . . . Dressed in the latest Paris fashion. . . . Perish my carriage and all its four wheels. . . .

LOPAHIN. Your brother, Leonid Andreyevich, says I'm a vulgarian and an exploiter. But it's all the same to me—let him talk. I only want you to trust me as you used to. I want you to look at me with your touching, wonderful eyes, as you used to. Dear God! My father was a serf of your father's and grandfather's, but you, you yourself, did so much for me once . . . so much . . . that I've forgotten all about that; I love you as though you were my sister—even more.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. I can't sit still, I simply can't. [*Jumps up and walks about in violent agitation.*] This joy is too much for me. . . . . Laugh at me, I'm silly! My own darling bookcase! My darling table! [*Kisses it.*]

GAYEV. While you were away, nurse died.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. [*Sits down and takes her coffee.*] Yes, God rest her soul; they wrote me about it.

GAYEV. And Anastasy is dead. Petrushka Kossoy has left me and has gone into town to work for the police inspector. [*Takes a box of sweets out of his pocket and begins to suck one.*]

PISHCHIK. My daughter Dashenka sends her regards.

LOPAHIN. I'd like to tell you something very pleasant—cheering. [*Glancing at his watch.*] I am leaving directly. There isn't much time to talk. But I will put it in a few words. As you know, your cherry orchard is to be sold to pay your debts. The sale is to be on the twenty-second of August; but don't you worry, my dear, you may sleep in peace; there is a way out. Here is my plan. Give me your attention! Your estate is only fifteen miles from the town; the railway runs close by it; and if the cherry orchard and the land along the riverbank were cut up into lots and these leased for summer cottages, you would have an income of at least 25,000 rubles a year out of it.

GAYEV. Excuse me. . . . What nonsense.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. I don't quite understand you, Yermolay Alexeyevich.

LOPAHIN. You will get an annual rent of at least ten rubles per acre, and if you advertise at once, I'll give you any guarantee you like that you won't have a square foot of ground left by autumn, all the lots will be snapped up. In short, congratulations, you're saved. The location is splendid—by that deep river. . . . Only, of course, the ground must be cleared . . . all the old buildings, for instance, must be torn down, and this house, too, which is useless, and, of course, the old cherry orchard must be cut down.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. Cut down? My dear, forgive me, but you don't know what you're talking about. If there's one thing that's interesting—indeed, remarkable—in the whole province, it's precisely our cherry orchard.

LOPAHIN. The only remarkable thing about this orchard is that it's a very large one. There's a crop of cherries every other year, and you can't do anything with them; no one buys them.

GAYEV. This orchard is even mentioned in the encyclopedia.

LOPAHIN. [*Glancing at his watch.*] If we can't think of a way out, if we don't come to a decision, on the twenty-second of August the cherry orchard and the whole estate will be sold at auction. Make up your minds! There's no other way out—I swear. None, none.

FIRS. In the old days, forty or fifty years ago, the cherries were dried, soaked, pickled, and made into jam, and we used to—

GAYEV. Keep still, Firs.

FIRS. And the dried cherries would be shipped by the cartload. It meant a lot of money! And in those days the dried cherries were soft and juicy, sweet, fragrant. . . . They knew the way to do it, then.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. And why don't they do it that way now?

FIRS. They've forgotten. Nobody remembers it.

PISHCHIK. [*To* MME. RANEVSKAYA.] What's doing in Paris? Eh? Did you eat frogs there?

MME. RANEVSKAYA. I ate crocodiles.

PISHCHIK. Just imagine!

LOPAHIN. There used to be only landowners and peasants in the country, but now these summer people have appeared on the scene. . . . All the towns, even the small ones, are surrounded by these summer cottages; and in another twenty years, no doubt, the summer population will have grown enormously. Now the summer resident only drinks tea on his porch, but maybe he'll take to working his acre, too, and then your cherry orchard will be a rich, happy, luxuriant place.

GAYEV. [*Indignantly.*] Poppycock!

[*Enter* VARYA *and* YASHA.]

VARYA. There are two telegrams for you, Mamma dear. [*Picks a key from the bunch at her belt and noisily opens an old-fashioned bookcase.*] Here they are.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. They're from Paris. [*Tears them up without reading them.*] I'm through with Paris.

GAYEV. Do you know, Luba, how old this bookcase is? Last week I pulled out the bottom drawer and there I found the date burnt in it. It was made exactly a hundred years ago. Think of that! We could celebrate its centenary. True, it's an inanimate object, but nevertheless, a bookcase . . .

PISHCHIK. [*Amazed.*] A hundred years! Just imagine!

GAYEV. Yes. [*Tapping it.*] That's something. . . . Dear, honored bookcase, hail to you who for more than a century have served the glorious ideals of goodness and justice! Your silent summons to fruitful toil has never weakened in all those hundred years [*through tears*], sustaining, through successive generations of our family, courage and faith in a better future, and fostering in us ideals of goodness and social consciousness. . . . [*Pauses.*]

LOPAHIN. Yes . . .

MME. RANEVSKAYA. You haven't changed a bit, Leonid.

GAYEV. [*Somewhat embarrassed.*] I'll play it off the red in the corner! Tip it in the side pocket!

LOPAHIN. [*Looking at his watch.*] Well, it's time for me to go . . .

YASHA. [*Handing pillbox to* MME. RANEVSKAYA.] Perhaps you'll take your pills now.

PISHCHIK. One shouldn't take medicines, dearest lady, they do neither harm nor good. . . . Give them here, my valued friend. [*Takes the pillbox, pours the pills into his palm, blows on them, puts them in his mouth, and washes them down with some kvass.*] There!

MME. RANEVSKAYA. [*Frightened.*] You must be mad!

PISHCHIK. I've taken all the pills.

LOPAHIN. What a glutton!

[*All laugh.*]

FIRS. The gentleman visited us in Easter week, ate half a bucket of pickles, he did . . . [*Mumbles.*]

MME. RANEVSKAYA. What's he saying?

VARYA. He's been mumbling like that for the last three years—we're used to it.

YASHA. His declining years!

[CHARLOTTA IVANOVNA, *very thin, tightly laced, dressed in white, a lorgnette at her waist, crosses the stage.*]

LOPAHIN. Forgive me, Charlotta Ivanovna, I've not had time to greet you. [*Tries to kiss her hand.*]

CHARLOTTA. [*Pulling away her hand.*] If I let you kiss my hand, you'll be wanting to kiss my elbow next, and then my shoulder.

LOPAHIN. I've no luck today. [*All laugh.*] Charlotta Ivanovna, show us a trick.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. Yes, Charlotta, do a trick for us.

CHARLOTTA. I don't see the need. I want to sleep. [*Exits.*]

LOPAHIN. In three weeks we'll meet again. [*Kisses* MME. RANEVSKAYA*'s hand.*] Good-bye till then. Time's up. [*To* GAYEV.] Bye-bye. [*Kisses* PISHCHIK.] Bye-bye. [*Shakes hands with* VARYA, *then with* FIRS *and* YASHA.] I hate to leave. [*To* MME. RANEVSKAYA.] If you make up your mind about the cottages, let me know; I'll get you a

loan of 50,000 rubles. Think it over seriously.

VARYA. [*Crossly.*] Will you never go!

LOPAHIN. I'm going, I'm going. [*Exits.*]

GAYEV. The vulgarian. But, excuse me . . . Varya's going to marry him, he's Varya's fiancé.

VARYA. You talk too much, Uncle.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. Well, Varya, it would make me happy. He's a good man.

PISHCHIK. Yes, one must admit, he's a most estimable man. And my Dashenka . . . she too says that . . . she says . . . lots of things. [*Snores; but wakes up at once.*] All the same, my valued friend, could you oblige me . . . with a loan of 240 rubles? I must pay the interest on the mortgage tomorrow.

VARYA. [*Alarmed.*] We can't, we can't!

MME. RANEVSKAYA. I really haven't any money.

PISHCHIK. It'll turn up. [*Laughs.*] I never lose hope, I thought everything was lost, that I was done for, when lo and behold, the railway ran through my land . . . and I was paid for it. . . . And something else will turn up again, if not today, then tomorrow . . . Dashenka will win two hundred thousand . . . she's got a lottery ticket.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. I've had my coffee, now let's go to bed.

FIRS. [*Brushes off* GAYEV; *admonishingly.*] You've got the wrong trousers on again. What am I to do with you?

VARYA. [*Softly.*] Anya's asleep. [*Gently opens the window.*] The sun's up now, it's not a bit cold. Look, Mamma dear, what wonderful trees. And heavens, what air! The starlings are singing!

GAYEV. [*Opens the other window.*] The orchard is all white. You've not forgotten it? Luba? That's the long alley that runs straight, straight as an arrow; how it shines on moonlight nights, do you remember? You've not forgotten?

MME. RANEVSKAYA. [*Looking out of the window into the orchard.*] Oh, my childhood, my innocent childhood. I used to sleep in this nursery—I used to look out into the orchard, happiness waked with me every morning, the orchard was just the same then . . . nothing has changed. [*Laughs with joy.*] All, all white! Oh, my orchard! After the dark, rainy autumn and the cold winter, you are young again, and full of happiness, the heavenly angels have not left you. . . . If I could free my chest and my shoulders from this rock that weighs on me, if I could only forget the past!

GAYEV. Yes, and the orchard will be sold to pay our debts, strange as it may seem.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. Look! There is our poor mother walking in the orchard . . . all in white . . . [*Laughs with joy.*] It is she!

GAYEV. Where?

VARYA. What are you saying, Mamma dear!

MME. RANEVSKAYA. There's no one there, I just imagined it. To the right, where the path turns toward the arbor, there's a little white tree, leaning over, that looks like a woman . . .

[TROFIMOV *enters, wearing a shabby student's uniform and spectacles.*]

MME. RANEVSKAYA. What an amazing orchard! White masses of blossom, the blue sky . . .

TROFIMOV. Lubov Andreyevna! [*She looks round at him.*] I just want to pay my respects to you, then I'll leave at once. [*Kisses her hand ardently.*] I was told to wait until morning, but I hadn't the patience . . . [MME. RANEVSKAYA *looks at him, perplexed.*]

VARYA. [*Through tears.*] This is Petya Trofimov.

TROFIMOV. Petya Trofimov, formerly your Grisha's tutor. . . . Can I have changed so much? [MME. RANEVSKAYA *embraces him and weeps quietly.*]

GAYEV. [*Embarrassed.*] Don't, don't, Luba.

VARYA. [*Crying.*] I told you, Petya, to wait until tomorrow.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. My Grisha . . . my little boy . . . Grisha . . . my son.

VARYA. What can one do, Mamma dear, it's God's will.

TROFIMOV. [*Softly, through tears.*] There . . . there.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. [*Weeping quietly.*] My little boy was lost . . . drowned. Why? Why, my friend? [*More quietly.*] Anya's asleep in there, and here I am talking so loudly . . . making all this noise. . . . But tell me, Petya, why do you look so badly? Why have you aged so?

TROFIMOV. A mangy master, a peasant woman in the train called me.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. You were just a boy then, a dear little student, and now your hair's thin—and you're wearing glasses! Is it possible you're still a student? [*Goes toward the door.*]

TROFIMOV. I suppose I'm a perpetual student.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. [*Kisses her brother, then* VARYA.] Now, go to bed. . . . You have aged, too, Leonid.

PISHCHIK. [*Follows her.*] So now we turn in. Oh, my gout! I'm staying the night here . . . Lubov Andreyevna, my angel, tomorrow morning . . . I do need 240 rubles.

GAYEV. He keeps at it.

PISHCHIK. I'll pay it back, dear . . . it's a trifling sum.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. All right, Leonid will give it to you. Give it to him, Leonid.

GAYEV. Me give it to him! That's a good one!

MME. RANEVSKAYA. It can't be helped. Give it to him! He needs it. He'll pay it back.

[MME. RANEVSKAYA, TROFIMOV, PISHCHIK, *and* FIRS *go out;* GAYEV, VARYA, *and* YASHA *remain.*]

GAYEV. Sister hasn't got out of the habit of throwing money around. [*To* YASHA.] Go away, my good fellow, you smell of the barnyard.

YASHA. [*With a grin.*] And you, Leonid Andreyevich, are just the same as ever.

GAYEV. Who? [*To* VARYA.] What did he say?

VARYA. [*To* YASHA.] Your mother's come from the village; she's been sitting in the servants' room since yesterday, waiting to see you.

YASHA. Botheration!

VARYA. You should be ashamed of yourself!

YASHA. She's all I needed! She could have come tomorrow. [*Exits.*]

VARYA. Mamma is just the same as ever; she hasn't changed a bit. If she had her own way, she'd keep nothing for herself.

GAYEV. Yes . . . [*Pauses.*] If a great many remedies are offered for some disease, it means it is incurable; I keep thinking and racking my brains; I have many remedies, ever so many, and that really means more. It would be fine if we came in for a legacy; it would be fine if we married off our Anya to a very rich man; or we might go to Yaroslavl and try our luck with our aunt, the Countess. She's very rich, you know . . .

VARYA. [*Weeping.*] If only God would help us!

GAYEV. Stop bawling. Aunt's very rich, but she doesn't like us. In the first place, Sister married a lawyer who was no nobleman . . . [ANYA *appears in the doorway.*] She married beneath her, and it can't be said that her behavior has been very exemplary. She's good, kind, sweet, and I love her, but no matter what extenuating circumstances you may adduce, there's no denying that she has no morals. You sense it in her least gesture.

VARYA. [*In a whisper.*] Anya's in the doorway.

GAYEV. Who? [*Pauses.*] It's queer, something got into my right eye—my eyes are going back on me. . . . And on Thursday, when I was in the circuit court—

[*Enter* ANYA.]

VARYA. Why aren't you asleep, Anya?

ANYA. I can't get to sleep, I just can't.

GAYEV. My little pet! [*Kisses* ANYA*'s face and hands.*] My child! [*Weeps.*] You are not my niece, you're my angel! You're everything to me. Believe me, believe—

ANYA. I believe you, Uncle. Everyone loves you and respects you . . . but, Uncle dear, you must keep still. . . . You must. What were you saying just now about my mother? Your own sister? What made you say that?

GAYEV. Yes, yes . . . [*Covers his face with her hand.*] Really, that was awful! Good God! Heaven help me! Just now I made a speech

to the bookcase . . . so stupid! And only after I was through, I saw how stupid it was.

VARYA. It's true, Uncle dear, you ought to keep still. Just don't talk, that's all.

ANYA. If you could only keep still, it would make things easier for you, too.

GAYEV. I'll keep still. [*Kisses* ANYA*'s and* VARYA*'s hands.*] I will. But now about business. On Thursday I was in court; well, there were a number of us there, and we began talking of one thing and another, and this and that, and do you know, I believe it will be possible to raise a loan on a promissory note to pay the interest at the bank.

VARYA. If only God would help us!

GAYEV. On Tuesday I'll go and see about it again. [*To* VARYA.] Stop bawling. [To ANYA.] Your mamma will talk to Lopahin, and he, of course, will not refuse her . . . and as soon as you're rested, you'll go to Yaroslavl to the Countess, your great-aunt. So we'll be working in three directions at once, and the thing is in the bag. We'll pay the interest—I'm sure of it. [*Puts a candy in his mouth.*] I swear on my honor, I swear by anything you like, the estate shan't be sold. [*Excitedly.*] I swear by my own happiness! Here's my hand on it, you can call me a swindler and a scoundrel if I let it come to an auction! I swear by my whole being.

ANYA. [*Relieved and quite happy again.*] How good you are, Uncle, and how clever! [*Embraces him.*] Now I'm at peace, quite at peace, I'm happy.

[*Enter* FIRS.]

FIRS. [*Reproachfully.*] Leonid Andreyevich, have you no fear of God? When are you going to bed?

GAYEV. Directly, directly. Go away, Firs, I'll . . . yes, I will undress myself. Now, children, 'nightie-'nightie. We'll consider details tomorrow, but now go to sleep. [Kisses ANYA *and* VARYA.] I am a man of the eighties; they have nothing good to say of that period nowadays. Nevertheless, in the course of my life, I have suffered not a little for my convictions. It's not for nothing that the peasant loves me; one should know the peasant; one should know from which—

ANYA. There you go again, Uncle.

VARYA. Uncle dear, be quiet.

FIRS. [*Angrily.*] Leonid Andreyevich!

GAYEV. I'm coming, I'm coming! Go to bed! Double bank shot in the side pocket! Here goes a clean shot . . .

[*Exits,* FIRS *hobbling after him.*]

ANYA. I am at peace now. I don't want to go to Yaroslavl—I don't

like my great-aunt, but still, I am at peace, thanks to Uncle. [*Sits down.*]

VARYA. We must get some sleep. I'm going now. While you were away, something unpleasant happened. In the old servants' quarters, there are only the old people as you know; Yefim, Polya, Yevstigney, and Karp, too. They began letting all sorts of rascals in to spend the night. . . . I didn't say anything. Then I heard they'd been spreading a report that I gave them nothing but dried peas to eat—out of stinginess, you know . . . and it was all Yevstigney's doing. . . . All right, I thought, if that's how it is, I thought, just wait. I sent for Yevstigney . . . [*Yawns.*] He comes. . . . "How's this, Yevstigney?" I say, "You fool. . . ." [*Looking at* ANYA.] Anichka! [*Pauses.*] She's asleep. [*Puts her arm around* ANYA.] Come to your little bed. . . . Come . . . [*Leads her.*] My darling has fallen asleep. . . . Come.

[*They go out. Far away beyond the orchard, a shepherd is piping.* TROFIMOV *crosses the stage and, seeing* VARYA *and* ANYA, *stands still.*]

VARYA. Sh! She's asleep . . . asleep. . . . Come, darling.

ANYA. [*Softly, half-asleep.*] I'm so tired. Those bells . . . Uncle . . . dear. . . . Mamma and Uncle . . .

VARYA. Come, my precious, come along. [*They go into* ANYA's *room.*]

TROFIMOV. [*With emotion.*] My sunshine, my spring!

Act II

A meadow. An old, long-abandoned, lopsided little chapel; near it a well, large slabs, which had apparently once served as tombstones, and an old bench. In the background the road to the Gayev estate. To one side poplars loom darkly, where the cherry orchard begins. In the distance a row of telegraph poles, and far off, on the horizon, the faint outline of a large city which is seen only in fine, clear weather. The sun will soon be setting. CHARLOTTA, YASHA, *and* DUNYASHA *are seated on the bench.* YEPIHODOV *stands near and plays a guitar. All are pensive.* CHARLOTTA *wears an old peaked cap. She has taken a gun from her shoulder and is straightening the buckle on the strap.*

CHARLOTTA. [*Musingly.*] I haven't a real passport, I don't know how old I am, and I always feel that I am very young. When I was a little girl, my father and mother used to go from fair to fair and give performances, very good ones. And I used to do the *salto mortale,* and all sorts of other tricks. And when papa and mamma died, a German lady adopted me and began to educate me. Very

good. I grew up and became a governess. But where I come from and who am I, I don't know. . . . Who were my parents? Perhaps they weren't even married. . . . I don't know . . . [*Takes a cucumber out of her pocket and eats it.*] I don't know a thing. [*Pause.*] One wants so much to talk, and there isn't anyone to talk to. . . . I haven't anybody.

YEPIHODOV. [*Plays the guitar and sings.*] "What care I for the jarring world? What's friend or foe to me? . . ." How agreeable it is to play the mandolin.

DUNYASHA. That's a guitar, not a mandolin. [*Looks in a hand mirror and powders her face.*]

YEPIHODOV. To a madman in love it's a mandolin. [*Sings.*] "Would that the heart were warmed by the fire of mutual love!" [YASHA *joins in.*]

CHARLOTTA. How abominably these people sing. Pfui! Like jackals!

DUNYASHA. [*To* YASHA.] How wonderful it must be though to have stayed abroad!

YASHA. Ah, yes, of course, I cannot but agree with you there. [*Yawns and lights a cigar.*]

YEPIHODOV. Naturally. Abroad, everything has long since achieved full perplexion.

YASHA. That goes without saying.

YEPIHODOV. I'm a cultivated man, I read all kinds of remarkable books. And yet I can never make out what direction I should take, what is it that I want, properly speaking. Should I live, or should I shoot myself, properly speaking? Nevertheless, I always carry a revolver about me. . . . Here it is . . . [*Shows revolver.*]

CHARLOTTA. I've finished. I'm going. [*Puts the gun over her shoulder.*] You are a very clever man, Yepihodov, and a very terrible one; women must be crazy about you. Br-r-r! [*Starts to go.*] These clever men are all so stupid; there's no one for me to talk to . . . always alone, alone, I haven't a soul . . . and who I am, and why I am, nobody knows. [*Exits unhurriedly.*]

YEPIHODOV. Properly speaking and letting other subjects alone, I must say regarding myself, among other things, that fate treats me mercilessly, like a storm treats a small boat. If I am mistaken, let us say, why then do I wake up this morning, and there on my chest is a spider of enormous dimensions . . . like this . . . [*Indicates with both hands.*] Again, I take up a pitcher of kvass to have a drink, and in it there is something unseemly to the highest degree, something like a cockroach. [*Pause.*] Have you read Buckle?[2] [*Pause.*] I wish to have a word with you, Avdotya Fyodorovna, if I may trouble you.

2. Henry Thomas Buckle (1821–1862) wrote a *History of Civilization in England* (1857–1861) which was considered daringly materialistic and free thinking.

DUNYASHA. Well, go ahead.

YEPIHODOV. I wish to speak with you alone. [*Sighs.*]

DUNYASHA. [*Embarassed.*] Very well. Only first bring me my little cape. You'll find it near the wardrobe. It's rather damp here.

YEPIHODOV. Certainly, ma'am; I will fetch it, ma'am. Now I know what to do with my revolver. [*Takes the guitar and goes off playing it.*]

YASHA. Two-and-Twenty Troubles! An awful fool, between you and me. [*Yawns.*]

DUNYASHA. I hope to God he doesn't shoot himself! [*Pause.*] I've become so nervous, I'm always fretting. I was still a little girl when I was taken into the big house, I am quite unused to the simple life now, and my hands are white, as white as a lady's. I've become so soft, so delicate, so refined, I'm afraid of everything. It's so terrifying; and if you deceive me, Yasha, I don't know what will happen to my nerves. [YASHA *kisses her.*]

YASHA. You're a peach! Of course, a girl should never forget herself; and what I dislike more than anything is when a girl don't behave properly.

DUNYASHA. I've fallen passionately in love with you; you're educated—you have something to say about everything. [*Pause.*]

YASHA. [*Yawns.*] Yes, ma'am. Now the way I look at it, if a girl loves someone, it means she is immoral. [*Pause.*] It's agreeable smoking a cigar in the fresh air. [*Listens.*] Someone's coming this way. . . . It's our madam and the others. [DUNYASHA *embraces him impulsively.*] You go home, as though you'd been to the river to bathe; go to the little path, or else they'll run into you and suspect me of having arranged to meet you here. I can't stand that sort of thing.

DUNYASHA. [*Coughing softly.*] Your cigar's made my head ache. [*Exits.* YASHA *remains standing near the chapel. Enter* MME. RANEVSKAYA, GAYEV, *and* LOPAHIN.]

LOPAHIN. You must make up your mind once and for all—there's no time to lose. It's quite a simple question, you know. Do you agree to lease your land for summer cottages or not? Answer in one word, yes or no; only one word!

MME. RANEVSKAYA. Who's been smoking such abominable cigars here? [*Sits down.*]

GAYEV. Now that the railway line is so near, it's made things very convenient. [*Sits down.*] Here we've been able to have lunch in town. Yellow ball in the side pocket! I feel like going into the house and playing just one game.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. You can do that later.

LOPAHIN. Only one word! [*Imploringly.*] Do give me an answer!

GAYEV. [*Yawning.*] Who?

MME. RANEVSKAYA. [*Looks into her purse.*] Yesterday I had a lot of

money and now my purse is almost empty. My poor Varya tries to economize by feeding us just milk soup; in the kitchen the old people get nothing but dried peas to eat, while I squander money thoughtlessly. [*Drops the purse, scattering gold pieces.*] You see, there they go . . . [*Shows vexation.*]

YASHA. Allow me—I'll pick them up. [*Picks up the money.*]

MME. RANEVSKAYA. Be so kind. Yasha. And why did I go to lunch in town? That nasty restaurant, with its music and the tablecloth smelling of soap. . . . Why drink so much, Leonid? Why eat so much? Why talk so much? Today again you talked a lot, and all so inappropriately about the seventies, about the decadents.[3] And to whom? Talking to waiters about decadents!

LOPAHIN. Yes.

GAYEV. [*Waving his hand.*] I'm incorrigible; that's obvious.[*Irritably, to* YASHA.] Why do you keep dancing about in front of me?

YASHA. [*Laughs.*] I can't hear your voice without laughing—

GAYEV. Either he or I—

MME. RANEVSKAYA. Go away, Yasha; run along.

YASHA. [*Handing* MME. RANEVSKAYA *her purse.*] I'm going at once. [*Hardly able to suppress his laughter.*] This minute. [*Exits.*]

LOPAHIN. That rich man, Deriganov, wants to buy your estate. They say he's coming to the auction himself.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. Where did you hear that?

LOPAHIN. That's what they are saying in town.

GAYEV. Our aunt in Yaroslavl has promised to help, but when she will send the money, and how much, no one knows.

LOPAHIN. How much will she send? A hundred thousand? Two hundred?

MME. RANEVSKAYA. Oh, well, ten or fifteen thousand; and we'll have to be grateful for that.

LOPAHIN. Forgive me, but such frivolous people as you are, so queer and unbusinesslike—I never met in my life. One tells you in plain language that your estate is up for sale, and you don't seem to take it in.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. What are we to do? Tell us what to do.

LOPAHIN. I do tell you, every day; every day I say the same thing! You must lease the cherry orchard and the land for summer cottages, you must do it and as soon as possible—right away. The auction is close at hand. Please understand! Once you've decided to have the cottages, you can raise as much money as you like, and you're saved.

3. A group of French poets (Mallarmé is today the most famous) of the 1880's were labeled "decadents" by their enemies and sometimes adopted the name themselves, proud of their refinement and sensitivity.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. Cottages—summer people—forgive me, but it's all so vulgar.

GAYEV. I agree with you absolutely.

LOPAHIN. I shall either burst into tears or scream or faint! I can't stand it! You've worn me out! [*To* GAYEV.] You're an old woman!

GAYEV. Who?

LOPAHIN. An old woman! [*Gets up to go.*]

MME. RANEVSKAYA. [*Alarmed.*] No, don't go! Please stay, I beg you, my dear. Perhaps we shall think of something.

LOPAHIN. What is there to think of?

MME. RANEVSKAYA. Don't go, I beg you. With you here it's more cheerful anyway. [*Pause.*] I keep expecting something to happen, it's as though the house were going to crash about our ears.

GAYEV. [*In deep thought.*] Bank shot in the corner. . . . Three cushions in the side pocket. . . .

MME. RANEVSKAYA. We have been great sinners . . .

LOPAHIN. What sins could you have committed?

GAYEV. [*Putting a candy in his mouth.*] They say I've eaten up my fortune in candy! [*Laughs.*]

MME. RANEVSKAYA. Oh, my sins! I've squandered money away recklessly, like a lunatic, and I married a man who made nothing but debts. My husband drank himself to death on champagne, he was a terrific drinker. And then, to my sorrow, I fell in love with another man, and I lived with him. And just then—that was my first punishment—a blow on the head: my little boy was drowned here in the river. And I went abroad, went away forever . . . never to come back, never to see this river again . . . I closed my eyes and ran, out of my mind. . . . But he followed me, pitiless, brutal. I bought a villa near Mentone, because he fell ill there; and for three years, day and night, I knew no peace, no rest. The sick man wore me out, he sucked my soul dry. Then last year, when the villa was sold to pay my debts, I went to Paris, and there he robbed me, abandoned me, took up with another woman, I tried to poison myself—it was stupid, so shameful—and then suddenly I felt drawn back to Russia, back, to my own country, to my little girl. [*Wipes her tears away.*] Lord, Lord! Be merciful, forgive me my sins—don't punish me anymore! [*Takes a telegram out of her pocket.*] This came today from Paris—he begs me to forgive him, implores me to go back . . . [*Tears up the telegram.*] Do I hear music? [*Listens.*]

GAYEV. That's our famous Jewish band, you remember? Four violins, a flute, and a double bass.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. Does it still exist? We ought to send for them some evening and have a party.

LOPAHIN. [*Listens.*] I don't hear anything. [*Hums softly.*] "The Germans for a fee will Frenchify a Russian." [*Laughs.*] I saw a play at the theater yesterday—awfully funny.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. There was probably nothing funny about it. You shouldn't go to see plays, you should look at yourselves more often. How drab your lives are—how full of unnecessary talk.

LOPAHIN. That's true; come to think of it, we do live like fools. [*Pause.*] My pop was a peasant, an idiot; he understood nothing, never taught me anything, all he did was beat me when he was drunk, and always with a stick. Fundamentally, I'm just the same kind of blockhead and idiot. I was never taught anything—I have a terrible handwriting. I write so that I feel ashamed before people, like a pig.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. You should get married, my friend.

LOPAHIN. Yes . . . that's true.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. To our Varya, she's a good girl.

LOPAHIN. Yes.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. She's a girl who comes of simple people, she works all day long; and above all, she loves you. Besides, you've liked her for a long time now.

LOPAHIN. Well, I've nothing against it. She's a good girl. [*Pause.*]

GAYEV. I've been offered a place in the bank—6,000 a year. Have you heard?

MME. RANEVSKAYA. You're not up to it. Stay where you are.

[FIRS *enters, carrying an overcoat.*]

FIRS. [*To* GAYEV.] Please put this on, sir, it's damp.

GAYEV. [*Putting it on.*] I'm fed up with you, brother.

FIRS. Never mind. This morning you drove off without saying a word. [*Looks him over.*]

MME. RANEVSKAYA. How you've aged, Firs.

FIRS. I beg your pardon?

LOPAHIN. The lady says you've aged.

FIRS. I've lived a long time; they were arranging my wedding and your papa wasn't born yet. [*Laughs.*] When freedom[4] came I was already head footman. I wouldn't consent to be set free then; I stayed on with the master . . . [*Pause.*] I remember they were all very happy, but why they were happy, they didn't know themselves.

LOPAHIN. It was fine in the old days! At least there was flogging!

FIRS. [*Not hearing.*] Of course. The peasants kept to the masters, the masters kept to the peasants; but now they've all gone their own ways, and there's no making out anything.

GAYEV. Be quiet, Firs. I must go to town tomorrow. They've prom-

4. Tsar Alexander II (ruled 1855–1881) emancipated the serfs in 1861.

ised to introduce me to a general who might let us have a loan.

LOPAHIN. Nothing will come of that. You won't even be able to pay the interest, you can be certain of that.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. He's raving, there isn't any general. [*Enter* TROFIMOV, ANYA, *and* VARYA.]

GAYEV. Here come our young people.

ANYA. There's Mamma, on the bench.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. [*Tenderly.*] Come here, come along, my darlings. [*Embraces* ANYA *and* VARYA.] If you only knew how I love you both! Sit beside me—there, like that. [*All sit down.*]

LOPAHIN. Our perpetual student is always with the young ladies.

TROFIMOV. That's not any of your business.

LOPAHIN. He'll soon be fifty, and he's still a student!

TROFIMOV. Stop your silly jokes.

LOPAHIN. What are you so cross about, you queer bird?

TROFIMOV. Oh, leave me alone.

LOPAHIN. [*Laughs.*] Allow me to ask you, what do you think of me?

TROFIMOV. What I think of you, Yermolay Alexeyevich, is this: you are a rich man who will soon be a millionaire. Well, just as a beast of prey, which devours everything that comes in its way, is necessary for the process of metabolism to go on, so you, too, are necessary.[*All laugh.*]

VARYA. Better tell us something about the planets, Petya.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. No, let's go on with yesterday's conversation.

TROFIMOV. What was it about?

GAYEV. About man's pride.

TROFIMOV. Yesterday we talked a long time, but we came to no conclusion. There is something mystical about man's pride in your sense of the word. Perhaps you're right, from your own point of view. But if you reason simply, without going into subtleties, then what call is there for pride? Is there any sense in it, if man is so poor a thing physiologically, and if, in the great majority of cases, he is coarse, stupid, profoundly unhappy? We should stop admiring ourselves. We should work, and that's all.

GAYEV. You die, anyway.

TROFIMOV. Who knows? And what does it mean—to die? Perhaps man has a hundred senses, and at his death only the five we know perish, while the other ninety-five remain alive.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. How clever you are, Petya!

LOPAHIN. [*Ironically.*] Awfully clever!

TROFIMOV. Mankind goes forward, developing its powers. Everything that is now unattainable for it will one day come within man's reach and be clear to him; only we must work, helping with all our might those who seek the truth. Here among us in Russia only the very few work as yet. The great majority of the intelligentsia,

as far as I can see, seek nothing, do nothing, are totally unfit for work of any kind. They call themselves the intelligentsia, yet they are uncivil to their servants, treat the peasants like animals, are poor students, never read anything serious, do absolutely nothing at all, only talk about science, and have little appreciation of the arts. They are all solemn, have grim faces, they all philosophize and talk of weighty matters. And meanwhile the vast majority of us, ninety-nine out of a hundred, live like savages. At the least provocation—a punch in the jaw, and curses. They eat disgustingly, sleep in filth and stuffiness, bedbugs everywhere, stench and damp and moral slovenliness. And obviously, the only purpose of all our fine talk is to hoodwink ourselves and others. Show me where the public nurseries are that we've heard so much about, and the libraries. We read about them in novels, but in reality they don't exist, there is nothing but dirt, vulgarity, and Asiatic backwardness. I don't like very solemn faces, I'm afraid of them, I'm afraid of serious conversations. We'd do better to keep quiet for a while.

LOPAHIN. Do you know, I get up at five o'clock in the morning, and I work from morning till night; and I'm always handling money, my own and other people's, and I see what people around me are really like. You've only to start doing anything to see how few honest, decent people there are. Sometimes when I lie awake at night, I think: "Oh, Lord, thou hast given us immense forests, boundless fields, the widest horizons, and living in their midst, we ourselves ought really to be giants."

MME. RANEVSKAYA. Now you want giants! They're only good in fairy tales; otherwise they're frightening.

[YEPIHODOV *crosses the stage at the rear, playing the guitar.*]

MME. RANEVSKAYA. [*Pensively*] There goes Yepihodov.

GAYEV. Ladies and gentlemen, the sun has set.

TROFIMOV. Yes.

GAYEV. [*In a low voice, declaiming as it were.*] Oh, Nature, wondrous Nature, you shine with eternal radiance, beautiful and indifferent! You, whom we call our mother, unite within yourself life and death! You animate and destroy!

VARYA. [*Pleadingly.*] Uncle dear!

ANYA. Uncle, again!

TROFIMOV. You'd better bank the yellow ball in the side pocket.

GAYEV. I'm silent, I'm silent . . .

[*All sit plunged in thought. Stillness reigns. Only* FIRS*'s muttering is audible. Suddenly a distant sound is heard, coming from the sky as it were, the sound of a snapping string, mournfully dying away.*]

MME. RANEVSKAYA. What was that?

LOPAHIN. I don't know. Somewhere far away, in the pits, a bucket's

broken loose; but somewhere very far away.

GAYEV. Or it might be some sort of bird, perhaps a heron.

TROFIMOV. Or an owl . . .

MME. RANEVSKAYA. [*Shudders.*] It's weird, somehow. [*Pause.*]

FIRS. Before the calamity the same thing happened—the owl screeched, and the samovar hummed all the time.

GAYEV. Before what calamity?

FIRS. Before the Freedom. [*Pause.*]

MME. RANEVSKAYA. Come, my friends, let's be going. It's getting dark. [*To* ANYA.] You have tears in your eyes. What is it, my little one? [*Embraces her.*]

ANYA. I don't know, Mamma; it's nothing.

TROFIMOV. Somebody's coming.

[*A* TRAMP *appears, wearing a shabby white cap and an overcoat. He is slightly drunk.*]

TRAMP. Allow me to inquire, will this short cut take me to the station?

GAYEV. It will. Just follow that road.

TRAMP. My heartfelt thanks. [*Coughing.*] The weather is glorious. [*Recites.*] "My brother, my suffering brother. . . . Go down to the Volga![5] Whose groans . . . ?' [*To* VARYA.] Mademoiselle, won't you spare 30 kopecks for a hungry Russian?

VARYA. [*Frightened, cries out.*]

LOPAHIN. [*Angrily.*] Even panhandling has its proprieties.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. [*Scared.*] Here, take this. [*Fumbles in her purse.*] I haven't any silver . . . never mind, here's a gold piece.

TRAMP. My heartfelt thanks. [*Exits. Laughter.*]

VARYA. [*Frightened.*] I'm leaving. I'm leaving. . . . Oh, Mamma dearest, at home the servants have nothing to eat, and you gave him a gold piece!

MME. RANEVSKAYA. What are you going to do with me? I'm such a fool. When we get home, I'll give you everything I have. Yermolay Alexeyevich, you'll lend me some more . . .

LOPAHIN. Yes, ma'am.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. Come, ladies and gentlemen, it's time to be going. Oh! Varya, we've settled all about your marriage. Congratulations!

VARYA. [*Through tears.*] Really, Mamma, that's not a joking matter.

LOPAHIN. "Aurelia, get thee to a nunnery, go . . ."

GAYEV. And do you know, my hands are trembling: I haven't played billiards in a long time.

LOPAHIN. "Aurelia, nymph, in your orisons, remember me!"[6]

5. Lines from poems by Semyon Nadson (1826–1878) and Nikolay Nekrasov (1821–1878).

6. Lopahin makes comic use of Hamlet's meeting with Ophelia (in the Russian distorted to "Okhmelia"). Hamlet, seeing her approaching, says: "Nymph, in thy orisons / Be all my sins remembered" (III: 1, 89–90), and later, suspecting her of spying for her father, sends her off with "Get thee to a nunnery" (1. 121).

MME. RANEVSKAYA. Let's go, it's almost suppertime.

VARYA. He frightened me! My heart's pounding.

LOPAHIN. Let me remind you, ladies and gentlemen, on the twenty-second of August the cherry orchard will be up for sale. Think about that! Think!

[*All except* TROFIMOV *and* ANYA *go out.*]

ANYA. [*Laughs.*] I'm grateful to that tramp, he frightened Varya and so we're alone.

TROFIMOV. Varya's afraid we'll fall in love with each other all of a sudden. She hasn't left us alone for days. Her narrow mind can't grasp that we're above love. To avoid the petty and illusory, everything that prevents us from being free and happy—that is the goal and meaning of our life. Forward! Do not fall behind, friends!

ANYA. [*Strikes her hands together.*] How well you speak! [*Pause.*] It's wonderful here today.

TROFIMOV. Yes, the weather's glorious.

ANYA. What have you done to me, Petya? Why don't I love the cherry orchard as I used to? I loved it so tenderly. It seemed to me there was no spot on earth lovelier than our orchard.

TROFIMOV. All Russia is our orchard. Our land is vast and beautiful, there are many wonderful places in it. [*Pause.*] Think of it, Anya, your grandfather, your great-grandfather and all your ancestors were serf owners, owners of living souls, and aren't human beings looking at you from every tree in the orchard, from every leaf, from every trunk? Don't you hear voices? Oh, it's terrifying! Your orchard is a fearful place, and when you pass through it in the evening or at night, the old bark on the trees gleams faintly, and the cherry trees seem to be dreaming of things that happened a hundred, two hundred years ago and to be tormented by painful visions. What is there to say? We're at least two hundred years behind, we've really achieved nothing yet, we have no definite attitude to the past, we only philosophize, complain of the blues, or drink vodka. It's all so clear: in order to live in the present, we should first redeem our past, finish with it, and we can expiate it only by suffering, only by extraordinary, unceasing labor. Realize that, Anya.

ANYA. The house in which we live has long ceased to be our own, and I will leave it, I give you my word.

TROFIMOV. If you have the keys, fling them into the well and go away. Be free as the wind.

ANYA. [*In ecstasy.*] How well you put that!

TROFIMOV. Believe me, Anya, believe me! I'm not yet thirty, I'm young, I'm still a student—but I've already suffered so much. In winter I'm hungry, sick, harassed, poor as a beggar, and where hasn't Fate driven me? Where haven't I been? And yet always,

every moment of the day and night, my soul is filled with inexplicable premonitions. . . . I have a premonition of happiness, Anya. . . . I see it already!

ANYA. [*Pensively.*] The moon is rising.

[YEPIHODOV *is heard playing the same mournful tune on the guitar. The moon rises. Somewhere near the poplars* VARYA *is looking for* ANYA and *calling, "Anya, where are you?"*]

TROFIMOV. Yes, the moon is rising. [*Pause.*] There it is, happiness, it's approaching, it's coming nearer and nearer, I can already hear its footsteps. And if we don't see it, if we don't know it, what does it matter? Others will!

VARYA'S VOICE. Anya! Where are you?

TROFIMOV. That Varya again! [*Angrily.*] It's revolting!

ANYA. Never mind, let's go down to the river. It's lovely there.

TROFIMOV. Come on. [*They go.*]

VARYA'S VOICE. Anya! Anya!

Act III

A drawing room separated by an arch from a ballroom. Evening. Chandelier burning. The Jewish band is heard playing in the anteroom. In the ballroom they are dancing the Grand Rond. PISHCHIK *is heard calling,* "Promenade à une paire." PISHCHIK *and* CHARLOTTA, TROFIMOV *and* MME. RANEVSKAYA, ANYA *and the* POST OFFICE CLERK, VARYA *and the* STATIONMASTER, *and others enter the drawing room in couples.* DUNYASHA *is in the last couple.* VARYA *weeps quietly, wiping her tears as she dances. All parade through drawing room.* PISHCHIK *calling,* "Grand rond, balancez!" *and* "Les cavaliers à genoux et remerciez vos dames!" FIRS, *wearing a dress coat, brings in soda water on a tray.* PISHCHIK *and* TROFIMOV *enter the drawing room.*

PISHCHIK. I have high blood pressure; I've already had two strokes. Dancing's hard work for me; but as they say, "If you run with the pack, you can bark or not, but at least wag your tail." Still, I'm as strong as a horse. My late lamented father, who would have his joke, God rest his soul, used to say, talking about our origin, that the ancient line of the Simeonov-Pishchiks was descended from the very horse that Caligula had made a senator. [*Sits down.*] But the trouble is, I have no money. A hungry dog believes in nothing but meat. [*Snores, and wakes up at once.*] It's the same with me—I can think of nothing but money.

TROFIMOV. You know, there *is* something equine about your figure.

PISHCHIK. Well, a horse is a fine animal—one can sell a horse.

[*Sound of billiards being played in an adjoining room.* VARYA *appears in the archway.*]

TROFIMOV. [*Teasing her.*] Madam Lopahina! Madam Lopahina!

VARYA. [*Angrily.*] Mangy master!

TROFIMOV. Yes, I am a mangy master and I'm proud of it.

VARYA. [*Reflecting bitterly.*] Here we've hired musicians, and what shall we pay them with? [*Exits.*]

TROFIMOV. [*To* PISHCHIK.] If the energy you have spent during your lifetime looking for money to pay interest had gone into something else, in the end you could have turned the world upside down.

PISHCHIK. Nietzsche, the philosopher, the greatest, most famous of men, that colossal intellect, says in his works that it is permissible to forge banknotes.

TROFIMOV. Have you read Nietzsche?

PISHCHIK. Well . . . Dashenka told me. . . . And now I've got to the point where forging banknotes is the only way out for me. . . . The day after tomorrow I have to pay 310 rubles—I already have 130 . . . [*Feels in his pockets. In alarm.*] The money's gone! I've lost my money! [*Through tears.*] Where's my money? [*Joyfully.*] Here it is! Inside the lining . . . I'm all in a sweat . . .

[*Enter* MME. RANEVSKAYA *and* CHARLOTTA.]

MME. RANEVSKAYA. [*Hums the "Lezginka."*] Why isn't Leonid back yet? What is he doing in town? [*To* DUNYASHA.] Dunyasha, offer the musicians tea.

TROFIMOV. The auction hasn't taken place, most likely.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. It's the wrong time to have the band, and the wrong time to give a dance. Well, never mind. [*Sits down and hums softly.*]

CHARLOTTA. [*Hands* PISHCHIK *a pack of cards.*] Here is a pack of cards. Think of any card you like.

PISHCHIK. I've thought of one.

CHARLOTTA. Shuffle the pack now. That's right. Give it here, my dear Mr. Pishchik. *Eins, zwei, drei!*[7] Now look for it—it's in your side pocket.

PISHCHIK. [*Taking the card out of his pocket.*] The eight of spades! Perfectly right! Just imagine!

CHARLOTTA. [*Holding the pack of cards in her hands. To* TROFIMOV.] Quickly, name the top card.

TROFIMOV. Well, let's see—the queen of spades.

CHARLOTTA. Right! [*To* PISHCHIK.] Now name the top card.

PISHCHIK. The ace of hearts.

CHARLOTTA. Right! [*Claps her hands and the pack of cards disappears.*] Ah, what lovely weather it is today! [*A mysterious feminine voice, which seems to come from under the floor, answers*

7. German for "one, two, three."

her: "Oh, yes, it's magnificent weather, madam."] You are my best ideal. [*Voice:* "And I find you pleasing too, madam."]

STATIONMASTER. [*Applauding.*] The lady ventriloquist, bravo!

PISHCHIK. [*Amazed.*] Just imagine! Enchanting Charlotta Ivanovna, I'm simply in love with you.

CHARLOTTA. In love? [*Shrugs her shoulders.*] Are you capable of love? *Guter Mensch, aber schlechter Musikant!*[8]

TROFIMOV. [*Claps* PISHCHIK *on the shoulder.*] You old horse, you!

CHARLOTTA. Attention please! One more trick! [*Takes a plaid from a chair.*] Here is a very good plaid; I want to sell it. [*Shaking it out.*] Does anyone want to buy it?

PISHCHIK. [*In amazement.*] Just imagine!

CHARLOTTA. *Eins, zwei, drei!* [*Raises the plaid quickly, behind it stands* ANYA. *She curtsies, runs to her mother, embraces her, and runs back into the ballroom, amid general enthusiasm.*]

MME. RANEVSKAYA. [*Applauds.*] Bravo! Bravo!

CHARLOTTA. Now again! *Eins, zwei, drei!* [*Lifts the plaid; behind it stands* VARYA, *bowing.*]

PISHCHIK. [*In amazement.*] Just imagine!

CHARLOTTA. [*Throws the plaid at* PISHCHIK, *curtsies, and runs into the ballroom.*]

PISHCHIK. [*Running after her.*] The rascal! What a woman, what a woman! [*Exits.*]

MME. RANEVSKAYA. And Leonid still isn't here. What is he doing in town so long? I don't understand. It must be all over by now. Either the estate has been sold, or the auction hasn't taken place. Why keep us in suspense so long?

VARYA. [*Trying to console her.*] Uncle's bought it, I feel sure of that.

TROFIMOV. [*Mockingly.*] Oh, yes!

VARYA. Great-aunt sent him an authorization to buy it in her name, and to transfer the debt. She's doing it for Anya's sake. And I'm sure that God will help us, and Uncle will buy it.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. Great-aunt sent fifteen thousand to buy the estate in her name, she doesn't trust us, but that's not even enough to pay the interest. [*Covers her face with her hands.*] Today my fate will be decided, my fate—

TROFIMOV. [*Teasing* VARYA.] Madam Lopahina!

VARYA. [*Angrily.*] Perpetual student! Twice already you've been expelled from the university.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. Why are you so cross, Varya? He's teasing you about Lopahin. Well, what of it? If you want to marry Lopahin, go ahead. He's a good man, and interesting; if you don't want to,

8. "A good man, but a bad musician," usually quoted in the plural: "*Gute Leute, schlechte Musikanten.*" It comes from *Das Buch le Grand* (1826) of German poet Heinrich Heine (1799–1856). Here it suggests that Pishchik may be a good man but a bad lover.

don't. Nobody's compelling you, my pet!

VARYA. Frankly, Mamma dear, I take this thing seriously; he's a good man and I like him.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. All right then, marry him. I don't know what you're waiting for.

VARYA. But, Mamma, I can't propose to him myself. For the last two years, everyone's been talking to me about him—talking. But he either keeps silent, or else cracks jokes. I understand; he's growing rich, he's absorbed in business—he has no time for me. If I had money, even a little, say, 100 rubles, I'd throw everything up and go far away—I'd go into a nunnery.

TROFIMOV. What a blessing . . .

VARYA. A student ought to be intelligent. [*Softly, with tears in her voice.*] How homely you've grown, Petya! How old you look! [*To* MME. RANEVSKAYA, *with dry eyes.*] But I can't live without work, Mamma dear; I must keep busy every minute.

[*Enter* YASHA.]

YASHA. [*Hardly restraining his laughter.*] Yepihodov has broken a billiard cue! [*Exits.*]

VARYA. Why is Yepihodov here? Who allowed him to play billiards? I don't understand these people! [*Exits.*]

MME. RANEVSKAYA. Don't tease her, Petya. She's unhappy enough with that.

TROFIMOV. She bustles so—and meddles in other people's business. All summer long she's given Anya and me no peace. She's afraid of a love affair between us. What business is it of hers? Besides, I've given no grounds for it, and I'm far from such vulgarity. We are above love.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. And I suppose I'm beneath love? [*Anxiously.*] What can be keeping Leonid? If I only knew whether the estate has been sold or not. Such a calamity seems so incredible to me that I don't know what to think—I feel lost. . . . I could scream. . . . I could do something stupid. . . . Save me, Petya, tell me something, talk to me!

TROFIMOV. Whether the estate is sold today or not, isn't it all one? That's all done with long ago—there's no turning back, the path is overgrown. Calm yourself, my dear. You mustn't deceive yourself. For once in your life you must face the truth.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. What truth? You can see the truth, you can tell it from falsehood, but I seem to have lost my eyesight, I see nothing. You settle every great problem so boldly, but tell me, my dear boy, isn't it because you're young, because you don't yet know what one of your problems means in terms of suffering? You look ahead fearlessly, but isn't it because you don't see and don't expect anything dreadful, because life is still hidden from your young

eyes? You're bolder, more honest, more profound than we are, but think hard, show just a bit of magnanimity, spare me. After all, I was born here, my father and mother lived here, and my grandfather; I love this house. Without the cherry orchard, my life has no meaning for me, and if it really must be sold, then sell me with the orchard. [*Embraces* TROFIMOV, *kisses him on the forehead.*] My son was drowned here. [*Weeps.*] Pity me, you good, kind fellow!

TROFIMOV. You know, I feel for you with all my heart.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. But that should have been said differently, so differently! [*Takes out her handkerchief—a telegram falls on the floor.*] My heart is so heavy today—you can't imagine! The noise here upsets me—my inmost being trembles at every sound—I'm shaking all over. But I can't go into my own room; I'm afraid to be alone. Don't condemn me, Petya. . . . I love you as though you were one of us, I would gladly let you marry Anya—I swear I would—only, my dear boy, you must study—you must take your degree—you do nothing, you let yourself be tossed by Fate from place to place—it's so strange. It's true, isn't it? And you should do something about your beard, to make it grow somehow! [*Laughs.*] You're so funny!

TROFIMOV. [*Picks up the telegram.*] I've no wish to be a dandy.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. That's a telegram from Paris. I get one every day. One yesterday and one today. That savage is ill again—he's in trouble again. He begs forgiveness, implores me to go to him, and really I ought to go to Paris to be near him. Your face is stern, Petya; but what is there to do, my dear boy? What am I to do? He's ill, he's alone and unhappy, and who is to look after him, who is to keep him from doing the wrong thing, who is to give him his medicine on time? And why hide it or keep still about it—I love him! That's clear. I love him, love him! He's a millstone round my neck, he'll drag me to the bottom, but I love that stone, I can't live without it. [*Presses* TROFIMOV*'s hand.*] Don't think badly of me. Petya, and don't say anything, don't say . . .

TROFIMOV. [*Through tears.*] Forgive me my frankness in heaven's name; but, you know, he robbed you!

MME. RANEVSKAYA. No, no, no, you mustn't say such things! [*Covers her ears.*]

TROFIMOV. But he's a scoundrel! You're the only one who doesn't know it. He's a petty scoundrel—a nonentity!

MME. RANEVSKAYA. [*Controlling her anger.*] You are twenty-six or twenty-seven years old, but you're still a schoolboy.

TROFIMOV. That may be.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. You should be a man at your age. You should understand people who love—and ought to be in love yourself.

You ought to fall in love! [*Angrily.*] Yes, yes! And it's not purity in you, it's prudishness, you're simply a queer fish, a comical freak!

TROFIMOV. [*Horrified.*] What is she saying?

MME. RANEVSKAYA. "I am above love!" You're not above love, but simple, as our Firs says, you're an addlehead. At your age not to have a mistress!

TROFIMOV. [*Horrified.*] This is frightful! What is she saying! [*Goes rapidly into the ballroom, clutching his head.*] It's frightful—I can't stand it, I won't stay! [*Exits, but returns at once.*] All is over between us! [*Exits into anteroom.*]

MME. RANEVSKAYA. [*Shouts after him.*] Petya! Wait! You absurd fellow, I was joking. Petya!

[*Sound of somebody running quickly downstairs and suddenly falling down with a crash.* ANYA *and* VARYA *scream. Sound of laughter a moment later.*]

MME. RANEVSKAYA. What's happened?

[ANYA *runs in.*]

ANYA. [*Laughing.*] Petya's fallen downstairs! [*Runs out.*]

MME. RANEVSKAYA. What a queer bird that Petya is!

[STATIONMASTER, *standing in the middle of the ballroom, recites Alexey Tolstoy's "Magdalene,"*[9] *to which all listen, but after a few lines, the sound of a waltz is heard from the anteroom and the reading breaks off. All dance.* TROFIMOV, ANYA, VARYA *and* MME. RANEVSKAYA *enter from the anteroom.*]

MME. RANEVSKAYA. Petya, you pure soul, please forgive me. . . . Let's dance.

[*Dances with* PETYA, ANYA *and* VARYA *dance.* FIRS *enters, puts his stick down by the side door.* YASHA *enters from the drawing room and watches the dancers.*]

YASHA. Well, Grandfather?

FIRS. I'm not feeling well. In the old days it was generals, barons, and admirals that were dancing at our balls, and now we have to send for the Post Office Clerk and the Stationmaster, and even they aren't too glad to come. I feel kind of shaky. The old master that's gone, their grandfather, dosed everyone with sealing wax, whatever ailed 'em. I've been taking sealing wax every day for twenty years or more. Perhaps that's what's kept me alive.

YASHA. I'm fed up with you, Grandpop. [*Yawns.*] It's time you croaked.

FIRS. Oh, you addlehead! [*Mumbles.*]

[TROFIMOV *and* MME. RANEVSKAYA *dance from the ballroom into the drawing room.*]

9. Called "The Sinning Woman" in Russian, begins thus: "A bustling crowd with happy laughter, / with twanging lutes and clashing cymbals / with flowers and foliage all around / the colonnaded portico." Alexey Tolstoy (1817–1875) was a distant relative of Leo Tolstoy, popular in his time as a dramatist and poet.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. *Merci.* I'll sit down a while. [*Sits down.*] I'm tired.

[*Enter* ANYA.]

ANYA. [*Excitedly.*] There was a man in the kitchen just now who said the cherry orchard was sold today.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. Sold to whom?

ANYA. He didn't say. He's gone. [*Dances off with* TROFIMOV.]

YASHA. It was some old man gabbing, a stranger.

FIRS. And Leonid Andreyevich isn't back yet, he hasn't come. And he's wearing his lightweight between-season overcoat; like enough, he'll catch cold. Ah, when they're young they're green.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. This is killing me. Go, Yasha, find out to whom it has been sold.

YASHA. But the old man left long ago. [*Laughs.*]

MME RANEVSKAYA. What are you laughing at? What are you pleased about?

YASHA. That Yepihodov is such a funny one. A funny fellow, Two-and-Twenty Troubles!

MME. RANEVSKAYA. Firs, if the estate is sold, where will you go?

FIRS. I'll go where you tell me.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. Why do you look like that? Are you ill? You ought to go to bed.

FIRS. Yes! [*With a snigger.*] Me go to bed, and who's to hand things round? Who's to see to things? I'm the only one in the whole house.

YASHA. [*To* MME. RANEVSKAYA.] Lubov Andreyevna, allow me to ask a favor of you, be so kind! If you go back to Paris, take me with you, I beg you. It's positively impossible for me to stay here. [*Looking around; sotto voce.*] What's the use of talking? You see for yourself, it's an uncivilized country, the people have no morals, and then the boredom! The food in the kitchen's revolting, and besides there's this Firs wanders about mumbling all sorts of inappropriate words. Take me with you, be so kind!

[*Enter* PISHCHIK.]

PISHCHIK. May I have the pleasure of a waltz with you, charming lady? [MME. RANEVSKAYA *accepts.*] All the same, enchanting lady, you must let me have 180 rubles. . . . You must let me have [*dancing*] just one hundred and eighty rubles. [*They pass into the ballroom.*]

YASHA. [*Hums softly.*] "Oh, wilt thou understand the tumult in my soul?"

[*In the ballroom a figure in a gray top hat and checked trousers is jumping about and waving its arms; shouts:* "Bravo, Charlotta Ivanovna!"]

DUNYASHA. [*Stopping to powder her face; to* FIRS.] The young miss has ordered me to dance. There are so many gentlemen and not

enough ladies. But dancing makes me dizzy, my heart begins to beat fast, Firs Nikolayevich. The Post Office Clerk said something to me just now that quite took my breath away. [*Music stops.*]

FIRS. What did he say?

DUNYASHA. "You're like a flower," he said.

YASHA. [*Yawns.*] What ignorance. [*Exits.*]

DUNYASHA. "Like a flower!" I'm such a delicate girl. I simply adore pretty speeches.

FIRS. You'll come to a bad end.

[*Enter* YEPIHODOV.]

YEPIHODOV. [*To* DUNYASHA.] You have no wish to see me, Avdotya Fyodorovna . . . as though I was some sort of insect. [*Sighs.*] Ah, life!

DUNYASHA. What is it you want?

YEPIHODOV. Indubitably you may be right. [*Sighs.*] But of course, if one looks at it from the point of view, if I may be allowed to say so, and apologizing for my frankness, you have completely reduced me to a state of mind. I know my fate. Every day some calamity befalls me, and I grew used to it long ago, so that I look upon my fate with a smile. You gave me your word, and though I—

DUNYASHA. Let's talk about it later, please. But just now leave me alone, I am daydreaming. [*Plays with a fan.*]

YEPIHODOV. A misfortune befalls me every day; and if I may be allowed to say so, I merely smile, I even laugh.

[*Enter* VARYA.]

VARYA. [*To* YEPIHODOV.] Are you still here? What an impertinent fellow you are really! Run along, Dunyasha. [*To* YEPIHODOV.] Either you're playing billiards and breaking a cue, or you're wandering about the drawing room as though you were a guest.

YEPIHODOV. You cannot, permit me to remark, penalize me.

VARYA. I'm not penalizing you; I'm just telling you. You merely wander from place to place, and don't do your work. We keep you as a clerk, but heaven knows what for.

YEPIHODOV. [*Offended.*] Whether I work or whether I walk, whether I eat or whether I play billiards, is a matter to be discussed only by persons of understanding and of mature years.

VARYA. [*Enraged.*] You dare say that to me—you dare? You mean to say I've no understanding? Get out of here at once! This minute!

YEPIHODOV. [*Scared.*] I beg you to express yourself delicately.

VARYA. [*Beside herself.*] Clear out this minute! Out with you!

[YEPIHODOV *goes toward the door,* VARYA *following.*]

VARYA. Two-and-Twenty Troubles! Get out—don't let me set eyes on you again!

[*Exit* YEPIHODOV. *His voice is heard behind the door:* "I shall lodge a complaint against you!"]

VARYA. Oh, you're coming back? [*She seizes the stick left near door by* FIRS.] Well, come then . . . come . . . I'll show you. . . . Ah, you're coming? You're coming? . . . Come . . . [*Swings the stick just as* LOPAHIN *enters.*]

LOPAHIN. Thank you kindly.

VARYA. [*Angrily and mockingly.*] I'm sorry.

LOPAHIN. It's nothing. Thank you kindly for your charming reception.

VARYA. Don't mention it. [*Walks away, looks back and asks softly.*] I didn't hurt you, did I?

LOPAHIN. Oh, no, not at all. I shall have a large bump, though.

[*Voices from the ballroom:* "Lopahin is here! Lopahin!"] [*Enter* PISHCHIK.]

PISHCHIK. My eyes do see, my ears do hear! [*Kisses* LOPAHIN.] You smell of cognac, my dear friend. And we've been celebrating here, too.

[*Enter* MME. RANEVSKAYA.]

MME. RANEVSKAYA. Is that you, Yermolay Alexeyevich? What kept you so long? Where's Leonid?

LOPAHIN. Leonid Andreyevich arrived with me. He's coming.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. Well, what happened? Did the sale take place? Speak!

LOPAHIN. [*Embarrassed, fearful of revealing his joy.*] The sale was over at four o'clock. We missed the train—had to wait till half-past nine. [*Sighing heavily.*] Ugh. I'm a little dizzy.

[*Enter* GAYEV. In his right hand he holds parcels, with his left he is wiping away his tears.]

MME. RANEVSKAYA. Well, Leonid? What news? [*Impatiently, through tears.*] Be quick, for God's sake!

GAYEV. [*Not answering, simply waves his hand. Weeping, to* FIRS.] Here, take these; anchovies, Kerch herrings . . . I haven't eaten all day. What I've been through! [*The click of billiard balls comes through the open door of the billiard room and* YASHA*'s voice is heard: "Seven and eighteen!"* GAYEV*'s expression changes, he no longer weeps.*] I'm terribly tired. Firs, help me change. [*Exits, followed by* FIRS.]

PISHCHIK. How about the sale? Tell us what happened.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. Is the cherry orchard sold?

LOPAHIN. Sold.

MME. RANEVSKAYA: Who bought it?

LOPAHIN. I bought it.

[*Pause,* MME. RANEVSKAYA *is overcome. She would fall to the floor, were it not for the chair and table near which she stands.* VARYA *takes the keys from her belt, flings them on the floor in the middle of the drawing room and goes out.*]

LOPAHIN. I bought it. Wait a bit, ladies and gentlemen, please, my head is swimming, I can't talk. [*Laughs.*] We got to the auction and Deriganov was there already. Leonid Andreyevich had only 15,000 and straight off Deriganov bid 30,000 over and above the mortgage. I saw how the land lay, got into the fight, bid 40,000. He bid 45,000. I bid fifty-five. He kept adding five thousands, I ten. Well . . . it came to an end. I bid ninety above the mortgage and the estate was knocked down to me. Now the cherry orchard's mine! Mine! [*Laughs uproariously.*] Lord! God in Heaven! The cherry orchard's mine! Tell me that I'm drunk—out of my mind—that it's all a dream. [*Stamps his feet.*] Don't laugh at me! If my father and my grandfather could rise from their graves and see all that has happened—how their Yermolay, who used to be flogged, their half-literate Yermolay, who used to run about barefoot in winter, how that very Yermolay has bought the most magnificent estate in the world. I bought the estate where my father and grandfather were slaves, where they weren't even allowed to enter the kitchen. I am asleep—it's only a dream—I only imagine it. . . . It's the fruit of your imagination, wrapped in the darkness of the unknown! [*Picks up the keys, smiling genially.*] She threw down the keys, wants to show she's no longer mistress here. [*Jingles keys.*] Well, no matter. [*The band is warming up.*] Hey, musicians! Strike up! I want to hear you! Come, everybody, and see how Yermolay Lopahin will lay the ax to the cherry orchard and how the trees will fall to the ground. We will build summer cottages there, and our grandsons and great grandsons will see a new life here. Music! Strike up!

[*The band starts to play.* MME RANEVSKAYA has sunk into a chair and is weeping bitterly.]

LOPAHIN. [*Reproachfully.*] Why, why didn't you listen to me? My dear friend, my poor friend, you can't bring it back now. [*Tearfully.*] Oh, if only this were over quickly! Oh, if only our wretched, disordered life were changed!

PISHCHIK. [*Takes him by the arm; sotto voce.*] She's crying. Let's go into the ballroom. Let her be alone. Come. [*Takes his arm and leads him into the ballroom.*]

LOPAHIN. What's the matter? Musicians, play so I can hear you! Let me have things the way I want them.[*Ironically.*] Here comes the new master, the owner of the cherry orchard. [*Accidentally he trips over a little table, almost upsetting the candelabra.*] I can pay for everything. [*Exits with* PISHCHIK.]

[MME. RANEVSKAYA, *alone, sits huddled up, weeping bitterly. Music plays softly. Enter* ANYA *and* TROFIMOV quickly. ANYA *goes to her mother and falls on her knees before her.* TROFIMOV *stands in the doorway.*]

ANYA. Mamma, Mamma, you're crying! Dear, kind, good Mamma, my precious, I love you, I bless you! The cherry orchard is sold, it's gone, that's true, quite true. But don't cry, Mamma, life is still before you, you still have your kind, pure heart. Let us go, let us go away from here, darling. We will plant a new orchard, even more luxuriant than this one. You will see it, you will understand, and like the sun at evening, joy—deep, tranquil joy—will sink into your soul, and you will smile, Mamma. Come, darling, let us go.

Act IV

Scene as in Act I. No window curtains or pictures, only a little furniture, piled up in a corner, as if for sale. A sense of emptiness. Near the outer door and at the back, suitcases, bundles, etc., are piled up. A door open on the left and the voices of VARYA *and* ANYA *are heard.* LOPAHIN *stands waiting.* YASHA *holds a tray with glasses full of champagne.* YEPIHODOV *in the anteroom is tying up a box. Behind the scene a hum of voices: peasants have come to say good-bye. Voice of* GAYEV: "Thanks, brothers, thank you."

YASHA. The country folk have come to say good-bye. In my opinion, Yermolay Alexeyevich, they are kindly souls, but there's nothing in their heads.

[*The hum dies away. Enter* MME. RANEVSKAYA *and* GAYEV. *She is not crying, but is pale, her face twitches and she cannot speak.*]

GAYEV. You gave them your purse, Luba. That won't do! That won't do!

MME. RANEVSKAYA. I couldn't help it! I couldn't! [*They go out.*]

LOPAHIN. [*Calls after them.*] Please, I beg you, have a glass at parting. I didn't think of bringing any champagne from town and at the station I could find only one bottle. Please, won't you? [*Pause.*] What's the matter, ladies and gentlemen, don't you want any? [*Moves away from the door.*] If I'd known, I wouldn't have bought it. Well, then I won't drink any, either. [YASHA *carefully sets the tray down on a chair.*] At least you have a glass, Yasha.

YASHA. Here's to the travelers! And good luck to those that stay! [*Drinks.*] This champagne isn't the real stuff, I can assure you.

LOPAHIN. Eight rubles a bottle. [*Pause.*] It's devilishly cold here.

YASHA. They didn't light the stoves today—it wasn't worth it, since we're leaving. [*Laughs.*]

LOPAHIN. Why are you laughing?

YASHA. It's just that I'm pleased.

LOPAHIN. It's October, yet it's as still and sunny as though it were summer. Good weather for building. [*Looks at his watch, and*

speaks off.] Bear in mind, ladies and gentlemen, the train goes in forty-seven minutes, so you ought to start for the station in twenty minutes. Better hurry up!

[*Enter* TROFIMOV, *wearing an overcoat.*]

TROFIMOV. I think it's time to start. The carriages are at the door. The devil only knows what's become of my rubbers; they've disappeared. [*Calling off.*] Anya! My rubbers are gone. I can't find them.

LOPAHIN. I've got to go to Kharkov. I'll take the same train you do. I'll spend the winter in Kharkov. I've been hanging round here with you, till I'm worn out with loafing. I can't live without work—I don't know what to do with my hands, they dangle as if they didn't belong to me.

TROFIMOV. Well, we'll soon be gone, then you can go on with your useful labors again.

LOPAHIN. Have a glass.

TROFIMOV. No, I won't.

LOPAHIN. So you're going to Moscow now?

TROFIMOV. Yes, I'll see them into town, and tomorrow I'll go on to Moscow.

LOPAHIN. Well, I'll wager the professors aren't giving any lectures, they're waiting for you to come.

TROFIMOV. That's none of your business.

LOPAHIN. Just how many years have you been at the university?

TROFIMOV. Can't you think of something new? Your joke's stale and flat. [*Looking for his rubbers.*] We'll probably never see each other again, so allow me to give you a piece of advice at parting: don't wave your hands about! Get out of the habit. And another thing: building bungalows, figuring that summer residents will eventually become small farmers, figuring like that is just another form of waving your hands about. . . . Never mind, I love you anyway; you have fine, delicate fingers, like an artist; you have a fine delicate soul.

LOPAHIN. [*Embracing him.*] Good-bye, my dear fellow. Thank you for everything. Let me give you some money for the journey, if you need it.

TROFIMOV. What for? I don't need it.

LOPAHIN. But you haven't any.

TROFIMOV. Yes, I have, thank you. I got some money for a translation—here it is in my pocket. [*Anxiously.*] But where are my rubbers?

VARYA. [*from the next room.*] Here! Take the nasty things. [*Flings a pair of rubbers onto the stage.*]

TROFIMOV. What are you so cross about, Varya? Hm . . . and these are not my rubbers.

LOPAHIN. I sowed three thousand acres of poppies in the spring, and now I've made 40,000 on them, clear profit; and when my poppies were in bloom, what a picture it was! So, as I say, I made 40,000; and I am offering you a loan because I can afford it. Why turn up your nose at it? I am a peasant—I speak bluntly.

TROFIMOV. Your father was a peasant, mine was a druggist—that proves absolutely nothing whatever. [LOPAHIN *takes out his wallet.*] Don't, put that away! If you were to offer me two hundred thousand, I wouldn't take it. I'm a free man. And everything that all of you, rich and poor alike, value so highly and hold so dear hasn't the slightest power over me. It's like so much fluff floating in the air. I can get on without you, I can pass you by, I'm strong and proud. Mankind is moving toward the highest truth, toward the highest happiness possible on earth, and I am in the front ranks.

LOPAHIN. Will you get there?

TROFIMOV. I will. [Pause.] I will get there, or I will show others the way to get there.

[*The sound of axes chopping down trees is heard in the distance.*]

LOPAHIN. Well, good-bye, my dear fellow. It's time to leave. We turn up our noses at one another, but life goes on just the same. When I'm working hard, without resting, my mind is easier, and it seems to me that I, too, know why I exist. But how many people are there in Russia, brother, who exist nobody knows why? Well, it doesn't matter. That's not what makes the wheels go round. They say Leonid Andreyevich has taken a position in the bank, 6,000 rubles a year. Only, of course, he won't stick to it, he's too lazy. . . .

ANYA. [*In the doorway.*] Mamma begs you not to start cutting down the cherry trees until she's gone.

TROFIMOV. Really, you should have more tact! [*Exits.*]

LOPAHIN. Right away—right away! Those men . . . [*Exits.*]

ANYA. Has Firs been taken to the hospital?

YASHA. I told them this morning. They must have taken him.

ANYA. [*To* YEPIHODOV, *who crosses the room.*] Yepihodov, please find out if Firs has been taken ot the hospital.

YASHA. [*Offended.*] I told Yegor this morning. Why ask a dozen times?

YEPIHODOV. The aged Firs, in my definitive opinion, is beyond mending. It's time he was gathered to his fathers. And I can only envy him. [*Puts a suitcase down on a hat box and crushes it.*] There now, of course, I knew it! [*Exits.*]

YASHA. [*Mockingly.*] Two-and-Twenty Troubles!

VARYA. [*Through the door.*] Has Firs been taken to the hospital?

ANYA. Yes.

VARYA. Then why wasn't the note for the doctor taken too?

ANYA. Oh! Then someone must take it to him. [*Exits.*]

VARYA. [*From adjoining room.*] Where's Yasha? Tell him his mother's come and wants to say good-bye.

YASHA. [*Waves his hand.*] She tries my patience.

[DUNYASHA *has been occupied with the luggage. Seeing* YASHA *alone, she goes up to him.*]

DUNYASHA. You might just give me one little look, Yasha. You're going away. . . . You're leaving me . . . [*Weeps and throws herself on his neck.*]

YASHA. What's there to cry about? [*Drinks champagne.*] In six days I shall be in Paris again. Tomorrow we get into an express train and off we go, that's the last you'll see of us. . . . I can scarcely believe it. *Vive la France!* It don't suit me here, I just can't live here. That's all there is to it. I'm fed up with the ignorance here, I've had enough of it. [*Drinks champagne.*] What's there to cry about? Behave yourself properly, and you'll have no cause to cry.

DUNYASHA. [*Powders her face, looking in pocket mirror.*] Do send me a letter from Paris. You know I loved you, Yasha, how I loved you! I'm a delicate creature, Yasha.

YASHA. Somebody's coming! [*Busies himself with the luggage; hums softly.*[

[*Enter* MME. RANEVSKAYA, GAYEV, ANYA, *and* CHARLOTTA.]

GAYEV. We ought to be leaving. We haven't much time. [*Looks at* YASHA.] Who smells of herring?

MME. RANEVSKAYA. In about ten minutes we should be getting into the carriages. [*Looks around the room.*] Good-bye, dear old home, good-bye, grandfather. Winter will pass, spring will come, you will no longer be here, they will have torn you down. How much these walls have seen! [*Kisses* ANYA *warmly.*] My treasure, how radiant you look! Your eyes are sparkling like diamonds. Are you glad? Very?

ANYA. [*Gaily.*] Very glad. A new life is beginning, Mamma.

GAYEV. Well, really, everything is all right now. Before the cherry orchard was sold, we all fretted and suffered; but afterward, when the question was settled finally and irrevocably, we all calmed down, and even felt quite cheerful. I'm a bank employee now, a financier. The yellow ball in the side pocket! And anyhow, you are looking better, Luba, there's no doubt of that.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. Yes, my nerves are better, that's true. [*She is handed her hat and coat.*] I sleep well. Carry out my things, Yasha. It's time. [*To* ANYA.] We shall soon see each other again, my little girl. I'm going to Paris, I'll live there on the money your great-aunt sent us to buy the estate with—long live Auntie! But that money won't last long.

ANYA. You'll come back soon, soon, Mamma, won't you? Mean-

while I'll study. I'll pass my high school examination, and then I'll go to work and help you. We'll read all kinds of books together, Mamma, won't we? [*Kisses her mother's hands.*] We'll read in the autumn evenings, we'll read lots of books, and a new wonderful world will open up before us. [*Falls into a revery.*] Mamma, do come back.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. I will come back, my precious. [*Embraces her daughter. Enter* LOPAHIN *and* CHARLOTTA *who is humming softly.*]

GAYEV. Charlotta's happy: she's singing.

CHARLOTTA. [*Picks up a bundle and holds it like a baby in swaddling clothes.*] Bye, baby, bye. [*A baby is heard crying: "Wah! Wah!"*] Hush, hush, my pet, my little one. ["Wah! Wah!"] I'm so sorry for you! [*Throws the bundle down.*] You will find me a position, won't you? I can't go on like this.

LOPAHIN. We'll find one for you, Charlotta Ivanovna, don't worry.

GAYEV. Everyone's leaving us. Varya's going away. We've suddenly become of no use.

CHARLOTTA. There's no place for me to live in town, I must go away. [*Hums.*]

[*Enter* PISHCHIK.]

LOPAHIN. There's nature's masterpiece!

PISHCHIK. [*Gasping.*] Oh . . . let me get my breath . . . I'm in agony. . . . Esteemed friends . . . Give me a drink of water. . . .

GAYEV. Wants some money, I suppose. No, thank you . . . I'll keep out of harm's way. [*Exits.*]

PISHCHIK. It's a long while since I've been to see you, most charming lady. [*To* LOPAHIN.] So you are here . . . glad to see you, you intellectual giant . . . There . . . [*Gives* LOPAHIN *money.*] Here's 400 rubles, and I still owe you 840.

LOPAHIN. [*Shrugging his shoulders in bewilderment.*] I must be dreaming. . . . Where did you get it?

PISHCHIK. Wait a minute . . . it's hot. . . . A most extraordinary event! Some Englishmen came to my place and found some sort of white clay on my land . . . [*To* MME. RANEVSKAYA.] And 400 for you . . . most lovely . . . most wonderful . . . [*Hands her the money.*] The rest later. [*Drinks water.*] A young man in the train was telling me just now that a great philosopher recommends jumping off roofs. "Jump!" says he; "that's the long and the short of it!" [*In amazement.*] Just imagine! Some more water!

LOPAHIN. What Englishmen?

PISHCHIK. I leased them the tract with the clay on it for twenty-four years. . . . And now, forgive me, I can't stay. . . . I must be dashing on. . . . I'm going over to Znoikov . . . to Kardamanov . . . I owe them all money . . . [*Drinks water.*] Good-bye, everybody

. . . I'll look in on Thursday . . .

MME. RANEVSKAYA. We're just moving into town; and tomorrow I go abroad.

PISHCHIK. [*Upset.*] What? Why into town? That's why the furniture is like that . . . and the suitcases. . . . Well, never mind! [*Through tears.*] Never mind . . . men of colossal intellect, these Englishmen. . . . Never mind . . . Be happy. God will come to your help. . . . Never mind . . . everything in this world comes to an end. [*Kisses* MME. RANEVSKAYA*'s hand.*] If the rumor reaches you that it's all up with me, remember this old . . . horse, and say: "Once there lived a certain . . . Simeonov-Pishchik . . . the kingdom of Heaven be his. . . ." Glorious weather! . . . Yes . . . [*Exits, in great confusion, but at once returns and says in the doorway.*] My daughter Dashenka sends her regards. [*Exits.*]

MME. RANEVSKAYA. Now we can go. I leave with two cares weighing on me. The first is poor old Firs. [*Glancing at her watch.*] We still have about five minutes.

ANYA. Mamma, Firs has already been taken to the hospital. Yasha sent him there this morning.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. My other worry is Varya. She's used to getting up early and working; and now, with no work to do, she is like a fish out of water. She has grown thin and pale, and keeps crying, poor soul. [*Pause.*] You know this very well, Yermolay Alexeyevich; I dreamed of seeing her married to you, and it looked as though that's how it would be. [*Whispers to* ANYA, *who nods to* CHARLOTTA *and both go out.*] She loves you. You find her attractive. I don't know, I don't know why it is you seem to avoid each other; I can't understand it.

LOPAHIN. To tell you the truth, I don't understand it myself. It's all a puzzle. If there's still time, I'm ready now, at once. Let's settle it straight off, and have done with it! Without you, I feel I'll never be able to propose.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. That's splendid. After all, it will only take a minute. I'll call her once. . . .

LOPAHIN. And luckily, here's champagne, too. [*Looks at the glasses.*] Empty! Somebody's drunk it all. [*Yasha coughs.*] That's what you might call guzzling . . .

MME. RANEVSKAYA. [*Animatedly.*] Excellent! We'll go and leave you alone. Yasha, *allez!* I'll call her. [*At the door.*] Varya, leave everything and come here. Come! [*Exits with* YASHA.]

LOPAHIN. [*Looking at his watch.*] Yes . . . [*Pause behind the door, smothered laughter and whispering; at last, enter* VARYA.]

VARYA. [*Looking over the luggage in leisurely fashion.*] Strange, I can't find it . . .

LOPAHIN. What are you looking for?

VARYA. Packed it myself, and I don't remember . . . [*Pause.*]

LOPAHIN. Where are you going now, Varya?

VARYA. I? To the Ragulins'. I've arranged to take charge there—as housekeeper, if you like.

LOPAHIN. At Yashnevo? About fifty miles from here. [*Pause.*] Well, life in this house is ended!

VARYA. [*Examining luggage.*] Where is it? Perhaps I put it in the chest. Yes, life in this house is ended. . . . There will be no more of it.

LOPAHIN. And I'm just off to Kharkov—by this next train. I've a lot to do there. I'm leaving Yepihodov here . . . I've taken him on.

VARYA. Oh!

LOPAHIN. Last year at this time, it was snowing, if you remember, but now it's sunny and there's no wind. It's cold, though. . . . It must be three below.

VARYA. I didn't look. [*Pause.*] And besides, our thermometer's broken. [*Pause. Voice from the yard:* "Yermolay Alexeyevich!"]

LOPAHIN. [*As if he had been waiting for the call.*] This minute! [*Exits quickly.*]

[VARYA *sits on the floor and sobs quietly, her head on a bundle of clothes. Enter* MME. RANEVSKAYA *cautiously.*]

MME. RANEVSKAYA. Well? [*Pause.*] We must be going.

VARYA. [*Wiping her eyes.*] Yes, it's time, Mamma dear. I'll be able to get to the Ragulins' today, if only we don't miss the train.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. [*At the door.*] Anya, put your things on. [*Enter* ANYA, GAYEV, CHARLOTTA. GAYEV *wears a heavy overcoat with a hood. Enter servants and coachmen.* YEPIHODOV *bustles about the luggage.*]

MME. RANEVSKAYA. Now we can start on our journey.

ANYA. [*Joyfully.*] On our journey!

GAYEV. My friends, my dear, cherished friends, leaving this house forever, can I be silent? Can I, at leave-taking, refrain from giving utterance to those emotions that now fill my being?

ANYA. [*Imploringly.*] Uncle!

VARYA. Uncle, Uncle dear, don't.

GAYEV. [*Forlornly.*] I'll bank the yellow in the side pocket . . . I'll be silent . . .

[*Enter* TROFIMOV, *then* LOPAHIN.]

TROFIMOV. Well, ladies and gentlemen, it's time to leave.

LOPAHIN. Yepihodov, my coat.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. I'll sit down just a minute. It seems as though I'd never before seen what the walls of this house were like, the ceilings, and now I look at them hungrily, with such tender affection.

GAYEV. I remember when I was six years old sitting on that window sill on Whitsunday, watching my father going to church.

MME. RANEVSKAYA. Has everything been taken?

LOPAHIN. I think so. [*Putting on his overcoat.*] Yepihodov, see that everything's in order.

YEPIHODOV. [*In a husky voice.*] You needn't worry, Yermolay Alexeyevich.

LOPAHIN. What's the matter with your voice?

YEPIHODOV. I just had a drink of water. I must have swallowed something.

YASHA. [*Contemptuously.*] What ignorance!

MME. RANEVSKAYA. When we're gone, not a soul will be left here.

LOPAHIN. Until the spring.

[VARYA *pulls an umbrella out of a bundle, as though about to hit someone with it.* LOPAHIN *pretends to be frightened.*]

VARYA. Come, come, I had no such idea!

TROFIMOV. Ladies and gentlemen, let's get into the carriages—it's time. The train will be in directly.

VARYA. Petya, there they are, your rubbers, by that trunk. [*Tearfully.*] And what dirty old things, they are!

TROFIMOV. [*Puts on rubbers.*] Let's go, ladies and gentlemen.

GAYEV. [*Greatly upset, afraid of breaking down.*] The train . . . the station. . . . Three cushions in the side pocket, I'll bank this one in the corner . . .

MME. RANEVSKAYA. Let's go.

LOPAHIN. Are we all here? No one in there? [*Locks the side door on the left.*] There are some things stored here, better lock up. Let us go!

ANYA. Good-bye, old house! Good-bye, old life!

TROFIMOV. Hail to you, new life!

[*Exits with* ANYA. VARYA *looks round the room and goes out slowly.* YASHA *and* CHARLOTTA *with her dog go out.*]

LOPAHIN. And so, until the spring. Go along, friends . . . Bye-bye! [*Exits.*]

[MME. RANEVSKAYA *and* GAYEV *remain alone. As though they had been waiting for this, they throw themselves on each other's necks, and break into subdued, restrained sobs, afraid of being overheard.*]

GAYEV. [*In despair.*] My sister! My sister!

MME. RANEVSKAYA. Oh, my orchard—my dear, sweet, beautiful orchard! My life, my youth, my happiness—good-bye! Good-bye! [*Voice of* ANYA, *gay and summoning:* "Mamma!" *Voice of* TROFIMOV, *gay and excited:* "Halloo!"]

MME. RANEVSKAYA. One last look at the walls, at the windows. . . . Our poor mother loved to walk about this room . . .

GAYEV. My sister, my sister! [*Voice of* ANYA: "MAMMA!" *Voice of* TROFIMOV: "Halloo!"]

MME. RANEVSKAYA. We're coming.

[*They go out. The stage is empty. The sound of doors being locked, of carriages driving away. Then silence. In the stillness is heard the muffled sound of the ax striking a tree, a mournful, lonely sound.*

Footsteps are heard. FIRS *appears in the doorway on the right. He is dressed as usual in a jacket and white waistcoat and wears slippers. He is ill.*]

FIRS. [*Goes to the door, tries the handle.*] Locked! They've gone . . . [*Sits down on the sofa.*] They've forgotten me. . . . Never mind . . . I'll sit here a bit . . . I'll wager Leonid Andreyevich hasn't put his fur coat on, he's gone off in his light overcoat . . . [*Sighs anxiously.*] I didn't keep an eye on him. . . . Ah, when they're young, they're green . . . [*Mumbles something indistinguishable.*] Life has gone by as if I had never lived. [*Lies down.*] I'll lie down a while. . . There's no strength left in you, old fellow; nothing is left, nothing. Ah, you addlehead! [*Lies motionless. A distant sound is heard coming from the sky, as it were, the sound of a snapping string mournfully dying away. All is still again, and nothing is heard but the strokes of the ax against a tree far away in the orchard.*]

CHARLES BAUDELAIRE

1821–1867

The impact of Charles Baudelaire is due mainly to the novelty of his sensibility and to the shock effect of his themes, never before presented in traditional forms. The clash between the austere beauty of the verse and the often tortured, morbid, and even perverse content is suggested in the very title of his collection of poems, *Flowers of Evil* (1857). It appeared in the same year as Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* and was, like Flaubert's novel, prosecuted for obscenity and blasphemy. The publisher was forced to suppress six poems, two of which were explicit depictions of lesbianism. Baudelaire wrote a review of *Madame Bovary* in which he praised Emma for that "double character of calculus and dreaming which makes a perfect human being." This double character is Baudelaire's rather than Emma's.

Baudelaire was born in Paris on April 9, 1821. His father died when the boy was six, and in 1828 his widowed mother married Captain Jacques Aupick, later to become a general and an ambassador. Throughout his life Baudelaire remained greatly attached to his mother and detested his stepfather. His independent behavior having caused alarm, in 1841 he was dispatched on a voyage to the tropics. The following year saw the beginning of his lifelong liaison with Jeanne Duval, a mulatto woman, and of his frequent changes of residence in Paris. Disturbed by his extravagance, the family in 1844

placed him under a financial tutelage which was never to be lifted. The revolutionary disturbances of 1848 awakened his enthusiasm, though later he expressed reactionary political views. The same year he published the first of his many translations from Edgar Allan Poe. His long-heralded collection of poems *Flowers of Evil (Les Fleurs du mal)*, at last appeared in 1857. In 1862 he noted that he had felt on his forehead "the breeze from imbecility's wing," probably the result of a venereal infection acquired many years before. Two years later he left Paris, and his creditors, for Brussels. There, in 1866, he was stricken with aphasia and hemiplegia, and he was brought back to Paris. After prolonged suffering he died in his mother's arms, on August 31, 1867. He was interred beside the body of General Aupick.

Baudelaire distrusted inspiration. He translated, paraphrased, and identified himself with Edgar Allan Poe, who had ridiculed the romantic cult of spontaneity and described the process of creation as an intellectual calculus. This is also Baudelaire's view, who composed the *Flowers of Evil* in a clearly thought-out order or even architecture and wrote every poem with meticulous care for the metrical pattern and the sound and associative values of every word. Many of his lines sound like Racine's. His classicist ambition opposes the loose sentimentalism of the French romantic poets. He wants and achieves sublimity, grandiose pathos, and ultimately "objectivity." There are, to be sure, many personal references in his poetry, and one can hardly deny that the picture of a personality emerges from the collection, but the book is meant rather to be a panorama of our civilization and an allegory of the pilgrimage of man from cradle to grave. Baudelaire is also antiromantic in his rejection of nature worship. Nature appears as the enemy of man: not only as the eventual victor in death over life, but as the implicit opponent in Baudelaire's very self-conscious glorification of the artificial, in his praise of makeup, jewels, glittering stones, and all the artifices of prostitution. Baudelaire is also one of the first poets in love with the city, with Paris, in spite of all the horror of its poverty and corruption.

Still, Baudelaire inherits much from the romantics; his cult of beauty, his defense of "art for art's sake," and his assertion of the mission of the grand artist go back to the cults of the early century, as does his boastful dandyism, not only in elegant dress, but in a superior disdain for the crowd. There is a strong residue of romanticism in his nostalgia for a lost paradise, for miraculous moments of ecstasy and happiness which he often locates in childhood or faraway tropical lands. There are a few poems of Platonic love, of yearning for an ideal that remains, however, empty and vague. His aesthetics, developed at length in his writings on art (collected posthumously as *L'Art romantique*, 1868), is ultimately romantic in its reliance on creative imagination and the role of dreams. He thinks of poetry as extracting flowers from evil, as the triumph of beauty over the ugly and even the repulsive. He widened the repertory of themes unheard or seldom heard in earlier poetry. His erotic poetry differs from anything that preceded it: no more frivolous, amusing, or leering than it is adoring of an unreachable beauty in the manner of Petrarch. At most, Donne and the sonnets of Shakespeare could be cited as antecedents. An entirely new sensibility finds its voice here: feelings of disgust and guilt attached to the sexual act; an attraction to venal women,

in spite of contempt and loathing for them; the appeal of and the fear of woman as man's destroyer; preoccupation with death not as a faraway event, but concretely as smelly putrefaction; inner conflict between spirit and flesh that divides man in two. Baudelaire grew up as a Roman Catholic, and much is phrased in religious terms: the fall of man, the sense of sin. But Baudelaire engages in blasphemy, even in the cult of Satan. If we exclude what was possibly a late conversion, he was an atheist and even a nihilist, who did not yearn for God's grace and redemption, did not believe in immortality, and hardly mentions Jesus Christ. We could consider his expansion of themes as an aesthetics of the ugly well in tune with realism, although Baudelaire detested the term and its propounders and quickly transforms realistic detail into a dream landscape or even phantasmagoria.

Baudelaire is today called the forerunner or even father of symbolism, which as a term and movement was established in France in 1886, long after his death. Only his early sonnet, "Correspondences" (1852), picks up the old idea of universal analogy, the concept of nature as a "forest of symbols," and the idea of the unity of the senses, "synaesthesia." But the rest of Baudelaire's work shows hardly any trace of this doctrine, for which this sonnet became the key text. Rather, Baudelaire abandons all such pretensions and celebrates "modernity": "the ephemeral and fleeting beauty of modern life," life in the city, lived with detachment, irony, and even revulsion. The poet has become an outcast and at the very least an outsider, who, as a little poem in prose tells us, loses his halo in the mud of the street and does not even bother to pick it up (XLV. "Perte d'Aureole," in *Petits Poëmes en Prose*).

Thus Baudelaire stands at the crossroads: he rejects romanticism, its reliance on inspiration and its nature-worship, though he preserves some of its apparatus and otherworldly nostalgia. To call him the father of Symbolism is misleading. He must be mainly seen as the poet of a new sensibility: in his preoccupation with death and sex, his view of the futility of all human endeavor, his horror of ugliness and evil in the modern metropolis, and his personal feelings of depression, of what he himself called "spleen" or most often *ennui*, boredom, even disgust. Baudelaire sees his time as an age of decadence, man's fate inexorably subject to a hostile power above him, and man and woman condemned to an internecine war. Man, primarily as artist, can escape into a world of dreams, but disillusion waits for him in any case. The cult of beauty is desperate defiance; it is the artist's or simply the sensitive man's revolt against the ugliness of industrial and commercial civilization, against the complacency of its belief in progress. But he himself is infected with the gloom and despair around him. In "Voyage," the last poem in *Flowers of Evil*, Death, the Captain, takes over, and we are consoled only with the vague hope: "Through the unknown, we'll find the new." This Baudelaire certainly did. Without him modern poetry would be different.

Our selection of poems from Baudelaire's *Flowers of Evil* offers characteristic poems in the translation of eminent modern English and American poets who try to give a feeling for Baudelaire's form. Prose translations and translations in loose rhythmic prose make the poetry evaporate, though they may be more accurate and literal.

Joseph D. Bennett, *Baudelaire: A Criticism* (1944), gives a close reading of the *Flowers of Evil*. Henri Peyre, ed., *Baudelaire: A Collection of Critical Essays* (1962), presents a selection from modern criticism. Enid Starkie, *Baudelaire* (1953), is the best biography in English. Martin Turnell, *Baudelaire* (1954), is a critical examination of his works.

The Flowers of Evil

Correspondences[1]

Nature is a temple whose living colonnades
Breathe forth a mystic speech in fitful sighs;
Man wanders among symbols in those glades
Where all things watch him with familiar eyes.

Like dwindling echoes gathered far away
Into a deep and thronging unison
Huge as the night or as the light of day,
All scents and sounds and colors meet as one.

Perfumes there are as sweet as the oboe's sound,
Green as the prairies, fresh as a child's caress,
—And there are others, rich, corrupt, profound

And of an infinite pervasiveness,
Like myrrh, or musk, or amber, that excite
The ecstasies of sense, the soul's delight.

Correspondances

La Nature est un temple où de vivants piliers
Laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles;
L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles
Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers.

Comme de longs échos qui de loin se confondent
Dans une ténébreuse et profonde unité,
Vaste comme la nuit et comme la clarté,
Les parfums, les couleurs et les sons se répondent.

Il est des parfums frais comme des chairs d'enfants,
Doux comme les hautbois, verts comme les prairies,
—Et d'autres, corrompus, riches et triomphants,

1. Translated by Richard Wilbur.

Ayant l'expansion des choses infinies,
Comme l'ambre, le musc, le benjoin et l'encens,
Qui chantent les transports de l'esprit et des sens.

Her Hair[2]

O fleece that down her nape rolls, plume on plume!
O curls! O scent of nonchalance and ease!
What ecstasy! To populate this room
With memories it harbours in its gloom,
I'd shake it like a banner on the breeze.

Hot Africa and languid Asia play
(An absent world, defunct, and far away)
Within that scented forest, dark and dim.
As other souls on waves of music swim,
Mine on its perfume sails, as on the spray.

I'll journey there, where man and sap-filled tree
Swoon in hot light for hours. Be you my sea,
Strong tresses! Be the breakers and the gales
That waft me. Your black river holds, for me,
A dream of masts and rowers, flames and sails.

A port, resounding there, my soul delivers
With long deep draughts of perfumes, scent, and clamour,
Where ships, that glide through gold and purple rivers,
Fling wide their vast arms to embrace the glamour
Of skies wherein the heat forever quivers.

I'll plunge my head in it, half drunk with pleasure—
In this black ocean that engulfs her form.
My soul, caressed with wavelets there may measure
Infinite rockings in embalmèd leisure,
Creative idleness that fears no storm!

Blue tresses, like a shadow-stretching tent,
You shed the blue of heavens round and far.
Along its downy fringes as I went
I reeled half-drunken to confuse the scent
Of oil of coconuts, with musk and tar.

My hand forever in your mane so dense,
Rubies and pearls and sapphires there will sow,

2. Translated by Roy Campbell.

That you to my desire be never slow—
Oasis of my dreams, and gourd from whence
Deep draughted wines of memory will flow.

You'd Take the Entire Universe to Bed with You[3]

You'd take the entire universe to bed with you,
I think, just out of boredom, you lecherous, idle shrew!
You need, to keep your teeth sound, exercise your jaws,
Daily, for dinner, some new heart between your paws!
Your eyes, all lighted up like shops, like public fairs,
How insolent they are!—as if their power were theirs
Indeed!—this borrowed power, this Beauty, you direct
And use, whose law, however, you do not suspect.

Unwholesome instrument for health, O deaf machine
And blind, fecund in tortures!—how is it you have not seen,
You drinker of the world's blood, your mirrored loveliness
Blench and recoil? how is it you feel no shame? Confess:
Has never, then, this evil's very magnitude
Caused you to stagger?—you, who think yourself so shrewd
In evil?—seeing how Nature, patient and abstruse—
O Woman, Queen of Sins, Vile Animal,—has made use
Of you, to mould a genius?—employed you all this time?

O muddy grandeur!—ignominy ironic and sublime!

A Carrion[4]

Remember now, my Love, what piteous thing
  We saw on a summer's gracious day:
By the roadside a hideous carrion, quivering
  On a clean bed of pebbly clay,

Her legs flexed in the air like a courtesan,
  Burning and sweating venomously,
Calmly exposed its belly, ironic and wan,
  Clamorous with foul ecstasy.

The sun bore down upon this rottenness
  As if to roast it with gold fire,
And render back to nature her own largess
  A hundredfold of her desire.

3. Translated by Edna St. Vincent Millay. 4. Translated by Allen Tate.

Heaven observed the vaunting carcass there
  Blooming with the richness of a flower;
And that almighty stink which corpses wear
  Choked you with sleepy power!

The flies swarmed on the putrid vulva, then
  A black tumbling rout would seethe
Of maggots, thick like a torrent in a glen,
  Over those rags that lived and seemed to breathe.

They darted down and rose up like a wave
  Or buzzed impetuously as before;
One would have thought the corpse was held a slave
  To living by the life it bore!

This world had music, its own swift emotion
  Like water and the wind running,
Or corn that a winnower in rhythmic motion
  Fans with fiery cunning.

All forms receded, as in a dream were still,
  Where white visions vaguely start
From the sketch of a painter's long-neglected idyl
  Into a perfect art!

Behind the rocks a restless bitch looked on
  Regarding us with jealous eyes,
Waiting to tear from the livid skeleton
  Her loosed morsel quick with flies.

And even you will come to this foul shame,
  This ultimate infection,
Star of my eyes, my being's inner flame,
  My angel and my passion!

Yes: such shall you be, O queen of heavenly grace,
  Beyond the last sacrament,
When through your bones the flowers and sucking grass
  Weave their rank cerement.

Speak, then, my Beauty, to this dire putrescence,
  To the worm that shall kiss your proud estate,
That I have kept the divine form and the essence
  Of my festered loves inviolate!

The Balcony[5]

Mother of memories, queen of paramours,
Yourself are all my pleasures, all my duty;
You will recall caresses that were yours
And fireside evenings in their warmth and beauty.
Mother of memories, queen of paramours.

On eves illumined by the light of coal,
The balcony beneath a rose-veiled sky,
Your breast how soft! Your heart how good and whole!
We spoke eternal things that cannot die—
On eves illumined by the light of coal!

How splendid sets the sun of a warm evening!
How deep is space! the heart how full of power!
When, queen of the adored, towards you leaning,
I breathed the perfume of your blood in flower.
How spendid sets the sun of a warm evening!

The evening like an alcove seemed to thicken,
And as my eyes astrologised your own,
Drinking your breath, I felt sweet poisons quicken,
And in my hands your feet slept still as stone.
The evening like an alcove seemed to thicken.

I know how to resuscitate dead minutes.
I see my past, its face hid in your knees.
How can I seek your languorous charm save in its
Own source, your heart and body formed to please.
I know how to resuscitate dead minutes.

These vows, these perfumes, and these countless kisses,
Reborn from gulfs that we could never sound,
Will they, like suns, once bathed in those abysses,
Rejuvenated from the deep, rebound—
These vows, these perfumes, and these countless kisses?

To One Who is Too Gay[6]

Your head, your gestures, and your air
Are lovely as a landscape; smiles
Rimple upon your face at whiles
Like winds in the clear sky up there.

5. Translated by Roy Campbell. 6. Translated by Roy Campbell.

The grumpy passers that you graze
Are dazzled by the radiant health,
And the illimitable wealth
Your arms and shoulders seem to blaze.

The glaring colours that, in showers,
Clash in your clothes with such commotion,
In poets' minds suggest the notion
Of a mad ballet-dance of flowers.

These garish dresses illustrate
Your spirit, striped with every fad.
O madwoman, whom, quite as mad,
I love as madly as I hate.

Sometimes in gardens, seeking rest,
Where I have dragged my soul atonic,
I've felt the sun with gaze ironic
Tearing the heart within my breast.

The spring and verdure, dressed to stagger,
Humiliate me with such power
That I have punished, in a flower,
The insolence of Nature's swagger.

And so, one night, I'd like to sneak,
When darkness tolls the hour of pleasure,
A craven thief, towards the treasure
Which is your person, plump and sleek.

To punish your bombastic flesh,
To bruise your breast immune to pain,
To furrow down your flank a lane
Of gaping crimson, deep and fresh.

And, most vertiginous delight!
Into those lips, so freshly striking
And daily lovelier to my liking—
Infuse the venom of my spite.

Spleen[7]

I'm like the king of a rain-country, rich
but sterile, young but with an old wolf's itch,

7. Translated by Robert Lowell.

one who escapes his tutor's monologues,
and kills the day in boredom with his dogs;
nothing cheers him, darts, tennis, falconry,
his people dying by the balcony;
the bawdry of the pet hermaphrodite
no longer gets him through a single night;
his bed of fleur-de-lys becomes a tomb;
even the ladies of the court, for whom
all kings are beautiful, cannot put on
shameful enough dresses for this skeleton;
the scholar who makes his gold cannot invent
washes to cleanse the poisoned element;
even in baths of blood, Rome's legacy,
our tyrants' solace in senility,
he cannot warm up his shot corpse, whose food
is syrup-green Lethean[8] ooze, not blood.

Parisian Dream[9]

I

That marvellous landscape of my dream—
Which no eye knows, nor ever will—
At moments, wide awake, I seem
To grasp, and it excites me still.

Sleep, how miraculous you are—
A strange caprice had urged my hand
To banish, as irregular,
All vegetation from that land;

And, proud of what my art had done,
I viewed my painting, knew the great
Intoxicating monotone
Of marble, water, steel and slate.

Staircases and arcades there were
In a long labyrinth, which led
To a vast palace; fountains there
Were gushing gold, and gushing lead.

And many a heavy cataract
Hung like a curtain,—did not fall,
As water does, but hung, compact,
Crystal, on many a metal wall.

8. Lethe is the river of forgetfulness in the underworld. 9. Translated by Edna St. Vincent Millay.

Tall nymphs with Titan breasts and knees
Gazed at their images unblurred,
Where groves of colonnades, not trees,
Fringed a deep pool where nothing stirred.

Blue sheets of water, left and right,
Spread between quays of rose and green,
To the world's end and out of sight,
And still expanded, though unseen.

Enchanted rivers, those—with jade
And jasper were their banks bedecked;
Enormous mirrors, dazzled, made
Dizzy by all they did reflect.

And many a Ganges, taciturn
And heedless, in the vaulted air,
Poured out the treasure of its urn
Into a gulf of diamond there.

As architect, it tempted me
To tame the ocean at is source;
And this I did,—I made the sea
Under a jeweled culvert course.

And every colour, even black,
Became prismatic, polished, bright;
The liquid gave its glory back
Mounted in iridescent light.

There was no moon, there was no sun,—
For why should sun and moon conspire
To light such prodigies?—each one
Blazed with its own essential fire!

A silence like eternity
Prevailed, there was no sound to hear;
These marvels all were for the eye,
And there was nothing for the ear.

II

I woke; my mind was bright with flame;
I saw the cheap and sordid hole
I live in, and my cares all came
Burrowing back into my soul.

Brutally the twelve strokes of noon
Against my naked ear were hurled;
And a grey sky was drizzling down
Upon this sad, lethargic world.

Voyage to Cythera[1]

My heart, a seagull rocketed and spun
about the rigging, dipping joyfully;
our slow prow rocking under cloudless sky
was like an angel drunk with the live sun.

What's that out there? Those leagues of hovering sand?
"It's Cythera famous in the songs,
the gay old dogs' El Dorado, it belongs
to legend. Look closely, it's a poor land."

Island of secret orgies none profess,
the august shade of Aphrodite plays
like clouds of incense over your blue bays,
and weights the heart with love and weariness.

Island whose myrtle esplanades arouse
our nerves, here heart-sighs and the adoration
of every land and age and generation
ramble like coal-red roses on a house

to the eternal cooing of the dove.
"No, Cythera crumbles, cakes and dries,
a rocky desert troubled by shrill cries . . .
And yet I see one portent stretch above
us. Is it a temple where the pagan powers
hover in naked majesty to bless
the arbors, gold-fish ponds and terraces;
and the young priestess is in love with flowers?"

No, nosing through these shoals, and coming near
enough to scare the birds with our white sails,
we saw a man spread-eagled on the nails
of a cross hanging like a cypress there.

Ferocious vultures choking down thick blood
gutted the hanging man, already foul;

1. Translated by Robert Lowell. Cythera is an island off the Peloponnese and the mythic birthplace of Aphrodite.

each smacked its beak like the flat of a trowel
into the private places of their food.

His eyes were holes and his important paunch
oozed lazy, looping innards down his hips;
those scavengers, licking sweetmeats from their lips,
had hung his pouch and penis on a branch.

Under his foot-soles, shoals of quadrupeds
with lifted muzzles nosed him round and guzzled;
a huge ante-diluvian reptile muscled
through them like an executioner with his aides.

Native of Cythera, initiate,
how silently you hung and suffered insult
in retribution for your dirty cult
and orgasms only death could expiate.

Ridiculous hanged man, my sins confirm
your desecration; when I saw you seethe,
I felt my nausea mounting to my teeth,
the drying bile-stream of my wasted sperm.

Poor devil with sweet memories, your laws
are mine; before you, I too felt those jaws:
black panther, lancing crow, the Noah's Ark
that loved to chafe my flesh and leave their mark.

I'd lost my vision clinging to those shrouds,
I feared the matching blues of sky and sea;
all things were henceforth black with blood for me,
and plunged my heart in allegoric clouds . . .

Nothing stands upright in your land, oh Lust,
except my double, hanging at full length—
Oh God, give me the courage and the strength
to see my heart and body without disgust.

The Voyage[2]

TO MAXIME DU CAMP

For children crazed with postcards, prints, and stamps
All space can scarce suffice their appetite.

2. Translated by Roy Campbell.

How vast the world seems by the light of lamps,
But in the eyes of memory how slight!

One morning we set sail, with brains on fire,
And hearts swelled up with rancorous emotion,
Balancing, to the rhythm of its lyre,
Our infinite upon the finite ocean.

Some wish to leave their venal native skies,
Some flee their birthplace, others change their ways,
Astrologers who've drowned in Beauty's eyes,
Tyrannic Circe[3] with the scent that slays.

Not to be changed to beasts, they have their fling
With space, and splendour, and the burning sky,
The suns that bronze them and the frosts that sting
Efface the mark of kisses by and by.

But the true travellers are those who go
Only to get away: hearts like balloons
Unballasted, with their own fate aglow,
Who know not why they fly with the monsoons:

Those whose desires are in the shape of clouds.
And dream, as raw recruits of shot and shell,
Of mighty raptures in strange, transient crowds
Of which no human soul the name can tell.

II

Horror! We imitate the top and bowl
In swerve and bias. Through our sleep it runs.
It's Curiosity that makes us roll
As the fierce Angel whips the whirling suns.

Singular game! where the goal changes places;
The winning-post is nowhere, yet all round;
Where Man tires not of the mad hope he races
Thinking, some day, that respite will be found.

Our soul's like a three-master, where one hears
A voice that from the bridge would warn all hands.

3. An enchantress who lured sailors onto her island and changed them into beasts (see, for example, the *Odyssey* X).

Another from the foretop madly cheers
"Love, joy, and glory" . . . Hell! we're on the sands!

The watchmen think each isle that heaves in view
An Eldorado, shouting their belief.
Imagination riots in the crew
Who in the morning only find a reef.

The fool that dotes on far, chimeric lands—
Put him in irons, or feed him to the shark!
The drunken sailor's visionary lands
Can only leave the bitter truth more stark.

So some old vagabond, in mud who grovels,
Dreams, nose in air, of Edens sweet to roam.
Wherever smoky wicks illumine hovels
He sees another Capua[4] or Rome.

III

Amazing travellers, what noble stories
We read in the deep oceans of your gaze!
Show us your memory's casket, and the glories
Streaming from gems made out of stars and rays!

We, too, would roam without a sail or steam,
And to combat the boredom of our jail,
Would stretch, like canvas on our souls, a dream,
Framed in horizons, of the seas you sail.

What have you seen?

IV

"We have seen stars and waves.
We have seen sands and shores and oceans too,
In spite of shocks and unexpected graves,
We have been bored, at times, the same as you.

The solar glories on the violet ocean
And those of spires that in the sunset rise,
Lit, in our hearts, a yearning, fierce emotion
To plunge into those ever-luring skies.

4. City in southern Italy famous as the center of corruption and luxury.

The richest cities and the scenes most proud
In nature, have no magic to enamour
Like those which hazard traces in the cloud
While wistful longing magnifies their glamour.

Enjoyment adds more fuel for desire,
Old tree, to which all pleasure is manure;
As the bark hardens, so the boughs shoot higher,
And nearer to the sun would grow mature.

Tree, will you always flourish, more vivacious
Than cypress?—None the less, these views are yours:
We took some photographs for your voracious
Album, who only care for distant shores.

We have seen idols elephantine-snouted,
And thrones with living gems bestarred and pearled,
And palaces whose riches would have routed
The dreams of all the bankers in the world.

We have seen wonder-striking robes and dresses,
Women whose nails and teeth the betel stains
And jugglers whom the rearing snake caresses."

V

What then? What then?

VI

"O childish little brains,
Not to forget the greatest wonder there—
We've seen in every country, without searching,
From top to bottom of the fatal stair
Immortal sin ubiquitously lurching:

Woman, a vile slave, proud in her stupidity,
Self-worshipping, without the least disgust:
Man, greedy, lustful, ruthless in cupidity,
Slave to a slave, and sewer to her lust:

The torturer's delight, the martyr's sobs,
The feasts where blood perfumes the giddy rout:
Power sapping its own tyrants: servile mobs
In amorous obeisance to the knout:

Some similar religions to our own,
All climbing skywards: Sanctity who treasures,
As in his downy couch some dainty drone,
In horsehair, nails, and whips, his dearest pleasures.

Prating Humanity, with genius raving,
As mad today as ever from the first,
Cries in fierce agony, its Maker braving,
'O God, my Lord and likeness, be thou cursed!'

But those less dull, the lovers of Dementia,
Fleeing the herd which fate has safe impounded,
In opium seek for limitless adventure.
—That's all the record of the globe we rounded."

VII

It's bitter knowledge that one learns from travel.
The world so small and drab, from day to day,
The horror of our image will unravel,
A pool of dread in deserts of dismay.

Must we depart, or stay? Stay if you can.
Go if you must. One runs: another hides
To baffle Time, that fatal foe to man.
And there are runners, whom no rest betides,

Like the Apostles or the Wandering Jew,[5]
Whom neither ship nor waggon can enable
To cheat the retiary.[6] But not a few
Have killed him without stirring from their cradle.

But when he sets his foot upon our nape
We still can hope and cry "Leave all behind!"
As in old times to China we'll escape
With eyes turned seawards, hair that fans the wind,—

We'll sail once more upon the sea of Shades
With heart like that of a young sailor beating.
I hear the rich, sad voices of the Trades
Who cry "This Way! all you who would be eating

5. A Jew, according to a medieval legend, who mocked Christ on his way to the cross and was condemned to a life of wandering until Judgment Day. 6. Net (i.e., of Time).

The scented Lotus. Here it is they range
The piles of magic fruit. O hungry friend,
Come here and swoon away into the strange
Trance of an afternoon that has no end."

In the familiar tones we sense the spectre.
Our Pylades stretch arms across the seas,
"To salve your heart, now swim to your Electra"[7]
She cries, of whom we used to kiss the knees.

VIII

O Death, old Captain, it is time. Weigh anchor!
To sail beyond the doldrums of our days.
Though black as pitch the sea and sky, we hanker
For space; you know our hearts are full of rays.

Pour us your poison to revive our soul!
It cheers the burning quest that we pursue,
Careless if Hell or Heaven be our goal,
Beyond the known world to seek out the New!

7. The sister of Orestes. *Pylades:* Orestes' friend.

Masterpieces of the Twentieth Century: Varieties of Modernism

Twentieth-century authors (like those of the Renaissance, or "Rebirth," and of the Enlightenment) often make a point of being "modern" and "new." There are many aspects to twentieth-century "newness," and they usually center in the claim to have achieved a more accurate representation of reality, and a better understanding of human consciousness. It is worth remembering, of course, that artists and philosophers have for centuries sought effective ways to perceive and express the "truth" of the world and the human condition. If, in reading a modern text, you sense an aim or attitude comparable with those of an earlier work, you are probably right. In some instances, we have tried to point out such echoes. Yet there is a recurrent emphasis on *how* we know, on structures of perception themselves, that runs through the claims to newness of almost all these writers and thinkers and which must be taken—no matter what individual comparisons can be made to previous eras—as the typifying mark of twentieth-century vision. This vision implies, generally, a criticism of the preceding century as a period of comfortable certainty and positive assurance that was dangerously unreal. It suggests that nineteenth-century philosophers and scientists placed too much faith in the possibility of finding unambiguous answers to age-old problems and that, in consequence, a belief in the provable "rightness" of certain ideas created uncompromising attitudes which, transposed into politics, ultimately brought on the bloody conflict of World Wars I and II. Only time will tell what criticism will be made of our own age by the twenty-first century.

This twentieth-century view of the flaws of the nineteenth has been influential but is, of course, inaccurate insofar as it neglects the roots of modern consciousness in nineteenth-century science, sociology, and art. Modernity was already a subject of widespread anxiety and argument in the nineteenth century, as the industrial revolution transformed social, economic, and political life faster, it seemed, than changes could peacefully be absorbed. To some, it seemed a time of decadence and the loss of stable values; others saw it as an era in which a progressive Europe would lead the rest of the world to its own pinnacle of achievement (a point of view obviously not shared by the colonial countries). In science, philosophy, social theory, and the arts, the nineteenth century prepared both the evolution and the rebellion of the twentieth.

SCIENTIFIC RATIONALISM

By the end of the nineteenth century, unprecedented developments in science had encouraged people to believe that they would soon master all the secrets of the universe. The Enlightenment notion of the world as a machine—something whose parts could be named and seen to function—came back into favor. Discoveries in different fields seemed to make the universe more rational and hence predictable: in chemistry, there was Dalton's atomic theory and Mendeleyev's periodic table of elements; in physics, Maxwell's field theory unifying the study of electricity, magnetism, and light. The development of Newtonian analysis made it possible to study the fixed stars, and spectral analysis showed the essential homogeneity of the universe. Technological applications suggested that these discoveries would serve humanity, not master it. Thermodynamics explained the processes of energy transformation, and locomotives and steamships promised rapid transportation throughout the world. Daguerreotype photography provided a documentary record. Finally, the history of living nature itself became an object of study when Charles Darwin examined the evolution of species according to material evidence, without reference to divine laws or purpose.

The enthusiasm for scientific discovery was not confined to scientists. Auguste Comte (1798–1857), a philosopher known as the founder of Positivism, held that scientific method constituted a total world view in which everything would ultimately be explained, including human society. Comte proposed a science of humanity which would analyze and define the laws governing human society (the first sociology). Soon it would be evident, however, that the results of "scientific method" depended on the objectivity of the scientist's point of view. Count Gobineau (1816–1882) proposed a "scientific" description of society in which there were three races with innate qualities and in which the white race (predictably, for this white Frenchman) was the superior category; his theory laid the groundwork for much "scientific" racism later on. In literature, the historian and critic Hippolyte Taine (1828–1893) proposed a science of culture in which each literary work could be categorized as the combined product of its "race, milieu, and time." The novelist Emile Zola offered as scientific justification for his series on the degeneracy of the Rougon-Macquart family, an *Introduction to the Study of Experimental Medicine* by Dr. Claude Bernard (1813–1878). The mixed attraction and repulsion of scientific method—its promise of objective truth, its risk of unrecognized bias, its description of individual subjects in terms of collective statistical evidence—would be recognized within as well as outside the scientific community in the twentieth century.

Social theorists shared with the philosopher Comte the vision of creating a perfect society by understanding social "laws." Utopian socialists like Charles Fourier (1772–1837), the Comte de Saint-Simon (1760–1825), and the Welsh industrialist Robert Owen (1771–1858) envisaged various methods for organizing society and planning its economy. John Stuart Mill (1806–1876) preached the dignity of man, the rights of women, and the possibility of happiness for all. By far the most important and influential theorist was Karl Marx (1819–1883), whose *Communist Manifesto* (1848) and *Capital* (1867) proposed a scientific theory of impersonal economic forces driving world history. Marx's vision of modern man as an alienated cog in the industrial

economic machine, no longer in control of his own productivity, expressed for many the antihuman aspect of modern technological progress. Yet he too believed in the power of rational systems to find answers for social ills, as is evident in his division of modern industrial society into the two competing forces of capital and labor (the proletariat) and in his schema of dialectical materialism to explain the process of history.

All, however, was not an unbroken picture of hope and enthusiasm. One of the strongest voices against positivism and its belief in rational solutions was the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900). Nietszche focused on the individual, not society, and admired only the superhero who refused to be bound by the prevailing social paradigms of nationalism, Christianity, faith in science, loyalty to the state, or bourgeois civilized comfort. Nietzsche's distinction between the Dionysiac (instinctual) and the Apollonian (intellectual) forces in human beings, his insistence on the individual's complete freedom (and responsibility) in a world that lacks transcendental law ("God is dead"), and his attack on the unimaginative mediocrity of mass society in the modern industrial world, all made him a powerful influence in the early years of the twentieth century.

REACTIONS TO RATIONALISM

The debate about scientific rationalism was inevitably a debate about knowledge and human values, and as such would change its focus along with the evolution of the different disciplines. The shape and intensity of this debate, however, as well as its impact on the world at large, were dictated for many years by a historical event that turned the generations of the early twentieth century against everything inherited from the recent past: the Great War (World War I, 1914–1918). In spite of the confident rationalism of the political leaders of "Papa's Europe" (a term of resentment used by many to describe an authoritarian, patriarchial society that claimed to have all the answers), World War I had for the first time involved the whole continent of Europe and the United States in battle, and was the first "total war" in which modern weapons spared no one, including civilians. Clearly, something was wrong. A generation of European and American youth was lost in the trenches, and the survivors emerged resolved to reexamine the bases of certainty, the structures of knowledge, the systems of belief, and the repositories of authority in a society which had allowed such a war to occur. Their reaction would also be reflected in literature, not only in subject matter but—for many—in a new use of language, in new ways of representing our knowledge of the world.

Several thinkers stand out as particularly important in formulating alternatives to the narrow rationalism of positivist philosophy. The French philosopher Henri Bergson (1859–1941) had attacked scientific rationality as artificial and unreal because it froze everything in conceptual space; it ignored the whole dimension of life as it is actually experienced. For Bergson, reality was a fluid, living force *(élan vital)* that could only be apprehended by consciousness. Instead of quantitative and logical inquiry, he proposed intuiting the "immediate data of consciousness" as an alternate, nonscientific means of knowledge. Authors were not slow to perceive the implications of his prescription for representing reality. Proust, searching to discover his identity

through layers of "lost time," or Joyce, imitating the stream of consciousness in the written flow of words, both reflect a Bergsonian change in the way reality is perceived and represented. Bergson himself received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1927, both for the creative imagination shown in his own work and for his literary influence.

Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), the founder of psychoanalysis, is another influential figure. Freud's study of subconscious motives and instinctual drives revealed a level of activity that had been largely ignored, and that was certainly not considered a productive subject for continued "rational" inquiry. His essays and case studies argued that dreams and manias contain their own networks of meaning, and that human beings cannot properly be understood without taking into consideration the irrational as well as the rational level of their existence. All are caught up, he suggested, in the process of mediating the same sexual drives and civilizational repressions that caused neurosis in his own patients. While many of Freud's theories are questioned today (his assumption that every woman considers herself an incomplete man, for example), he focused attention on the way everyday, "rational" behavior is shaped by unconscious impulses and hidden motivations, and on the way human beings actually create (and modify) their images of self through engaging in dialogue with others. It is probably impossible for any author after Freud to write without taking into consideration the psychological undercurrents of human behavior—and this without implying that the author has ever read Freud. Some derive themes and images from the idea of subconscious motivations guiding interpersonal relations and social behavior (Lawrence, Lessing, Ellison); others employ a "stream of consciousness" technique very much like Freud's therapeutic tactic of free association (Joyce, Faulkner); others exploit the aesthetic possibilities of a surface pattern of apparent intentions concealing a contradictory pattern of repressed intentions (Porter); others exploit the pattern of otherwise-empty dialogue creating its own reality (Beckett); the surrealists, while quoting Freud, totally reverse his aim by pronouncing madness an insight into a larger reality instead of an illness to be cured. Freud, like Bergson, was honored as a creative artist when he received the Goethe Prize in 1930.

Literature, however, is a matter of words, and not disembodied themes and patterns of consciousness. Much twentieth-century literature exploits patterns of language to the limit of comprehensibility (and perhaps past, as some have said of Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* or Beckett's later novels). If some liberation of language derives from Freudian free association, from the complex inner patterns favored by nineteenth-century Symbolist poetry, or from attempts to reproduce the effects of impressionist or cubist painting, a number of later texts (Beckett, Borges, Robbe-Grillet) also reflect the "gamelike" theories of language stemming from the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913) and the Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951). Here readers of literature are likely to feel that the theorists are only catching up with what poets have always known: that the "reality" of literature is created on the page, in the manipulation of words. The French poet Mallarmé had already responded to the painter and sculptor Degas, when the latter claimed that he too had a lot of ideas for poems: "Poems are not made with ideas, but with words." Gertrude Stein employed words to create

a different way of looking at the world when she created the relationships of "A Carafe, That Is a Blind Glass":

> A kind of glass and a cousin, a spectacle and nothing strange a single hurt color and an arrangement in a system to pointing. All this and not ordinary, not unordered in not resembling. The difference is spreading. (*Tender Buttons*, 1914)

Modern linguistic theory contributed nonetheless by formulating theoretical objections to the positivist understanding of language. Where nineteenth-century positivism had assumed that language was a specific, accurate tool for direct reference to reality, and Bertrand Russell's "logical positivism" of 1913 proposed the construction of an ideal language whose "syntax" would be clear, precise, and allow us to comprehend the structures of reality, Saussure and Wittgenstein emphasized instead the artificial or culture-bound nature of language: that it does not give "real" names but only socially-agreed-upon titles (a *signifier* pointing to a *signified*). The sun remains the same gaseous ball no matter what it is called; what is of interest is the network of meanings and associations the word can achieve in different contexts (along with its homonym *son*). Here literature and linguistic systems are seen as *games*, combinations of moves which have a particular meaning in each arrangement (and, as any sports or chess fan knows, there are "good games" and "bad games" depending on the relative elegance and efficiency of the play). Words and word-fragments combine to stress patterns of surface relationships, instead of trying to peel away associations and name a single core of meaning. Joyce, in *Finnegans Wake*, chooses verbal associations over direct referent when he describes Anna Livia Plurabelle as "babbling, bubbling, chattering to herself, deloothering the fields on their elbows leaning with the sloothering side of her, giddgaddy, grannyma, gossipacious Anna Livia." Samuel Beckett's tongue-tied characters in *Endgame*, or the excessively voluble narrators of his novels, make immediate conversational sense but finally express very little, unless it be the absurd inexpressibility of the human condition. At its most extreme, the "game" theory leads to a view of all language as an endless networking of associations: a situation in which communication, as well as value judgment, is impossible. Yet it also gives a linguistic explanation for one of the traditional attributes of the literary masterwork: that it can bear rereading and rereading because of its connotative richness, because it manipulates words so as to pull together many dimensions of meaning.

These insights are not isolated from current developments in the sciences, or from the impact of historical events. In psychology, anthropology, and physics, there were not only new definitions of human nature and the material world, but also new ideas of how we pursue such knowledge. Gestalt psychology (*Gestalt* is German for *form*) after 1912 suggested that the meaning of individual phenomena was not to be found in further analysis of the separate pieces but in the organized wholes of which they were a part: it was the "shape of things" that mattered. Shapes and the relation of parts were also important in structural anthropology, with the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908—) defining human society as a system of world views or

"codes" that could be compared from culture to culture. From his early research on the primitive Nambikwara Indian tribe of Brazil to his later comparisons of primitive with modern cultures, Lévi-Strauss insisted that each society could only be understood from the inside, by an imaginative participation that recognized the codes or system of relationships (kinship rules, taboos, habits of social interaction, folkloric imagination) governing its daily life. Less scientific but more influential on modern writers was Jungian psychology (Carl Gustav Jung, 1875–1961), which proposed that humanity shared a "collective unconscious"—a buried level of universal experience tapped by myth, religion, and art. According to Jung, the common experience of our species was revealed in archetypes (master patterns) like the figures of the hero, seer, or Great Mother, the image of the quest, or the process of death and regeneration. A number of writers (for example, T. S. Eliot in *The Waste Land*) openly incorporated archetypal images in their work in order to allude to a universal level of human experience.

Gestalt psychology and structural anthropology had both emphasized the relationship of parts, and directed attention to modes of perception as part of scientific inquiry. Physics and mathematics were doing the same thing, with results that shocked the general public and intrigued writers and artists. Albert Einstein's theory of relativity (1905) abandoned the concepts of absolute motion and the absolute difference of space and time and, working from pure mathematical logic, proposed that reality should be understood as a four-dimensional continuum (called space-time) that literally could not be expressed either in words or in the old three-dimensional models of Newtonian physics. "Relativity" implied "relativism" in the popular mind, and Einstein's discovery was widely thought to pull the ground out from under any certainty—scientific or religious—about the physical world. Worse yet, Werner Heisenberg's "uncertainty principle" (1927) proclaimed that scientific measurement (in this case, the measurement of electrons) was always a matter of statistical approximation, a "probability function" and not an exact description. Ironically, what was scientifically an increasingly *accurate* perception of the nature of things often seemed just the opposite to the general public. It was not possible for them to find self-evident truths, or go "back to basics," when scientists had just shown that the "basic" world of three-dimensional reality did not even exist. Many writers, however (and Proust among the earliest), welcomed what they saw as scientific confirmation that reality could be represented in a shifting and fluid perspective.

Although all the attitudes mentioned thus far have been concerned with one or another aspect of the perception of reality, the issue itself belongs more squarely to the philosophy known as phenomenology (the analysis of phenomena or things *as they appear to us*) and its offshoot, existentialism. The phenomenology of Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) described all consciousness as consciousness *of* something *by* someone, and concluded that every object of study should be imagined in "brackets"—not as a thing in itself, but as part of a relationship between perceiver and perceived. The ethical implications of this view were taken up by the philosophers Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) and Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980), who questioned what existence could mean in a world without preexisting truths, values, or general laws. Heidegger's profoundly somber vision of the "absurd" condi-

tion of human beings, "thrown into the world" without any understanding of their fate, influenced many writers and especially the "Theater of the Absurd" that flourished after World War II, of which Samuel Beckett (1906—) and Eugène Ionesco (1912—) are the best-known writers. Sartre, who was much more of a social activist, derived from the same "absurd" freedom an ideal of human "authenticity" which consists in choosing our actions at each point, avoiding the "bad faith" of pretending that others are responsible for our choices, and choosing not just for oneself but "for all" inasmuch as each choice envisages the creation of a new world. This kind of existentialism, with its appealing image of the lonely tragic hero who acts to benefit society without any hope of reward (Sartre portrayed such a hero as Orestes in *The Flies*, based on Aeschylus' *Oresteia*), had tremendous influence on young writers immediately after World War II. Albert Camus, writing at the same time as Sartre, offers in "The Guest" a good example of the emphasis on freedom, responsibility, and social "engagement" that typifies much "existentialist" writing. Although existentialism was attacked by those who felt that "total freedom" necessarily meant an abdication of moral commitment, a glance at the works of Sartre and Camus (or at the Christian existentialists Gabriel Marcel, Jacques Maritain, Karl Jaspers, and Paul Tillich) will show that the existentialist rejection of exterior laws leads immediately to the question of responsible choice and to a sharpening of moral issues.

Existentialism's popular appeal in the forties and fifties was undoubtedly enhanced by the fact that it was a philosophic attempt to recover clear vision—and a basis for action—in a confused and meaningless world. The notion of philosophical "absurdity" corresponded to a very real confusion felt by the general public in the face of the radical historical changes taking place ever since World War I and the Russian Revolution of 1917. By the middle of the century, there had been two world wars, the second of which had reached all the way around the globe to Japan; almost all the old monarchies had been overthrown and colonial empires were being dismantled as the emerging nations of Africa and Asia struggled for independence and self-definition; the wielders of authority became the enormous bureaucracy of the modern state, multinational corporations, international governmental organizations, and ethnic alliances. Transportation and telecommunications progressed to an extent only envisaged in earlier ages' science fiction and effectively shrank the global community; and the rise of the modern industrial state set up new political, cultural, and economic tensions not only in the West but between the West and the "less developed" countries of the world.

The change in historical conditions had visible effects on literature and art. Cultural parochialism—the belief that there is only one correct view of the world (ours)—was much harder to maintain when people traveled widely and experienced different ways of life. Racial and ethnic stereotypes were challenged, and traditional ideas of identity and social class broken down. Romantic heroism and aristocratic "rank" seemed irrelevant to men who died anonymously in the trenches of World War I, or to the masses killed at a distance by bombing raids in both wars. The appropriate symbol for modern, impersonal warfare was the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier,

and in literature it was the "common man," not the Romantic hero, whose plight was portrayed. The conventional roles of the sexes came under examination. Western women achieved civil rights unparalleled in previous centuries: the right to vote (1920 in the United States), the right to have bank accounts and to own and control their own property, the right to be educated equally with men, and the right to enter professions not previously open to them. When women held many jobs previously thought to be masculine ("Rosie the Riveter" was a famous poster in World War II), it was no longer possible to pretend that they were incapable of work outside the home. Technology became part of the modern literary consciousness, inspiring both enthusiasm and fear, and initiating all over again the question of human values in a society where so much could be done (and so many controlled) by the use of machines.

A CENTURY OF ISMS

The literary and artistic movements of the twentieth century are part of this evolution; they were shaped by it, and helped shape it for others. There are many such movements: in fact, the twentieth century has been called by some a "century of isms," or of "vanguardism," reflecting the fact that so many different groups have tried to find the appropriate artistic response to contemporary history. Expressionism, Acmeism, Dadaism, Surrealism, and Futurism—each worth exploring in itself—are all different ways of expressing the "reality" of the world: some appearing very unreal at first glance, but all trying to adopt a point of view that will reveal an inner (presumably more important) truth than could be shown by documentary detail alone. Expressionists refused the direct representation of reality, or even impressions of it (as in Impressionism), in favor of expressing an inner vision, emotion, or spiritual reality. *The Scream*, a painting by Edward Munch (1863–1944) evokes a whole realm of spiritual agony, and expressionist writers like Frank Wedekind (1864–1918) and Gottfried Benn (1886–1956) assert their alienation from an industrial society whose inhumanity repels them. In order to bring out an underlying psychological distress that "objective" descriptions fail to capture, expressionist writers subordinate conventional (rational) style and let emotion dictate the structure of their works, emphasizing rhythm, disrupted narrative line and broken syntax, and distorted imagery.

Futurism loudly proclaimed its enthusiasm for the dynamic new machine age. F. T. Marinetti (1876–1944) wrote in the first Futurist Manifesto (1908) that "a roaring motor car which seems to run on machine-gun fire is more beautiful than the Winged Victory of Samothrace" (a famous Greek statue). Italian Futurism is still clouded by Marinetti's glorification of terrorism and war, and his delighted description (from the pilot's point of view) of bombs bursting in the air. However, the Futurists' experiments in typography, in free association, in rapid shifts and breaks of syntax; their manipulation of sounds and word placement for special effects apart from semantic meaning; their harshness and stark vision; and above all their eagerness to depict the new age, were all widely imitated.

Dada-Surrealism is the best known of the movements, and the only one to have adherents today. Dada began in Zurich in 1916 as a movement of absolute revolt agains "Papa's Europe," and the word *dada* is a nonsense

word which represents the disgust the Dadaists felt for the traditional middle-class values (patriotism, religion, morality, and rationalism) that they blamed for World War I. Dada set out to contradict authority and break all the rules (including those of art), hoping to liberate the creative imagination. Marcel Duchamp (1887–1968) reversed a series of expectations when he named a piece "Why Not Sneeze, Rrose Sélavy?" (1921): it was a small birdcage filled with what looked like sugar lumps and turned out (when you tried to lift the cage) to be carved marble cubes. Tristan Tzara (1896–1963) attacked the notion of the inspired genius by giving a recipe for the Dada poem: the "poet" was to cut words out of a newspaper, shake them in a paper bag, and pull them out one at a time. Dada creations were attacks on the mind and emotions: for Dadaists and Surrealists alike the important thing was to bring about a "revolution of the mind" in which ordinary habits of seeing yielded to a different, "surreal" or "superreal" vision.

Surrealists especially aimed to bring about a fuller awareness of human experience, including both conscious and unconscious states. The Surrealist Manifestoes of 1924 and 1930 proclaimed that Surrealism was a means of expressing "the actual functioning of thought," "the total recuperation of our psychic force by a means that is nothing else than the dizzying descent into ourselves. . . ." André Breton, the Surrealist leader, had been a medical intern in a psychiatric clinic during World War I and was interested in Freud's theories of the unconscious. The Surrealists experimented with various means to liberate the unconscious imagination and reach what they called the "marvelous" point of view: dream-writing, automatic writing (writing rapidly and continuously whatever comes to mind), and chiefly the creation of startling images. The Surrealist image forcibly yokes two seemingly unrelated elements to suggest buried connections, possible relationships not to be discovered by the logical mind. A poem by Paul Eluard, for example, will begin "Earth is blue like an orange, / Never a mistake; words don't lie . . ." and leave it to the reader to make the connections of shape, color, distance, and the fact that the whole vision is brought about in the realm of words (they don't lie). The dreamlike quality and startling imagery of Surrealism has made "surrealist" a convenient word for many unconventional or fantastic works that have no real connection with the movement.

The most generally used term for the change in tastes and artistic strategy at the beginning of the century is modernism, and in its broadest sense modernism will embrace all the separate movements just described. Taken more narrowly, it refers to a group of Anglo-American writers (many associated with the Imagists, 1908–1917) who favored clear, precise images and "common speech" and thought of the work as an art object produced by consummate craft rather than as a statement of emotion. James Joyce, Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, William Faulkner, and Virginia Woolf are examples of Anglo-American modernism, and of the larger modernism too. Modernism in general is an attempt to use language in a new way, to reconstruct the world of art much as the philosophers and scientists had redefined the world of their own disciplines. Modernist writers played with shifting and contradictory appearances to suggest the shifting and uncertain nature of reality (Pirandello): they broke up the logically developing plot typical of the nineteenth-century novel, and offered instead unexpected connections or sudden

changes of perspective (Woolf); they used interior monologues and free association to express the rhythm of consciousness (Joyce, Woolf); they made much greater use of image clusters, thematic associations, and "musical" patterning to supply the basic structures of both fiction and poetry (Proust, Porter; Stevens, Eliot); they drew attention to style instead of trying to make it "transparent" (Eliot, Brecht); they blended fantasy with reality while representing real historical or psychological dilemmas (Kafka); they raised age-old questions of human identity in terms of contemporary philosophy and psychology (Proust, Camus). Yet there is another element which unites these figures: their experiments with perspective and language are carried on inside still-traditional concepts of individual psychological depth, and of the art work as a coherent aesthetic whole. The combination of discontinuous, experimental style with a continuing belief in the wholeness of the human personality and of the art work carries with it the stamp of what we call the Modernist tradition.

FURTHER READING

The Modern Tradition, edited by Richard Ellmann and Charles Feidelson, Jr. (1965), is a valuable collection of statements by writers, artists, philosophers and scientists, arranged by themes. Willson Coates and Hayden White's *The Ordeal of Liberal Humanism; An Intellectual History of Western Europe* (1970) is an excellent intellectual history of Western Europe after the French Revolution. Harry Levin, "What Was Modernism?" (1962, reprinted in *Refractions*, 1966), is an influential survey of modernist writers as humanists and inheritors of the Enlightenment. Renato Poggioli's *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1968, translated by Gerald Fitzgerald), locates basic categories of attitudes toward society inside the different arts of the twentieth-century American avant-garde. *History of Modern Art, Painting, Sculpture, Architecture*, by H. H. Arnason (1977), illustrated with many photographs and plates (black-and-white and color), follows the evolution of the arts in the West from the nineteenth century to the 1960s. Examples of Impressionism, Expressionism, Cubism, Surrealism, and contemporary abstract, concrete, and "new realist" art introduce the reader to changes in artistic perception throughout the modern era. Matei Calinescu's *Faces of Modernity* (1977) is a subtly argued, informative collection of essays on the aesthetics of modernism, avant-garde, decadence, and kitsch. *Romanticism, Modernism, Postmodernism*, edited by Harry R. Garvin (1980), is a useful collection of essays that attempt to define changing views of the artistic imagination and its place in society.

LUIGI PIRANDELLO
1867–1936

Although Pirandello's basic themes reappear throughout his novels, short stories, and plays, he is best known as an innovative dramatist who revolutionized stage techniques at the same time that he dramatized issues later known as "existential": the difficulty of achieving a sense of identity, the impossibility of communication, and the overlapping frontiers of appearance and reality. Instead of the late nineteenth-century's "well-made play," with its neatly constructed plot offering a conventional beginning, middle, and end, and characters who remained safely on the other side of the footlights, Pirandello offered plays that sometimes seemed merely improvised and that always raised questions about the roles assumed in everyday life. It is not easy to know the truth, he suggests, or to make oneself known behind the "naked mask" that each of us wears in society. Pirandello composes a fully self-reflexive theater that readily displays its own nature as illusion: plays exist within plays until one is not sure where the "real" play begins, and characters question their own reality and that of the audience. In their manipulation of contradictory appearances and often tragicomic effects, these plays foreshadow the absurdist theater of Samuel Beckett and Eugène Ionesco, the cosmic irony of Antonin Artaud's "Theater of Cruelty," and the emphasis on spectacle and illusion in works by Jean Genet.

Pirandello was born in Girgenti (now Agrigento), Sicily, on June 28, 1867. His father was a sulphur merchant who intended his son to go into business like himself, but Pirandello preferred language and literature. After studying in Palermo and the University of Rome, he traveled to the University of Bonn in 1888 where he received a doctorate in Romance Philology in 1891 with a thesis on the dialect of his home town. In 1894, Pirandello made an arranged marriage with the daughter of a rich sulphur merchant. They lived for ten years in Rome, where he wrote poetry and short stories, until the collapse of the sulphur mines destroyed the fortunes of both families. Not only was Pirandello suddenly forced to earn a living, but his wife became insane with a jealous paranoia that lasted until her death in 1918. Pirandello himself died on December 1, 1936.

Pirandello's early poetry was indebted to nineteenth-century Italian predecessors like Giosuè Carducci (1835–1907). He also translated Goethe's *Roman Elegies* in 1896. Soon, however, he turned to short stories or *novelle* under the influence of a narrative style called *verismo* (realism) exemplified in the work of the Sicilian writer Giovanni Verga (1840–1922). Pirandello wrote hundreds of stories of all lengths and, in his clarity, realism, and psychological acuteness, which did not rule out a liking for a certain grotesqueness, is recognized as an Italian master of the story much as was Guy de Maupassant (1850–1893) in France. Collections include the 1894 *Love Without Love* and an anthology in 1922 titled *A Year's Worth of Stories*.

In such stories, and in his early novels, Pirandello begins to develop his characteristic themes: the questioning of appearance and reality and prob-

lems of identity. In *The Outcast* (1901), an irate husband drives his innocent wife out of the house only to take her back when—without his knowing it—the supposed adultery has actually occurred. The hero of Pirandello's best-known novel, *The Late Mattia Pascal*, tries to create a fresh identity for himself and leave behind the old Mattia Pascal. When things become too difficult he returns to his "late" self and begins to write his life story: an early example of the tendency in Pirandello's works to comment on their own composition. The protagonists in these and other works are visibly commonplace, middle-class citizens, neither heroic nor villainous, but prototypes of the twentieth-century "antihero" who takes the center of the stage while remaining aggressively average.

The questions of identity that obsessed Pirandello (he speaks of them as reflecting the "pangs of my spirit") are explored on social, psychological, and metaphysical levels. He was acquainted with the experimental psychology of his day, and learned from works like Alfred Binet's *Personality Alterations* (1892) about the existence of a subconscious personality beneath our everyday awareness (a theme Pirandello shares with Proust and Freud). Successive layers of personality, conflicts among the various parts, and the simultaneous existence of multiple perspectives shape an identity that is never fixed but always fluid and changing. This identity escapes the grasp of onlookers and subject alike, and expresses a basic incongruity in human existence that challenges the most earnest attempts to create a unified self. The protagonist of a later novel, *One, None, and a Hundred Thousand* (1925–26) finds that what "he" is depends on the viewpoint of a great number of people. Such incongruity can be tragic or comic—or both at once—according to one's attitude, a topic which Pirandello explored in a 1908 essay, *On Humor*, and which is echoed in the double-edged humor of his plays. The "Pirandellian" themes of ambiguous identity, lack of communication, and deceptive appearance reappear in all the genres, however, reaching a particular intensity in his first dramatic success (*It Is So [If You Think So]*, 1917), and in the play printed here, *Six Characters in Search of an Author*.

First performed in Paris in 1923, *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (1921) represented a change from the mimetic realism and unified character portrayals of nineteenth-century drama and offered a new psychological realism emphasizing the ambiguity of language and motivation and the impossibility of communication between individuals. These ideas were also being explored by existentialist thinkers at the same time, and through Pirandello made their way into the repertory of the theater. Later playwrights like Eugène Ionesco, Samuel Beckett, Edward Albee, and Harold Pinter (and, to a lesser degree, Jean-Paul Sartre and T. S. Eliot) show the influence of Pirandellian attitudes and dialogue in their work.

Six Characters in Search of an Author and *Henry IV* established Pirandello's stature as a major dramatist. He directed his own company (the Teatro d'Arte di Roma) from 1924 to 1928 and received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1934. His later plays, featuring fantastic and grotesque elements, did not achieve the wide popularity of their predecessors. In 1936, he published a collection of 43 plays as *Naked Masks*, a title conceived in 1918 after Luigi Chiarelli's "grotesque theater." Pirandello's characters are "naked" and vulnerable inside their social roles or masks: Henry IV, trapped

for life inside a pretense of insanity, or the Father in *Six Characters*, forced to play out a demeaning role in which, he insists, only part of his true nature is revealed. The term "naked mask" also suggests Pirandello's superb manipulation of theatrical ambiguity—the confusion between the actor and the character he portrays—that ultimately prolongs the confusion of appearance and reality which is one of his chief themes. Pirandello is famous in twentieth-century theater for his use of the "play within a play," a technique of embedded dramatic episodes that maintain a life of their own while serving as foil to the overall or governing plot. Dividing lines are sometimes hard to draw when stage dialogue can be taken as referring to either context, a situation that allows for double meanings at the same time that it reiterates the impossibility of real communication.

Six Characters in Search of an Author combines all these elements in an extraordinarily self-reflexive style. From the beginning, where the audience apparently sees the rehearsal of another Pirandellian play (including comments in which the author pokes fun at his reputation for obscurity), to the invasion of the stage by characters out of an unwritten novel, demanding to be given dramatic existence, the play is continually in the process of being composed: composed as the interwoven double plot we see on stage, written down in shorthand by the prompter for the actors to reproduce, and potentially composed as the characters' inner drama finally achieves its rightful existence as a work of art. The conflicts between the different levels of the play finally prevent the completion of any but the first work, but it has created a convincing dramatic illusion in the meantime (it is difficult not to believe in Madame Pace when she walks on stage) that incorporates the psychological drama of the "six characters," as well as a discussion of the relationship of life and art.

The initial absurdity of the play appears when six admittedly fictional characters arrive with their claim to be "truer and more real" than the "real" characters they confront. (Of course, to the audience all the actors on stage are equally unreal.) Their greater "truth" is the truth of art with its profound but formally fixed glimpses into human nature. Each character represents, specifically and in depth, a particular identity created by the author. They are incapable of developing outside that role and are condemned, in their search for existence, painfully to re-enact their essential selves.

Conversely, the fictional characters have a more stable personality than "real" people who are still "nobody," incomplete, open to change and misinterpretation. Characters are "somebody" because their nature has been decided once and for all. Yet there is a further complication to this contrast between real and fictional characters: the characters have real anxieties in that they want to play their own roles, and are disturbed at the prospect of having actors represent them incorrectly. All human beings, suggests Pirandello, whether fictional or real, are subject to misunderstanding. We even misunderstand ourselves when we think we are the same person in all situations. "We have this illusion of being one person for all," says the Father, "but it isn't true." When he explains himself as a very human philosopher driven by the Demon of Experiment, his self-image is quite different from the picture held by his vengeful Step-Daughter or the passive Mother who blames him for her expulsion from the house. The Step-Daughter, in turn,

appears to love an innocent little sister because she reminds her of an earlier self. It is an entanglement of motives and "deceit of mutual understanding" that goes beyond the tabloid level of a sordid family scandal and claims a broader scope. Pirandello, in fact, does not intend merely to describe a particular setting or situation: that is the concern of what he calls "historical writers." He belongs to the opposite category of "philosophical writers" whose characters and situations embody "a particular sense of life and acquire from it a universal value."

Pirandello does not hold his audience by uttering grand philosophical truths, however. There is constant suspense and a process of discovery in *Six Characters*, from the moment that the rehearsal with its complaining actors and Manager is interrupted and the initial hints of melodrama and family scandal catch our attention in the Step-Daughter's and Mother's complaints. It is a story that could be found in the most sensational papers: an adulterous wife thrust out of her home and supporting herself and her children after her lover's death by sewing; the daughter's turn to prostitution to support the family; the father's unknowing attempt to seduce his step-daughter (interpreted by the latter as the continuation of an old and perverse impulse); and the final drowning and suicide of the two youngest children. Pirandello plays with the sensational aspect of his story by focusing the play around the characters' repeated attempts to portray the seduction scene; actors and Manager perceive the saleable quality of such "human-interest" events and are eager to let the story unfold. The daughter's protective fondness for her doomed baby sister, and her puzzling reproach to the little boy ("Instead of killing myself, I'd have shot one of those two") hints at an inner plot which is revealed only as the action continues. The level of illusion and the level of "reality" persist to the very end, when the little boy's suicide is seen alternately as death and make-believe. If the Manager dismisses what has just occurred with the cry "I've lost a whole day over these people, a whole day!" the audience—which sees both Manager and characters as illusions—is more willing to entertain the possibility that this play is a "real" description of the human condition.

A good biography and general introduction is found in Susan Bassnett-McGuire, *Pirandello* (1984). Walter Starkie's *Luigi Pirandello, 1867–1936*, 3rd. ed., revised and enlarged (1965), is a general study against the background of twentieth-century Italian literature: novels, stories, plays, and themes. The study *Pirandello: A Collection of Critical Essays* (1967), edited by Glauco Cambon, lays emphasis to the plays.

Six Characters in Search of an Author[1]

A Comedy in the Making

Characters of the Comedy in the Making

THE FATHER
THE MOTHER
THE STEP-DAUGHTER
THE SON
THE BOY
THE CHILD
(The last two do not speak)
MADAME PACE

1. English version by Edward Storer.

Actors of the Company

THE MANAGER	OTHER ACTORS AND ACTRESSES
LEADING LADY	PROPERTY MAN
LEADING MAN	PROMPTER
SECOND LADY	MACHINIST
LEAD	MANAGER'S SECRETARY
L'INGÉNUE	DOOR-KEEPER
JUVENILE LEAD	SCENE-SHIFTERS

Daytime. The Stage of a Theatre

N.B. The Comedy is without acts or scenes. The performance is interrupted once, without the curtain being lowered, when the manager and the chief characters withdraw to arrange the scenario. A second interruption of the action takes place when, by mistake, the stage hands let the curtain down.

ACT I

The spectators will find the curtain raised and the stage as it usually is during the day time. It will be half dark, and empty, so that from the beginning the public may have the impression of an impromptu performance.

Prompter's box and a small table and chair for the manager.

Two other small tables and several chairs scattered about as during rehearsals.

The ACTORS *and* ACTRESSES *of the company enter from the back of the stage: first one, then another, then two together; nine or ten in all. They are about to rehearse a Pirandello play: Mixing It Up.*[2] *Some of the company move off towards their dressing rooms. The* PROMPTER *who has the "book" under his arm, is waiting for the manager in order to begin the rehearsal.*

The ACTORS *and* ACTRESSES, *some standing, some sitting, chat and smoke. One perhaps reads a paper; another cons his part.*

Finally, the MANAGER *enters and goes to the table prepared for him. His* SECRETARY *brings him his mail, through which he glances. The* PROMPTER *takes his seat, turns on a light, and opens the "book."*

THE MANAGER [*throwing a letter down on the table*]. I can't see [*To* PROPERTY MAN.] Let's have a little light, please!

PROPERTY MAN. Yes sir, yes, at once. [*A light comes down on to the stage.*]

2. *Il giuoco delle parti*, written in 1918. The hero, Leone Gala, pretends to ignore the infidelity of his wife, Silia, until the end, when he takes revenge by tricking her lover, Guido Venanzi, into taking his place in a fatal duel she had engineered to get rid of her husband.

THE MANAGER [*clapping his hands*]. Come along! Come along! Second act of "Mixing It Up." [*Sits down.*]

[*The* ACTORS *and* ACTRESSES *go from the front of the stage to the wings, all except the three who are to begin the rehearsal.*]

THE PROMPTER [*reading the "book"*]. "Leo Gala's house. A curious room serving as dining-room and study."

THE MANAGER [*to* PROPERTY MAN]. Fix up the old red room.

PROPERTY MAN [*noting it down*]. Red set. All right!

THE PROMPTER [*continuing to read from the "book"*]. "Table already laid and writing desk with books and papers. Book-shelves. Exit rear to Leo's bedroom. Exit left to kitchen. Principal exit to right."

THE MANAGER [*energetically*]. Well, you understand: The principal exit over there; here, the kitchen. [*Turning to actor who is to play the part of* SOCRATES.][3] You make your entrances and exits here. [*To* PROPERTY MAN.] The baize doors at the rear, and curtains.

PROPERTY MAN [*noting it down*]. Right!

PROMPTER [*reading as before*]. "When the curtain rises, Leo Gala, dressed in cook's cap and apron, is busy beating an egg in a cup. Philip, also dressed as a cook, is beating another egg. Guido Venanzi is seated and listening."

LEADING MAN [*To* MANAGER]. Excuse me, but must I absolutely wear a cook's cap?

THE MANAGER [*annoyed*]. I imagine so. It says so there anyway. [*Pointing to the "book."*]

LEADING MAN. But it's ridiculous!

THE MANAGER [*jumping up in a rage*]. Ridiculous? Ridiculous? Is it my fault if France won't send us any more good comedies,[4] and we are reduced to putting on Pirandello's works, where nobody understands anything, and where the author plays the fool with us all? [*The* ACTORS *grin. The* MANAGER *goes to* LEADING MAN *and shouts.*] Yes sir, you put on the cook's cap and beat eggs. Do you suppose that with all this egg-beating business you are on an ordinary stage? Get that out of your head. You represent the shell of the eggs you are beating! [*Laughter and comments among the* ACTORS.] Silence! and listen to my explanations, please! [*To* LEADING MAN.] "The empty form of reason without the fullness of instinct, which is blind."—You stand for reason, your wife is instinct. It's a mixing up of the parts, according to which you who act your own part become the puppet of yourself.[5] Do you understand?

3. Nickname given to Gala's servant, Philip, in *Mixing It Up*. 4. The tightly constructed, realistic, and "well-made" plays of French theater were internationally popular, and a staple in Italian theaters at the beginning of the century. 5. Leo Gala is a rationalist and an aesthete—the opposite of his impulsive, passionate wife, Silia. By masking his feelings and constantly playing the role of gourmet cook, he chooses his own role and thus becomes his own "puppet."

LEADING MAN. I'm hanged if I do.

THE MANAGER. Neither do I. But let's get on with it. It's sure to be a glorious failure anyway. [*Confidentially.*] But I say, please face three-quarters. Otherwise, what with the abstruseness of the dialogue, and the public that won't be able to hear you, the whole thing will go to hell. Come on! come on!

PROMPTER. Pardon sir, may I get into my box? There's a bit of a draught.

THE MANAGER. Yes, yes, of course!

At this point, the DOOR-KEEPER *has entered from the stage door and advances towards the manager's table, taking off his braided cap. During this manoeuvre, the* SIX CHARACTERS *enter, and stop by the door at back of stage, so that when the* DOOR-KEEPER *is about to announce their coming to the* MANAGER, *they are already on the stage. A tenuous light surrounds them, almost as if irradiated by them—the faint breath of their fantastic reality.*

This light will disappear when they come forward towards the actors. They preserve, however, something of the dream lightness in which they seem almost suspended; but this does not detract from the essential reality of their forms and expressions.

He who is known as THE FATHER *is a man of about 50: hair, reddish in colour, thin at the temples; he is not bald, however; thick moustaches, falling over his still fresh mouth, which often opens in an empty and uncertain smile. He is fattish, pale; with an especially wide forehead. He has blue, oval-shaped eyes, very clear and piercing. Wears light trousers and a dark jacket. He is alternatively mellifluous and violent in his manner.*

THE MOTHER *seems crushed and terrified as if by an intolerable weight of shame and abasement. She is dressed in modest black and wears a thick widow's veil of crêpe. When she lifts this, she reveals a wax-like face. She always keeps her eyes downcast.*

THE STEP-DAUGHTER, *is dashing, almost impudent, beautiful. She wears mourning too, but with great elegance. She shows contempt for the timid half-frightened manner of the wretched* BOY *(14 years old, and also dressed in black); on the other hand, she displays a lively tenderness for her little sister,* THE CHILD *(about four), who is dressed in white, with a black silk sash at the waist.*

THE SON *(22) tall, severe in his attitude of contempt for* THE FATHER, *supercilious and indifferent to* THE MOTHER. *He looks as if he had come on the stage against his will.*

DOOR-KEEPER [*cap in hand*]. Excuse me, sir . . .

THE MANAGER [*rudely*]. Eh? What is it?

DOOR-KEEPER [*timidly*]. These people are asking for you, sir.

THE MANAGER [*furious*]. I am rehearsing, and you know perfectly

well no one's allowed to come in during rehearsals! [*Turning to the* CHARACTERS.] Who are you, please? What do you want?

THE FATHER [*coming forward a little, followed by the others who seem embarrassed*]. As a matter of fact . . . we have come here in search of an author . . .

THE MANAGER [*half angry, half amazed*]. An author? What author?

THE FATHER. Any author, sir.

THE MANAGER. But there's no author here. We are not rehearsing a new piece.

THE STEP-DAUGHTER [*vivaciously*]. So much the better, so much the better! We can be your new piece.

AN ACTOR [*coming forward from the others*]. Oh, do you hear that?

THE FATHER [*to* STEP-DAUGHTER]. Yes, but if the author isn't here . . . [*To* MANAGER.] unless you would be willing . . .

THE MANAGER. You are trying to be funny.

THE FATHER. No, for Heaven's sake, what are you saying? We bring you a drama, sir.

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. We may be your fortune.

THE MANAGER. Will you oblige me by going away? We haven't time to waste with mad people.

THE FATHER [*mellifluously*]. Oh sir, you know well that life is full of infinite absurdities, which, strangely enough, do not even need to appear plausible, since they are true.

THE MANAGER. What the devil is he talking about?

THE FATHER. I say that to reverse the ordinary process may well be considered a madness: that is, to create credible situations, in order that they may appear true. But permit me to observe that if this be madness, it is the sole *raison d'être* of your profession, gentlemen. [*The* ACTORS *look hurt and perplexed.*]

THE MANAGER [*getting up and looking at him*]. So our profession seems to you one worthy of madmen then?

THE FATHER. Well, to make seem true that which isn't true . . . without any need . . . for a joke as it were . . . Isn't that your mission, gentlemen: to give life to fantastic characters on the stage?

THE MANAGER [*interpreting the rising anger of the* COMPANY]. But I would beg you to believe, my dear sir, that the profession of the comedian is a noble one. If today, as things go, the playwrights give us stupid comedies to play and puppets to represent instead of men, remember we are proud to have given life to immortal works here on these very boards! [*The* ACTORS, *satisfied, applaud their* MANAGER.]

THE FATHER [*interrupting furiously*]. Exactly, perfectly, to living beings more alive than those who breathe and wear clothes: beings less real perhaps, but truer! I agree with you entirely. [*The* ACTORS *look at one another in amazement.*]

THE MANAGER. But what do you mean? Before, you said . . .

THE FATHER. No, excuse me, I meant it for you, sir, who were crying out that you had no time to lose with madmen, while no one better than yourself knows that nature uses the instrument of human fantasy in order to pursue her high creative purpose.

THE MANAGER. Very well,—but where does all this take us?

THE FATHER. Nowhere! It is merely to show you that one is born to life in many forms, in many shapes, as tree, or as stone, as water, as butterfly, or as woman. So one may also be born a character in a play.

THE MANAGER [*with feigned comic dismay*]. So you and these other friends of yours have been born characters?

THE FATHER. Exactly, and alive as you see! [MANAGER *and* ACTORS *burst out laughing.*]

THE FATHER [*hurt*]. I am sorry you laugh, because we carry in us a drama, as you can guess from this woman here veiled in black.

THE MANAGER [*losing patience at last and almost indignant*]. Oh, chuck it! Get away please! Clear out of here! [*To* PROPERTY MAN.] For Heaven's sake, turn them out!

THE FATHER [*resisting*]. No, no, look here, we . . .

THE MANAGER [*roaring*]. We come here to work, you know.

LEADING ACTOR. One cannot let oneself be made such a fool of.

THE FATHER [*determined, coming forward*]. I marvel at your incredulity, gentlemen. Are you not accustomed to see the characters created by an author spring to life in yourselves and face each other? Just because there is no "book" [*Pointing to the* PROMPTER'S *box.*] which contains us, you refuse to believe . . .

THE STEP-DAUGHTER [*advances towards* MANAGER, *smiling and coquettish*]. Believe me, we are really six most interesting characters, sir; side-tracked however.

THE FATHER. Yes, that is the word! [*To* MANAGER *all at once.*] In the sense, that is, that the author who created us alive no longer wished, or was no longer able, materially to put us into a work of art.[6] And this was a real crime, sir; because he who has had the luck to be born a character can laugh even at death. He cannot die. The man, the writer, the instrument of the creation will die, but his creation does not die. And to live for ever, it does not need to have extraordinary gifts or to be able to work wonders. Who was Sancho Panza? Who was Don Abbondio?[7] Yet they live eternally because—live germs as they were—they had the fortune to find a fecundat-

6. In the 1925 preface to *Six Characters*, Pirandello explains that these characters came to him first as characters for a novel, which he later abandoned. Haunted by their half-realized personalities, he decided to use the situation in a play. 7. Sancho Panza was Don Quixote's servant in Cervantes' novel *Don Quixote* (1605–15). Don Abbondio is the priest in Manzoni's novel *The Betrothed* (1828).

ing matrix, a fantasy which could raise and nourish them: make them live for ever!

THE MANAGER. That is quite all right. But what do you want here, all of you?

THE FATHER. We want to live.

THE MANAGER [*ironically*]. For Eternity?

THE FATHER. No, sir, only for a moment . . . in you.

AN ACTOR. Just listen to him!

LEADING LADY. They want to live, in us . . . !

JUVENILE LEAD [*pointing to the* STEP-DAUGHTER]. I've no objection, as far as that one is concerned!

THE FATHER. Look here! look here! The comedy has to be made. [*To the* MANAGER.] But if you and your actors are willing, we can soon concert it among ourselves.

THE MANAGER [*annoyed*]. But what do you want to concert? We don't go in for concerts here. Here we play dramas and comedies!

THE FATHER. Exactly! That is just why we have come to you.

THE MANAGER. And where is the "book"?

THE FATHER. It is in us! [*The* ACTORS *laugh.*] The drama is in us, and we are the drama. We are impatient to play it. Our inner passion drives us on to this.

THE STEP-DAUGHTER [*disdainful, alluring, treacherous, full of impudence*]. My passion, sir! Ah, if you only knew! My passion for him! [*Points to the* FATHER *and makes a pretence of embracing him. Then she breaks out into a loud laugh.*]

THE FATHER [*angrily*]. Behave yourself! And please don't laugh in that fashion.

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. With your permission, gentlemen, I, who am a two months' orphan, will show you how I can dance and sing. [*Sings and then dances* Prenez garde à Tchou-Tchin-Tchou.]

Les chinois sont un peuple malin,
De Shangaî à Pekin,
Ils ont mis des écriteaux partout:
Prenez garde à Tchou-Tchin-Tchou.[8]

ACTORS AND ACTRESSES. Bravo! Well done! Tip-top!

THE MANAGER. Silence! This isn't a café concert, you know! [*Turning to the* FATHER *in consternation.*] Is she mad?

THE FATHER. Mad? No, she's worse than mad.

8. A popular musical comedy, *Chu-Chin-Chow*, ran in London from 1916 to 1921, and inspired the song *Chu-Chin-Chow* by Dave Stamper for the Ziegfeld Follies in 1917. Stamper's song was translated into the French, which Pirandello cites. Retranslated, the lines say "The Chinese are a crafty people, / From Shanghai to Peking, / They have put up their signs everywhere: / Watch out for Chu-Chin-Chow."

THE STEP-DAUGHTER [*to* MANAGER]. Worse? Worse? Listen! Stage this drama for us at once! Then you will see that at a certain moment I . . . when this little darling here . . . [*Takes the* CHILD *by the hand and leads her to the* MANAGER.] Isn't she a dear? [*Takes her up and kisses her.*] Darling! Darling! [*Puts her down again and adds feelingly.*] Well, when God suddenly takes this dear little child away from that poor mother there; and this imbecile here [*Seizing hold of the* BOY *roughly and pushing him forward.*] does the stupidest things, like the fool he is, you will see me run away. Yes, gentlemen, I shall be off. But the moment hasn't arrived yet. After what has taken place between him and me [*indicates the* FATHER *with a horrible wink.*] I can't remain any longer in this society, to have to witness the anguish of this mother here for that fool . . . [*Indicates the* SON.] Look at him! Look at him! See how indifferent, how frigid he is, because he is the legitimate son. He despises me, despises him [*Pointing to the* BOY.], despises this baby here; because . . . we are bastards. [*Goes to the* MOTHER *and embraces her.*] And he doesn't want to recognize her as his mother—she who is the common mother of us all. He looks down upon her as if she were only the mother of us three bastards. Wretch! [*She says all this very rapidly, excitedly. At the word "bastards" she raises her voice, and almost spits out the final "Wretch!"*]

THE MOTHER [*to the* MANAGER, *in anguish*]. In the name of these two little children, I beg you . . . [*She grows faint and is about to fall.*] Oh God!

THE FATHER [*coming forward to support her as do some of the* ACTORS]. Quick, a chair, a chair for this poor widow!

THE ACTORS. Is it true? Has she really fainted?

THE MANAGER. Quick, a chair! Here!

[*One of the* ACTORS *brings a chair, the* OTHERS *proffer assistance. The* MOTHER *tries to prevent the* FATHER *from lifting the veil which covers her face.*]

THE FATHER. Look at her! Look at her!

THE MOTHER. No, no; stop it please!

THE FATHER [*raising her veil*]. Let them see you!

THE MOTHER [*rising and covering her face with her hands, in desperation*]. I beg you, sir, to prevent this man from carrying out his plan which is loathsome to me.

THE MANAGER [*dumbfounded*]. I don't understand at all. What is the situation? Is this lady your wife? [*To the* FATHER.]

THE FATHER. Yes, gentlemen: my wife!

THE MANAGER. But how can she be a widow if you are alive? [*The* ACTORS *find relief for their astonishment in a loud laugh.*]

THE FATHER. Don't laugh! Don't laugh like that, for Heaven's sake. Her drama lies just here in this: she has had a lover, a man who ought to be here.

THE MOTHER [*with a cry*]. No! No!

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. Fortunately for her, he is dead. Two months ago as I said. We are in mourning, as you see.

THE FATHER. He isn't here you see, not because he is dead. He isn't here—look at her a moment and you will understand—because her drama isn't a drama of the love of two men for whom she was incapable of feeling anything except possibly a little gratitude—gratitude not for me but for the other. She isn't a woman, she is a mother, and her drama—powerful sir, I assure you—lies, as a matter of fact, all in these four children she has had by two men.

THE MOTHER. I had them? Have you got the courage to say that I wanted them? [*To the* COMPANY.] It was his doing. It was he who gave me that other man, who forced me to go away with him.

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. It isn't true.

THE MOTHER [*startled*]. Not true, isn't it?

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. No, it isn't true, it just isn't true.

THE MOTHER. And what can you know about it?

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. It isn't true. Don't believe it. [*To* MANAGER.] Do you know why she says so? For that fellow there. [*Indicates the* SON.] She tortures herself, destroys herself on account of the neglect of that son there; and she wants him to believe that if she abandoned him when he was only two years old, it was because he [*Indicates the* FATHER.] made her do so.

THE MOTHER [*vigorously*]. He forced me to it, and I call God to witness it. [*To the* MANAGER.] Ask him [*Indicates* HUSBAND.] if it isn't true. Let him speak. You [*To* DAUGHTER.] are not in a position to know anything about it.

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. I know you lived in peace and happiness with my father while he lived. Can you deny it?

THE MOTHER. No, I don't deny it . . .

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. He was always full of affection and kindness for you. [*To the* BOY, *angrily.*] It's true, isn't it? Tell them! Why don't you speak, you little fool?

THE MOTHER. Leave the poor boy alone. Why do you want to make me appear ungrateful, daughter? I don't want to offend your father. I have answered him that I didn't abandon my house and my son through any fault of mine, nor from any wilful passion.

THE FATHER. It is true. It was my doing.

LEADING MAN [*to the* COMPANY]. What a spectacle!

LEADING LADY. We are the audience this time.

JUVENILE LEAD. For once, in a way.

THE MANAGER [*beginning to get really interested*]. Let's hear them out. Listen!

THE SON. Oh yes, you're going to hear a fine bit now. He will talk to you of the Demon of Experiment.

THE FATHER. You are a cynical imbecile, I've told you so already a hundred times. [*To the* MANAGER.] He tries to make fun of me on account of this expression which I have found to excuse myself with.

THE SON [*with disgust*]. Yes, phrases! phrases!

THE FATHER. Phrases! Isn't everyone consoled when faced with a trouble or fact he doesn't understand, by a word, some simple word, which tells us nothing and yet calms us?

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. Even in the case of remorse. In fact, especially then.

THE FATHER. Remorse? No, that isn't true. I've done more than use words to quieten the remorse in me.

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. Yes, there was a bit of money too. Yes, yes, a bit of money. There were the hundred lire he was about to offer me in payment, gentlemen . . . [*Sensation of horror among the* ACTORS.]

THE SON [*to the* STEP-DAUGHTER]. This is vile.

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. Vile? There they were in a pale blue envelope on a little mahogany table in the back of Madame Pace's shop. You know Madame Pace—one of those ladies who attract poor girls of good family into their ateliers, under the pretext of their selling *robes et manteaux.*[9]

THE SON. And he thinks he has bought the right to tyrannize over us all with those hundred lire he was going to pay; but which, fortunately—note this, gentlemen—he had no chance of paying.

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. It was a near thing, though, you know! [*Laughs ironically.*]

THE MOTHER [*protesting*]. Shame, my daughter, shame!

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. Shame indeed! This is my revenge! I am dying to live that scene . . . The room . . . I see it . . . Here is the window with the mantles exposed, there the divan, the looking-glass, a screen, there in front of the window the little mahogany table with the blue envelope containing one hundred lire. I see it. I see it. I could take hold of it . . . But you, gentlemen, you ought to turn your backs now: I am almost nude, you know. But I don't blush: I leave that to him. [*Indicating* FATHER.]

THE MANAGER. I don't understand this at all.

THE FATHER. Naturally enough. I would ask you, sir, to exercise your

9. An atelier is a studio: the implication is that Madame Pace runs a call-girl operation under the guise of selling fashionable "dresses and coats."

authority a little here, and let me speak before you believe all she is trying to blame me with. Let me explain.

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. Ah yes, explain it in your own way.

THE FATHER. But don't you see that the whole trouble lies here. In words, words. Each one of us has within him a whole world of things, each man of us his own special world. And how can we ever come to an understanding if I put in the words I utter the sense and value of things as I see them; while you who listen to me must inevitably translate them according to the conception of things each one of you has within himself. We think we understand each other, but we never really do. Look here! This woman [*Indicating the* MOTHER.] takes all my pity for her as a specially ferocious form of cruelty.

THE MOTHER. But you drove me away.

THE FATHER. Do you hear her? I drove her away! She believes I really sent her away.

THE MOTHER. You know how to talk, and I don't; but, believe me, sir [*To* MANAGER], after he had married me . . . who knows why? . . . I was a poor insignificant woman . . .

THE FATHER. But, good Heavens! it was just for your humility that I married you. I loved this simplicity in you. [*He stops when he sees she makes signs to contradict him, opens his arms wide in sign of desperation, seeing how hopeless it is to make himself understood.*] You see she denies it. Her mental deafness, believe me, is phenomenal, the limit: [*Touches his forehead.*] deaf, deaf, mentally deaf! She has plenty of feeling. Oh yes, a good heart for the children; but the brain—deaf, to the point of desperation——!

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. Yes, but ask him how his intelligence has helped us.

THE FATHER. If we could see all the evil that may spring from good, what should we do? [*At this point the* LEADING LADY *who is biting her lips with rage at seeing the* LEADING MAN *flirting with the* STEP-DAUGHTER, *comes forward and says to the* MANAGER.]

LEADING LADY. Excuse me, but are we going to rehearse today?

MANAGER. Of course, of course; but let's hear them out.

JUVENILE LEAD. This is something quite new.

L'INGÉNUE. Most Interesting!

LEADING LADY. Yes, for the people who like that kind of thing. [*Casts a glance at* LEADING MAN.]

THE MANAGER [*to* FATHER]. You must please explain yourself quite clearly. [*Sits down.*]

THE FATHER. Very well then: listen! I had in my service a poor man, a clerk, a secretary of mine, full of devotion, who became friends with her. [*Indicating the* MOTHER.] They understood one another, were kindred souls in fact, without, however, the least suspicion

of any evil existing. They were incapable even of thinking of it.

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. So he thought of it—for them!

THE FATHER. That's not true. I meant to do good to them—and to myself, I confess, at the same time. Things had come to the point that I could not say a word to either of them without their making a mute appeal, one to the other, with their eyes. I could see them silently asking each other how I was to be kept in countenance, how I was to be kept quiet. And this, believe me, was just about enough of itself to keep me in a constant rage, to exasperate me beyond measure.

THE MANAGER. And why didn't you send him away then—this secretary of yours?

THE FATHER. Precisely what I did, sir. And then I had to watch this poor woman drifting forlornly about the house like an animal without a master, like an animal one has taken in out of pity.

THE MOTHER. Ah yes . . . !

THE FATHER [*suddenly turning to the* MOTHER]. It's true about the son anyway, isn't it?

THE MOTHER. He took my son away from me first of all.

THE FATHER. But not from cruelty. I did it so that he should grow up healthy and strong by living in the country.

THE STEP-DAUGHTER [*pointing to him ironically*]. As one can see.

THE FATHER [*quickly*]. Is it my fault if he has grown up like this? I sent him to a wet nurse in the country, a peasant, as *she* did not seem to me strong enough, though she is of humble origin. That was, anyway, the reason I married her. Unpleasant all this may be, but how can it be helped? My mistake possibly, but there we are! All my life I have had these confounded aspirations towards a certain moral sanity. [*At this point the* STEP-DAUGHTER *bursts into a noisy laugh.*] Oh, stop it! Stop it! I can't stand it.

THE MANAGER. Yes, please stop it, for Heaven's sake.

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. But imagine moral sanity from him, if you please—the client of certain ateliers like that of Madame Pace!

THE FATHER. Fool! That is the proof that I am a man! This seeming contradiction, gentlemen, is the strongest proof that I stand here a live man before you. Why, it is just for this very incongruity in my nature that I have had to suffer what I have. I could not live by the side of that woman [*Indicating the* MOTHER.] any longer; but not so much for the boredom she inspired me with as for the pity I felt for her.

THE MOTHER. And so he turned me out—.

THE FATHER. —Well, provided for! Yes, I sent her to that man, gentlemen . . . to let her go free of me.

THE MOTHER. And to free himself.

THE FATHER. Yes, I admit it. It was also a liberation for me. But great

evil has come of it. I meant well when I did it; and I did it more for her sake than mine. I swear it. [*Crosses his arms on his chest; then turns suddenly to the* MOTHER.] Did I ever lose sight of you until that other man carried you off to another town, like the angry fool he was? And on account of my pure interest in you . . . my pure interest, I repeat, that had no base motive in it . . . I watched with the tenderest concern the new family that grew up around her. She can bear witness to this. [*Points to the* STEP-DAUGHTER.]

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. Oh yes, that's true enough. When I was a kiddie, so so high, you know, with plaits over my shoulders and knickers longer than my skirts, I used to see him waiting outside the school for me to come out. He came to see how I was growing up.

THE FATHER. This is infamous, shameful!

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. No. Why?

THE FATHER. Infamous! infamous! [*Then excitedly to* MANAGER *explaining.*] After she [*Indicating* MOTHER.] went away, my house seemed suddenly empty. She was my incubus, but she filled my house. I was like a dazed fly alone in the empty rooms. This boy here [*Indicating the* SON.] was educated away from home, and when he came back, he seemed to me to be no more mine. With no mother to stand between him and me, he grew up entirely for himself, on his own, apart, with no tie of intellect or affection binding him to me. And then—strange but true—I was driven, by curiosity at first and then by some tender sentiment, towards her family, which had come into being through my will. The thought of her began gradually to fill up the emptiness I felt all around me. I wanted to know if she were happy in living out the simple duties of life. I wanted to think of her as fortunate and happy because far away from the complicated torments of my spirit. And so, to have proof of this, I used to watch that child coming out of school.

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. Yes, yes. True. He used to follow me in the street and smiled at me, waved his hand, like this. I would look at him with interest, wondering who he might be. I told my mother, who guessed at once. [*The* MOTHER *agrees with a nod.*] Then she didn't want to send me to school for some days; and when I finally went back, there he was again—looking so ridiculous—with a paper parcel in his hands. He came close to me, caressed me, and drew out a fine straw hat from the parcel, with a bouquet of flowers—all for me!

THE MANAGER. A bit discursive this, you know!

THE SON [*contemptuously*]. Literature! Literature!

THE FATHER. Literature indeed! This is life, this is passion!

THE MANAGER. It may be, but it won't act.

THE FATHER. I agree. This is only the part leading up. I don't suggest this should be staged. She [*Pointing to the* STEP-DAUGHTER.], as you see, is no longer the flapper with plaits down her back—

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. —and the knickers showing below the skirt!

THE FATHER. The drama is coming now, sir; something new, complex, most interesting.

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. As soon as my father died . . .

THE FATHER. —there was absolute misery for them. They came back here, unknown to me. Through her stupidity! [*Pointing to the* MOTHER.] It is true she can barely write her own name; but she could anyhow have got her daughter to write to me that they were in need . . .

THE MOTHER. And how was I to divine all this sentiment in him?

THE FATHER. That is exactly your mistake, never to have guessed any of my sentiments.

THE MOTHER. After so many years apart, and all that had happened . . .

THE FATHER. Was it my fault if that fellow carried you away? It happened quite suddenly; for after he had obtained some job or other, I could find no trace of them; and so, not unnaturally, my interest in them dwindled. But the drama culminated unforeseen and violent on their return, when I was impelled by my miserable flesh that still lives . . . Ah! what misery, what wretchedness is that of the man who is alone and disdains debasing *liaisons!* Not old enough to do without women, and not young enough to go and look for one without shame. Misery? It's worse than misery; it's a horror; for no woman can any longer give him love; and when a man feels this . . . One ought to do without, you say? Yes, yes, I know. Each of us when he appears before his fellows is clothed in a certain dignity. But every man knows what unconfessable things pass within the secrecy of his own heart. One gives way to the temptation, only to rise from it again, afterwards, with a great eagerness to re-establish one's dignity, as if it were a tombstone to place on the grave of one's shame, and a monument to hide and sign the memory of our weaknesses. Everybody's in the same case. Some folks haven't the courage to say certain things, that's all!

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. All appear to have the courage to do them though.

THE FATHER. Yes, but in secret. Therefore, you want more courage to say these things. Let a man but speak these things out, and folks at once label him a cynic. But it isn't true. He is like all the others, better indeed, because he isn't afraid to reveal with the light of the intelligence the red shame of human bestiality on which most men close their eyes so as not to see it.

Woman—for example, look at her case! She turns tantalizing

inviting glances on you. You seize her. No sooner does she feel herself in your grasp than she closes her eyes. It is the sign of her mission, the sign by which she says to man: "Blind yourself, for I am blind."

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. Sometimes she can close them no more: when she no longer feels the need of hiding her shame to herself, but dry-eyed and dispassionately, sees only that of the man who has blinded himself without love. Oh, all these intellectual complications make me sick, disgust me—all this philosophy that uncovers the beast in man, and then seeks to save him, excuse him . . . I can't stand it, sir. When a man seeks to "simplify" life bestially, throwing aside every relic of humanity, every chaste aspiration, every pure feeling, all sense of ideality, duty, modesty, shame . . . then nothing is more revolting and nauseous than a certain kind of remorse—crocodiles' tears, that's what it is.

THE MANAGER. Let's come to the point. This is only discussion.

THE FATHER. Very good, sir! But a fact is like a sack which won't stand up when it is empty. In order that it may stand up, one has to put into it the reason and sentiment which have caused it to exist. I couldn't possibly know that after the death of that man, they had decided to return here, that they were in misery, and that she [*Pointing to the* MOTHER.] had gone to work as a modiste, and at a shop of the type of that of Madame Pace.

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. A real high-class modiste, you must know, gentlemen. In appearance, she works for the leaders of the best society; but she arranges matters so that these elegant ladies serve her purpose . . . without prejudice to other ladies who are . . . well . . . only so-so.

THE MOTHER. You will believe me, gentlemen, that it never entered my mind that the old hag offered me work because she had her eye on my daughter.

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. Poor mamma! Do you know, sir, what that woman did when I brought her back the work my mother had finished? She would point out to me that I had torn one of my frocks, and she would give it back to my mother to mend. It was I who paid for it, always I; while this poor creature here believed she was sacrificing herself for me and these two children here, sitting up at night sewing Madame Pace's robes.

THE MANAGER. And one day you met there . . .

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. Him, him. Yes sir, an old client. There's a scene for you to play! Superb!

THE FATHER. She, the Mother arrived just then . . .

THE STEP-DAUGHTER [*treacherously*]. Almost in time!

THE FATHER [*crying out*]. No, in time! in time! fortunately I recognized her . . . in time. And I took them back home with me to

my house. You can imagine now her position and mine; she, as you see her; and I who cannot look her in the face.

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. Absurd! How can I possibly be expected—after that—to be a modest young miss, a fit person to go with his confounded aspirations for "a solid moral sanity"?

THE FATHER. For the drama lies all in this—in the conscience[1] that I have, that each one of us has. We believe this conscience to be a single thing, but it is many-sided. There is one for this person, and another for that. Diverse consciences. So we have this illusion of being one person for all, of having a personality that is unique in all our acts. But it isn't true. We perceive this when, tragically perhaps, in something we do, we are as it were, suspended, caught up in the air on a kind of hook. Then we perceive that all of us was not in that act, and that it would be an atrocious injustice to judge us by that action alone, as if all our existence were summed up in that one deed. Now do you understand the perfidy of this girl? She surprised me in a place, where she ought not to have known me, just as I could not exist for her; and she now seeks to attach to me a reality such as I could never suppose I should have to assume for her in a shameful and fleeting moment of my life. I feel this above all else. And the drama, you will see, acquires a tremendous value from this point. Then there is the position of the others . . . his . . . [*Indicating the* SON.]

THE SON. [*shrugging his shoulders scornfully*]. Leave me alone! I don't come into this.

THE FATHER. What? You don't come into this?

THE SON. I've got nothing to do with it, and don't want to have; because you know well enough I wasn't made to be mixed up in all this with the rest of you.

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. We are only vulgar folk! He is the fine gentleman. You may have noticed, Mr. Manager, that I fix him now and again with a look of scorn while he lowers his eyes—for he knows the evil he has done me.

THE SON [*scarcely looking at her*]. I?

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. You! you! I owe my life on the streets to you. Did you or did you not deny us, with your behaviour, I won't say the intimacy of home, but even that mere hospitality which makes guests feel at their ease? We were intruders who had come to disturb the kingdom of your legitimacy. I should like to have you witness, Mr. Manager, certain scenes between him and me. He says I have tyrannized over everyone. But it was just his behaviour which made me insist on the reason for which I had come into the house,—this reason he calls "vile"—into his house, with my

1. *Coscienza:* a word with a double meaning, better translated here as "consciousness" (awareness of identity) although it can also mean the English "conscience."

mother who is his mother too. And I came as mistress of the house.

THE SON. It's easy for them to put me always in the wrong. But imagine, gentlemen, the position of a son, whose fate it is to see arrive one day at his home a young woman of impudent bearing, a young woman who inquires for his father, with whom who knows what business she has. This young man has then to witness her return bolder than ever, accompanied by that child there. He is obliged to watch her treat his father in an equivocal and confidential manner. She asks money of him in a way that lets one suppose he must give it her, *must,* do you understand, because he has every obligation to do so.

THE FATHER. But I have, as a matter of fact, this obligation. I owe it to your mother.

THE SON. How should I know? When had I ever seen or heard of her? One day there arrive with her [*Indicating* STEP-DAUGHTER.] that lad and this baby here. I am told: "This is *your* mother too, you know." I divine from her manner [*Indicating* STEP-DAUGHTER *again.*] why it is they have come home. I shouldn't even care to confess to myself. No action can therefore be hoped for from me in this affair. Believe me, Mr. Manager, I am an "unrealized" character, dramatically speaking; and I find myself not at all at ease in their company. Leave me out of it, I beg you.

THE FATHER. What? It is just because you are so that . . .

THE SON. How do you know what I am like? When did you ever bother your head about me?

THE FATHER. I admit it. I admit it. But isn't that a situation in itself? This aloofness of yours which is so cruel to me and to your mother, who returns home and sees you almost for the first time grown up, who doesn't recognize you but knows you are her son . . . [*Pointing out the* MOTHER *to the* MANAGER.] See, she's crying!

THE STEP-DAUGHTER [*angrily, stamping her foot*]. Like a fool!

THE FATHER [*indicating* STEP-DAUGHTER]. She can't stand him you know. [*Then referring again to the* SON.] He says he doesn't come into the affair, whereas he is really the hinge of the whole action. Look at that lad who is always clinging to his mother, frightened and humiliated. It is on account of this fellow here. Possibly his situation is the most painful of all. He feels himself a stranger more than the others. The poor little chap feels mortified, humiliated at being brought into a home out of charity as it were. [*In confidence.*] He is the image of his father. Hardly talks at all. Humble and quiet.

THE MANAGER. Oh, we'll cut him out. You've no notion what a nuisance boys are on the stage . . .

THE FATHER. He disappears soon, you know. And the baby too. She is the first to vanish from the scene. The drama consists finally in

this: when that mother re-enters my house, her family born outside of it, and shall we say superimposed on the original, ends with the death of the little girl, the tragedy of the boy and the flight of the elder daughter. It cannot go on, because it is foreign to its surroundings. So after much torment, we three remain: I, the mother, that son. Then, owing to the disappearance of that extraneous family, we too find ourselves strange to one another. We find we are living in an atmosphere of mortal desolation which is the revenge, as he [*Indicating* SON.] scornfully said of the Demon of Experiment, that unfortunately hides in me. Thus, sir, you see when faith is lacking, it becomes impossible to create certain states of happiness, for we lack the necessary humility. Vainglorously, we try to substitute ourselves for this faith, creating thus for the rest of the world a reality which we believe after their fashion, while, actually, it doesn't exist. For each one of us has his own reality to be respected before God, even when it is harmful to one's very self.

THE MANAGER. There is something in what you say. I assure you all this interests me very much. I begin to think there's the stuff for a drama in all this, and not a bad drama either.

THE STEP-DAUGHTER [*coming forward*]. When you've got a character like me.

THE FATHER [*shutting her up, all excited to learn the decision of the* MANAGER]. You be quiet!

THE MANAGER [*reflecting, heedless of interruption*]. It's new . . . hem . . . yes . . .

THE FATHER. Absolutely new!

THE MANAGER. You've got a nerve though, I must say, to come here and fling it at me like this . . .

THE FATHER. You will understand, sir, born as we are for the stage . . .

THE MANAGER. Are you amateur actors then?

THE FATHER. No. I say born for the stage, because . . .

THE MANAGER. Oh, nonsense. You're an old hand, you know.

THE FATHER. No sir, no. We act that rôle for which we have been cast, that rôle which we are given in life. And in my own case, passion itself, as usually happens, becomes a trifle theatrical when it is exalted.

THE MANAGER. Well, well, that will do. But you see, without an author . . . I could give you the address of an author if you like . . .

THE FATHER. No, no. Look here! You must be the author.

THE MANAGER. I? What are you talking about?

THE FATHER. Yes, you, you! Why not?

THE MANAGER. Because I have never been an author: that's why.

THE FATHER. Then why not turn author now? Everybody does it. You don't want any special qualities. Your task is made much

easier by the fact that we are all here alive before you . . .

THE MANAGER. It won't do.

THE FATHER. What? When you see us live our drama . . .

THE MANAGER. Yes, that's all right. But you want someone to write it.

THE FATHER. No, no. Someone to take it down, possibly, while we play it, scene by scene! It will be enough to sketch it out at first, and then try it over.

THE MANAGER. Well . . . I am almost tempted. It's a bit of an idea. One might have a shot at it.

THE FATHER. Of course. You'll see what scenes will come out of it. I can give you one, at once . . .

THE MANAGER. By Jove, it tempts me. I'd like to have a go at it. Let's try it out. Come with me to my office. [*Turning to the* ACTORS.] You are at liberty for a bit, but don't step out of the theatre for long. In a quarter of an hour, twenty minutes, all back here again! [*To the* FATHER.] We'll see what can be done. Who knows if we don't get something really extraordinary out of it?

THE FATHER. There's no doubt about it. They [*Indicating the* CHARACTERS.] had better come with us too, hadn't they?

THE MANAGER. Yes, yes. Come on! come on! [*Moves away and then turning to the* ACTORS.] *Be punctual, please!* [MANAGER *and the* SIX CHARACTERS *cross the stage and go off. The other* ACTORS *remain, looking at one another in astonishment.*]

LEADING MAN. Is he serious? What the devil does he want to do?

JUVENILE LEAD. This is rank madness.

THIRD ACTOR. Does he expect to knock up a drama in five minutes?

JUVENILE LEAD. Like the improvisers![2]

LEADING LADY. If he thinks I'm going to take part in a joke like this . . .

JUVENILE LEAD. I'm out of it anyway.

FOURTH ACTOR. I should like to know who they are. [*Alludes to* CHARACTERS].

THIRD ACTOR. What do you suppose? Madmen or rascals!

JUVENILE LEAD. And he takes them seriously!

L'INGÉNUE. Vanity! He fancies himself as an author now.

LEADING MAN. It's absolutely unheard of. If the stage has come to this . . . well I'm . . .

FIFTH ACTOR. It's rather a joke.

THIRD ACTOR. Well, we'll see what's going to happen next.

Thus talking, the ACTORS *leave the stage; some going out by the*

2. Literally, like players in the *Commedia dell'arte*, an improvisational form popular beginning with the sixteenth century in which actors improvised their dialogue according to basic plots and audience reaction.

little door at the back; others retiring to their dressing-rooms.

The curtain remains up.

The action of the play is suspended for twenty minutes.

ACT II

The stage call-bells ring to warn the company that the play is about to begin again.

The STEP-DAUGHTER *comes out of the* MANAGER'S *office along with the* CHILD *and the* BOY. *As she comes out of the office, she cries:—*

Nonsense! nonsense! Do it yourselves! I'm not going to mix myself up in this mess. [*Turning to the* CHILD *and coming quickly with her on to the stage.*] Come on, Rosetta, let's run!

[*The* BOY *follows them slowly, remaining a little behind and seeming perplexed.*]

THE STEP-DAUGHTER [*stops, bends over the* CHILD *and takes the latter's face between her hands*]. My little darling! You're frightened, aren't you? You don't know where we are, do you? [*Pretending to reply to a question of the* CHILD.] What is the stage? It's a place, baby, you know, where people play at being serious, a place where they act comedies. We've got to act a comedy now, dead serious, you know; and you're in it also, little one. [*Embraces her, pressing the little head to her breast, and rocking the* CHILD *for a moment.*] Oh darling, darling, what a horrid comedy you've got to play! What a wretched part they've found for you! A garden . . . a fountain . . . look . . . just suppose, kiddie, it's here. Where, you say? Why, right here in the middle. It's all make-believe here. It's better to imagine it though, because if they fix it up for you, it'll only be painted cardboard, painted cardboard for the rockery, the water, the plants. . . . Ah, but I think a baby like this one would sooner have a make-believe fountain than a real one, so she could play with it. What a joke it'll be for the others! But for you, alas! not quite such a joke: you who are real, baby dear, and really play by a real fountain that is big and green and beautiful, with ever so many bamboos around it that are reflected in the water, and a whole lot of little ducks swimming about . . . No, Rosetta, no, your mother doesn't bother about you on account of that wretch of a son there. I'm in the devil of a temper, and as for that lad . . . [*Seizes* BOY *by the arm to force him to take one of his hands out of his pockets.*] What have you got there? What are you hiding? [*Pulls his hand out of his pocket, looks into it and catches the glint of a revolver.*] Ah! where did you get this? [*The* BOY, *very pale in the face, looks at her, but does not answer*]. Idiot! If I'd been in your place, instead of killing myself, I'd have shot one of those

two, or both of them: father and son.

[*The* FATHER *enters from the office, all excited from his work. The* MANAGER *follows him.*]

THE FATHER. Come on, come on dear! Come here for a minute! We've arranged everything. It's all fixed up.

THE MANAGER [*also excited*]. If you please, young lady, there are one or two points to settle still. Will you come along?

THE STEP-DAUGHTER [*following him towards the office*]. Ouff! what's the good, if you've arranged everything.

[*The* FATHER, MANAGER *and* STEP-DAUGHTER *go back into the office again (off) for a moment. At the same time, the* SON *followed by the* MOTHER, *comes out.*]

THE SON [*looking at the three entering office*]. Oh this is fine, fine! And to think I can't even get away!

[*The* MOTHER *attempts to look at him, but lowers her eyes immediately when* HE *turns away from her.* SHE *then sits down. The* BOY *and the* CHILD *approach her.* SHE *casts a glance again at the* SON, *and speaks with humble tones, trying to draw him into conversation.*]

THE MOTHER. And isn't my punishment the worst of all? [*Then seeing from the* SON'S *manner that he will not bother himself about her.*] My God! Why are you so cruel? Isn't it enough for one person to support all this torment? Must you then insist on others seeing it also?

THE SON [*half to himself, meaning the* MOTHER *to hear, however*]. And they want to put it on the stage! If there was at least a reason for it! He thinks he has got at the meaning of it all. Just as if each one of us in every circumstance of life couldn't find his own explanation of it! [*Pauses.*] He complains he was discovered in a place where he ought not to have been seen, in a moment of his life which ought to have remained hidden and kept out of the reach of that convention which he has to maintain for other people. And what about my case? Haven't I had to reveal what no son ought ever to reveal: how father and mother live and are man and wife for themselves quite apart from that idea of father and mother which we give them? When this idea is revealed, our life is then linked at one point only to that man and that woman; and as such it should shame them, shouldn't it?

[*The* MOTHER *hides her face in her hands. From the dressing-rooms and the little door at the back of the stage the* ACTORS *and* STAGE MANAGER *return, followed by the* PROPERTY MAN, *and the* PROMPTER. *At the same moment, the* MANAGER *comes out of his office, accompanied by the* FATHER *and the* STEP-DAUGHTER.]

THE MANAGER. Come on, come on, ladies and gentlemen! Heh! you there, machinist!

MACHINIST. Yes sir?

THE MANAGER. Fix up the white parlor with the floral decorations. Two wings and a drop with a door will do.[3] Hurry up!

[*The* MACHINIST *runs off at once to prepare the scene, and arranges it while the* MANAGER *talks with the* STAGE MANAGER, *the* PROPERTY MAN, *and the* PROMPTER *on matters of detail.*]

THE MANAGER [*to* PROPERTY MAN]. Just have a look, and see if there isn't a sofa or divan in the wardrobe . . .

PROPERTY MAN. There's the green one.

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. No no! Green won't do. It was yellow, ornamented with flowers—very large! and most comfortable!

PROPERTY MAN. There isn't one like that.

THE MANAGER. It doesn't matter. Use the one we've got.

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. Doesn't matter? It's most important!

THE MANAGER. We're only trying it now. Please don't interfere. [*To* PROPERTY MAN.] See if we've got a shop window—long and narrowish.

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. And the little table! The little mahogany table for the pale blue envelope!

PROPERTY MAN [*to* MANAGER]. There's that little gilt one.

THE MANAGER. That'll do fine.

THE FATHER. A mirror.

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. And the screen! We must have a screen. Otherwise how can I manage?

PROPERTY MAN. That's all right, Miss. We've got any amount of them.

THE MANAGER [*to the* STEP-DAUGHTER]. We want some clothes pegs too, don't we?

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. Yes, several, several!

THE MANAGER. See how many we've got and bring them all.

PROPERTY MAN. All right!

[*The* PROPERTY MAN *hurries off to obey his orders. While he is putting the things in their places, the* MANAGER *talks to the* PROMPTER *and then with the* CHARACTERS *and the* ACTORS.]

THE MANAGER [*to* PROMPTER]. Take your seat. Look here: this is the outline of the scenes, act by act. [*Hands him some sheets of paper.*] And now I'm going to ask you to do something out of the ordinary.

PROMPTER. Take it down in shorthand?

THE MANAGER [*pleasantly surprised*]. Exactly! Can you do shorthand?

PROMPTER. Yes, a little.

THE MANAGER. Good! [*Turning to a* STAGE HAND.] Go and get some

3. Stage sets: a backdrop with a door painted on it and two side walls.

paper from my office, plenty, as much as you can find.

[*The* STAGE HAND *goes off, and soon returns with a handful of paper which he gives to the* PROMPTER.]

THE MANAGER [*to* PROMPTER]. You follow the scenes as we play them, and try and get the points down, at any rate the most important ones. [*Then addressing the* ACTORS.] Clear the stage, ladies and gentlemen! Come over here [*Pointing to the left.*] and listen attentively.

LEADING LADY. But, excuse me, we . . .

THE MANAGER [*guessing her thought*]. Don't worry! You won't have to improvise.

LEADING MAN. What have we to do then?

THE MANAGER. Nothing. For the moment you just watch and listen. Everybody will get his part written out afterwards. At present we're going to try the thing as best we can. They're going to act now.

THE FATHER [*as if fallen from the clouds into the confusion of the stage*]. We? What do you mean, if you please, by a rehearsal?

THE MANAGER. A rehearsal for them. [*Points to the* ACTORS.]

THE FATHER. But since we are the characters . . .

THE MANAGER. All right: "characters" then, if you insist on calling yourselves such. But here, my dear sir, the characters don't act. Here the actors do the acting. The characters are there, in the "book" [*Pointing towards* PROMPTER's *box.*]—when there is a "book"!

THE FATHER. I won't contradict you; but excuse me, the actors aren't the characters. They want to be, they pretend to be, don't they? Now if these gentlemen here are fortunate enough to have us alive before them . . .

THE MANAGER. Oh this is grand! You want to come before the public yourselves then?

THE FATHER. As we are . . .

THE MANAGER. I can assure you it would be a magnificent spectacle!

LEADING MAN. What's the use of us here anyway then?

THE MANAGER. You're not going to pretend that you can act? It makes me laugh! [*The* ACTORS *laugh.*] There, you see, they are laughing at the notion. But, by the way, I must cast the parts. That won't be difficult. They cast themselves. [*To the* SECOND LADY LEAD.] You play the Mother. [*To the* FATHER.] We must find her a name.

THE FATHER. Amalia, sir.

THE MANAGER. But that is the real name of your wife. We don't want to call her by her real name.

THE FATHER. Why ever not, if it is her name? . . . Still, perhaps, if that lady must . . . [*Makes a slight motion of the hand to indicate the* SECOND LADY LEAD.] I see this woman here [*Means the* MOTHER.] as Amalia. But do as you like. [*Gets more and more confused.*] I don't know what to say to you. Already, I begin to

hear my own words ring false, as if they had another sound . . .

THE MANAGER. Don't you worry about it. It'll be our job to find the right tones. And as for her name, if you want her Amalia, Amalia it shall be; and if you don't like it, we'll find another! For the moment though, we'll call the characters in this way: [*To* JUVENILE LEAD.] You are the Son. [*To the* LEADING LADY.] You naturally are the Step-Daughter . . .

THE STEP-DAUGHTER [*excitedly*]. What? what? I, that woman there? [*Bursts out laughing.*]

THE MANAGER [*angry*]. What is there to laugh at?

LEADING LADY [*indignant*]. Nobody has ever dared to laugh at me. I insist on being treated with respect; otherwise I go away.

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. No, no, excuse me . . . I am not laughing at you . . .

THE MANAGER [*to* STEP-DAUGHTER]. You ought to feel honored to be played by . . .

LEADING LADY [*at once, contemptuously*]. "That woman there" . . .

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. But I wasn't speaking of you, you know. I was speaking of myself—whom I can't see at all in you! That is all. I don't know . . . but . . . you . . . aren't in the least like me . . .

THE FATHER. True. Here's the point. Look here, sir, our temperaments, our souls . . .

THE MANAGER. Temperament, soul, be hanged! Do you suppose the spirit of the piece is in you? Nothing of the kind!

THE FATHER. What, haven't we our own temperaments, our own souls?

THE MANAGER. Not at all. Your soul or whatever you like to call it takes shape here. The actors give body and form to it, voice and gesture. And my actors—I may tell you—have given expression to much more lofty material than this little drama of yours, which may or may not hold up on the stage. But if it does, the merit of it, believe me, will be due to my actors.

THE FATHER. I don't dare contradict you, sir; but believe me, it is a terrible suffering for us who are as we are, with these bodies of ours, these features to see . . .

THE MANAGER [*cutting him short and out of patience*]. Good heavens! The make-up will remedy all that, man, the make-up . . .

THE FATHER. Maybe. But the voice, the gestures . . .

THE MANAGER. Now, look here! On the stage, you as yourself, cannot exist. The actor here acts you, and that's an end to it!

THE FATHER. I understand. And now I think I see why our author who conceived us as we are, all alive, didn't want to put us on the stage after all. I haven't the least desire to offend your actors. Far from it! But when I think that I am to be acted by . . . I don't know by whom . . .

LEADING MAN [*on his dignity*]. By me, if you've no objection!

THE FATHER [*humbly, mellifluously*]. Honored, I assure you, sir. [*Bows.*] Still, I must say that try as this gentleman may, with all his good will and wonderful art, to absorb me into himself . . .

LEADING MAN. Oh chuck it! "Wonderful art!" Withdraw that, please!

THE FATHER. The performance he will give, even doing his best with make-up to look like me . . .

LEADING MAN. It will certainly be a bit difficult! [*The* ACTORS *laugh.*]

THE FATHER. Exactly! It will be difficult to act me as I really am. The effect will be rather—apart from the make-up—according as to how he supposes I am, as he senses me—if he does sense me—and not as I inside of myself feel myself to be. It seems to me then that account should be taken of this by everyone whose duty it may become to criticize us . . .

THE MANAGER. Heavens! The man's starting to think about the critics now! Let them say what they like. It's up to us to put on the play if we can. [*Looking around.*] Come on! come on! Is the stage set? [*To the* ACTORS *and* CHARACTERS.] Stand back—stand back! Let me see, and don't let's lose any more time! [*To the* STEP-DAUGHTER.] Is it all right as it is now?

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. Well, to tell the truth, I don't recognize the scene.

THE MANAGER. My dear lady, you can't possibly suppose that we can construct that shop of Madame Pace piece by piece here? [*To the* Father.] You said a white room with flowered wall paper, didn't you?

THE FATHER. Yes.

THE MANAGER. Well then. We've got the furniture right more or less. Bring that little table a bit further forward. [*The* STAGE HANDS *obey the order. To* PROPERTY MAN.] You go and find an envelope, if possible, a pale blue one; and give it to that gentleman. [*Indicates* FATHER.]

PROPERTY MAN. An ordinary envelope?

MANAGER AND FATHER. Yes, yes, an ordinary envelope.

PROPERTY MAN. At once, sir. [*Exit.*]

THE MANAGER. Ready, everyone! First scene—the Young Lady. [*The* LEADING LADY *comes forward.*] No, no, you must wait. I meant her [*Indicating the* STEP-DAUGHTER.] You just watch—

THE STEP-DAUGHTER [*adding at once*]. How I shall play it, how I shall live it! . . .

LEADING LADY [*offended*]. I shall live it also, you may be sure, as soon as I begin!

THE MANAGER [*with his hands to his head*]. Ladies and gentlemen, if you please! No more useless discussions! Scene I: the young lady

with Madame Pace: Oh! [*Looks around as if lost.*] And this Madame Pace, where is she?

THE FATHER. She isn't with us, sir.

THE MANAGER. Then what the devil's to be done?

THE FATHER. But she is alive too.

THE MANAGER. Yes, but where is she?

THE FATHER. One minute. Let me speak! [*Turning to the* ACTRESSES.] If these ladies would be so good as to give me their hats for a moment . . .

THE ACTRESSES [*half surprised, half laughing, in chorus*]. What? Why?
Our hats?
What does he say?

THE MANAGER. What are you going to do with the ladies' hats? [*The* ACTORS *laugh.*]

THE FATHER. Oh nothing. I just want to put them on these pegs for a moment. And one of the ladies will be so kind as to take off her mantle . . .

THE ACTORS. Oh, what d'you think of that?
Only the mantle?
He must be mad.

SOME ACTRESSES. But why?
Mantles as well?

THE FATHER. To hang them up here for a moment. Please be so kind, will you?

THE ACTRESSES [*taking off their hats, one or two also their cloaks, and going to hang them on the racks*]. After all, why not?
There you are!
This is really funny.
We've got to put them on show.

THE FATHER. Exactly; just like that, on show.

THE MANAGER. May we know why?

THE FATHER. I'll tell you. Who knows if, by arranging the stage for her, she does not come here herself, attracted by the very articles of her trade? [*Inviting the* ACTORS *to look towards the exit at back of stage.*] Look! Look!

[*The door at the back of stage opens and* MADAME PACE *enters and takes a few steps forward. She is a fat, oldish woman with puffy oxygenated hair.*[4] *She is rouged and powdered, dressed with a comical elegance in black silk. Round her waist is a long silver chain from which hangs a pair of scissors. The* STEPDAUGHTER *runs over at once amid the stupor of the actors.*]

4. Bleached.

THE STEP-DAUGHTER [*turning towards her*]. There she is! There she is!

THE FATHER [*radiant*]. It's she! I said so, didn't I? There she is!

THE MANAGER [*conquering his surprise, and then becoming indignant*]. What sort of a trick is this?

LEADING MAN [*almost at the same time*]. What's going to happen next?

JUVENILE LEAD. Where does *she* come from?

L'INGÉNUE. They've been holding her in reserve, I guess.

LEADING LADY. A vulgar trick!

THE FATHER [*dominating the protests*]. Excuse me, all of you! Why are you so anxious to destroy in the name of a vulgar, commonplace sense of truth, this reality which comes to birth attracted and formed by the magic of the stage itself, which has indeed more right to live here than you, since it is much truer than you—if you don't mind my saying so? Which is the actress among you who is to play Madame Pace! Well, here is Madame Pace herself. And you will allow, I fancy, that the actress who acts her will be less true than this woman here, who is herself in person. You see my daughter recognized her and went over to her at once. Now you're going to witness the scene!

[*But the scene between the* STEP-DAUGHTER *and* MADAME PACE *has already begun despite the protest of the actors and the reply of the* FATHER. *It has begun quietly, naturally, in a manner impossible for the stage. So when the actors, called to attention by the* FATHER, *turn round and see* MADAME PACE, *who has placed one hand under the* STEP-DAUGHTER*'s chin to raise her head, they observe her at first with great attention, but hearing her speak in an unintelligible manner their interest begins to wane.*]

THE MANAGER. Well? well?

LEADING MAN. What does she say?

LEADING LADY. One can't hear a word.

JUVENILE LEAD. Louder! Louder please!

THE STEP-DAUGHTER [*leaving* MADAME PACE, *who smiles a Sphinx-like smile, and advancing towards the actors*]. Louder? Louder? What are you talking about? These aren't matters which can be shouted at the top of one's voice. If I have spoken them out loud, it was to shame him and have my revenge. [*Indicates* FATHER.] But for Madame it's quite a different matter.

THE MANAGER. Indeed? indeed? But here, you know, people have got to make themselves heard, my dear. Even we who are on the stage can't hear you. What will it be when the public's in the theatre? And anyway, you can very well speak up now among yourselves, since we shan't be present to listen to you as we are

now. You've got to pretend to be alone in a room at the back of a shop where no one can hear you.

[*The* STEP-DAUGHTER *coquettishly and with a touch of malice makes a sign of disagreement two or three times with her finger.*]

THE MANAGER. What do you mean by no?

THE STEP-DAUGHTER [*sotto voce, mysteriously*]. There's someone who will hear us if she [*Indicating* MADAME PACE.] speaks out loud.

THE MANAGER [*in consternation*]. What? Have you got someone else to spring on us now? [*The* ACTORS *burst out laughing.*]

THE FATHER. No, no sir. She is alluding to me. I've got to be here—there behind that door, in waiting; and Madame Pace knows it. In fact, if you will allow me, I'll go there at once, so I can be quite ready. [*Moves away.*]

THE MANAGER [*stopping him*]. No! Wait! wait! We must observe the conventions of the theatre. Before you are ready . . .

THE STEP-DAUGHTER [*interrupting him*]. No, get on with it at once! I'm just dying, I tell you, to act this scene. If he's ready, I'm more than ready.

THE MANAGER [*shouting*]. But, my dear young lady, first of all, we must have the scene between you and this lady . . . [*Indicates* MADAME PACE.] Do you understand? . . .

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. Good Heavens! She's been telling me what you know already; that mamma's work is badly done again, that the material's ruined; and that if I want her to continue to help us in our misery I must be patient . . .

MADAME PACE [*coming forward with an air of great importance*]. Yes indeed, sir, I no wanta take advantage of her, I no wanta be hard . . .

[*Note.* MADAME PACE *is supposed to talk in a jargon half Italian, half English.*]

THE MANAGER [*alarmed*]. What? What? She talks like that? [*The* ACTORS *burst out laughing again.*]

THE STEP-DAUGHTER [*also laughing*]. Yes yes, that's the way she talks, half English, half Italian! Most comical it is!

MADAME PACE. Itta seem not verra polite gentlemen laugha atta me eef I trya best speaka English.

THE MANAGER. *Diamine!*[5] Of course! Of course! Let her talk like that! Just what we want. Talk just like that, Madame, if you please! The effect will be certain. Exactly what was wanted to put a little comic relief into the crudity of the situation. Of course she talks like that! Magnificent!

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. Magnificent? Certainly! When certain suggestions are made to one in language of that kind, the effect is cer-

5. "Devil take it!"

tain, since it seems almost a joke. One feels inclined to laugh when one hears her talk about an "old signore"[6] "who wanta talka nicely with you." Nice old signore, eh, Madame?

MADAME PACE. Not so old my dear, not so old! And even if you no lika him, he won't make any scandal!

THE MOTHER [*jumping up amid the amazement and consternation of the actors who had not been noticing her.* THEY *move to restrain her*]. You old devil! You murderess!

THE STEP-DAUGHTER [*running over to calm her* MOTHER]. Calm yourself, Mother, calm yourself! Please don't . . .

THE FATHER [*going to her also at the same time*]. Calm yourself! Don't get excited! Sit down now!

THE MOTHER. Well then, take that woman away out of my sight!

THE STEP-DAUGHTER [*to* MANAGER]. It is impossible for my mother to remain here.

THE FATHER [*to* MANAGER]. They can't be here together. And for this reason, you see: that woman there was not with us when we came . . . If they are on together, the whole thing is given away inevitably, as you see.

THE MANAGER. It doesn't matter. This is only a first rough sketch—just to get an idea of the various points of the scene, even confusedly . . . [*Turning to the* MOTHER *and leading her to her chair.*] Come along, my dear lady, sit down now, and let's get on with the scene . . .

[*Meanwhile, the* STEP-DAUGHTER, *coming forward again, turns to* MADAME PACE.]

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. Come on, Madame, come on!

MADAME PACE [*offended*]. No, no, *grazie.*[7] I not do anything witha your mother present.

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. Nonsense! Introduce this "old signore" who wants to talk nicely to me. [*Addressing the* COMPANY *imperiously.*] We've got to do this scene one way or another, haven't we? Come on! [*To* MADAME PACE.] You can go!

MADAME PACE. Ah yes! I go'way! I go'way! Certainly! [*Exits furious.*]

THE STEP-DAUGHTER [*to the* FATHER]. Now you make your entry. No, you needn't go over here. Come here. Let's suppose you've already come in. Like that, yes! I'm here with bowed head, modest like. Come on! Out with your voice! Say "Good morning, Miss" in that peculiar tone, that special tone . . .

THE MANAGER. Excuse me, but are you the Manager, or am I? [*To the* FATHER, *who looks undecided and perplexed.*] Get on with it, man! Go down there to the back of the stage. You needn't go off. Then come right forward here.

6. "Old gentleman." 7. "Thank you."

[*The* FATHER *does as he is told, looking troubled and perplexed at first. But as soon as he begins to move, the reality of the action affects him, and he begins to smile and to be more natural. The* ACTORS *watch intently.*]

THE MANAGER [*sotto voce, quickly to the* PROMPTER *in his box*]. Ready! ready? Get ready to write now.

THE FATHER [*coming forward and speaking in a different tone*]. Good afternoon, Miss!

THE STEP-DAUGHTER [*head bowed down slightly, with restrained disgust*]. Good afternoon!

THE FATHER [*looks under her hat which partly covers her face. Perceiving she is very young, he makes an exclamation, partly of surprise, partly of fear lest he compromise himself in a risky adventure*]. Ah . . . but . . . ah . . . I say . . . this is not the first time that you have come here, is it?

THE STEP-DAUGHTER [*modestly*]. No sir.

THE FATHER. You've been here before, eh? [*Then seeing her nod agreement.*] More than once? [*Waits for her to answer, looks under her hat, smiles, and then says.*] Well then, there's no need to be so shy, is there? May I take off your hat?

THE STEP-DAUGHTER [*anticipating him and with veiled disgust*]. No sir . . . I'll do it myself. [*Takes it off quickly.*]

[*The* MOTHER, *who watches the progress of the scene with The* SON *and the other two children who cling to her, is on thorns; and follows with varying expressions of sorrow, indignation, anxiety, and horror the words and actions of the other two. From time to time* SHE *hides her face in her hands and sobs.*]

THE MOTHER. Oh, my God, my God!

THE FATHER [*playing his part with a touch of gallantry*]. Give it to me! I'll put it down. [*Takes hat from her hands.*] But a dear little head like yours ought to have a smarter hat. Come and help me choose one from the stock, won't you?

L'INGÉNUE [*interrupting*]. I say . . . those are our hats you know.

THE MANAGER [*furious*]. Silence! silence! Don't try and be funny, if you please . . . We're playing the scene now I'd have you notice. [*To the* STEP-DAUGHTER.] Begin again, please!

THE STEP-DAUGHTER [*continuing*]. No thank you, sir.

THE FATHER. Oh, come now. Don't talk like that. You must take it. I shall be upset if you don't. There are some lovely little hats here; and then—Madame will be pleased. She expects it, anyway, you know.

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. No, no! I couldn't wear it!

THE FATHER. Oh, you're thinking about what they'd say at home if they saw you come in with a new hat? My dear girl, there's always a way round these little matters, you know.

THE STEP-DAUGHTER [*all keyed up*]. No, it's not that. I couldn't wear it because I am . . . as you see . . . you might have noticed . . . [*Showing her black dress.*]

THE FATHER. . . . in mourning! Of course: I beg your pardon: I'm frightfully sorry . . .

THE STEP-DAUGHTER [*forcing herself to conquer her indignation and nausea*]. Stop! Stop! It's I who must thank you. There's no need for you to feel mortified or specially sorry. Don't think any more of what I've said. [*Tries to smile.*] I must forget that I am dressed so . . .

THE MANAGER [*interrupting and turning to the* PROMPTER]. Stop a minute! Stop! Don't write that down. Cut out that last bit. [*Then to the* FATHER *and* STEP-DAUGHTER.] Fine! it's going fine! [*To the* FATHER *only.*] And now you can go on as we arranged. [*To the* ACTORS.] Pretty good that scene, where he offers her the hat, eh?

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. The best's coming now. Why can't we go on?

THE MANAGER. Have a little patience! [*To the* ACTORS.] Of course, it must be treated rather lightly.

LEADING MAN. Still, with a bit of go in it!

LEADING LADY. Of course! It's easy enough! [*To* LEADING MAN.] Shall you and I try it now?

LEADING MAN. Why, yes! I'll prepare my entrance. [*Exit in order to make his entrance.*]

THE MANAGER [*to* LEADING LADY]. See here! The scene between you and Madame Pace is finished. I'll have it written out properly after. You remain here . . . oh, where are you going?

LEADING LADY. One minute. I want to put my hat on again. [*Goes to hat-rack and puts her hat on her head.*]

THE MANAGER. Good! You stay here with your head bowed down a bit.

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. But she isn't dressed in black.

LEADING LADY. But I shall be, and much more effectively than you.

THE MANAGER [*to* STEP-DAUGHTER]. Be quiet please, and watch! You'll be able to learn something. [*Clapping his hands.*] Come on! come on! Entrance, please!

[*The door at rear of stage opens, and the* LEADING MAN *enters with the lively manner of an old gallant. The rendering of the scene by the* ACTORS *from the very first words is seen to be quite a different thing, though it has not in any way the air of a parody. Naturally, the* STEP-DAUGHTER *and the* FATHER, *not being able to recognize themselves in the* LEADING LADY *and the* LEADING MAN, *who deliver their words in different tones and with a different psychology, express, sometimes with smiles, sometimes with gestures, the impression they receive.*]

LEADING MAN. Good afternoon, Miss . . .

THE FATHER [*at once unable to contain himself*]. No! no!

[*The* STEP-DAUGHTER *noticing the way the* LEADING MAN *enters, bursts out laughing.*]

THE MANAGER [*furious*]. Silence! And you please just stop that laughing. If we go on like this, we shall never finish.

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. Forgive me, sir, but it's natural enough. This lady [*Indicating* LEADING LADY.] stands there still; but if she is supposed to be me, I can assure you that if I heard anyone say "Good afternoon" in that manner and in that tone, I should burst out laughing as I did.

THE FATHER. Yes, yes, the manner, the tone . . .

THE MANAGER. Nonsense! Rubbish! Stand aside and let me see the action.

LEADING MAN. If I've got to represent an old fellow who's coming into a house of an equivocal character . . .

THE MANAGER. Don't listen to them, for Heaven's sake! Do it again! It goes fine. [*Waiting for the* ACTORS *to begin again.*] Well?

LEADING MAN. Good afternoon, Miss.

LEADING LADY. Good afternoon.

LEADING MAN [*imitating the gesture of the* FATHER *when he looked under the hat, and then expressing quite clearly first satisfaction and then fear*]. Ah, but . . . I say . . . this is not the first time that you have come here, is it?

THE MANAGER. Good, but not quite so heavily. Like this. [*Acts himself.*] "This isn't the first time that you have come here" . . . [*To* LEADING LADY.] And you say: "No, sir."

LEADING LADY. No, sir.

LEADING MAN. You've been here before, more than once.

THE MANAGER. No, no, stop! Let her nod "yes" first. "You've been here before, eh?" [*The* LEADING LADY *lifts up her head slightly and closes her eyes as though in disgust. Then* SHE *inclines her head twice.*]

THE STEP-DAUGHTER [*unable to contain herself*]. Oh my God! [*Puts a hand to her mouth to prevent herself from laughing.*]

THE MANAGER [*turning round*]. What's the matter?

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. Nothing, nothing!

THE MANAGER [*to* LEADING MAN]. Go on!

LEADING MAN. You've been here before, eh? Well then, there's no need to be so shy, is there? May I take off your hat?

[*The* LEADING MAN *says this last speech in such a tone and with such gestures that the* STEP-DAUGHTER, *though she has her hand to her mouth, cannot keep from laughing.*]

LEADING LADY [*indignant*]. I'm not going to stop here to be made a fool of by that woman there.

LEADING MAN. Neither am I! I'm through with it!

THE MANAGER [*shouting to* STEP-DAUGHTER]. Silence! for once and all, I tell you!

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. Forgive me! forgive me!

THE MANAGER. You haven't any manners: that's what it is! You go too far.

THE FATHER [*endeavouring to intervene*]. Yes, it's true, but excuse her . . .

THE MANAGER. Excuse what? It's absolutely disgusting.

THE FATHER. Yes, sir, but believe me, it has such a strange effect when . . .

THE MANAGER. Strange? Why strange? Where is it strange?

THE FATHER. No, sir; I admire your actors—this gentleman here, this lady; but they are certainly not us!

THE MANAGER. I should hope not. Evidently they cannot be you, if they are actors.

THE FATHER. Just so: actors! Both of them act our parts exceedingly well. But, believe me, it produces quite a different effect on us. They want to be us, but they aren't, all the same.

THE MANAGER. What is it then anyway?

THE FATHER. Something that is . . . that is theirs—and no longer ours . . .

THE MANAGER. But naturally, inevitably. I've told you so already.

THE FATHER. Yes, I understand . . . I understand . . .

THE MANAGER. Well then, let's have no more of it! —*Turning to the* ACTORS.] We'll have the rehearsals by ourselves, afterwards, in the ordinary way. I never could stand rehearsing with the author present. He's never satisfied! [*Turning to* FATHER *and* STEP-DAUGHTER.] Come on! Let's get on with it again; and try and see if you can't keep from laughing.

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. Oh, I shan't laugh any more. There's a nice little bit coming for me now: you'll see.

THE MANAGER. Well then: when she says "Don't think any more of what I've said. I must forget, etc.," you [*Adressing the* FATHER.] come in sharp with "I understand, I understand"; and then you ask her . . .

THE STEP-DAUGHTER [*interrupting*]. What?

THE MANAGER. Why she is in mourning.

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. Not at all! See here: when I told him that it was useless for me to be thinking about my wearing mourning, do you know how he answered me? "Ah well," he said, "then let's take off this little frock."

THE MANAGER. Great! Just what we want, to make a riot in the theatre!

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. But it's the truth!

THE MANAGER. What does that matter? Acting is our business here.

Truth up to a certain point, but no further.

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. What do you want to do then?

THE MANAGER. You'll see, you'll see! Leave it to me.

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. No sir! What you want to do is to piece together a little romantic sentimental scene out of my disgust, out of all the reasons, each more cruel and viler than the other, why I am what I am. He is to ask me why I'm in mourning; and I'm to answer with tears in my eyes, that it is just two months since papa died. No sir, no! He's got to say to me; as he did say: "Well, let's take off this little dress at once." And I; with my two months' mourning in my heart, went there behind that screen, and with these fingers tingling with shame . . .

THE MANAGER [*running his hands through his hair*]. For Heaven's sake! What are you saying?

THE STEP-DAUGHTER [*crying out excitedly*]. The truth! The truth!

THE MANAGER. It may be. I don't deny it, and I can understand all your horror; but you must surely see that you can't have this kind of thing on the stage. It won't go.

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. Not possible, eh? Very well! I'm much obliged to you—but I'm off!

THE MANAGER. Now be reasonable! Don't lose your temper!

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. I won't stop here! I won't! I can see you've fixed it all up with him in your office. All this talk about what is possible for the stage . . . I understand! He wants to get at his complicated "cerebral drama," to have his famous remorses and torments acted; but I want to act my part, *my part!*

THE MANAGER [*annoyed, shaking his shoulders*]. Ah! Just *your* part! But, if you will pardon me, there are other parts than yours: His [*Indicating the* FATHER.] and hers! [*Indicating the* MOTHER.] On the stage you can't have a character becoming too prominent and overshadowing all the others. The thing is to pack them all into a neat little framework and then act what is actable. I am aware of the fact that everyone has his own interior life which he wants very much to put forward. But the difficulty lies in this fact: to set out just so much as is necessary for the stage, taking the other characters into consideration, and at the same time hint at the unrevealed interior life of each. I am willing to admit, my dear young lady, that from your point of view it would be a fine idea if each character could tell the public all his troubles in a nice monologue or a regular one-hour lecture. [*Good-humoredly.*] You must restrain yourself, my dear, and in your own interest, too; because this fury of yours, this exaggerated disgust you show, may make a bad impression, you know. After you have confessed to me that there were others before him at Madame Pace's and more than once . . .

THE STEP-DAUGHTER [*bowing her head, impressed*]. It's true. But remember those others mean him for me all the same.

THE MANAGER [*not understanding*]. What? The others? What do you mean?

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. For one who has gone wrong, sir, he who was responsible for the first fault is responsible for all that follow. He is responsible for my faults, was, even before I was born. Look at him, and see if it isn't true!

THE MANAGER. Well, well! And does the weight of so much responsibility seem nothing to you? Give him a chance to act it, to get it over!

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. How? How can he act all his "noble remorses," all his "moral torments," if you want to spare him the horror of being discovered one day—after he had asked her what he did ask her—in the arms of her, that already fallen woman, that child, sir, that child he used to watch come out of school? [SHE *is moved.*]

[*The* MOTHER *at this point is overcome with emotion, and breaks out into a fit of crying.* ALL *are touched. A long pause.*]

THE STEP-DAUGHTER [*as soon as the* MOTHER *becomes a little quieter, adds resolutely and gravely*]. At present, we are unknown to the public. Tomorrow, you will act us as you wish, treating us in your own manner. But do you really want to see drama, do you want to see it flash out as it really did?

THE MANAGER. Of course! That's just what I do want, so I can use as much of it as is possible.

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. Well then, ask that Mother there to leave us.

THE MOTHER [*changing her low plaint into a sharp cry*]. No! No! Don't permit it, sir, don't permit it!

THE MANAGER. But it's only to try it.

THE MOTHER. I can't bear it. I can't.

THE MANAGER. But since it has happened already . . . I don't understand!

THE MOTHER. It's taking place now. It happens all the time. My torment isn't a pretended one. I live and feel every minute of my torture. Those two children there—have you heard them speak? They can't speak any more. They cling to me to keep up my torment actual and vivid for me. But for themselves, they do not exist, they aren't any more. And she [*Indicating the* STEP-DAUGHTER.] has run away, she has left me, and is lost. If I now see her here before me, it is only to renew for me the tortures I have suffered for her too.

THE FATHER. The eternal moment! She [*Indicating the* STEP-DAUGHTER.] is here to catch me, fix me, and hold me eternally in the stocks for that one fleeting and shameful moment of my life. She can't give it up! And you sir, cannot either fairly spare me it.

THE MANAGER. I never said I didn't want to act it. It will form, as a matter of fact, the nucleus of the whole first act right up to her surprise. [*Indicates the* MOTHER.]

THE FATHER. Just so! This is my punishment: the passion in all of us that must culminate in her final cry.

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. I can hear it still in my ears. It's driven me mad, that cry!—You can put me on as you like; it doesn't matter. Fully dressed, if you like—provided I have at least the arm bare; because, standing like this [*She goes close to the* FATHER *and leans her head on his breast.*] with my head so, and my arms round his neck, I saw a vein pulsing in my arm here; and then, as if that live vein had awakened disgust in me, I closed my eyes like this, and let my head sink on his breast. [*Turning to the* MOTHER.] Cry out mother! Cry out! [*Buries head in* FATHER's *breast, and with her shoulders raised as if to prevent her hearing the cry, adds in tones of intense emotion.*] Cry out as you did then!

THE MOTHER [*coming forward to separate them*]. No! My daughter, my daughter! [*And after having pulled her away from him.*] You brute! you brute! She is my daughter! Don't you see she's my daughter?

THE MANAGER [*walking backwards towards footlights*]. Fine! fine! Damned good! And then, of course—curtain!

THE FATHER [*going towards him excitedly*]. Yes, of course, because that's the way it really happened.

THE MANAGER [*convinced and pleased*]. Oh, yes, no doubt about it. Curtain here, curtain!

[*At the reiterated cry of the* MANAGER, *the* MACHINIST *lets the curtain down, leaving the* MANAGER *and the* FATHER *in front of it before the footlights.*]

THE MANAGER. The darned idiot! I said "curtain" to show the act should end there, and he goes and lets it down in earnest. [*To the* FATHER, *while he pulls the curtain back to go on to the stage again.*] Yes, yes, it's all right. Effect certain! That's the right ending. I'll guarantee the first act at any rate.

ACT III

When the curtain goes up again, it is seen that the stage hands have shifted the bit of scenery used in the last part, and have rigged up instead at the back of the stage a drop, with some trees, and one or two wings. A portion of a fountain basin is visible. The MOTHER *is sitting on the right with the two children by her side. The* SON *is on the same side, but away from the others. He seems bored, angry, and full of shame. The* FATHER *and the* STEP-DAUGHTER *are also seated towards the right front. On the other side (left) are the* ACTORS,

much in the positions they occupied before the curtain was lowered. Only the MANAGER *is standing up in the middle of the stage, with his hand closed over his mouth in the act of meditating.*

THE MANAGER [*shaking his shoulders after a brief pause*]. Ah yes: the second act! Leave it to me, leave it all to me as we arranged, and you'll see! It'll go fine!

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. Our entry into his house [*Indicates* FATHER.] in spite of him . . . [*Indicates the* SON.]

THE MANAGER [*out of patience*]. Leave it to me, I tell you!

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. Do let it be clear, at any rate, that it is in spite of my wishes.

THE MOTHER [*from her corner, shaking her head*]. For all the good that's come of it . . .

THE STEP-DAUGHTER [*turning towards her quickly*]. It doesn't matter. The more harm done us, the more remorse for him.

THE MANAGER [*impatiently*]. I understand! Good Heavens! I understand! I'm taking it into account.

THE MOTHER [*supplicatingly*]. I beg you, sir, to let it appear quite plain that for conscience' sake I did try in every way . . .

THE STEP-DAUGHTER [*interrupting indignantly and continuing for the* MOTHER]. . . . to pacify me, to dissuade me from spiting him. [*To* MANAGER.] Do as she wants: satisfy her, because it is true! I enjoy it immensely. Anyhow, as you can see, the meeker she is, the more she tries to get at his heart, the more distant and aloof does he become.

THE MANAGER. Are we going to begin this second act or not?

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. I'm not going to talk any more now. But I must tell you this: you can't have the whole action take place in the garden, as you suggest. It isn't possible!

THE MANAGER. Why not?

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. Because he [*Indicates the* SON *again.*] is always shut up alone in his room. And then there's all the part of that poor dazed-looking boy there which takes place indoors.

THE MANAGER. Maybe! On the other hand, you will understand—we can't change scenes three or four times in one act.

THE LEADING MAN. They used to once.

THE MANAGER. Yes, when the public was up to the level of that child there.

THE LEADING LADY. It makes the illusion easier.

THE FATHER [*irritated*]. The illusion! For Heaven's sake, don't say illusion. Please don't use that word, which is particularly painful for us.

THE MANAGER [*astounded*]. And why, if you please?

THE FATHER. It's painful, cruel, really cruel; and you ought to understand that.

THE MANAGER. But why? What ought we to say then? The illusion, I tell you, sir, which we've got to create for the audience . . .

THE LEADING MAN. With our acting.

THE MANAGER. The illusion of a reality.

THE FATHER. I understand; but you, perhaps, do not understand us. Forgive me! You see . . . here for you and your actors, the thing is only—and rightly so . . . a kind of game . . .

THE LEADING LADY [*interrupting indignantly*]. A game! We're not children here, if you please! We are serious actors.

THE FATHER. I don't deny it. What I mean is the game, or play, of your art, which has to give, as the gentleman says, a perfect illusion of reality.

THE MANAGER. Precisely—!

THE FATHER. Now, if you consider the fact that we [*Indicates himself and the other five* CHARACTERS.], as we are, have no other reality outside of this illusion . . .

THE MANAGER [*astonished, looking at his* ACTORS, *who are also amazed*]. And what does that mean?

THE FATHER [*after watching them for a moment with a wan smile*]. As I say, sir, that which is a game of art for you is our sole reality. [*Brief pause. He goes a step or two nearer the* MANAGER *and adds.*] But not only for us, you know, by the way. Just you think it over well. [*Looks him in the eyes.*] Can you tell me who you are?

THE MANAGER [*perplexed, half smiling*]. What? Who am I? I am myself.

THE FATHER. And if I were to tell you that that isn't true, because you and I . . . ?

THE MANAGER. I should say you were mad—! [*The* ACTORS *laugh.*]

THE FATHER. You're quite right to laugh: because we are all making believe here. [*To* MANAGER.] And you can therefore object that it's only for a joke that that gentleman there [*Indicates the* LEADING MAN.], who naturally is himself, has to be me, who am on the contrary myself—this thing you see here. You see I've caught you in a trap! [*The* ACTORS *laugh.*]

THE MANAGER [*annoyed*]. But we've had all this over once before. Do you want to begin again?

THE FATHER. No, no! That wasn't my meaning! In fact, I should like to request you to abandon this game of art [*Looking at the* LEADING LADY *as if anticipating her.*] which you are accustomed to play here with your actors, and to ask you seriously once again: who are you?

THE MANAGER [*astonished and irritated, turning to his* ACTORS]. If this fellow here hasn't got a nerve! A man who calls himself a character comes and asks me who I am!

THE FATHER [*with dignity, but not offended*]. A character, sir, may

always ask a man who he is. Because a character has really a life of his own, marked with his especial characteristics; for which reason he is always "somebody." But a man—I'm not speaking of you now—may very well be "nobody."

THE MANAGER. Yes, but you are asking these questions of me, the boss, the manager! Do you understand?

THE FATHER. But only in order to know if you, as you really are now, see yourself as you once were with all the illusions that were yours then, with all the things both inside and outside of you as they seemed to you—as they were then indeed for you. Well, sir, if you think of all those illusions that mean nothing to you now, of all those things which don't even *seem* to you to exist any more, while once they *were* for you, don't you feel that—I won't say these boards—but the very earth under your feet is sinking away from you when you reflect that in the same way this *you* as you feel it today—all this present reality of yours—is fated to seem a mere illusion to you tomorrow?

THE MANAGER [*without having understood much, but astonished by the specious argument*]. Well, well! And where does all this take us anyway?

THE FATHER. Oh, nowhere! It's only to show you that if we [*Indicating the* CHARACTERS.] have no other reality beyond the illusion, you too must not count overmuch on your reality as you feel it today, since, like that of yesterday, it may prove an illusion for you tomorrow.

THE MANAGER [*determining to make fun of him*]. Ah, excellent! Then you'll be saying next that you, with this comedy of yours that you brought here to act, are truer and more real than I am.

THE FATHER [*with the greatest seriousness*]. But of course; without doubt!

THE MANAGER. Ah, really?

THE FATHER. Why, I thought you'd understand that from the beginning.

THE MANAGER. More real than I?

THE FATHER. If your reality can change from one day to another . . .

THE MANAGER. But everyone knows it can change. It is always changing, the same as anyone else's.

THE FATHER [*with a cry*]. No, sir, not ours! Look here! That is the very difference! Our reality doesn't change: it can't change! It can't be other than what it is, because it is already fixed for ever. It's terrible. Ours is an immutable reality which should make you shudder when you approach us if you are really conscious of the fact that your reality is a mere transitory and fleeting illusion, taking this form today and that tomorrow, according to the conditions, according to your will, your sentiments, which in turn are

controlled by an intellect that shows them to you today in one manner and tomorrow . . . who knows how? . . . Illusions of reality represented in this fatuous comedy of life that never ends, nor can ever end! Because if tomorrow it were to end . . . then why, all would be finished.

THE MANAGER. Oh for God's sake, will you *at least* finish with this philosophizing and let us try and shape this comedy which you yourself have brought me here? You argue and philosophize a bit too much, my dear sir. You know you seem to me almost, almost . . . [*Stops and looks him over from head to foot.*] Ah, by the way, I think you introduced yourself to me as a—what shall . . . we say—a "character," created by an author who did not afterward care to make a drama of his own creations.

THE FATHER. It is the simple truth, sir.

THE MANAGER. Nonsense! Cut that out, please! None of us believes it, because it isn't a thing, as you must recognize yourself, which one can believe seriously. If you want to know, it seems to me you are trying to imitate the manner of a certain author whom I heartily detest—I warn you—although I have unfortunately bound myself to put on one of his works. As a matter of fact, I was just starting to rehearse it, when you arrived. [*Turning to the* ACTORS.] And this is what we've gained—out of the frying-pan into the fire!

THE FATHER. I don't know to what author you may be alluding, but believe me I feel what I think; and I seem to be philosophizing only for those who do not think what they feel, because they blind themselves with their own sentiment. I know that for many people this self-blinding seems much more "human"; but the contrary is really true. For man never reasons so much and becomes so introspective as when he suffers; since he is anxious to get at the cause of his sufferings, to learn who has produced them, and whether it is just or unjust that he should have to bear them. On the other hand, when he is happy, he takes his happiness as it comes and doesn't analyze it, just as if happiness were his right. The animals suffer without reasoning about their sufferings. But take the case of a man who suffers and begins to reason about it. Oh no! it can't be allowed! Let him suffer like an animal, and then—ah yet, he is "human"!

THE MANAGER. Look here! Look here! You're off again, philosophizing worse than ever.

THE FATHER. Because I suffer, sir! I'm not philosophizing: I'm crying aloud the reason of my sufferings.

THE MANAGER [*makes brusque movement as he is taken with a new idea*]. I should like to know if anyone has ever heard of a character who gets right out of his part and perorates and speechifies as you do. Have you ever heard of a case? I haven't.

THE FATHER. You have never met such a case, sir, because authors, as a rule, hide the labour of their creations. When the characters are really alive before their author, the latter does nothing but follow them in their action, in their words, in the situations which they suggest to him; and he has to will them the way they will themselves—for there's trouble if he doesn't. When a character is born, he acquires at once such an independence, even of his own author, that he can be imagined by everybody even in many other situations where the author never dreamed of placing him; and so he acquires for himself a meaning which the author never thought of giving him.

THE MANAGER. Yes, yes, I know this.

THE FATHER. What is there then to marvel at in us? Imagine such a misfortune for characters as I have described to you: to be born of an author's fantasy, and be denied life by him; and then answer me if these characters left alive, and yet without life, weren't right in doing what they did do and are doing now, after they have attempted everything in their power to persuade him to give them their stage life. We've all tried him in turn, I, she [*Indicating the* STEP-DAUGHTER.] and she. [*Indicating the* MOTHER.]

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. It's true. I too have sought to tempt him, many, many times, when he has been sitting at his writing table, feeling a bit melancholy, at the twilight hour. He would sit in his armchair too lazy to switch on the light, and all the shadows that crept into his room were full of our presence coming to tempt him. [*As if she saw herself still there by the writing table, and was annoyed by the presence of the* ACTORS.] Oh, if you would only go away, go away and leave us alone—mother here with that son of hers—I with that Child—that Boy there always alone—and then I with him [*Just hints at the* FATHER.]—and then I alone, alone . . . in those shadows! [*Makes a sudden movement as if in the vision she has of herself illuminating those shadows she wanted to seize hold of herself.*] Ah! my life! my life! Oh, what scenes we proposed to him—and I tempted him more than any of the others!

THE FATHER. Maybe. But perhaps it was your fault that he refused to give us life: because you were too insistent, too troublesome.

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. Nonsense! Didn't he make me so himself? [*Goes close to the* MANAGER *to tell him as if in confidence.*] In my opinion he abandoned us in a fit of depression, of disgust for the ordinary theatre as the public knows it and likes it.

THE SON. Exactly what it was, sir; exactly that!

THE FATHER. Not at all! Don't believe it for a minute. Listen to me! You'll be doing quite right to modify, as you suggest, the excesses both of this girl here, who wants to do too much, and of this young man, who won't do anything at all.

THE SON. No, nothing!

THE MANAGER. You too get over the mark occasionally, my dear sir, if I may say so.

THE FATHER. I? When? Where?

THE MANAGER. Always! Continuously! Then there's this insistence of yours in trying to make us believe you are a character. And then too, you must really argue and philosophize less, you know, much less.

THE FATHER. Well, if you want to take away from me the possibility of representing the torment of my spirit which never gives me peace, you will be suppressing me: that's all. Every true man, sir, who is a little above the level of the beasts and plants does not live for the sake of living, without knowing how to live; but he lives so as to give a meaning and a value of his own to life. For me this is *everything.* I cannot give up this, just to represent a mere fact as she [*Indicating the* STEP-DAUGHTER.] wants. It's all very well for her, since her "vendetta" lies in the "fact." I'm not going to do it. It destroys my *raison d'être.*

THE MANAGER. Your *raison d'être!* Oh, we're going ahead fine! First she starts off, and then you jump in. At this rate, we'll never finish.

THE FATHER. Now, don't be offended! Have it your own way—provided, however, that within the limits of the parts you assign us each one's sacrifice isn't too great.

THE MANAGER. You've got to understand that you can't go on arguing at your own pleasure. Drama is action, sir, action and not confounded philosophy.

THE FATHER. All right. I'll do just as much arguing and philosophizing as everybody does when he is considering his own torments.

THE MANAGER. If the drama permits! But for Heaven's sake, man, let's get along and come to the scene.

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. It seems to me we've got too much action with our coming into his house. [*Indicating* FATHER.] You said, before, you couldn't change the scene every five minutes.

THE MANAGER. Of course not. What we've got to do is to combine and group up all the facts in one simultaneous, close-knit action. We can't have it as you want, with your little brother wandering like a ghost from room to room, hiding behind doors and meditating a project which—what did you say it did to him?

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. Consumes him, sir, wastes him away!

THE MANAGER. Well, it may be. And then at the same time, you want the little girl there to be playing in the garden . . . one in the house, and the other in the garden: isn't that it?

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. Yes, in the sun, in the sun! That is my only pleasure: to see her happy and careless in the garden after the misery and squalor of the horrible room where we all four slept together. And I had to sleep with her—I, do you understand?—

with my vile contaminated body next to hers; with her folding me fast in her loving little arms. In the garden, whenever she spied me, she would run to take me by the hand. She didn't care for the big flowers, only the little ones; and she loved to show me them and pet me.

THE MANAGER. Well then, we'll have it in the garden. Everything shall happen in the garden; and we'll group the other scenes there. [*Calls a* STAGE HAND.] Here, a backcloth with trees and something to do as a fountain basin. [*Turning round to look at the back of the stage.*] Ah, you've fixed it up. Good! [*To* STEP-DAUGHTER.] This is just to give an idea, of course. The Boy, instead of hiding behind the doors, will wander about here in the garden, hiding behind the trees. But it's going to be rather difficult to find a child to do that scene with you where she shows you the flowers. [*Turning to the* BOY.] Come forward a little, will you please? Let's try it now! Come along! come along! [*Then seeing him come shyly forward, full of fear and looking lost.*] It's a nice business, this lad here. What's the matter with him? We'll have to give him a word or two to say. [*Goes close to him, puts a hand on his shoulders, and leads him behind one of the trees.*] Come on! come on! Let me see you a little! Hide here . . . yes, like that. Try and show your head just a little as if you were looking for someone . . . [*Goes back to observe the effect, when the* BOY *at once goes through the action.*] Excellent! fine! [*Turning to* STEP-DAUGHTER.] Suppose the little girl there were to surprise him as he looks round, and run over to him, so we could give him a word or two to say?

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. It's useless to hope he will speak, as long as that fellow there is here . . . [*Indicates the* SON.] You must send him away first.

THE SON [*jumping up*]. Delighted! Delighted! I don't ask for anything better. [*Begins to move away.*]

THE MANAGER [*at once stopping him*]. No! No! Where are you going? Wait a bit!

[*The* MOTHER *gets up alarmed and terrified at the thought that he is really about to go away. Instinctively she lifts her arms to prevent him, without, however, leaving her seat.*]

THE SON [*to* MANAGER *who stops him*]. I've got nothing to do with this affair. Let me go please! Let me go!

THE MANAGER. What do you mean by saying you've got nothing to do with this?

THE STEP-DAUGHTER [*calmly, with irony*]. Don't bother to stop him: he won't go away.

THE FATHER. He has to act the terrible scene in the garden with his mother.

THE SON [*suddenly resolute and with dignity*]. I shall act nothing at

all. I've said so from the very beginning. [*To the* MANAGER.] Let me go!

THE STEP-DAUGHTER [*going over to the* MANAGER]. Allow me? [*Puts down the* MANAGER's *arm which is restraining the* SON.] Well, go away then, if you want to! [*The* SON *looks at her with contempt and hatred. She laughs and says.*] You see, he can't, he can't go away! He is obliged to stay here, indissolubly bound to the chain. If I, who fly off when that happens which has to happen, because I can't bear him—if I am still here and support that face and expression of his, you can well imagine that he is unable to move. He has to remain here, has to stop with that nice father of his, and that mother whose only son he is. [*Turning to the* MOTHER.] Come on, mother, come along! [*Turning to* MANAGER *to indicate her.*] You see, she was getting up to keep him back. [*To the* MOTHER, *beckoning her with her hand.*] Come on! come on! [*Then to* MANAGER]. You can imagine how little she wants to show these actors of yours what she really feels; but so eager is she to get near him that . . . There, you see? She is willing to act her part. [*And in fact, the* MOTHER *approaches him; and as soon as the* STEP-DAUGHTER *has finished speaking, opens her arms to signify that she consents.*]

THE SON [*suddenly*]. No! no! If I can't go away, then I'll stop here; but I repeat: I act nothing!

THE FATHER [*to* MANAGER *excitedly*]. You can force him, sir.

THE SON. Nobody can force me.

THE FATHER. I can.

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. Wait a minute, wait . . . First of all, the baby has to go to the fountain . . . [*Runs to take the* CHILD *and leads her to the fountain.*]

THE MANAGER. Yes, yes of course; that's it. Both at the same time. [*The second* LADY LEAD *and the* JUVENILE LEAD *at this point separate themselves from the group of* ACTORS. *One watches the* MOTHER *attentively; the other moves about studying the movements and manner of the* SON *whom he will have to act.*]

THE SON [*to* MANAGER]. What do you mean by both at the same time? It isn't right. There was no scene between me and her. [*Indicates the* MOTHER.] Ask her how it was!

THE MOTHER. Yes, it's true. I had come into his room . . .

THE SON. Into my room, do you understand? Nothing to do with the garden.

THE MANAGER. It doesn't matter. Haven't I told you we've got to group the action?

THE SON [*observing the* JUVENILE LEAD *studying him*]. What do you want?

THE JUVENILE LEAD. Nothing! I was just looking at you.

THE SON [*turning towards the second* LADY LEAD]. Ah! she's at it too:

to re-act her part! [*Indicating the* MOTHER.]

THE MANAGER. Exactly! And it seems to me that you ought to be grateful to them for their interest.

THE SON. Yes, but haven't you yet perceived that it isn't possible to live in front of a mirror which not only freezes us with the image of ourselves, but throws our likeness back at us with a horrible grimace?

THE FATHER. That is true, absolutely true. You must see that.

THE MANAGER [*to second* LADY LEAD *and* JUVENILE LEAD]. He's right! Move away from them!

THE SON. Do as you like. I'm out of this!

THE MANAGER. Be quiet, you, will you? And let me hear your mother! [*To* MOTHER.] You were saying you had entered . . .

THE MOTHER. Yes, into his room, because I couldn't stand it any longer. I went to empty my heart to him of all the anguish that tortures me . . . But as soon as he saw me come in . . .

THE SON. Nothing happened! There was no scene. I went away, that's all! I don't care for scenes!

THE MOTHER. It's true, true. That's how it was.

THE MANAGER. Well now, we've got to do this bit between you and him. It's indispensable.

THE MOTHER. I'm ready . . . when you are ready. If you could only find a chance for me to tell him what I feel here in my heart.

THE FATHER [*going to* SON *in a great rage*]. You'll do this for your mother, for your mother, do you understand?

THE SON [*quite determined*]. I do nothing!

THE FATHER [*taking hold of him and shaking him*]. For God's sake, do as I tell you! Don't you hear your mother asking you for a favor? Haven't you even got the guts to be a son?

THE SON [*taking hold of the* FATHER]. No! No! And for God's sake stop it, or else . . . [*General agitation. The* MOTHER, *frightened, tries to separate them.*]

THE MOTHER [*pleading*]. Please! please!

THE FATHER [*not leaving hold of the* SON]. You've got to obey, do you hear?

THE SON [*almost crying from rage*]. What does it mean, this madness you've got? [*They separate.*] Have you no decency, that you insist on showing everyone our shame? I won't do it! I won't! And I stand for the will of our author in this. He didn't want to put us on the stage, after all!

THE MANAGER. Man alive! You came here . . .

THE SON [*indicating* FATHER]. *He* did! I didn't!

THE MANAGER. Aren't you here now?

THE SON. It was his wish, and he dragged us along with him. He's told you not only the things that did happen, but also things that have never happened at all.

THE MANAGER. Well, tell me then what did happen. You went out of your room without saying a word?

THE SON. Without a word, so as to avoid a scene!

THE MANAGER. And then what did you do?

THE SON. Nothing . . . walking in the garden . . . [*Hesitates for a moment with expression of gloom.*]

THE MANAGER [*coming closer to him, interested by his extraordinary reserve*]. Well, well . . . walking in the garden . . .

THE SON [*exasperated*]. Why on earth do you insist? It's horrible! [*The* MOTHER *trembles, sobs, and looks towards the fountain.*]

THE MANAGER [*slowly observing the glance and turning towards the* SON *with increasing apprehension*]. The baby?

THE SON. There in the fountain . . .

THE FATHER [*pointing with tender pity to the* MOTHER]. She was following him at the moment . . .

THE MANAGER [*to the* SON *anxiously*]. And then you . . .

THE SON. I ran over to her; I was jumping in to drag her out when I saw something that froze my blood . . . the boy standing stock still, with eyes like a madman's, watching his little drowned sister, in the fountain! [*The* STEP-DAUGHTER *bends over the fountain to hide the* CHILD. *She sobs.*] Then . . . [*A revolver shot rings out behind the trees where the* BOY *is hidden.*]

THE MOTHER [*with a cry of terror runs over in that direction together with several of the* ACTORS *amid general confusion*]. My son! My son! [*Then amid the cries and exclamations one hears her voice.*] Help! Help!

THE MANAGER [*pushing the* ACTORS *aside while* THEY *lift up the* BOY *and carry him off.*] Is he really wounded?

SOME ACTORS. He's dead! dead!

OTHER ACTORS. No, no, it's only make believe, it's only pretence!

THE FATHER [*with a terrible cry*]. Pretence? Reality, sir, reality!

THE MANAGER. Pretence? Reality? To hell with it all! Never in my life has such a thing happened to me. I've lost a whole day over these people, a whole day!

Curtain.

MARCEL PROUST

1871–1922

Proust's influence in twentieth-century letters is unequalled by any other writer. His massive novel sequence, *Remembrance of Things Past* (*À la recherche du temps perdu*), broke from nineteenth-century tradition to provide the example of a new kind of characterization and narrative line, a

monumentally complex and precisely coordinated aesthetic structure, and a concept of the individual's cumulatively created profound identity—much of it buried in the experience of our senses—that has influenced writers everywhere modern Western literature is known. All of these innovations refer to an exploration of time in terms that parallel the influential work of Proust's contemporary, the philosopher Henri Bergson, with its emphasis on experience as duration, or *lived* time (rather than the artificial measurements of clock or calendar), and the importance of intuitive knowledge. Proust's plot refuses the immediate sense of direction given by traditional nineteenth-century novels: it acquires purpose gradually, through the relationship of different themes, and its collective intent appears only at the end when Marcel's suddenly catalyzed memory grasps the relationship of all parts. Characters are not sketched in fully from the beginning but are revealed piece by piece, evolving inside the different perspectives of individual chapters: even the protagonist is not fully outlined before the end. Proust's novel is a monumental construction coordinated down to its smallest parts not by the development of traditional novel form but by a new structural vision; it suggested the availability of intuitive or nonrational elements as organizational principles in an example that continues to be a reference point for twentieth-century writers.

Marcel Proust was born on July 10, 1871, the older of two sons in a wealthy middle-class Parisian family. His father was a well-known doctor and professor of medicine, a Catholic from a small town outside Paris. His mother, a sensitive, scrupulous, and highly educated woman to whom Marcel was devoted, came from an urban Jewish family. Proust fell ill with severe asthma when he was nine, and thereafter spent his childhood holidays at a seaside resort in Normandy that became the fictional model for Balbec. In spite of his illness, which limited what he could do, he graduated with honors from the Lycée Condorcet in Paris in 1889 and did a year's military service at Orléans (the fictional Doncières). As a student, Proust had met many young writers and composers, and he began to frequent the salons of the wealthy bourgeoisie and the aristocracy of the Faubourg Saint Germain (an elegant area of Paris), from which he drew much of the material for his portraits of society. He wrote for symbolist magazines like *Le Banquet* and *La Revue blanche*, published a collection of essays, poems, and stories in an elegant book, *Pleasures and Days* (1896), with drawings by Madeleine Lemaire and music by Reynaldo Hahn. In 1899 (with his mother's help since he knew no English), he began to translate the English moralist and art critic, John Ruskin.

Proust is known as the author of one work: the enormous, fifteen-volume exploration of time and consciousness called *Remembrance of Things Past*. As early as 1895, he had begun work on a shorter novel that traced the same themes and autobiographical awareness, but *Jean Santeuil* (published posthumously in 1952) never found a coherent structure for its numerous episodes and Proust abandoned it in 1899. Many episodes from the unfinished manuscript reflected Proust's interest in current events, and especially the Dreyfus Affair that was dividing France around issues of military honor, anti-Semitism, and national security. Themes, ideas, and some episodes from the earlier novel were absorbed into *Remembrance of Things Past*, and

it is striking that the major difference (aside from the length) between the two works is simply the extremely sophisticated and subtle structure that Proust devised for the later one.

Proust's health started seriously to decline in 1902, and to make matters worse, he lost both parents by 1905. The following year, his asthma worsening, he moved into a cork-lined, fumigated room at 102 Boulevard Haussmann in Paris, where he stayed until forced to move in 1919. From 1907 to 1914, he spent summers in the seacoast town of Cabourg (another source of material for the fictional Balbec), but when in Paris emerged rarely from his apartment and then only late at night for dinners with friends. In 1909 he conceived the structure of his novel as a whole, and wrote its first and last chapters together. A first draft was finished by September 1912, but Proust had difficulty finding a publisher and finally published the first volume at his own expense in 1913. Though *Swann's Way (Du côté de chez Swann)* was a success, World War I delayed publication of subsequent volumes, and Proust began the painstaking revision and enlargement of the whole manuscript (from 1,500 to 4,000 pages, and three to seven parts) that was to occupy him until his death on November 18, 1922. *Within a Budding Grove* (*À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*—"In the Shadow of Young Girls in Flower") won the prestigious Goncourt Prize in 1919, and *The Guermantes' Way* (*Le Côté de Guermantes*) followed in 1920–21. The last volume published in Proust's lifetime was *Cities of the Plain II (Sodome et Gomorrhe II*—"Sodom and Gomorrah II," 1922), and the remaining volumes (*The Captive* [*La Prisonnière*, 1923], *The Fugitive* [*Albertine disparue*—"Albertine Disappeared," 1925], and *Time Regained* [*Le Temps retrouvé*, 1927]) were published posthumously from manuscripts on which he had been working. Written almost completely in the first person, and based on events in the author's life (although by no means purely autobiographical), the novel is famous both for its evocation of the closed world of Parisian society at the turn of the century and as a meditation on time and human emotions.

When *Swann's Way* appeared in 1913, it was immediately seen as a new kind of fiction. Unlike nineteenth-century novels such as Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, *Remembrance of Things Past* has no clear and continuous plot line building to a dénouement, nor (until the last volume, published in 1927) could the reader detect a consistent development of the central character, Marcel. Only at the end does the narrator recognize the meaning and value of what has preceded, and when he retells his story it is not from an omniscient, explanatory point of view but rather as a re-living and gradual assessment of Marcel's lifelong experience. Most of the novel sets forth a roughly chronological sequence of events, yet its opening pages swing through recollections of many times and places before settling on the narrator's childhood in Combray. The second section, *Swann in Love (Un Amour de Swann)*, is a story told about another character and in the third person. Thus the novel proceeds by apparently discontinuous blocks of recollection, all bound together by the central consciousness of the narrator. This was always Proust's plan: he insisted that he had from the beginning a fixed structure and goal for the whole novel that reached down to the "solidity of the smallest parts," and his substantial revisions of the shorter first draft enriched an already existing structure without changing the sequence of scenes and events.

The overall theme of the novel is suggested by a literal translation of its title: "In Search of Lost Time." The narrator, a "Marcel" who suggests but is not identical with the author, is an old man weakened by a long illness who puzzles over the events of his past, trying to find in them a significant pattern. He begins with his childhood, ordered within the comfortable security of accepted manners and ideals in the family home at Combray. In succeeding volumes he goes out into the world, experiences love and disappointment, discovers the disparity between idealized images of places and their crude, sometimes banal reality, and is increasingly overcome by disillusionment with himself and society. Until the end of the novel, Marcel remains a *grand nerveux* ("nervous" or high-strung person), an extremely sensitive person impelled by the major experiences of his life—love, betrayal, art, separation, and death—to discard his earlier naive perspective and seek out a largely intuited meaning for life.

In the short ending chapter, things suddenly come into focus as Marcel reaches a new understanding of the role of time. Abruptly reliving a childhood experience when he sees a familiar book, and recognizing the ravages of time in the aged and enfeebled figures of his old friends, Marcel faces the approach of death with a new sense of existential continuity and realizes that his vocation as an artist lies in giving form to this buried existence. Apparently lost, the past is still alive within us, a part of our being, and memory can recapture it to give coherence and depth to present identity. "Marcel" has not yet begun to write by the end of the last volume, *Time Regained*, but paradoxically the book that he plans to write is already there: Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*.

The larger subject of the novel, penetrating its description of society and Marcel's experience, is "that invisible substance called time." Although neither ever claimed any direct connection (and Proust recognized more readily the influence of his lycée philosophy professor, Darlu), Proust echoes the concerns of contemporary philosopher Henri Bergson when he looks to intuition and a sense of lived experience for a way to represent reality. Bergson's opposition of intellect and intuition, his preference for *duration* (everyday lived time) as opposed to abstract or clock time as a means of knowledge, and his distinction between the interactive "social ego" and the individually "profound" or intuitive ego all correspond to themes in Proust. Marcel's awareness of his life in time is created through memory—not rational or "forced," but spontaneous or "involuntary" memory—the chance recollection that wells up from his subconscious mind when he repeats a previous action such as dipping cookies in lime-blossom tea, stumbling on a paving stone, hearing a spoon clatter, or glimpsing a familiar book. Involuntary memory is more powerful because it draws upon a buried level of experience where the five senses are still linked. Life thus recalled comes to us in one piece, not separated into different categories for easier intellectual understanding. Sounds are connected with colors (the name *Brabant* with gold), and emotions with the settings in which they were experienced (sorrow with the smell of varnish on the stairway up to bed). Involuntary memory recreates a whole past world in all its concrete reality—and so does art. When Proust attributes such an absolute metaphysical value to art, making it a special means of knowledge and the focus of his book, he joins a special

French tradition of "moralist" writers: those who, from Montaigne to Camus, strive for clear vision and a sense of universal human values.

Proust's style has a unique "architectural" design that coordinates large blocks of material: themes, situations, places, and events recur and are transformed across time. His long sentences and mammoth paragraphs reflect the slow and careful progression of thought among the changing objects of its perception. The ending paragraph of the "Overture" is composed of two long sentences that encompass an enormous range of meditative detail as the narrator not only recalls his childhood world—the old gray house, garden, public square and country roads, Swann's park, the river, the villagers, and indeed the whole town of Combray—but simultaneously compares the suddenly arisen house to a stage set, and the unfolding village itself to the twists and turns of a Japanese flower taking on color and form inside a bowl of water: here, in the narrator's cup of lime-blossom tea. Characters are remembered in different settings and perspectives, creating a "multiple self" who is free to change and still remain the same. Thus Charles Swann appears first as the visitor who often delays the child Marcel's bedtime kiss from his mother, next as an anxious and disappointed lover, and finally as a tragic, dying man rejected by his friends, the Guermantes, in their haste to get to a ball. Marcel's grandmother appears throughout the scenes in Combray, later during a visit to the seaside resort of Balbec, still later in her death agonies when Marcel is unable truly to grieve, and finally as a sudden recollection when Marcel has trouble tying his shoelace in Balbec. Nor is it characters alone who undergo cumulative transformations. The little musical phrase which Marcel first hears as part of a sonata by the composer Vinteuil, and which is associated with love in various settings, recurs towards the end of the novel as part of a septet and becomes a revelation of the subtle constructions of art. Places overlap in the memory: the imagined and the real Balbec or Venice confront one another, and the church steeples of Vieuxvicq and Martinville are juxtaposed. On a linguistic level, Proust juxtaposes entire social roles and habits of mind through the interaction of different types of speech. When Charlus and the Princesse de Guermantes meet in a bourgeois salon, their manner of speaking to each other creates a small "in-group" dialogue of the aristocracy and sets them off from everyone else. The flexibility of Proust's style, representing thought and habits of speech rather than following a superimposed common code, makes him an example of verbal and visionary innovation that is paralleled by other writers of the same period such as Joyce and Woolf, and is enormously influential on later writers of the "new novel" tradition.

The selection given here, "Overture," is the first chapter of *Swann's Way* (*Du côté de chez Swann*, 1913), the first full volume of Proust's novel. "Swann's way" is one of the two directions in which Marcel's family used to take walks from their home in Combray, toward Tansonville, home of Charles Swann, and is associated with various scenes and anecdotes of love and private life. The longer walk toward the estate of the Guermantes *(The Guermantes' Way)*, a fictional family of the highest aristocracy appearing frequently in the novel, evokes an aura of high society and French history, a more public sphere. Fictional people and places mingle throughout with the real; where a name is not annotated, it is Proust's invention. The narrator of "Overture"

is Marcel as an old man, and the French verb tense used in his recollections (here and throughout all but the final volume) is appropriately the imperfect, a tense of uncompleted action ("I used to . . . I would ask myself").

As the chapter title suggests, "Overture" introduces the work's themes and methods rather like the overture of an opera. All but one of the main characters appear or are mentioned, and the patterns of future encounters are set. Marcel, waiting anxiously for his beloved mother's response to a note sent down to her during dinner, suffers the same agony of separation as does Swann in his love for the promiscuous Odette, or the older Marcel himself for Albertine. The strange world of half-sleep, half-waking with which the novel begins prefigures later awakenings of memory. Long passages of intricate introspection, and sudden shifts of time and space, introduce us to the style and point of view of the rest of the book. The narrator shares the painful anxiety of little Marcel's desperate wait for his mother's bedtime kiss; for though his observations and judgments are tempered with mature wisdom, he is only at the beginning of his progress to full consciousness. The remembrance of things past is a key to further discovery but not an end in itself.

"Overture" ends with Proust's most famous image, summing up for many readers the world, the style, and the process of discovery of the Proustian vision. Nibbling at a madeleine (a small rich pastry) that he has dipped in lime-blossom tea, Marcel suddenly has an overwhelming feeling of happiness. He soon associates this tantalizing, puzzling phenomenon with the memory of earlier times when he sipped tea with his Aunt Leonie. He realizes that there is something valuable about such passive, spontaneous, and sensuous memory, quite different from the abstract operations of reason. Although the Marcel of "Combray" does not yet know it, he will pursue the elusive significance of this moment of happiness until, in *Time Regained*, he can as a complete artist bring it to the surface and link past and present time in a fuller and richer identity.

Roger Shattuck's *Proust* (1974) is a general study including advice on "how to read" Proust; it is still useful although it predates the revised translation used here. An excellent general study is Germaine Brée's *Marcel Proust and Deliverance from Time*, translated by R. J. Richards and A. D. Truitt (1969). *A Reader's Guide to Remembrance of Things Past* (1984), by Terence Kilmartin, is a handbook guide to Proust's characters, to persons referred to in the text, to places, and to themes, all keyed to the revised translation by the translator. René Girard, *Proust: A Collection of Critical Essays* (1962) is also recommended.

Remembrance of Things Past[1]

Swann's Way: Overture[2]

For a long time I used to go to bed early. Sometimes, when I had put out my candle, my eyes would close so quickly that I had not even time to say to myself: "I'm falling asleep." And half an hour

1. Translated by C. K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin. 2. The opening section of Combray, the first volume of *Swann's Way*.

later the thought that it was time to go to sleep would awaken me; I would make as if to put away the book which I imagined was still in my hands, and to blow out the light; I had gone on thinking, while I was asleep, about what I had just been reading, but these thoughts had taken a rather peculiar turn; it seemed to me that I myself was the immediate subject of my book: a church, a quartet, the rivalry between François I and Charles V.[3] This impression would persist for some moments after I awoke; it did not offend my reason, but lay like scales upon my eyes and prevented them from registering the fact that the candle was no longer burning. Then it would begin to seem unintelligible, as the thoughts of a former existence must be to a reincarnate spirit; the subject of my book would separate itself from me, leaving me free to apply myself to it or not; and at the same time my sight would return and I would be astonished to find myself in a state of darkness, pleasant and restful enough for my eyes, but even more, perhaps, for my mind, to which it appeared incomprehensible, without a cause, something dark indeed.

I would ask myself what time it could be; I could hear the whistling of trains, which, now nearer and now farther off, punctuating the distance like the note of a bird in a forest, showed me in perspective the deserted countryside through which a traveller is hurrying towards the nearby station; and the path he is taking will be engraved in his memory by the excitement induced by strange surroundings, by unaccustomed activities, by the conversation he has had and the farewells exchanged beneath an unfamiliar lamp, still echoing in his ears amid the silence of the night, by the imminent joy of going home.

I would lay my cheeks gently against the comfortable cheeks of my pillow, as plump and blooming as the cheeks of babyhood. I would strike a match to look at my watch. Nearly midnight. The hour when an invalid, who has been obliged to set out on a journey and to sleep in a strange hotel, awakened by a sudden spasm, sees with glad relief a streak of daylight showing under his door. Thank God, it is morning! The servants will be about in a minute: he can ring, and someone will come to look after him. The thought of being assuaged gives him strength to endure his pain. He is certain he heard footsteps: they come nearer, and then die away. The ray of light beneath his door is extinguished. It is midnight; someone has just turned down the gas; the last servant has gone to bed, and he must lie all night in agony with no one to bring him relief.

I would fall asleep again, and thereafter would reawaken for short snatches only, just long enough to hear the regular creaking of the

3. Francis I (1496–1567), King of France, and Charles V (1500–1558), Holy Roman Emperor and King of Spain, fought four wars over the Empire's expansion in Europe.

wainscot,[4] or to open my eyes to stare at the shifting kaleidoscope of the darkness, to savour, in a momentary glimmer of consciousness, the sleep which lay heavy upon the furniture, the room, the whole of which I formed but an insignificant part and whose insensibility I should very soon return to share. Or else while sleeping I had drifted back to an earlier stage in my life, now for ever outgrown, and had come under the thrall of one of my childish terrors, such as that old terror of my great-uncle's pulling my curls which was effectually dispelled on the day—the dawn of a new era to me—when they were finally cropped from my head. I had forgotten that event during my sleep, but I remembered it again immediately I had succeeded in waking myself up to escape my great-uncle's fingers, and as a measure of precaution I would bury the whole of my head in the pillow before returning to the world of dreams.

Sometimes, too, as Eve was created from a rib of Adam, a woman would be born during my sleep from some strain in the position of my thighs. Conceived from the pleasure I was on the point of consummating, she it was, I imagined, who offered me that pleasure. My body, conscious that its own warmth was permeating hers, would strive to become one with her, and I would awake. The rest of humanity seemed very remote in comparison with this woman whose company I had left but a moment ago; my cheek was still warm from her kiss, my body ached beneath the weight of hers. If, as would sometimes happen, she had the features of some woman whom I had known in waking hours, I would abandon myself altogether to the sole quest of her, like people who set out on a journey to see with their eyes some city of their desire, and imagine that one can taste in reality what has charmed one's fancy. And then, gradually, the memory of her would dissolve and vanish, until I had forgotten the girl of my dream.

When a man is asleep, he has in a circle round him the chain of the hours, the sequence of the years, the order of the heavenly host. Instinctively, when he awakes, he looks to these, and in an instant reads off his own position on the earth's surface and the time that has elapsed during his slumbers; but this ordered procession is apt to grow confused, and to break its ranks. Suppose that, towards morning, after a night of insomnia, sleep descends upon him while he is reading, in quite a different position from that in which he normally goes to sleep, he has only to lift his arm to arrest the sun and turn it back in its course,[5] and, at the moment of waking, he will have no idea of the time, but will conclude that he has just gone to bed. Or suppose that he dozes off in some even more abnormal and divergent position, sitting in an armchair, for instance, after dinner: then the

4. The wooden paneling of the walls.

5. If his uplifted arm prevents him from seeing the sunlight, he will think it is still night.

world will go hurtling out of orbit, the magic chair will carry him at full speed through time and space, and when he opens his eyes again he will imagine that he went to sleep months earlier in another place. But for me it was enough if, in my own bed, my sleep was so heavy as completely to relax my consciousness; for then I lost all sense of the place in which I had gone to sleep, and when I awoke in the middle of the night, not knowing where I was, I could not even be sure at first who I was; I had only the most rudimentary sense of existence, such as may lurk and flicker in the depths of an animal's consciousness; I was more destitute than the cave-dweller; but then the memory—not yet of the place in which I was, but of various other places where I had lived and might now very possibly be—would come like a rope let down from heaven to draw me up out of the abyss of not-being, from which I could never have escaped by myself: in a flash I would traverse centuries of civilisation, and out of a blurred glimpse of oil-lamps, then of shirts with turned-down collars, would gradually piece together the original components of my ego.

Perhaps the immobility of the things that surround us is forced upon them by our conviction that they are themselves and not anything else, by the immobility of our conception of them. For it always happened that when I awoke like this, and my mind struggled in an unsuccessful attempt to discover where I was, everything revolved around me through the darkness: things, places, years. My body, still too heavy with sleep to move, would endeavour to construe from the pattern of its tiredness the position of its various limbs, in order to deduce therefrom the direction of the wall, the location of the furniture, to piece together and give a name to the house in which it lay. Its memory, the composite memory of its ribs, its knees, its shoulder-blades, offered it a whole series of rooms in which it had at one time or another slept, while the unseen walls, shifting and adapting themselves to the shape of each successive room that it remembered, whirled round it in the dark. And even before my brain, lingering in cogitation over when things had happened and what they had looked like, had reassembled the circumstances sufficiently to identify the room, it, my body, would recall from each room in succession the style of the bed, the position of the doors, the angle at which the daylight came in at the windows, whether there was a passage outside, what I had had in my mind when I went to sleep and found there when I awoke. The stiffened side on which I lay would, for instance, in trying to fix its position, imagine itself to be lying face to the wall in a big bed with a canopy; and at once I would say to myself, "Why, I must have fallen asleep before Mamma came to say good night," for I was in the country at my grandfather's, who died years ago; and my body, the side upon which I was lying, faithful

guardians of a past which my mind should never have forgotten, brought back before my eyes the glimmering flame of the night-light in its urn-shaped bowl of Bohemian glass that hung by chains from the ceiling, and the chimney-piece of Siena marble[6] in my bedroom at Combray, in my grandparents' house, in those far distant days which at this moment I imagined to be in the present without being able to picture them exactly, and which would become plainer in a little while when I was properly awake.

Then the memory of a new position would spring up, and the wall would slide away in another direction; I was in my room in Mme de Saint-Loup's[7] house in the country; good heavens, it must be ten o'clock, they will have finished dinner! I must have overslept myself in the little nap which I always take when I come in from my walk with Mme de Saint-Loup, before dressing for the evening. For many years have now elapsed since the Combray days when, coming in from the longest and latest walks, I would still be in time to see the reflection of the sunset glowing in the panes of my bedroom window. It is a very different kind of life that one leads at Tansonville, at Mme de Saint-Loup's, and a different kind of pleasure that I derive from taking walks only in the evenings, from visiting by moonlight the roads on which I used to play as a child in the sunshine; while the bedroom in which I shall presently fall asleep instead of dressing for dinner I can see from the distance as we return from our walk, with its lamp shining through the window, a solitary beacon in the night.

These shifting and confused gusts of memory never lasted for more than a few seconds; it often happened that, in my brief spell of uncertainty as to where I was, I did not distinguish the various suppositions of which it was composed any more than, when we watch a horse running, we isolate the successive positions of its body as they appear upon a bioscope.[8] But I had seen first one and then another of the rooms in which I had slept during my life, and in the end I would revisit them all in the long course of my waking dream: rooms in winter, where on going to bed I would at once bury my head in a nest woven out of the most diverse materials—the corner of my pillow, the top of my blankets, a piece of a shawl, the edge of my bed, and a copy of a children's paper—which I had contrived to cement together, bird-fashion, by dint of continuous pressure; rooms where, in freezing weather, I would enjoy the satisfaction of being shut in from the outer world (like the sea-swallow which builds at the end of a dark tunnel and is kept warm by the surrounding earth), and where, the fire keeping in all night, I would sleep wrapped up, as it were, in

6. From central Italy, mottled and reddish in color. *Bohemian glass:* Likely to have been ornately engraved. (Bohemia, now the western part of Czechoslovakia, was a major center of the glass industry.) 7. Charles Swann's daughter, Gilberte, who has married Robert de Saint-Loup, a nephew of the Guermantes. 8. An early moving-picture machine that showed photographs in rapid succession.

a great cloak of snug and smoky air, shot with the glow of the logs intermittently breaking out again in flame, a sort of alcove without walls, a cave of warmth dug out of the heart of the room itself, a zone of heat whose boundaries were constantly shifting and altering in temperature as gusts of air traversed them to strike freshly upon my face, from the corners of the room or from parts near the window or far from the fireplace which had therefore remained cold;—or rooms in summer, where I would delight to feel myself a part of the warm night, where the moonlight striking upon the half-opened shutters would throw down to the foot of my bed its enchanted ladder, where I would fall asleep, as it might be in the open air, like a titmouse which the breeze gently rocks at the tip of a sunbeam;—or sometimes the Louis XVI room,[9] so cheerful that I never felt too miserable in it, even on my first night, and in which the slender columns that lightly supported its ceiling drew so gracefully apart to reveal and frame the site of the bed;—sometimes, again, the little room with the high ceiling, hollowed in the form of a pyramid out of two separate storeys, and partly walled with mahogany, in which from the first moment, mentally poisoned by the unfamiliar scent of vetiver,[1] I was convinced of the hostility of the violet curtains and of the insolent indifference of a clock that chattered on at the top of its voice as though I were not there; in which a strange and pitiless rectangular cheval-glass, standing across one corner of the room, carved out for itself a site I had not looked to find tenanted in the soft plenitude of my normal field of vision;[2] in which my mind, striving for hours on end to break away from its moorings, to stretch upwards so as to take on the exact shape of the room and to reach to the topmost height of its gigantic funnel, had endured many a painful night as I lay stretched out in bed, my eyes staring upwards, my ears straining, my nostrils flaring, my heart beating; until habit had changed the colour of the curtains, silenced the clock, brought an expression of pity to the cruel, slanting face of the glass, disguised or even completely dispelled the scent of vetiver, and appreciably reduced the apparent loftiness of the ceiling. Habit! that skilful but slow-moving arranger who begins by letting our minds suffer for weeks on end in temporary quarters, but whom our minds are none the less only too happy to discover at last, for without it, reduced to their own devices, they would be powerless to make any room seem habitable.

Certainly I was now well awake; my body had veered round for the last time and the good angel of certainty had made all the sur-

9. Furnished in late-18th-century style, named for the French monarch of the time, and marked by great elegance. The room is that in which Marcel visits Robert de Saint-Loup in *Guermantes' Way*. 1. The aromatic root of a tropical grass packaged as a moth-preventive. 2. The narrator's room at the fictional seaside resort of Balbec, a setting in *Within a Budding Grove*.

rounding objects stand still, had set me down under my bedclothes, in my bedroom, and had fixed, approximately in their right places in the uncertain light, my chest of drawers, my writing-table, my fireplace, the window overlooking the street, and both the doors. But for all that I now knew that I was not in any of the houses of which the ignorance of the waking moment had, in a flash, if not presented me with a distinct picture, at least persuaded me of the possible presence, my memory had been set in motion; as a rule I did not attempt to go to sleep again at once, but used to spend the greater part of the night recalling our life in the old days at Combray with my great-aunt, at Balbec, Paris, Doncières, Venice, and the rest; remembering again all the places and people I had known, what I had actually seen of them, and what others had told me.

At Combray, as every afternoon ended, long before the time when I should have to go to bed and lie there, unsleeping, far from my mother and grandmother, my bedroom became the fixed point on which my melancholy and anxious thoughts were centred. Someone had indeed had the happy idea of giving me, to distract me on evenings when I seemed abnormally wretched, a magic lantern,[3] which used to be set on top of my lamp while we waited for dinner-time to come; and, after the fashion of the master-builders and glass-painters of gothic days, it substituted for the opaqueness of my walls an impalpable iridescence, supernatural phenomena of many colours, in which legends were depicted as on a shifting and transitory window. But my sorrows were only increased thereby, because this mere change of lighting was enough to destroy the familiar impression I had of my room, thanks to which, save for the torture of going to bed, it had become quite endurable. Now I no longer recognised it, and felt uneasy in it, as in a room in some hotel or chalet, in a place where I had just arrived by train for the first time.

Riding at a jerky trot, Golo,[4] filled with an infamous design, issued from the little triangular forest which dyed dark-green the slope of a convenient hill, and advanced fitfully towards the castle of poor Geneviève de Brabant. This castle was cut off short by a curved line which was in fact the circumference of one of the transparent ovals in the slides which were pushed into position through a slot in the lantern. It was only the wing of a castle, and in front of it stretched a moor on which Geneviève stood lost in contemplation, wearing a blue girdle.[5] The castle and the moor were yellow, but I could tell their colour without waiting to see them, for before the slides made their appearance the old-gold sonorous name of Brabant had given me an unmistakable clue. Golo stopped for a moment and listened

3. A kind of slide projector. 4. Villain of a fifth-century legend. He falsely accuses Geneviève de Brabant of adultery. (Brabant was a principality in what is now Belgium.) 5. Belt.

sadly to the accompanying patter read aloud by my great-aunt,[6] which he seemed perfectly to understand, for he modified his attitude with a docility not devoid of a degree of majesty, so as to conform to the indications given in the text; then he rode away at the same jerky trot. And nothing could arrest his slow progress. If the lantern were moved I could still distinguish Golo's horse advancing across the window-curtains, swelling out with their curves and diving into their folds. The body of Golo himself, being of the same supernatural substance as his steed's, overcame every material obstacle—everything that seemed to bar his way—by taking it as an ossature[7] and embodying it in himself: even the door-handle, for instance, over which, adapting itself at once, would float irresistibly his red cloak or his pale face, which never lost its nobility or its melancholy, never betrayed the least concern at this transvertebration.

And, indeed, I found plenty of charm in these bright projections, which seemed to emanate from a Merovingian[8] past and shed around me the reflections of such ancient history. But I cannot express the discomfort I felt at this intrusion of mystery and beauty into a room which I had succeeded in filling with my own personality until I thought no more of it than of myself. The anaesthetic effect of habit being destroyed, I would begin to think—and to feel—such melancholy things. The door-handle of my room, which was different to me from all the other door-handles in the world, inasmuch as it seemed to open of its own accord and without my having to turn it, so unconscious had its manipulation become—lo and behold, it was now an astral body[9] for Golo. And as soon as the dinner-bell rang I would hurry down to the dining-room, where the big hanging lamp, ignorant of Golo and Bluebeard[1] but well acquainted with my family and the dish of stewed beef, shed the same light as on every other evening; and I would fall into the arms of my mother, whom the misfortunes of Geneviève de Brabant had made all the dearer to me, just as the crimes of Golo had driven me to a more than ordinarily scrupulous examination of my own conscience.

But after dinner, alas, I was soon obliged to leave Mamma, who stayed talking with the others, in the garden if it was fine, or in the little parlour where everyone took shelter when it was wet. Everyone except my grandmother, who held that "It's a pity to shut oneself indoors in the country," and used to have endless arguments with my father on the very wettest days, because he would send me up to my room with a book instead of letting me stay out of doors. "That is not the way to make him strong and active," she would say sadly,

6. Marcel's great-aunt is reading the story to him as they wait for dinner. 7. Skeleton. 8. The first dynasty of French kings, 500–751 A.D. 9. Spiritual counterpart of the physical body; according to the doctrine of Theosophy (a spiritualist movement originating in 1875), the astral body survives the death of the physical body. 1. The legendary wife-murderer, presumably depicted on another set of slides.

"especially this little man, who needs all the strength and will-power that he can get." My father would shrug his shoulders and study the barometer, for he took an interest in meteorology, while my mother, keeping very quiet so as not to disturb him, looked at him with tender respect, but not too hard, not wishing to penetrate the mysteries of his superior mind. But my grandmother, in all weathers, even when the rain was coming down in torrents and Françoise had rushed the precious wicker armchairs indoors so that they should not get soaked, was to be seen pacing the deserted rain-lashed garden, pushing back her disordered grey locks so that her forehead might be freer to absorb the health-giving draughts of wind and rain. She would say, "At last one can breathe!" and would trot up and down the sodden paths—too straight and symmetrical for her liking, owing to the want of any feeling for nature in the new gardener, whom my father had been asking all morning if the weather were going to improve—her keen, jerky little step regulated by the various effects wrought upon her soul by the intoxication of the storm, the power of hygiene, the stupidity of my upbringing and the symmetry of gardens, rather than by any anxiety (for that was quite unknown to her) to save her plum-coloured skirt from the mudstains beneath which it would gradually disappear to a height that was the constant bane and despair of her maid.

When these walks of my grandmother's took place after dinner there was one thing which never failed to bring her back to the house: this was if (at one of those points when her circular itinerary brought her back, moth-like, in sight of the lamp in the little parlour where the liqueurs were set out on the card-table) my great-aunt called out to her: "Bathilde! Come in and stop your husband drinking brandy!" For, simply to tease her (she had brought so different a type of mind into my father's family that everyone made fun of her), my great-aunt used to make my grandfather, who was forbidden liqueurs, take just a few drops. My poor grandmother would come in and beg and implore her husband not to taste the brandy; and he would get angry and gulp it down all the same, and she would go out again sad and discouraged, but still smiling, for she was so humble of heart and so gentle that her tenderness for others and her disregard for herself and her own troubles blended in a smile which, unlike those seen on the majority of human faces, bore no trace of irony save for herself, while for all of us kisses seemed to spring from her eyes, which could not look upon those she loved without seeming to bestow upon them passionate caresses. This torture inflicted on her by my great-aunt, the sight of my grandmother's vain entreaties, of her feeble attempts, doomed in advance, to remove the liqueur-glass from my grandfather's hands—all these were things of the sort to which, in later years, one can grow so accustomed as to smile at them and to take the

persecutor's side resolutely and cheerfully enough to persuade oneself that it is not really persecution; but in those days they filled me with such horror that I longed to strike my great-aunt. And yet, as soon as I heard her "Bathilde! Come in and stop your husband drinking brandy," in my cowardice I became at once a man, and did what all we grown men do when face to face with suffering and injustice: I preferred not to see them; I ran up to the top of the house to cry by myself in a little room beside the schoolroom and beneath the roof, which smelt of orris-root[2] and was scented also by a wild currant-bush which had climbed up between the stones of the outer wall and thrust a flowering branch in through the half-opened window. Intended for a more special and a baser use,[3] this room, from which, in the daytime, I could see as far as the keep[4] of Roussainville-le-Pin, was for a long time my place of refuge, doubtless because it was the only room whose door I was allowed to lock, whenever my occupation was such as required an inviolable solitude: reading or day-dreaming, secret tears or sensual gratification. Alas! I little knew that my own lack of will-power, my delicate health, and the consequent uncertainty as to my future, weighed far more heavily on my grandmother's mind than any little dietary indiscretion by her husband in the course of those endless perambulations, afternoon and evening, during which we used to see her handsome face passing to and fro, half raised towards the sky, its brown and wrinkled cheeks, which with age had acquired almost the purple hue of tilled fields in autumn, covered, if she were "going out," by a half-lifted veil, while upon them either the cold or some sad reflection invariably left the drying traces of an involuntary tear.

My sole consolation when I went upstairs for the night was that Mamma would come in and kiss me after I was in bed. But this good night lasted for so short a time, she went down again so soon, that the moment in which I heard her climb the stairs, and then caught the sound of her garden dress of blue muslin, from which hung little tassels of plaited straw, rustling along the double-doored corridor, was for me a moment of the utmost pain; for it heralded the moment which was bound to follow it, when she would have left me and gone downstairs again. So much so that I reached the point of hoping that this good night which I loved so much would come as late as possible, so as to prolong the time of respite during which Mamma would not yet have appeared. Sometimes when, after kissing me, she opened the door to go, I longed to call her back, to say to her "Kiss me just once more," but I knew that then she would at once look displeased, for the concession which she made to my wretchedness and agitation in coming up to give me this kiss of peace always

2. A powder then used as a deodorizer for rooms. 3. As a toilet. 4. The best-fortified tower of a medieval castle.

annoyed my father, who thought such rituals absurd, and she would have liked to try to induce me to outgrow the need, the habit, of having her there at all, let alone get into the habit of asking her for an additional kiss when she was already crossing the threshold. And to see her look displeased destroyed all the calm and serenity she had brought me a moment before, when she had bent her loving face down over my bed, and held it out to me like a host[5] for an act of peace-giving communion in which my lips might imbibe her real presence and with it the power to sleep. But those evenings on which Mamma stayed so short a time in my room were sweet indeed compared to those on which we had guests to dinner, and therefore she did not come at all. Our "guests" were usually limited to M. Swann, who, apart from a few passing strangers, was almost the only person who ever came to the house at Combray, sometimes to a neighbourly dinner (but less frequently since his unfortunate marriage, as my family did not care to receive his wife) and sometimes after dinner, uninvited. On those evenings when, as we sat in front of the house round the iron table beneath the big chestnut-tree, we heard, from the far end of the garden, not the shrill and assertive alarm bell which assailed and deafened with its ferruginous,[6] interminable, frozen sound any member of the household who set it off on entering "without ringing," but the double tinkle, timid, oval, golden, of the visitors' bell, everyone would at once exclaim "A visitor! Who in the world can it be?" but they knew quite well that it could only be M. Swann. My great-aunt, speaking in a loud voice to set an example, in a tone which she endeavoured to make sound natural, would tell the others not to whisper so; that nothing could be more offensive to a stranger coming in, who would be led to think that people were saying things about him which he was not meant to hear; and then my grandmother, always happy to find an excuse for an additional turn in the garden, would be sent out to reconnoitre, and would take the opportunity to remove surreptitiously, as she passed, the stakes of a rose-tree or two, so as to make the roses look a little more natural, as a mother might run her hand through her boy's hair after the barber has smoothed it down, to make it look naturally wavy.

We would all wait there in suspense for the report which my grandmother would bring back from the enemy lines, as though there might be a choice between a large number of possible assailants, and then, soon after, my grandfather would say: "I can hear Swann's voice." And indeed one could tell him only by his voice, for it was difficult to make out his face with its arched nose and green eyes, under a high forehead fringed with fair, almost red hair, done in the Bressant style,[7] because in the garden we used as little light as possi-

5. Communion wafer. 6. Iron-like. 7. Close-cropped, like a crew cut; named after a French actor.

ble, so as not to attract mosquitoes; and I would slip away unobtrusively to order the liqueurs to be brought out, for my grandmother made a great point, thinking it "nicer," of their not being allowed to seem anything out of the ordinary, which we kept for visitors only. Although a far younger man, M. Swann was very much attached to my grandfather, who had been an intimate friend of Swann's father, an excellent but eccentric man the ardour of whose feelings and the current of whose thoughts would often be checked or diverted by the most trifling thing. Several times in the course of a year I would hear my grandfather tell at table the story, which never varied, of the behaviour of M. Swann the elder upon the death of his wife, by whose bedside he had watched day and night. My grandfather, who had not seen him for a long time, hastened to join him at the Swanns' family property on the outskirts of Combray, and managed to entice him for a moment, weeping profusely, out of the death-chamber, so that he should not be present when the body was laid in its coffin. They took a turn or two in the park, where there was a little sunshine. Suddenly M. Swann seized my grandfather by the arm and cried, "Ah, my dear old friend, how fortunate we are to be walking here together on such a charming day! Don't you see how pretty they are, all these trees, my hawthorns, and my new pond, on which you have never congratulated me? You look as solemn as the grave. Don't you feel this little breeze? Ah! whatever you may say, it's good to be alive all the same, my dear Amédée!" And then, abruptly, the memory of his dead wife returned to him, and probably thinking it too complicated to inquire into how, at such a time, he could have allowed himself to be carried away by an impulse of happiness, he confined himself to a gesture which he habitually employed whenever any perplexing question came into his mind: that is, he passed his hand across his forehead, rubbed his eyes, and wiped his glasses. And yet he never got over the loss of his wife, but used to say to my grandfather, during the two years by which he survived her, "It's a funny thing, now; I very often think of my poor wife, but I cannot think of her for long at a time." "Often, but a little at a time, like poor old Swann," became one of my grandfather's favourite sayings, which he would apply to all manner of things. I should have assumed that this father of Swann's had been a monster if my grandfather, whom I regarded as a better judge than myself, and whose word was my law and often led me in the long run to pardon offences which I should have been inclined to condemn, had not gone on to exclaim, "But, after all, he had a heart of gold."

For many years, during the course of which—especially before his marriage—M. Swann the younger came often to see them at Combray, my great-aunt and my grandparents never suspected that he had entirely ceased to live in the society which his family had fre-

quented, and that, under the sort of incognito which the name of Swann gave him among us, they were harbouring—with the complete innocence of a family of respectable innkeepers who have in their midst some celebrated highwayman without knowing it—one of the most distinguished members of the Jockey Club, a particular friend of the Comte de Paris and of the Prince of Wales, and one of the men most sought after in the aristocratic world of the Faubourg Saint-Germain.[8]

Our utter ignorance of the brilliant social life which Swann led was, of course, due in part to his own reserve and discretion, but also to the fact that middle-class people in those days took what was almost a Hindu view of society, which they held to consist of sharply defined castes, so that everyone at his birth found himself called to that station in life which his parents already occupied, and from which nothing, save the accident of an exceptional career or of a "good" marriage, could extract you and translate you to a superior caste. M. Swann the elder had been a stockbroker; and so "young Swann" found himself immured for life in a caste whose members' fortunes, as in a category of tax-payers, varied between such and such limits of income. One knew the people with whom his father had associated, and so one knew his own associates, the people with whom he was "in a position to mix." If he knew other people besides, those were youthful acquaintances on whom the old friends of his family, like my relatives, shut their eyes all the more good-naturedly because Swann himself, after he was left an orphan, still came most faithfully to see us; but we would have been ready to wager that the people outside our acquaintance whom Swann knew were of the sort to whom he would not have dared to raise his hat if he had met them while he was walking with us. Had it been absolutely essential to apply to Swann a social coefficient peculiar to himself, as distinct from all the other sons of other stockbrokers in his father's position, his coefficient would have been rather lower than theirs, because, being very simple in his habits, and having always had a craze for "antiques" and pictures, he now lived and amassed his collections in an old house which my grandmother longed to visit but which was situated on the Quai d'Orléans,[9] a neighbourhood in which my great-aunt thought it most degrading to be quartered. "Are you really a connoisseur, now?" she would say to him: "I ask for your own sake, as you are likely to have fakes palmed off on you by the dealers," for

8. A fashionable area of Paris on the left bank of the Seine; many of the French aristocracy lived there. The *Jockey Club* was an exclusive men's club devoted not only to horseracing but to other diversions (such as the Opera). The *Comte de Paris* (1838–1894) was heir apparent to the French throne, in the unlikely event that the monarchy were reinstated; the *Prince of Wales* became in 1901 King Edward VII of England. The implication is that Swann's social connections were not merely of the highest but of an idle and somewhat hedonistic sort. 9. A beautiful though less fashionable section in the heart of Paris, along the Seine.

she did not, in fact, endow him with any critical faculty, and had no great opinion of the intelligence of a man who, in conversation, would avoid serious topics and showed a very dull preciseness, not only when he gave us kitchen recipes, going into the most minute details, but even when my grandmother's sisters were talking to him about art. When challenged by them to give an opinion, or to express his admiration for some picture, he would remain almost offensively silent, and would then make amends by furnishing (if he could) some fact or other about the gallery in which the picture was hung, or the date at which it had been painted. But as a rule he would content himself with trying to amuse us by telling us about his latest adventure with someone whom we ourselves knew, such as the Combray chemist,[1] or our cook, or our coachman. These stories certainly used to make my great-aunt laugh, but she could never decide whether this was on account of the absurd rôle which Swann invariably gave himself therein, or of the wit that he showed in telling them: "I must say you really are a regular character, M. Swann!"

As she was the only member of our family who could be described as a trifle "common," she would always take care to remark to strangers, when Swann was mentioned, that he could easily, had he so wished, have lived in the Boulevard Haussmann or the Avenue de l'Opéra,[2] and that he was the son of old M. Swann who must have left four or five million francs, but that it was a fad of his. A fad which, moreover, she thought was bound to amuse other people so much that in Paris, when M. Swann called on New Year's Day bringing her a little packet of *marrons glacés*,[3] she never failed, if there were strangers in the room, to say to him: "Well, M. Swann, and do you still live next door to the bonded vaults,[4] so as to be sure of not missing your train when you go to Lyons?" and she would peep out of the corner of her eye, over her glasses, at the other visitors.

But if anyone had suggested to my great-aunt that this Swann, who, in his capacity as the son of old M. Swann, was "fully qualified" to be received by any of the "best people," by the most respected barristers and solicitors[5] of Paris (though he was perhaps a trifle inclined to let this hereditary privilege go by default), had another almost secret existence of a wholly different kind; that when he left our house in Paris, saying that he must go home to bed, he would no sooner have turned the corner than he would stop, retrace his steps, and be off to some salon on whose like no stockbroker or associate of stockbrokers had ever set eyes—that would have seemed to my aunt

1. Pharmacist. 2. Two large modern avenues where the wealthy *bourgeoisie* (or middle class) liked to live. *Four or five million francs* would have been nearly a million dollars in the currency of the day. 3. Candied chestnuts, a traditional gift on New Year's Day, then a more common day for exchanging gifts than Christmas. 4. A wine warehouse in southeastern Paris, close to the *Gare de Lyon*, the terminal from which trains depart for the industrial city of Lyon and other destinations in southeastern France. 5. Trial lawyers and lawyers of other kinds.

as extraordinary as, to a woman of wider reading, the thought of being herself on terms of intimacy with Aristaeus[6] and of learning that after having a chat with her he would plunge deep into the realms of Thetis, into an empire veiled from mortal eyes, in which Virgil depicts him as being received with open arms; or—to be content with an image more likely to have occurred to her, for she had seen it painted on the plates we used for biscuits at Combray—as the thought of having had to dinner Ali Baba,[7] who, as soon as he finds himself alone and unobserved, will make his way into the cave, resplendent with its unsuspected treasures.

One day when he had come to see us after dinner in Paris, apologising for being in evening clothes, Françoise told us after he had left that she had got it from his coachman that he had been dining "with a princess." "A nice sort of princess,"[8] retorted my aunt, shrugging her shoulders without raising her eyes from her knitting, serenely sarcastic.

Altogether, my great-aunt treated him with scant ceremony. Since she was of the opinion that he ought to feel flattered by our invitations, she thought it only right and proper that he should never come to see us in summer without a basket of peaches or raspberries from his garden, and that from each of his visits to Italy he should bring back some photographs of old masters for me.

It seemed quite natural, therefore, to send for him whenever a recipe for some special sauce or for a pineapple salad was needed for one of our big dinner-parties, to which he himself would not be invited, being regarded as insufficiently important to be served up to new friends who might be in our house for the first time. If the conversation turned upon the princes of the House of France,[9] "gentlemen you and I will never know, will we, and don't want to, do we?" my great-aunt would say tartly to Swann, who had, perhaps, a letter from Twickenham[1] in his pocket; she would make him push the piano into place and turn over the music on evenings when my grandmother's sister sang, manipulating this person who was elsewhere so sought after with the rough simplicity of a child who will play with a collectors' piece with no more circumspection than if it were a cheap gewgaw. Doubtless the Swann who was a familiar figure in all the clubs of those days differed hugely from the Swann created by my great-aunt when, of an evening, in our little garden

6. Son of the Greek god Apollo. In Virgil's *Fourth Georgic*, Aristaeus seeks help from the sea nymph Thetis. 7. Hero of an *Arabian Nights* tale, a poor youth who discovers a robber's cave filled with treasure. 8. That is, a "princess" of some shady level of society. 9. The male members of the French royal family, such as the Comte de Paris. The spirit of the times was anti-Royalist, and in fact all claimants to the French throne and their heirs were banished from France by law in 1886. 1. Fashionable London suburb. The French royal family had a house there.

at Combray, after the two shy peals had sounded from the gate, she would inject and vitalise with everything she knew about the Swann family the obscure and shadowy figure who emerged, with my grandmother in his wake, from the dark background and who was identified by his voice. But then, even in the most insignificant details of our daily life, none of us can be said to constitute a material whole, which is identical for everyone, and need only be turned up like a page in an account-book or the record of a will; our social personality is a creation of the thoughts of other people. Even the simple act which we describe as "seeing someone we know" is to some extent an intellectual process. We pack the physical outline of the person we see with all the notions we have already formed about him, and in the total picture of him which we compose in our minds those notions have certainly the principal place. In the end they come to fill out so completely the curve of his cheeks, to follow so exactly the line of his nose, they blend so harmoniously in the sound of his voice as if it were no more than a transparent envelope, that each time we see the face or hear the voice it is these notions which we recognise and to which we listen. And so, no doubt, from the Swann they had constructed for themselves my family had left out, in their ignorance, a whole host of details of his life in the world of fashion, details which caused other people, when they met him, to see all the graces enthroned in his face and stopping at the line of his aquiline nose as at a natural frontier; but they had contrived also to put into this face divested of all glamour, vacant and roomy as an untenanted house, to plant in the depths of these undervalued eyes, a lingering residuum, vague but not unpleasing—half-memory and half-oblivion—of idle hours spent together after our weekly dinners, round the card-table or in the garden, during our companionable country life. Our friend's corporeal envelope had been so well lined with this residuum, as well as various earlier memories of his parents, that their own special Swann had become to my family a complete and living creature; so that even now I have the feeling of leaving someone I know for another quite different person when, going back in memory, I pass from the Swann whom I knew later and more intimately to this early Swann—this early Swann in whom I can distinguish the charming mistakes of my youth, and who in fact is less like his successor than he is like the other people I knew at that time, as though one's life were a picture gallery in which all the portraits of any one period had a marked family likeness, a similar tonality—this early Swann abounding in leisure, fragrant with the scent of the great chestnut-tree, of baskets of raspberries and of a sprig of tarragon.

And yet one day, when my grandmother had gone to ask some

favour of a lady whom she had known at the Sacré Cœur[2] (and with whom, because of our notions of caste, she had not cared to keep up any degree of intimacy in spite of several common interests), the Marquise de Villeparisis,[3] of the famous house of Bouillon, this lady had said to her:

"I believe you know M. Swann very well; he's a great friend of my nephews, the des Laumes."

My grandmother had returned from the call full of praise for the house, which overlooked some gardens, and in which Mme de Villeparisis had advised her to rent a flat, and also for a repairing tailor and his daughter who kept a little shop in the courtyard, into which she had gone to ask them to put a stitch in her skirt, which she had torn on the staircase. My grandmother had found these people perfectly charming: the girl, she said, was a jewel, and the tailor the best and most distinguished man she had ever seen. For in her eyes distinction was a thing wholly independent of social position. She was in ecstasies over some answer the tailor had made to her, saying to Mamma:

"Sévigné[4] would not have put it better!" and, by way of contrast, of a nephew of Mme de Villeparisis whom she had met at the house:

"My dear, he is so common!"

Now, the effect of the remark about Swann had been, not to raise him in my great-aunt's estimation, but to lower Mme de Villeparisis. It appeared that the deference which, on my grandmother's authority, we owed to Mme de Villeparisis imposed on her the reciprocal obligation to do nothing that would render her less worthy of our regard, and that she had failed in this duty by becoming aware of Swann's existence and in allowing members of her family to associate with him. "What! She knows Swann? A person who, you always made out, was related to Marshal MacMahon!"[5] This view of Swann's social position which prevailed in my family seemed to be confirmed later on by his marriage with a woman of the worst type, almost a prostitute, whom, to do him justice, he never attempted to introduce to us—for he continued to come to our house alone, though more and more seldom—but from whom they felt they could establish, on the assumption that he had found her there, the circle, unknown to them, in which he ordinarily moved.

But on one occasion my grandfather read in a newspaper that M. Swann was one of the most regular attendants at the Sunday luncheons given by the Duc de X——, whose father and uncle had been

2. A convent school in Paris, attended by daughters of the aristocracy and the wealthy *bourgeoisie*. 3. Member of the Guermantes family. Proust enhances the apparent reality of the Guermantes by relating them to the historical house of Bouillon, a famous aristocratic family tracing its descent from the Middle Ages. The des Laumes, on the other hand, are fictional.
4. The Marquise de Sévigné (1626–1696), known for the lively style of her letters. 5. (1808–1893), Marshal of France, elected President of the French Republic in 1873.

among our most prominent statesmen in the reign of Louis-Philippe.[6] Now my grandfather was curious to learn all the smallest details which might help him to take a mental share in the private lives of men like Molé, the Duc Pasquier, or the Duc de Broglie.[7] He was delighted to find that Swann associated with people who had known them. My great-aunt, on the other hand, interpreted this piece of news in a sense discreditable to Swann; for anyone who chose his associates outside the caste in which he had been born and bred, outside his "proper station," automatically lowered himself in her eyes. It seemed to her that such a one abdicated all claim to enjoy the fruits of the splendid connections with people of good position which prudent parents cultivate and store up for their children's benefit, and she had actually ceased to "see" the son of a lawyer of our acquaintance because he had married a "Highness" and had thereby stepped down—in her eyes—from the respectable position of a lawyer's son to that of those adventurers, upstart footmen or stable-boys mostly, to whom, we are told, queens have sometimes shown their favours. She objected, therefore, to my grandfather's plan of questioning Swann, when next he came to dine with us, about these people whose friendship with him we had discovered. At the same time my grandmother's two sisters, elderly spinsters who shared her nobility of character but lacked her intelligence, declared that they could not conceive what pleasure their brother-in-law could find in talking about such trifles. They were ladies of lofty aspirations, who for that reason were incapable of taking the least interest in what might be termed gossip, even if it had some historical import, or, generally speaking, in anything that was not directly associated with some aesthetic or virtuous object. So complete was their negation of interest in anything which seemed directly or indirectly connected with worldly matters that their sense of hearing—having finally come to realise its temporary futility when the tone of the conversation at the dinner-table became frivolous or merely mundane without the two old ladies' being able to guide it back to topics dear to themselves—would put its receptive organs into abeyance to the point of actually becoming atrophied. So that if my grandfather wished to attract the attention of the two sisters, he had to resort to some such physical stimuli as alienists adopt in dealing with their distracted patients: to wit, repeated taps on a glass with the blade of a knife, accompanied by a sharp word and a compelling glance, violent methods which these psychiatrists are apt to bring with them into

6. King of France from 1830 to 1848, father of the Comte de Paris. 7. Comte Louis Mathieu Molé (1781–1855) held various cabinet positions before becoming premier of France in 1836; Duc Etienne Denis de Pasquier (1767–1862) also held important public positions up to 1837; and Duc Achille Charles Leonce Victor de Broglie (1785–1870) had a busy public career that ended in 1851. All were active during the reign of Louis Philippe.

their everyday life among the sane, either from force of professional habit or because they think the whole world a trifle mad.

Their interest grew, however, when, the day before Swann was to dine with us, and when he had made them a special present of a case of Asti,[8] my great-aunt, who had in her hand a copy of the *Figaro* in which to the name of a picture then on view in a Corot[9] exhibition were added the words, "from the collection of M. Charles Swann," asked: "Did you see that Swann is 'mentioned' in the *Figaro*?"

"But I've always told you," said my grandmother, "that he had a great deal of taste."

"You would, of course," retorted my great-aunt, "say anything just to seem different from *us*." For, knowing that my grandmother never agreed with her, and not being quite confident that it was her own opinion which the rest of us invariably endorsed, she wished to extort from us a wholesale condemnation of my grandmother's views, against which she hoped to force us into solidarity with her own. But we sat silent. My grandmother's sisters having expressed a desire to mention to Swann this reference to him in the *Figaro*, my great-aunt dissuaded them. Whenever she saw in others an advantage, however trivial, which she herself lacked, she would persuade herself that it was no advantage at all, but a drawback, and would pity so as not to have to envy them.

"I don't think that would please him at all; I know very well that I should hate to see my name printed like that, as large as life, in the paper, and I shouldn't feel at all flattered if anyone spoke to me about it."

She did not, however, put any very great pressure upon my grandmother's sisters, for they, in their horror of vulgarity, had brought to such a fine art the concealment of a personal allusion in a wealth of ingenious circumlocution, that it would often pass unnoticed even by the person to whom it was addressed. As for my mother, her only thought was of trying to induce my father to speak to Swann, not about his wife but about his daughter, whom he worshipped, and for whose sake it was understood that he had ultimately made his unfortunate marriage.

"You need only say a word; just ask him how she is. It must be so very hard for him."

My father, however, was annoyed: "No, no; you have the most absurd ideas. It would be utterly ridiculous."

But the only one of us in whom the prospect of Swann's arrival gave rise to an unhappy foreboding was myself. This was because on the evenings when there were visitors, or just M. Swann, in the house, Mamma did not come up to my room. I dined before the

8. An Italian white wine. 9. (1796–1875), French landscape painter, very popular at the time. *Figaro*: Leading Parisian newspaper.

others, and afterwards came and sat at table until eight o'clock, when it was understood that I must go upstairs; that frail and precious kiss which Mamma used normally to bestow on me when I was in bed and just going to sleep had to be transported from the dining-room to my bedroom where I must keep it inviolate all the time that it took me to undress, without letting its sweet charm be broken, without letting its volatile essence diffuse itself and evaporate; and it was precisely on those very evenings when I needed to receive it with special care that I was obliged to take it, to snatch it brusquely and in public, without even having the time or the equanimity to bring to what I was doing the single-minded attention of lunatics who compel themselves to exclude all other thoughts from their minds while they are shutting a door, so that when the sickness of uncertainty sweeps over them again they can triumphantly oppose it with the recollection of the precise moment when they shut the door.

We were all in the garden when the double tinkle of the visitors' bell sounded shyly. Everyone knew that it must be Swann, and yet they looked at one another inquiringly and sent my grandmother to reconnoitre.

"See that you thank him intelligibly for the wine," my grandfather warned his two sisters-in-law. "You know how good it is, and the case is huge."

"Now, don't start whispering!" said my great-aunt. "How would you like to come into a house and find everyone muttering to themselves?"

"Ah! There's M. Swann," cried my father. "Let's ask him if he thinks it will be fine to-morrow."

My mother fancied that a word from her would wipe out all the distress which my family had contrived to cause Swann since his marriage. She found an opportunity to draw him aside for a moment. But I followed her: I could not bring myself to let her out of my sight while I felt that in a few minutes I should have to leave her in the dining-room and go up to my bed without the consoling thought, as on ordinary evenings, that she would come up later to kiss me.

"Now, M. Swann," she said, "do tell me about your daughter. I'm sure she already has a taste for beautiful things, like her papa."

"Come along and sit down here with us all on the verandah," said my grandfather, coming up to him. My mother had to abandon her quest, but managed to extract from the restriction itself a further delicate thought, like good poets whom the tyranny of rhyme forces into the discovery of their finest lines.

"We can talk about her again when we are by ourselves," she said, or rather whispered to Swann. "Only a mother is capable of understanding these things. I'm sure that hers would agree with me."

And so we all sat down round the iron table. I should have liked

not to think of the hours of anguish which I should have to spend that evening alone in my room, without being able to go to sleep: I tried to convince myself that they were of no importance since I should have forgotten them next morning, and to fix my mind on thoughts of the future which would carry me, as on a bridge, across the terrifying abyss that yawned at my feet. But my mind, strained by this foreboding, distended like the look which I shot at my mother, would not allow any extraneous impression to enter. Thoughts did indeed enter it, but only on the condition that they left behind them every element of beauty, or even of humour, by which I might have been distracted or beguiled. As a surgical patient, thanks to a local anaesthetic, can look on fully conscious while an operation is being performed upon him and yet feel nothing, I could repeat to myself some favourite lines, or watch my grandfather's efforts to talk to Swann about the Duc d' Audiffret-Pasquier,[1] without being able to kindle any emotion from the one or amusement from the other. Hardly had my grandfather begun to question Swann about that orator when one of my grandmother's sisters, in whose ears the question echoed like a solemn but untimely silence which her natural politeness bade her interrupt, addressed the other with:

"Just fancy, Flora, I met a young Swedish governess today who told me some most interesting things about the co-operative movement in Scandinavia. We really must have her to dine here one evening."

"To be sure!" said her sister Flora, "but I haven't wasted my time either. I met such a clever old gentleman at M. Vinteuil's who knows Maubant[2] quite well, and Maubant has told him every little thing about how he gets up his parts. It's the most interesting thing I ever heard. He's a neighbour of M. Vinteuil's, and I never knew; and he is so nice besides."

"M. Vinteuil is not the only one who has nice neighbours," cried my aunt Céline in a voice that was loud because of shyness and forced because of premeditation, darting, as she spoke, what she called a "significant glance" at Swann. And my aunt Flora, who realised that this veiled utterance was Céline's way of thanking Swann for the Asti, looked at him also with a blend of congratulation and irony, either because she simply wished to underline her sister's little witticism, or because she envied Swann his having inspired it, or because she imagined that he was embarrassed, and could not help having a little fun at his expense.

"I think it would be worth while," Flora went on, "to have this old gentleman to dinner. When you get him going on Maubant or

1. A fictitious nobleman. 2. Actor at the Comédie Française, the French national theater. *M. Vinteuil:* A fictitious composer and neighbor of the family.

Mme Materna[3] he will talk for hours on end."

"That must be delightful," sighed my grandfather, in whose mind nature had unfortunately forgotten to include any capacity whatsoever for becoming passionately interested in the Swedish co-operative movement or in the methods employed by Maubant to get up his parts, just as it had forgotten to endow my grandmother's two sisters with a grain of that precious salt which one has oneself to "add to taste" in order to extract any savour from a narrative of the private life of Molé or of the Comte de Paris.

"By the way," said Swann to my grandfather, "what I was going to tell you has more to do than you might think with what you were asking me just now, for in some respects there has been very little change. I came across a passage in Saint-Simon[4] this morning which would have amused you. It's in the volume which covers his mission to Spain; not one of the best, little more in fact than a journal, but at least a wonderfully well written journal, which fairly distinguishes it from the tedious journals we feel bound to read morning and evening."

"I don't agree with you: there are some days when I find reading the papers very pleasant indeed," my aunt Flora broke in, to show Swann that she had read the note about his Corot in the *Figaro*.

"Yes," aunt Céline went one better, "when they write about things or people in whom we are interested."

"I don't deny it," answered Swann in some bewilderment. "The fault I find with our journalism is that it forces us to take an interest in some fresh triviality or other every day, whereas only three or four books in a lifetime give us anything that is of real importance. Suppose that, every morning, when we tore the wrapper off our paper with fevered hands, a transmutation were to take place, and we were to find inside it—oh! I don't know; shall we say Pascal's *Pensées*?"[5] He articulated the title with an ironic emphasis so as not to appear pedantic. "And then, in the gilt and tooled volumes which we open once in ten years," he went on, showing that contempt for worldly matters which some men of the world like to affect, "we should read that the Queen of the Hellenes had arrived at Cannes, or that the Princesse de Léon had given a fancy dress ball. In that way we should arrive at a happy medium." But at once regretting that he had allowed himself to speak of serious matters even in jest, he added ironically: "What a fine conversation we're having! I can't think why we climb to these lofty heights," and then, turning to my grandfather: "Well,

3. Austrian soprano, who took part in the premiere of Wagner's *Ring* cycle at Bayreuth in 1876.
4. The memoirs of the Duc de Saint-Simon (1675–1755) describe court life and intrigue during the reigns of Louis XIV and Louis XV. He was sent to Spain in 1721 to arrange the marriage of Louis XV and the daughter of the King of Spain. 5. The *Thoughts* of the French mathematician and religious philosopher Blaise Pascal (1623–1662) are comments on the human condition, and one of the triumphant works of French classicism.

Saint-Simon tells how Maulévrier had had the audacity to try to shake hands with his sons. You remember how he says of Maulévrier, 'Never did I find in that coarse bottle anything but ill-humour, boorishness, and folly.' "[6]

"Coarse or not, I know bottles in which there is something very different," said Flora briskly, feeling bound to thank Swann as well as her sister, since the present of Asti had been addressed to them both. Céline laughed.

Swann was puzzled, but went on: "I cannot say whether it was ignorance or cozenage,' writes Saint-Simon. 'He tried to give his hand to my children. I noticed it in time to prevent him.' "

My grandfather was already in ecstasies over "ignorance or cozenage," but Mlle Céline—the name of Saint-Simon, a "man of letters," having arrested the complete paralysis of her auditory faculties—was indignant:

"What! You admire that? Well, that's a fine thing, I must say! But what's it supposed to mean? Isn't one man as good as the next? What difference can it make whether he's a duke or a groom so long as he's intelligent and kind? He had a fine way of bringing up his children, your Saint-Simon, if he didn't teach them to shake hands with all decent folk. Really and truly, it's abominable. And you dare to quote it!"

And my grandfather, utterly depressed, realising how futile it would be, against this opposition, to attempt to get Swann to tell him the stories which would have amused him, murmured to my mother: "Just tell me again that line of yours which always comforts me so much on these occasions. Oh, yes: 'What virtues, Lord, Thou makest us abhor!'[7] How good that is!"

I never took my eyes off my mother. I knew that when they were at table I should not be permitted to stay there for the whole of dinner-time, and that Mamma, for fear of annoying my father, would not allow me to kiss her several times in public, as I would have done in my room. And so I promised myself that in the dining-room, as they began to eat and drink and as I felt the hour approach, I would put beforehand into this kiss, which was bound to be so brief and furtive, everything that my own efforts could muster, would carefully choose in advance the exact spot on her cheek where I would imprint it, and would so prepare my thoughts as to be able, thanks to these mental preliminaries, to consecrate the whole of the minute Mamma would grant me to the sensation of her cheek against my lips, as a painter who can have his subject for short sittings only

6. Maulévrier was the French ambassador to Spain. Saint-Simon considered him of inferior birth, and refused to let his own children shake Maulévrier's hand. (*Memoirs*, vol. XXXIX.)
7. From *Pompey's Death* (line 1072), a tragedy by the French dramatist Pierre Corneille (1606–1684).

prepares his palette, and from what he remembers and from rough notes does in advance everything which he possibly can do in the sitter's absence. But to-night, before the dinner-bell had sounded, my grandfather said with unconscious cruelty: "The little man looks tired; he'd better go up to bed. Besides, we're dining late to-night."

And my father, who was less scrupulous than my grandmother or my mother in observing the letter of a treaty, went on: "Yes; run along; off to bed."

I would have kissed Mamma then and there, but at that moment the dinner-bell rang.

"No, no, leave your mother alone. You've said good night to one another, that's enough. These exhibitions are absurd. Go on upstairs."

And so I must set forth without viaticum;[8] must climb each step of the staircase "against my heart," as the saying is, climbing in opposition to my heart's desire, which was to return to my mother, since she had not, by kissing me, given my heart leave to accompany me forth. That hateful staircase, up which I always went so sadly, gave out a smell of varnish which had, as it were, absorbed and crystallised the special quality of sorrow that I felt each evening, and made it perhaps even crueller to my sensibility because, when it assumed this olfactory guise, my intellect was powerless to resist it. When we have gone to sleep with a raging toothache and are conscious of it only as of a little girl whom we attempt, time after time, to pull out of the water, or a line of Molière[9] which we repeat incessantly to ourselves, it is a great relief to wake up, so that our intelligence can disentangle the idea of toothache from any artificial semblance of heroism or rhythmic cadence. It was the converse of this relief which I felt when my anguish at having to go up to my room invaded my consciousness in a manner infinitely more rapid, instantaneous almost, a manner at once insidious and brutal, through the inhalation—far more poisonous than moral penetration—of the smell of varnish peculiar to that staircase.

Once in my room I had to stop every loophole, to close the shutters, to dig my own grave as I turned down the bedclothes, to wrap myself in the shroud of my nightshirt. But before burying myself in the iron bed which had been placed there because, on summer nights, I was too hot among the rep curtains of the four-poster,[1] I was stirred to revolt, and attempted the desperate stratagem of a condemned prisoner. I wrote to my mother begging her to come upstairs for an important reason which I could not put in writing. My fear was that Françoise, my aunt's cook who used to be put in charge of me when I was at Combray, might refuse to take my note. I had a suspicion

8. The communion wafer and wine given to the dying in Catholic rites. 9. (1622–1673), French dramatist. 1. Bed with corner pillars to support a canopy and curtains. *rep:* a heavy, ribbed fabric.

that, in her eyes, to carry a message to my mother when there was a guest would appear as flatly inconceivable as for the door-keeper of a theatre to hand a letter to an actor upon the stage. On the subject of things which might or might not be done she possessed a code at once imperious, abundant, subtle, and uncompromising on points themselves imperceptible or irrelevant, which gave it a resemblance to those ancient laws which combine such cruel ordinances as the massacre of infants at the breast with prohibitions of exaggerated refinement against "seething the kid in his mother's milk," or "eating of the sinew which is upon the hollow of the thigh."[2] This code, judging by the sudden obstinacy which she would put into her refusal to carry out certain of our instructions, seemed to have provided for social complexities and refinements of etiquette which nothing in Françoise's background or in her career as a servant in a village household could have put into her head; and we were obliged to assume that there was latent in her some past existence in the ancient history of France, noble and little understood, as in those manufacturing towns where old mansions still testify to their former courtly days, and chemical workers toil among delicately sculptured scenes from *Le Miracle de Théophile* or *Les quatre fils Aymon*.[3]

In this particular instance, the article of her code which made it highly improbable that—barring an outbreak of fire—Françoise would go down and disturb Mamma in the presence of M. Swann for so unimportant a person as myself was one embodying the respect she showed not only for the family (as for the dead, for the clergy, or for royalty), but also for the stranger within our gates; a respect which I should perhaps have found touching in a book, but which never failed to irritate me on her lips, because of the solemn and sentimental tones in which she would express it, and which irritated me more than usual this evening when the sacred character with which she invested the dinner-party might have the effect of making her decline to disturb its ceremonial. But to give myself a chance of success I had no hesitation in lying, telling her that it was not in the least myself who had wanted to write to Mamma, but Mamma who, on saying good night to me, had begged me not to forget to send her an answer about something she had asked me to look for, and that she would certainly be very angry if this note were not taken to her. I think that Françoise disbelieved me, for, like those primitive men whose senses were so much keener than our own, she could immediately detect, from signs imperceptible to the rest of us, the truth or falsehood of anything that we might wish to conceal from her. She studied the envelope for five minutes as though an examination of

2. Refers to the strict dietary laws of Deuteronomy 14:21 and Genesis 32:32. 3. Théophile was saved from damnation by the Virgin Mary after having signed a pact with the devil, and the four sons of Aymon were heroic knights who together rode the magic horse Bayard.

the paper itself and the look of my handwriting could enlighten her as to the nature of the contents, or tell her to which article of her code she ought to refer the matter. Then she went out with an air of resignation which seemed to imply: "It's hard lines on parents having a child like that."

A moment later she returned to say that they were still at the ice stage and that it was impossible for the butler to deliver the note at once, in front of everybody; but that when the finger-bowls were put round he would find a way of slipping it into Mamma's hand. At once my anxiety subsided; it was now no longer (as it had been a moment ago) until to-morrow that I had lost my mother, since my little note—though it would annoy her, no doubt, and doubly so because this stratagem would make me ridiculous in Swann's eyes—would at least admit me, invisible and enraptured, into the same room as herself, would whisper about me into her ear; since that forbidden and unfriendly dining-room, where but a moment ago the ice itself—with burned nuts in it—and the finger-bowls seemed to me to be concealing pleasures that were baleful and of a mortal sadness because Mamma was tasting of them while I was far away, had opened its doors to me and, like a ripe fruit which bursts through its skin, was going to pour out into my intoxicated heart the sweetness of Mamma's attention while she was reading what I had written. Now I was no longer separated from her; the barriers were down; an exquisite thread united us. Besides, that was not all: for surely Mamma would come.

As for the agony through which I had just passed, I imagined that Swann would have laughed heartily at it if he had read my letter and had guessed its purpose; whereas, on the contrary, as I was to learn in due course, a similar anguish[4] had been the bane of his life for many years, and no one perhaps could have understood my feelings at that moment so well as he; to him, the anguish that comes from knowing that the creature one adores is in some place of enjoyment where oneself is not and cannot follow—to him that anguish came through love, to which it is in a sense predestined, by which it will be seized upon and exploited; but when, as had befallen me, it possesses one's soul before love has yet entered into one's life, then it must drift, awaiting love's coming, vague and free, without precise attachment, at the disposal of one sentiment to-day, of another to-morrow, of filial piety or affection for a friend. And the joy with which I first bound myself apprentice, when Françoise returned to tell me that my letter would be delivered, Swann, too, had known well—that false joy which a friend or relative of the woman we love can give us, when, on his arrival at the house or theatre where she

4. That is, his unhappy love for Odette de Crécy, described in *Swann in Love*.

is to be found, for some ball or party or "first-night" at which he is to meet her, he sees us wandering outside, desperately awaiting some opportunity of communicating with her. He recognises us, greets us familiarly, and asks what we are doing there. And when we invent a story of having some urgent message to give to his relative or friend, he assures us that nothing could be simpler, takes us in at the door, and promises to send her down to us in five minutes. How we love him—as at that moment I loved Françoise—the good-natured intermediary who by a single word has made supportable, human, almost propitious the inconceivable, infernal scene of gaiety in the thick of which we had been imagining swarms of enemies, perverse and seductive, beguiling away from us, even making laugh at us, the woman we love! If we are to judge of them by him—this relative who has accosted us and who is himself an initiate in those cruel mysteries—then the other guests cannot be so very demoniacal. Those inaccessible and excruciating hours during which she was about to taste of unknown pleasures—suddenly, through an unexpected breach, we have broken into them; suddenly we can picture to ourselves, we possess, we intervene upon, we have almost created, one of the moments the succession of which would have composed those hours, a moment as real as all the rest, if not actually more important to us because our mistress is more intensely a part of it: namely, the moment in which he goes to tell her that we are waiting below. And doubtless the other moments of the party would not have been so very different from this one, would be no more exquisite, no more calculated to make us suffer, since this kind friend has assured us that "Of course, she will be delighted to come down! It will be far more amusing for her to talk to you than to be bored up there." Alas! Swann had learned by experience that the good intentions of a third party are powerless to influence a woman who is annoyed to find herself pursued even into a ballroom by a man she does not love. Too often, the kind friend comes down again alone.

My mother did not appear, but without the slightest consideration for my self-respect (which depended upon her keeping up the fiction that she had asked me to let her know the result of my search for something or other) told Françoise to tell me, in so many words: "There is no answer"—words I have so often, since then, heard the hall-porters in grand hotels and the flunkeys in gambling-clubs and the like repeat to some poor girl who replies in bewilderment: "What! he said nothing? It's not possible. You did give him my letter, didn't you? Very well, I shall wait a little longer." And, just as she invariably protests that she does not need the extra gas which the porter offers to light for her, and sits on there, hearing nothing further except an occasional remark on the weather which the porter exchanges with a bell-hop whom he will send off suddenly, when he notices

the time, to put some customer's wine on the ice, so, having declined Françoise's offer to make me some tea or to stay beside me, I let her go off again to the pantry, and lay down and shut my eyes, trying not to hear the voices of my family who were drinking their coffee in the garden.

But after a few seconds I realised that, by writing that note to Mamma, by approaching—at the risk of making her angry—so near to her that I felt I could reach out and grasp the moment in which I should see her again, I had cut myself off from the possibility of going to sleep until I actually had seen her, and my heart began to beat more and more painfully as I increased my agitation by ordering myself to keep calm and to acquiesce in my ill-fortune. Then, suddenly, my anxiety subsided, a feeling of intense happiness coursed through me, as when a strong medicine begins to take effect and one's pain vanishes: I had formed a resolution to abandon all attempts to go to sleep without seeing Mamma, had made up my mind to kiss her at all costs, even though this meant the certainty of being in disgrace with her for long afterwards—when she herself came up to bed. The calm which succeeded my anguish filled me with an extraordinary exhilaration, no less than my sense of expectation, my thirst for and my fear of danger. Noiselessly I opened the window and sat down on the foot of my bed. I hardly dared to move in case they should hear me from below. Outside, things too seemed frozen, rapt in a mute intentness not to disturb the moonlight which, duplicating each of them and throwing it back by the extension in front of it of a shadow denser and more concrete than its substance, had made the whole landscape at once thinner and larger, like a map which, after being folded up, is spread out upon the ground. What had to move—a leaf of the chestnut-tree, for instance—moved. But its minute quivering, total, self-contained, finished down to its minutest gradation and its last delicate tremor, did not impinge upon the rest of the scene, did not merge with it, remained circumscribed. Exposed upon this surface of silence which absorbed nothing of them, the most distant sounds, those which must have come from gardens at the far end of the town, could be distinguished with such exact "finish" that the impression they gave of coming from a distance seemed due only to their "pianissimo" execution, like those movements on muted strings so well performed by the orchestra of the Conservatoire[5] that, even though one does not miss a single note, one thinks nonetheless that they are being played somewhere outside, a long way from the concert hall, so that all the old subscribers—my grandmother's sisters too, when Swann had given them his seats—used to strain their ears as if they had caught the distant

5. The national music conservatory in Paris.

approach of an army on the march, which had not yet rounded the corner of the Rue de Trévise.[6]

I was well aware that I had placed myself in a position than which none could be counted upon to involve me in graver consequences at my parents' hands; consequences far graver, indeed, than a stranger would have imagined, and such as (he would have thought) could follow only some really shameful misdemeanour. But in the upbringing which they had given me faults were not classified in the same order as in that of other children, and I had been taught to place at the head of the list (doubtless because there was no other class of faults from which I needed to be more carefully protected) those in which I can now distinguish the common feature that one succumbs to them by yielding to a nervous impulse. But such a phrase had never been uttered in my hearing; no one had yet accounted for my temptations in a way which might have led me to believe that there was some excuse for my giving in to them, or that I was actually incapable of holding out against them. Yet I could easily recognise this class of transgressions by the anguish of mind which preceded as well as by the rigour of the punishment which followed them; and I knew that what I had just done was in the same category as certain other sins for which I had been severely punished, though infinitely more serious than they. When I went out to meet my mother on her way up to bed, and when she saw that I had stayed up in order to say good night to her again in the passage, I should not be allowed to stay in the house a day longer, I should be packed off to school[7] next morning; so much was certain. Very well: had I been obliged, the next moment, to hurl myself out of the window, I should still have preferred such a fate. For what I wanted now was Mamma, to say good night to her. I had gone too far along the road which led to the fulfilment of this desire to be able to retrace my steps.

I could hear my parents' footsteps as they accompanied Swann to the gate, and when the clanging of the bell assured me that he had really gone, I crept to the window. Mamma was asking my father if he had thought the lobster good, and whether M. Swann had had a second helping of the coffee-and-pistachio ice. "I thought it rather so-so," she was saying. "Next time we shall have to try another flavour."

"I can't tell you," said my great-aunt, "what a change I find in Swann. He is quite antiquated!" She had grown so accustomed to seeing Swann always in the same stage of adolescence that it was a shock to her to find him suddenly less young than the age she still attributed to him. And the others too were beginning to remark in Swann that abnormal, excessive, shameful and deserved senescence

6. A street in Combray. 7. Boarding school.

of bachelors, of all those for whom it seems that the great day which knows no morrow must be longer than for other men, since for them it is void of promise, and from its dawn the moments steadily accumulate without any subsequent partition[8] among offspring.

"I fancy he has a lot of trouble with that wretched wife of his, who lives with a certain Monsieur de Charlus,[9] as all Combray knows. It's the talk of the town."

My mother observed that, in spite of this, he had looked much less unhappy of late. "And he doesn't nearly so often do that trick of his, so like his father, of wiping his eyes and drawing his hand across his forehead. I think myself that in his heart of hearts he no longer loves that woman."

"Why, of course he doesn't," answered my grandfather. "He wrote me a letter about it, ages ago, to which I took care to pay no attention, but it left no doubt as to his feelings, or at any rate his love, for his wife. Hullo! you two; you never thanked him for the Asti," he went on, turning to his sisters-in-law.

"What! we never thanked him? I think, between you and me, that I put it to him quite neatly," replied my aunt Flora.

"Yes, you managed it very well; I admired you for it," said my aunt Céline.

"But you did it very prettily, too."

"Yes; I was rather proud of my remark about 'nice neighbours.' "

"What! Do you call that thanking him?" shouted my grandfather. "I heard that all right, but devil take me if I guessed it was meant for Swann. You may be quite sure he never noticed it."

"Come, come; Swann isn't a fool. I'm sure he understood. You didn't expect me to tell him the number of bottles, or to guess what he paid for them."

My father and mother were left alone and sat down for a moment; then my father said: "Well, shall we go up to bed?"

"As you wish, dear, though I don't feel at all sleepy. I don't know why; it can't be the coffee-ice—it wasn't strong enough to keep me awake like this. But I see a light in the servants' hall: poor Françoise has been sitting up for me, so I'll get her to unhook me while you go and undress."

My mother opened the latticed door which led from the hall to the staircase. Presently I heard her coming upstairs to close her window. I went quietly into the passage; my heart was beating so violently that I could hardly move, but at least it was throbbing no longer with anxiety, but with terror and joy. I saw in the well of the stair a light coming upwards, from Mamma's candle. Then I saw Mamma herself and I threw myself upon her. For an instant she

8. Sharing, as under a will. 9. Brother of the Duc de Guermantes.

looked at me in astonishment, not realising what could have happened. Then her face assumed an expression of anger. She said not a single word to me; and indeed I used to go for days on end without being spoken to, for far more venial offences than this. A single word from Mamma would have been an admission that further intercourse with me was within the bounds of possibility, and that might perhaps have appeared to me more terrible still, as indicating that, with such a punishment as was in store for me, mere silence and black looks would have been puerile. A word from her then would have implied the false calm with which one addresses a servant to whom one has just decided to give notice; the kiss one bestows on a son who is being packed off to enlist, which would have been denied him if it had merely been a matter of being angry with him for a few days. But she heard my father coming from the dressing-room, where he had gone to take off his clothes, and, to avoid the "scene" which he would make if he saw me, she said to me in a voice half-stifled with anger: "Off you go at once. Do you want your father to see you waiting there like an idiot?"

But I implored her again: "Come and say good night to me," terrified as I saw the light from my father's candle already creeping up the wall, but also making use of his approach as a means of blackmail, in the hope that my mother, not wishing him to find me there, as find me he must if she continued to refuse me, would give in and say: "Go back to your room. I will come."

Too late: my father was upon us. Instinctively I murmured, though no one heard me, "I'm done for!"

I was not, however. My father used constantly to refuse to let me do things which were quite clearly allowed by the more liberal charters granted me by my mother and grandmother, because he paid no heed to "principles," and because for him there was no such thing as the "rule of law."[1] For some quite irrelevant reason, or for no reason at all, he would at the last moment prevent me from taking some particular walk, one so regular, so hallowed, that to deprive me of it was a clear breach of faith; or again, as he had done this evening, long before the appointed hour he would snap out: "Run along up to bed now; no excuses!" But at the same time, because he was devoid of principles (in my grandmother's sense), he could not, strictly speaking, be called intransigent. He looked at me for a moment with an air of surprise and annoyance, and then when Mamma had told him, not without some embarrassment, what had happened, said to her: "Go along with him, then. You said just now that you

1. Reference to the *ius gentium*, the "law of nations" or natural law supposed to govern international and public relations. Marcel sees the relationship between himself and his mother and grandmother as a social contract; his father is the unpredictable tyrant.

didn't feel very sleepy, so stay in his room for a little. I don't need anything."

"But, my dear," my mother answered timidly, "whether or not I feel sleepy is not the point; we mustn't let the child get into the habit . . ."

"There's no question of getting into a habit," said my father, with a shrug of the shoulders; "you can see quite well that the child is unhappy. After all, we aren't jailers. You'll end by making him ill, and a lot of good that will do. There are two beds in his room; tell Françoise to make up the big one for you, and stay with him for the rest of the night. Anyhow, I'm off to bed; I'm not so nervy as you. Good night."

It was impossible for me to thank my father; he would have been exasperated by what he called mawkishness. I stood there, not daring to move; he was still in front of us, a tall figure in his white night-shirt, crowned with the pink and violet cashmere scarf which he used to wrap around his head since he had begun to suffer from neuralgia, standing like Abraham in the engraving after Benozzo Gozzoli[2] which M. Swann had given me, telling Sarah that she must tear herself away from Isaac. Many years have passed since that night. The wall of the staircase up which I had watched the light of his candle gradually climb was long ago demolished. And in myself, too, many things have perished which I imagined would last for ever, and new ones have arisen, giving birth to new sorrows and new joys which in those days I could not have foreseen, just as now the old are hard to understand. It is a long time, too, since my father has been able to say to Mamma: "Go along with the child." Never again will such moments be possible for me. But of late I have been increasingly able to catch, if I listen attentively, the sound of the sobs which I had the strength to control in my father's presence, and which broke out only when I found myself alone with Mamma. In reality their echo has never ceased; and it is only because life is now growing more and more quiet round about me that I hear them anew, like those convent bells which are so effectively drowned during the day by the noises of the street that one would suppose them to have stopped, until they ring out again through the silent evening air.

Mamma spent that night in my room: when I had just committed a sin so deadly that I expected to be banished from the household, my parents gave me a far greater concession than I could ever have won as the reward of a good deed. Even at the moment when it manifested itself in this crowning mercy, my father's behaviour towards me still retained that arbitrary and unwarranted quality which was so

2. (1420–1497). Florentine painter whose frescoes at Pisa contain scenes from the life of the Hebrew patriarch Abraham.

characteristic of him and which arose from the fact that his actions were generally dictated by chance expediencies rather than based on any formal plan. And perhaps even what I called his severity, when he sent me off to bed, deserved that title less than my mother's or my grandmother's attitude, for his nature, which in some respects differed more than theirs from my own, had probably prevented him from realising until then how wretched I was every evening, something which my mother and grandmother knew well; but they loved me enough to be unwilling to spare me that suffering, which they hoped to teach me to overcome, so as to reduce my nervous sensibility and to strengthen my will. Whereas my father, whose affection for me was of another kind, would not, I suspect, have had the same courage, for as soon as he had grasped the fact that I was unhappy he had said to my mother: "Go and comfort him."

Mamma stayed that night in my room, and it seemed that she did not wish to mar by recrimination those hours which were so different from anything that I had had a right to expect, for when Françoise (who guessed that something extraordinary must have happened when she saw Mamma sitting by my side, holding my hand and letting me cry unchided) said to her: "But, Madame, what is young master crying for?" she replied: "Why, Françoise, he doesn't know himself: it's his nerves. Make up the big bed for me quickly and then go off to your own." And thus for the first time my unhappiness was regarded no longer as a punishable offence but as an involuntary ailment which had been officially recognised, a nervous condition for which I was in no way responsible: I had the consolation of no longer having to mingle apprehensive scruples with the bitterness of my tears; I could weep henceforth without sin. I felt no small degree of pride, either, in Françoise's presence at this return to humane conditions which, not an hour after Mamma had refused to come up to my room and had sent the snubbing message that I was to go to sleep, raised me to the dignity of a grown-up person, brought me of a sudden to a sort of puberty of sorrow, a manumission of tears. I ought to have been happy; I was not. It struck me that my mother had just made a first concession which must have been painful to her, that it was a first abdication on her part from the ideal she had formed for me, and that for the first time she who was so brave had to confess herself beaten. It struck me that if I had just won a victory it was over her, that I had succeeded, as sickness or sorrow or age might have succeeded, in relaxing her will, in undermining her judgment; a black date in the calendar. And if I had dared now, I should have said to Mamma: "No, I don't want you to, you mustn't sleep here." But I was conscious of the practical wisdom, of what would nowadays be called the realism, with which she tempered the ardent idealism of my grandmother's nature, and I knew that now the mischief was

done she would prefer to let me enjoy the soothing pleasure of her company, and not to disturb my father again. Certainly my mother's beautiful face seemed to shine again with youth that evening, as she sat gently holding my hands and trying to check my tears; but this was just what I felt should not have been; her anger would have saddened me less than this new gentleness, unknown to my childhood experience; I felt that I had with an impious and secret finger traced a first wrinkle upon her soul and brought out a first white hair on her head. This thought redoubled my sobs, and then I saw that Mamma, who had never allowed herself to indulge in any undue emotion with me, was suddenly overcome by my tears and had to struggle to keep back her own. When she realised that I had noticed this, she said to me with a smile: "Why, my little buttercup, my little canary-boy, he's going to make Mamma as silly as himself if this goes on. Look, since you can't sleep, and Mamma can't either, we mustn't go on in this stupid way; we must do something; I'll get one of your books." But I had none there. "Would you like me to get out the books now that your grandmother is going to give you for your birthday? Just think it over first, and don't be disappointed if there's nothing new for you then."

I was only too delighted, and Mamma went to fetch a parcel of books of which I could not distinguish, through the paper in which they were wrapped, any more than their short, wide format but which, even at this first glimpse, brief and obscure as it was, bade fair to eclipse already the paintbox of New Year's Day and the silkworms of the year before. The books were *La Mare au Diable*, *François le Champi*, *La Petite Fadette* and *Les Maîtres Sonneurs*.[3] My grandmother, as I learned afterwards, had at first chosen Musset's poems, a volume of Rousseau, and *Indiana*; for while she considered light reading as unwholesome as sweets and cakes, she did not reflect that the strong breath of genius might have upon the mind even of a child an influence at once more dangerous and less invigorating than that of fresh air and sea breezes upon his body. But when my father had almost called her an imbecile on learning the names of the books she proposed to give me,[4] she had journeyed back by herself to Jouy-le-Vicomte to the bookseller's, so that there should be no danger of my not having my present in time (it was a boiling hot day, and she had come home so unwell that the doctor had warned my mother not to allow her to tire herself so), and had fallen back upon the four pastoral novels of George Sand.

"My dear," she had said to Mamma, "I could not bring myself to

3. *The Devil's Pool*, *François the Foundling Discovered in the Fields*, *Little Fadette*, and *The Master Bellringers*, novels of idealized country life by the French woman writer George Sand (1806–1876). 4. The works of Alfred de Musset (1810–1857) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), often romantic and sometimes confessional, and some works by Sand (*Indiana* was a novel of free love), would be thought unsuitable reading for a young child.

give the child anything that was not well written."

The truth was that she could never permit herself to buy anything from which no intellectual profit was to be derived, above all the profit which fine things afford us by teaching us to seek our pleasures elsewhere than in the barren satisfaction of worldly wealth. Even when she had to make someone a present of the kind called "useful," when she had to give an armchair or some table-silver or a walking-stick, she would choose "antiques," as though their long desuetude had effaced from them any semblance of utility and fitted them rather to instruct us in the lives of the men of other days than to serve the common requirements of our own. She would have liked me to have in my room photographs of ancient buildings or of beautiful places. But at the moment of buying them, and for all that the subject of the picture had an aesthetic value, she would find that vulgarity and utility had too prominent a part in them, through the mechanical nature of their reproduction by photography. She attempted by a subterfuge, if not to eliminate altogether this commercial banality, at least to minimise it, to supplant it to a certain extent with what was art still, to introduce, as it were, several "thicknesses" of art: instead of photographs of Chartres Cathedral, of the Fountains of Saint-Cloud, or of Vesuvius, she would inquire of Swann whether some great painter had not depicted them, and preferred to give me photographs of "Chartres Cathedral" after Corot, of the "Fountains of Saint-Cloud" after Hubert Robert, and of "Vesuvius" after Turner,[5] which were a stage higher in the scale of art. But although the photographer had been prevented from reproducing directly these masterpieces or beauties of nature, and had there been replaced by a great artist, he resumed his odious position when it came to reproducing the artist's interpretation. Accordingly, having to reckon again with vulgarity, my grandmother would endeavour to postpone the moment of contact still further. She would ask Swann if the picture had not been engraved, preferring, when possible, old engravings with some interest of association apart from themselves, such, for example, as show us a masterpiece in a state in which we can no longer see it to-day (like Morghen's print of Leonardo's "Last Supper" before its defacement).[6] It must be admitted that the results of this method of interpreting the art of making presents were not always happy. The idea which I formed of Venice, from a drawing by Titian[7] which is supposed to have the lagoon in the background, was certainly far less accurate than what I should have derived from ordinary

5. The Cathedral of Chartres, painted in 1830 by Corot; the fountains in the old park at Saint-Cloud, outside Paris, painted by Hubert Robert (1733–1809), and Vesuvius, the famous volcano near Naples, painted by J. M. W. Turner (1775–1851). 6. Leonardo da Vinci's *Last Supper* was the subject of a famous engraving by Morghen, a late eighteenth-century engraver. The paints in the original fresco had deteriorated rapidly, and a major restoration took place in the nineteenth century. 7. Venetian painter (1477–1576).

photographs. We could no longer keep count in the family (when my great-aunt wanted to draw up an indictment of my grandmother) of all the armchairs she had presented to married couples, young and old, which on a first attempt to sit down upon them had at once collapsed beneath the weight of their recipients. But my grandmother would have thought it sordid to concern herself too closely with the solidity of any piece of furniture in which could still be discerned a flourish, a smile, a brave conceit of the past. And even what in such pieces answered a material need, since it did so in a manner to which we are no longer accustomed, charmed her like those old forms of speech in which we can still see traces of a metaphor whose fine point has been worn away by the rough usage of our modern tongue. As it happened, the pastoral novels of George Sand which she was giving me for my birthday were regular lumber-rooms full of expressions that have fallen out of use and become quaint and picturesque, and are now only to be found in country dialects. And my grandmother had bought them in preference to other books, as she would more readily have taken a house with a gothic dovecot or some other such piece of antiquity as will exert a benign influence on the mind by giving it a hankering for impossible journeys through the realms of time.

Mamma sat down by my bed; she had chosen *François le Champi*, whose reddish cover and incomprehensible title[8] gave it, for me, a distinct personality and a mysterious attraction. I had not then read any real novels. I had heard it said that George Sand was a typical novelist. This predisposed me to imagine that *François le Champi* contained something inexpressibly delicious. The narrative devices designed to arouse curiosity or melt to pity, certain modes of expression which disturb or sadden the reader, and which, with a little experience, he may recognise as common to a great many novels, seemed to me—for whom a new book was not one of a number of similar objects but, as it were, a unique person, absolutely self-contained—simply an intoxicating distillation of the peculiar essence of *François le Champi*. Beneath the everyday incidents, the ordinary objects and common words, I sensed a strange and individual tone of voice. The plot began to unfold: to me it seemed all the more obscure because in those days, when I read, I used often to daydream about something quite different for page after page. And the gaps which this habit left in my knowledge of the story were widened by the fact that when it was Mamma who was reading to me aloud she left all the love-scenes out. And so all the odd changes which take place in the relations between the miller's wife and the boy, changes which only the gradual dawning of love can explain, seemed to me

8. *Champi* is an old French word the child Marcel would not have known.

steeped in a mystery the key to which (I readily believed) lay in that strange and mellifluous name of *Champi*, which invested the boy who bore it, I had no idea why, with its own vivid, ruddy, charming colour. If my mother was not a faithful reader, she was none the less an admirable one, when reading a work in which she found the note of true feeling, in the respectful simplicity of her interpretation and the beauty and sweetness of her voice. Even in ordinary life, when it was not works of art but men and women whom she was moved to pity or admire, it was touching to observe with what deference she would banish from her voice, her gestures, from her whole conversation, now the note of gaiety which might have distressed some mother who had once lost a child, now the recollection of an event or anniversary which might have reminded some old gentleman of the burden of his years, now the household topic which might have bored some young man of letters. And so, when she read aloud the prose of George Sand, prose which is everywhere redolent of that generosity and moral distinction which Mamma had learned from my grandmother to place above all other qualities in life, and which I was not to teach her until much later to refrain from placing above all other qualities in literature too, taking pains to banish from her voice any pettiness or affectation which might have choked that powerful stream of language, she supplied all the natural tenderness, all the lavish sweetness which they demanded to sentences which seemed to have been composed for her voice and which were all, so to speak, within the compass of her sensibility. She found, to tackle them in the required tone, the warmth of feeling which pre-existed and dictated them, but which is not to be found in the words themselves, and by this means she smoothed away, as she read, any harshness or discordance in the tenses of verbs, endowing the imperfect and the preterite[9] with all the sweetness to be found in generosity, all the melancholy to be found in love, guiding the sentence that was drawing to a close towards the one that was about to begin, now hastening, now slackening the pace of the syllables so as to bring them, despite their differences of quantity, into a uniform rhythm, and breathing into this quite ordinary prose a kind of emotional life and continuity.

My aching heart was soothed; I let myself be borne upon the current of this gentle night on which I had my mother by my side. I knew that such a night could not be repeated; that the strongest desire I had in the world, namely, to keep my mother in my room through the sad hours of darkness, ran too much counter to general requirements and to the wishes of others for such a concession as had been granted me this evening to be anything but a rare and artificial

9. The imperfect is the tense of continued and incomplete action in the past, while the preterite describes a single completed action.

exception. To-morrow night my anguish would return and Mamma would not stay by my side. But when my anguish was assuaged, I could no longer understand it; besides, to-morrow was still a long way off; I told myself that I should still have time to take preventive action, although that time could bring me no access of power since these things were in no way dependent upon the exercise of my will, and seemed not quite inevitable only because they were still separated from me by this short interval.

And so it was that, for a long time afterwards, when I lay awake at night and revived old memories of Combray, I saw no more of it than this sort of luminous panel, sharply defined against a vague and shadowy background, like the panels which the glow of a Bengal light[1] or a searchlight beam will cut out and illuminate in a building the other parts of which remain plunged in darkness: broad enough at its base, the little parlour, the dining-room, the opening of the dark path from which M. Swann, the unwitting author of my sufferings, would emerge, the hall through which I would journey to the first step of that staircase, so painful to climb, which constituted, all by itself, the slender cone of this irregular pyramid; and, at the summit, my bedroom, with the little passage through whose glazed[2] door Mamma would enter; in a word, seen always at the same evening hour, isolated from all its possible surroundings, detached and solitary against the dark background, the bare minimum of scenery necessary (like the decor one sees prescribed on the title-page of an old play, for its performance in the provinces) to the drama of my undressing; as though all Combray had consisted of but two floors joined by a slender staircase, and as though there had been no time there but seven o'clock at night. I must own[3] that I could have assured any questioner that Combray did include other scenes and did exist at other hours than these. But since the facts which I should then have recalled would have been prompted only by voluntary memory, the memory of the intellect, and since the pictures which that kind of memory shows us preserve nothing of the past itself, I should never have had any wish to ponder over this residue of Combray. To me it was in reality all dead.

Permanently dead? Very possibly.

There is a large element of chance in these matters, and a second chance occurrence, that of our own death, often prevents us from awaiting for any length of time the favours of the first.

I feel that there is much to be said for the Celtic belief that the souls of those whom we have lost are held captive in some inferior being, in an animal, in a plant, in some inanimate object, and thus effectively lost to us until the day (which to many never comes) when

1. Fireworks. 2. I.e., with glass panes. 3. Admit.

we happen to pass by the tree or to obtain possession of the object which forms their prison.[4] Then they start and tremble, they call us by our name, and as soon as we have recognised their voice the spell is broken. Delivered by us, they have overcome death and return to share our life.

And so it is with our own past. It is a labour in vain to attempt to recapture it: all the efforts of our intellect must prove futile. The past is hidden somewhere outside the realm, beyond the reach of intellect, in some material object (in the sensation which that material object will give us) of which we have no inkling. And it depends on chance whether or not we come upon this object before we ourselves must die.

Many years had elapsed during which nothing of Combray, save what was comprised in the theatre and the drama of my going to bed there, had any existence for me, when one day in winter, on my return home, my mother, seeing that I was cold, offered me some tea, a thing I did not ordinarily take. I declined at first, and then, for no particular reason, changed my mind. She sent for one of those squat, plump little cakes called "petites madeleines," which look as though they had been moulded in the fluted valve of a scallop shell. And soon, mechanically, dispirited after a dreary day with the prospect of a depressing morrow, I raised to my lips a spoonful of the tea in which I had soaked a morsel of the cake. No sooner had the warm liquid mixed with the crumbs touched my palate than a shudder ran through me and I stopped, intent upon the extraordinary thing that was happening to me. An exquisite pleasure had invaded my senses, something isolated, detached, with no suggestion of its origin. And at once the vicissitudes of life had become indifferent to me, its disasters innocuous, its brevity illusory—this new sensation having had on me the effect which love has of filling me with a precious essence; or rather this essence was not in me, it *was* me. I had ceased now to feel mediocre, contingent, mortal. Whence could it have come to me, this all-powerful joy? I sensed that it was connected with the taste of the tea and the cake, but that it infinitely transcended those savours, could not, indeed, be of the same nature. Whence did it come? What did it mean? How could I seize and apprehend it?

I drink a second mouthful, in which I find nothing more than in the first, then a third, which gives me rather less than the second. It is time to stop; the potion is losing its magic. It is plain that the truth I am seeking lies not in the cup but in myself. The drink has called it into being, but does not know it, and can only repeat indefinitely, with a progressive diminution of strength, the same message which I cannot interpret, though I hope at least to be able to call it forth

4. A belief attributed to Druids, the priests of the Celtic peoples.

again and to find it there presently, intact and at my disposal, for my final enlightenment. I put down the cup and examine my own mind. It alone can discover the truth. But how? What an abyss of uncertainty, whenever the mind feels overtaken by itself; when it, the seeker, is at the same time the dark region through which it must go seeking and where all its equipment will avail it nothing. Seek? More than that: create. It is face to face with something which does not yet exist, to which it alone can give reality and substance, which it alone can bring into the light of day.

And I begin again to ask myself what it could have been, this unremembered state which brought with it no logical proof, but the indisputable evidence, of its felicity, its reality, and in whose presence other states of consciousness melted and vanished. I decide to attempt to make it reappear. I retrace my thoughts to the moment at which I drank the first spoonful of tea. I rediscover the same state, illuminated by no fresh light. I ask my mind to make one further effort, to bring back once more the fleeting sensation. And so that nothing may interrupt it in its course I shut out every obstacle, every extraneous idea, I stop my ears and inhibit all attention against the sounds from the next room. And then, feeling that my mind is tiring itself without having any success to report, I compel it for a change to enjoy the distraction which I have just denied it, to think of other things, to rest and refresh itself before making a final effort. And then for the second time I clear an empty space in front of it; I place in position before my mind's eye the still recent taste of that first mouthful, and I feel something start within me, something that leaves its resting-place and attempts to rise, something that has been embedded like an anchor at a great depth; I do not know yet what it is, but I can feel it mounting slowly; I can measure the resistance, I can hear the echo of great spaces traversed.

Undoubtedly what is thus palpitating in the depths of my being must be the image, the visual memory which, being linked to that taste, is trying to follow it into my conscious mind. But its struggles are too far off, too confused and chaotic; scarcely can I perceive the neutral glow into which the elusive whirling medley of stirred-up colours is fused, and I cannot distinguish its form, cannot invite it, as the one possible interpreter, to translate for me the evidence of its contemporary, its inseparable paramour, the taste, cannot ask it to inform me what special circumstance is in question, from what period in my past life.

Will it ultimately reach the clear surface of my consciousness, this memory, this old, dead moment which the magnetism of an identical moment has travelled so far to importune, to disturb, to raise up out of the very depths of my being? I cannot tell. Now I feel nothing; it has stopped, has perhaps sunk back into its darkness, from which

who can say whether it will ever rise again? Ten times over I must essay the task, must lean down over the abyss. And each time the cowardice that deters us from every difficult task, every important enterprise, has urged me to leave the thing alone, to drink my tea and to think merely of the worries of to-day and my hopes for to-morrow, which can be brooded over painlessly.

And suddenly the memory revealed itself. The taste was that of the little piece of madeleine which on Sunday mornings at Combray (because on those mornings I did not go out before mass), when I went to say good morning to her in her bedroom, my aunt Léonie used to give me, dipping it first in her own cup of tea or tisane. The sight of the little madeleine had recalled nothing to my mind before I tasted it; perhaps because I had so often seen such things in the meantime, without tasting them, on the trays in pastry-cooks' windows, that their image had dissociated itself from those Combray days to take its place among others more recent; perhaps because of those memories, so long abandoned and put out of mind, nothing now survived, everything was scattered; the shapes of things, including that of the little scallop-shell of pastry, so richly sensual under its severe, religious folds, were either obliterated or had been so long dormant as to have lost the power of expansion which would have allowed them to resume their place in my consciousness. But when from a long-distant past nothing subsists, after the people are dead, after the things are broken and scattered, taste and smell alone, more fragile but more enduring, more unsubstantial, more persistent, more faithful, remain poised a long time, like souls, remembering, waiting, hoping, amid the ruins of all the rest; and bear unflinchingly, in the tiny and almost impapable drop of their essence, the vast structure of recollection.

And as soon as I had recognised the taste of the piece of madeleine soaked in her decoction of lime-blossom which my aunt used to give me (although I did not yet know and must long postpone the discovery of why this memory made me so happy) immediately the old grey house upon the street, where her room was, rose up like a stage set to attach itself to the little pavilion opening on to the garden which had been built out behind it for my parents (the isolated segment which until that moment had been all that I could see); and with the house the town, from morning to night and in all weathers, the Square where I used to be sent before lunch, the streets along which I used to run errands, the country roads we took when it was fine. And as in the game wherein the Japanese amuse themselves by filling a porcelain bowl with water and steeping in it little pieces of paper which until then are without character or form, but, the moment they become wet, stretch and twist and take on colour and distinctive shape, become flowers or houses or people, solid and recognisable,

so in that moment all the flowers in our garden and in M. Swann's park, and the water-lilies on the Vivonne[5] and the good folk of the village and their little dwellings and the parish church and the whole of Combray and its surroundings, taking shape and solidity, sprang into being, town and gardens alike, from my cup of tea.

5. The local river.

THOMAS MANN
1875–1955

Thomas Mann's reputation as the great German novelist of the twentieth century represents only part of his stature; by the time of his death in 1955, he had become an international figure to whom people looked for statements on art, modern society, and the human condition. Continuing the great nineteenth-century tradition of psychological realism, Mann took as his subject the cultural and spiritual crises of Europe at the turn of the century. His career spanned a time of great change, including as it did the upheaval of two world wars and the visible disintegration of a whole society. Where other modern novelists, such as Joyce, Faulkner, or Woolf, stressed innovative language and style, Mann emphasized instead the society of his time and—inside that society—the universal human conflicts between art and life, sensuality and intellect, individual and social will.

Many of Mann's themes derive from the nineteenth-century German aesthetic tradition in which he grew up. The philosophers Schopenhauer and Nietzsche and the composer Wagner had the most influence on his work: Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860) for his vision of artistic suffering and development; Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) for his portrait of the diseased artist overcoming chaos and decay to produce, through discipline and will, art works that justify existence; and Richard Wagner (1813–1883) for embodying the complete artist who controlled all aspects of his work: music, lyrics, the very staging of his operas. Mann's well-known use of the verbal *leitmotif* (pronounced "light-moteef") is also borrowed from Wagner, who would use in his operas a recurrent musical theme (the leitmotif) associated with a particular person, thing, action, or state of being. In Mann's literary adaptation, evocative phrases, repeated almost without change, link memories throughout the text and establish a cumulative emotional resonance. In the story "Tonio Kröger," for example, Tonio's dual ancestry is repeatedly suggested by the contrasting phrases of the "dark, fiery mother, who played the piano and mandolin," and the father with his "thoughtful blue eyes" and "wild flower in the buttonhole." Inside the tradition of realistic narration, Mann created a highly organized literary structure with subtly interrelated themes and images that built up rich associations of ideas: in his own words, an "epic prose composition . . . understood by me as spiritual thematic pattern, as a musical complex of associations."

Mann was born in an historic seaport and commercial city, Lübeck, on

June 6, 1875. His father was a grain merchant and head of the family firm; his mother came from a German-Brazilian family and was known for her beauty and musical talent. The contrast of Nordic and Latin that plays such a large part in Mann's work begins in his consciousness of his own heritage and is expanded to far-reaching symbolic levels. He disliked the scientific emphasis of his secondary education, and left school in 1894 after repeating two years. Rejoining his family in Munich, where they had moved in 1891 after his father's death, he worked as an unpaid apprentice in a fire insurance business but found more interest in university lectures in history, political economy, and art. He decided against a business career after his first published story, "Fallen" (1896), received praise from the noted poet Richard Dehmel, and from 1896 to 1898 lived and wrote in Italy before returning to Munich for a two-year stint as manuscript reader for the satiric weekly *Simplicissimus*. In 1905, he married Katia Pringsheim, with whom he had six children. The short stories collected in *Little Herr Friedemann* (1899) were a success, and enabled Mann to find a publisher for his first major work, *Buddenbrooks* (1901).

Buddenbrooks describes the decline of a prosperous German family through four generations, and is to some extent based on the history of the Mann family business. Nonetheless, the elements of autobiography are quickly absorbed into the more universal themes of the inner decay of the German burgher ("bourgeois," or middle-class) tradition and its growing isolation from other segments of society, a decline paralleled in the portrait of a developing artistic sensitivity and its relation to death. Children in the family of the self-confident, aggressive, and disciplined Consul Johann Buddenbrooks become increasingly introspective, hesitant, unhealthy, and artistic. The end of the family comes with young Hanno, a musical genius who is completely absorbed in his piano improvisations and the fatal temptation to the infinite that music implies. In this novel, as in many later works, Mann's fictional world is governed by a tension or dualism between sensuous experience and intellect or will. A diseased and alienated imaginative soul is set against a healthy, gregarious, somewhat obtuse normal citizen; the erratic and poor artist against the disciplined and prosperous burgher; the dark, brown-eyed Latin against the blond, blue-eyed Nordic; warm, unselfconscious feelings against icy intellect; freedom against authority; immorality and decadence against moral respectability; a longing for the eternal and infinite against active participation in everyday life.

There is no recommended resolution of these polarities, for if either overwhelms the other, tragedy must follow. In the seemingly autobiographical "Tonio Kröger," the protagonist is portrayed as sensitive to the claims of both, and his growing awareness of their combined importance is a sign of maturity. Ideally, the artist must live both extremes at once, in constant lucidity and pain. In *Death in Venice*, the author Gustave Aschenbach suffers and dies for having been unable to keep the balance; in the late novel *Doctor Faustus*, the composer Adrian Leverkühn sells his soul to the devil in order to draw on both extremes for his art. In "Mario and the Magician," the sadistic hypnotist Cipolla is an artist in his fashion, exercising a fatally corrupt art in which all his psychological insight, cutting intellect, and iron will produce only torment for himself and others. Mann's letters and essays

show that he felt deeply involved in the relations of the artist's life to that of the art work, but his protagonists have their own identity and symbolize much more than Mann's own artistic career. As artist and craftsman, he always insisted on distinguishing the work of art from its raw material, the emotions and experiences of life. He cultivated objectivity, distance, and irony in his own works, and no character—including the narrator—is immune from the author's critical eye.

Mann's most famous novella, *Death in Venice*, was published in 1912, shortly after a trip to Venice and shortly before World War I. Its sense of impending doom involves the cultural disintegration of the "European soul" (soon to be expressed in the Great War) symbolized by the corruption and death of the writer Gustave Aschenbach during an epidemic. The story pictures a loss of psychological balance, a sickness of the artistic soul to match that of plague-ridden Venice masking its true condition before unsuspecting tourists. Erotic and artistic themes mingle as the respected Aschenbach, escaping a lifetime of laborious creation and self-discipline, allows himself to be swept away by the classical beauty of a young boy until he becomes a grotesque figure, dyeing his hair and rouging his cheeks in a vain attempt to appear young. The issue, however, is not Aschenbach's obsession with Tadzio but rather his alternate repression of and abandonment to emotion. On the one hand, the will which drove him to compose masterworks is now gutted from within as he sinks into a passive, fatalistic acceptance of his feelings and remains in the plague-stricken city. On the other, Aschenbach has clearly sacrificed an integral part of artistic vision in his former repression of emotions. He has developed an "official" note and been anthologized in textbooks, but he no longer takes joy in his work, lives with the tension of a clenched fist, and suffers from repressed yearnings for freedom and mystic beauty. "Who shall unriddle the puzzle of the artist's nature?" asks the narrator. *Death in Venice* is a crystallization of Mann's work at its best, displaying the penetrating detail of his social and psychological realism, the power of his tightly interwoven symbolic structure, and the cumulative impact of his artist-hero's quest for meaning.

Throughout his writings up to and during World War I, Mann established himself as an important spokesman for modern Germany. His early conservatism and defense of an authoritarian nationalist government (*Reflections of a Non-Political Man*, 1918) gave way to an ardent defense of democracy and liberal humanism as the Nazis came to power. Mann's most famous novel, *The Magic Mountain* (1924), is a *Bildungsroman* (novel of the protagonist's education and development) that uses the isolation of a mountain-top sanitorium to gain perspective on the philosophic issues of twentieth-century Europe. The hero, Hans Castorp, has to decide how to live as he listens to the competing dogmas of the humanist Settembrini and the fanatic antirationalist Naphta, and undergoes a double temptation of oblivion through eroticism (Clavdia Chauchat) and death (symbolized by the isolated sanitorium). The novel ends with Castorp choosing active participation in a world at war; whether or not he survives the trenches is left unresolved, but he has taken charge of his own destiny. *The Magic Mountain* was immensely popular, and its author received the Nobel Prize in 1929. He was so much an international figure when he went into voluntary

exile in Switzerland as Hitler came to power in 1933 that the Nazis, stung by his criticism, revoked his citizenship. Moving to America in 1938, he wrote and lectured against Hitlerism and in 1944 became an American citizen.

Mann's later works cover a range of themes. *Joseph and His Brothers* (1933–45) is a tetralogy on the Biblical tale of Joseph who, abandoned for dead by his brothers, survives and comes to power in Egypt. *Dr. Faustus* (1947), which Mann called "the novel of my epoch, dressed up in the story of a highly precarious and sinful artistic life," portrayed the composer Adrian Leverkühn as a modern Faust who personifies the temptation and corruption of contemporary Germany. Leverkühn makes a pact with the devil to become aware of the extremes of his own personality, thus enriching his experience and his music. His pieces are rationally composed by using patterns derived from the twelve-tone row, and his "Lamentation of Doctor Faustus" is a direct challenge to the traditional tonality and freer form of the earlier German masterpiece, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with its concluding "Ode to Joy." A somber and compelling work, *Doctor Faustus* symbolizes the negation of life Mann found inherent in Hitler's attempt to reshape German culture. Well after the war, when Mann had moved to Zurich, he published a final, comic picture of the artist-figure as a confidence man who uses his skill and ironic insight to manipulate society (*The Confessions of Felix Krull*, 1954). Mann's last work before his death on August 12, 1955, the *Confessions* recapitulate his familiar themes but in a light-hearted parody of traditional *Bildungsromans* that is a far cry from the moral seriousness of earlier tales.

"Mario and the Magician" is both a specific commentary on a period in history—the Fascist era in which the dictators Mussolini and Hitler came to power in Italy and Germany—and a larger and still valid examination of the relation between individual and society, freedom and authority, artistic power and its corruption. Published in 1929, the short story pictures Italy falling under the spell of a militant nationalism, indirectly referring to the dictatorship of Benito Mussolini and his dream of a second Roman Empire. In 1928, the Italian dictator had ended parliamentary government and reorganized the economy as a centralized, corporate state; he controlled the press, encouraged terrorism by nationalist groups, and began an ambitious building program which sought to enhance national pride by constructing modern Italian monuments to rival those of ancient Rome. Small wonder that the northern European tourists who traditionally visited Italy in search of sun and sea began to feel unwelcome, inexplicably attacked by swaggering locals eager to establish their own superiority. In the same years, Adolph Hitler was using his extraordinary skills as a speaker, and his insight into mass psychology, to sway crowds in a new, hate-filled German nationalism that also aimed at world domination. He was the "Leader" (literally: *Führer* in Germany and *Duce* for Mussolini in Italy) wedded to his people in a complex rhetoric of love, hate, and mastery whose erotic overtones have often been observed. Like Mussolini, Hitler loved grand spectacles and prophesied the rebirth of ancient glories: in his case, the powerful gods of Nordic mythology to replace "weak" Christianity, the assertion of an Aryan master race archetypally superior to all others (especially Jews), and the

abandonment of rational inquiry and individual will in favor of his own mythic vision.

The story is subtitled "A Tragic Travel Experience" and is viewed throughout from the slightly alienated eyes of the narrator, a German tourist on holiday with his family in the small Italian resort of Torre di Venere. The tragedy is viewed first from the outside, in the hotel and on the beach, and then in more personal terms as the magician Cipolla brings various members of the audience under his control. Mann leads the reader through different levels and seriousness of attack: the anonymous Italian defending his will and the "honour of the human race," Sofronia's loyalty to family ties, and the "utter abandonment of the inmost soul" when simple, kindly Mario's hidden love is travestied before an entire audience. "In that evil span of time, crowded with a sense of the illusiveness of all joy, one sound became audible, and that not quite at once, but on the instant of the melancholy and ribald meeting between Mario's lips and the repulsive flesh which thrust itself forward for his caress. It was the sound of a laugh. . . ." Cipolla, receiving the kiss, is himself a grotesque, tormented figure; a cripple who cannot endure either physical beauty or human love, a demon nourished by alcohol who ultimately falls puppet-like into a "huddled heap of clothing," he is the fountainhead and personification of the whole unhealthy atmosphere in Torre di Venere.

Cipolla uses his mastery of stage technique and repartee to win his audience's admiration in spite of their initial dislike, and then—whip in hand—proceeds ruthlessly to demolish all resistance. It is a complicated performance, alternating between outright aggression and an emotional plea for sympathy and identification. The magician suffers for them all, he suggests, and both artist and audience are partners in the reciprocal enactment of a higher goal, a "mysterious common will" which only he can formulate. In its successive triumphs, Cipolla's performance also demonstrates the difficulty of maintaining free will before determined attack: first, the defensive posture is negative and therefore weak, and second, the very openness of free will—its refusal to be enclosed in a set doctrine—leaves it vulnerable to more aggressive beliefs. "A will that aims at its own freedom aims at the unknown," taunts Cipolla. One of the disturbing aspects of "Mario and the Magician" is that free will, in fact, does not triumph: it is the instinctive revulsion of an outraged Mario, revolver in hand, that puts an end to Cipolla and accomplishes what the narrator calls "a liberation." The conclusion is doubly ambiguous, expressing in 1929 both the unfinished tragedy of history and a somber view of the resources of human individualism.

Ignace Feuerlicht's *Thomas Mann* (1969) provides a general biographical introduction. In *Thomas Mann: A Collection of Critical Essays* (1964) Henry Hatfield presents essays on different works, including one by Mann on humor; there is a short biographical sketch at the end. Terence J. Reed's *Thomas Mann: The Uses of Tradition* (1974) is an excellent, well-written general study incorporating recent material. Richard Winston, *Thomas Mann: The Making of an Artist 1875–1911* (1981), the first volume of an unfinished study, is a detailed and authoritative presentation by the translator of Mann's diaries and letters.

Mario and the Magician[1]

The atmosphere of Torre di Venere[2] remains unpleasant in the memory. From the first moment the air of the place made us uneasy, we felt irritable, on edge; then at the end came the shocking business of Cipolla, that dreadful being who seemed to incorporate, in so fateful and so humanly impressive a way, all the peculiar evilness of the situation as a whole. Looking back, we had the feeling that the horrible end of the affair had been preordained and lay in the nature of things; that the children had to be present at it was an added impropriety, due to the false colours in which the weird creature presented himself. Luckily for them, they did not know where the comedy left off and the tragedy began; and we let them remain in their happy belief that the whole thing had been a play up till the end.

Torre di Venere lies some fifteen kilometres from Portoclemente, one of the most popular summer resorts on the Tyrrhenian Sea.[3] Portoclemente is urban and elegant and full to overflowing for months on end. Its gay and busy main street of shops and hotels runs down to a wide sandy beach covered with tents and pennanted sand-castles and sunburnt humanity, where at all times a lively social bustle reigns, and much noise. But this same spacious and inviting fine-sanded beach, this same border of pine grove and near, presiding mountains, continues all the way along the coast. No wonder then that some competition of a quiet kind should have sprung up further on. Torre di Venere—the tower that gave the town its name is gone long since, one looks for it in vain—is an offshoot of the larger resort, and for some years remained an idyll for the few, a refuge for more unworldly spirits. But the usual history of such places repeated itself: peace has had to retire further along the coast, to Marina Petriera and dear knows where else. We all know how the world at once seeks peace and puts her to flight—rushing upon her in the fond idea that they two will wed, and where she is, there it can be at home. It will even set up its Vanity Fair in a spot and be capable of thinking that peace is still by its side. Thus Torre—though its atmosphere so far is more modest and contemplative than that of Portoclemente—has been quite taken up, by both Italians and foreigners. It is no longer the thing to go to Portoclemente—though still so much the thing that it is as noisy and crowded as ever. One goes next door, so to speak: to Torre. So much more refined, even, and cheaper to boot. And the attractiveness of these qualities persists, though the qualities themselves long ago ceased to be evident. Torre has got a Grand

1. Subtitled "A Tragic Travel Experience." Translated by H. T. Lowe-Porter. 2. "Tower of Venus" (Italian). 3. Part of the Mediterranean Sea, between Italy and Sicily and Sardinia. *Portoclemente* means "merciful harbors."

Hotel. Numerous pensions have sprung up, some modest, some pretentious. The people who own or rent the villas and pinetas[4] overlooking the sea no longer have it all their own way on the beach. In July and August it looks just like the beach at Portoclemente: it swarms with a screaming, squabbling, merrymaking crowd, and the sun, blazing down like mad, peels the skin off their necks. Garish little flat-bottomed boats rock on the glittering blue, manned by children, whose mothers hover afar and fill the air with anxious cries of Nino! and Sandro! and Bice! and Maria! Pedlars step across the legs of recumbent sun-bathers, selling flowers and corals, oysters, lemonade, and *cornetti al burro,*[5] and crying their wares in the breathy, full-throated southern voice.

Such was the scene that greeted our arrival in Torre: pleasant enough, but after all, we thought, we had come too soon. It was the middle of August, the Italian season was still at its height, scarcely the moment for strangers to learn to love the special charms of the place. What an afternoon crowd in the cafés on the front! For instance, in the Esquisito, where we sometimes sat and were served by Mario, that very Mario of whom I shall have presently to tell. It is well-nigh impossible to find a table; and the various orchestras contend together in the midst of one's conversation with bewildering effect. Of course, it is in the afternoon that people come over from Portoclemente. The excursion is a favourite one for the restless denizens of that pleasure resort, and a Fiat motor-bus plies to and fro, coating inch-thick with dust the oleander and laurel hedges along the highroad—a notable if repulsive sight.

Yes, decidedly one should go to Torre in September, when the great public has left. Or else in May, before the water is warm enough to tempt the Southerner to bathe. Even in the before and after seasons Torre is not empty, but life is less national and more subdued. English, French, and German prevail under the tent-awnings and in the pension dining-rooms; whereas in August—in the Grand Hotel, at least, where, in default of private addresses, we had engaged rooms—the stranger finds the field so occupied by Florentine and Roman society that he feels quite isolated and even temporarily *déclassé.*[6]

We had, rather to our annoyance, this experience on the evening we arrived, when we went in to dinner and were shown to our table by the waiter in charge. As a table, it had nothing against it, save that we had already fixed our eyes upon those on the veranda beyond, built out over the water, where little red-shaded lamps glowed—and there were still some tables empty, though it was as full as the dining-room within. The children went into raptures at the festive sight, and without more ado we announced our intention to take our meals

4. Small pine groves. *Pension:* a boardinghouse. 5. Buttered rolls or croissants. 6. Socially inferior; "lower class" (French).

by preference in the veranda. Our words, it appeared, were prompted by ignorance; for we were informed with somewhat embarrassed politeness, that the cosy nook outside was reserved for the clients of the hotel: *ai nostri clienti.*[7] Their clients? But we were their clients. We were not tourists or trippers, but boarders for a stay of some three or four weeks. However, we forbore to press for an explanation of the difference between the likes of us and that clientèle to whom it was vouchsafed to eat out there in the glow of the red lamps, and took our dinner by the prosaic common light of the dining-room chandelier—a thoroughly ordinary and monotonous hotel bill of fare, be it said. In Pensione Eleonora, a few steps landward, the table, as we were to discover, was much better.

And thither it was that we moved, three or four days later, before we had had time to settle in properly at the Grand Hotel. Not on account of the veranda and the lamps. The children, straightway on the best of terms with waiters and pages, absorbed in the joys of life on the beach, promptly forgot those colourful seductions. But now there arose, between ourselves and the veranda clientèle—or perhaps more correctly with the compliant management—one of those little unpleasantnesses which can quite spoil the pleasure of a holiday. Among the guests were some high Roman aristocracy, a Principe[8] X and his family. These grand folk occupied rooms close to our own, and the Principessa, a great and a passionately maternal lady, was thrown into a panic by the vestiges of a whooping-cough which our little ones had lately got over, but which now and then still faintly troubled the unshatterable slumbers of our youngest-born. The nature of this illness is not clear, leaving some play for the imagination. So we took no offence at our elegant neighbour for clinging to the widely held view that whooping-cough is acoustically contagious and quite simply fearing lest her children yield to the bad example set by ours. In the fullness of her feminine self-confidence she protested to the management, which then, in the person of the proverbial frock-coated manager, hastened to represent to us, with many expressions of regret, that under the circumstances they were obliged to transfer us to the annexe. We did our best to assure him that the disease was in its very last stages, that it was actually over, and presented no danger of infection to anybody. All that we gained was permission to bring the case before the hotel physician—not one chosen by us—by whose verdict we must then abide. We agreed, convinced that thus we should at once pacify the Princess and escape the trouble of moving. The doctor appeared, and behaved like a faithful and honest servant of science. He examined the child and gave his opinion: the disease was quite over, no danger of contagion was present. We drew a long

7. "Our clients" (Italian). 8. "Prince" (Italian); *Principessa*, "Princess."

breath and considered the incident closed—until the manager announced that despite the doctor's verdict it would still be necessary for us to give up our rooms and retire to the *dépendance*.[9] Byzantinism like this outraged us. It is not likely that the Principessa was responsible for the wilful breach of faith. Very likely the fawning management had not even dared to tell her what the physician said. Anyhow, we made it clear to his understanding that we preferred to leave the hotel altogether and at once—and packed our trunks. We could do so with a light heart, having already set up casual friendly relations with Casa Eleonora. We had noticed its pleasant exterior and formed the acquaintance of its proprietor, Signora Angiolieri, and her husband: she slender and black-haired, Tuscan[1] in type, probably at the beginning of the thirties, with the dead ivory complexion of the southern woman, he quiet and bald and carefully dressed. They owned a larger establishment in Florence and presided only in summer and early autumn over the branch in Torre di Venere. But earlier, before her marriage, our new landlady had been companion, fellow-traveller, wardrobe mistress, yes, friend, of Eleonora Duse[2] and manifestly regarded that period as the crown of her career. Even at our first visit she spoke of it with animation. Numerous photographs of the great actress, with affectionate inscriptions, were displayed about the drawing-room, and other souvenirs of their life together adorned the little tables and étagères. This cult of a so interesting past was calculated, of course, to heighten the advantages of the signora's present business. Nevertheless our pleasure and interest were quite genuine as we were conducted through the house by its owner and listened to her sonorous and staccato Tuscan voice relating anecdotes of that immortal mistress, depicting her suffering saintliness, her genius, her profound delicacy of feeling.

Thither, then, we moved our effects, to the dismay of the staff of the Grand Hotel, who, like all Italians, were very good to children. Our new quarters were retired and pleasant, we were within easy reach of the sea through the avenue of young plane trees that ran down to the esplanade. In the clean, cool dining-room Signora Angiolieri daily served the soup with her own hands, the service was attentive and good, the table capital. We even discovered some Viennese acquaintances, and enjoyed chatting with them after luncheon, in front of the house. They, in their turn, were the means of our finding others—in short, all seemed for the best, and we were heartily glad of the change we had made. Nothing was now wanting to a holiday of the most gratifying kind.

And yet no proper gratification ensued. Perhaps the stupid occa-

9. Annex (French). *Byzantinism:* officious behavior and worship of rank (a reference to the Eastern Roman or Byzantine Empire, A.D. 330–1453). 1. From Tuscany, a region in north central Italy. 2. Famous Italian actress (1859–1924).

sion of our change of quarters pursued us to the new ones we had found. Personally, I admit that I do not easily forget these collisions with ordinary humanity, the naïve misuse of power, the injustice, the sycophantic corruption. I dwelt upon the incident too much, it irritated me in retrospect—quite futilely, of course, since such phenomena are only all too natural and all too much the rule. And we had not broken off relations with the Grand Hotel. The children were as friendly as ever there, the porter mended their toys, and we sometimes took tea in the garden. We even saw the Principessa. She would come out, with her firm and delicate tread, her lips emphatically corallined, to look after her children, playing under the supervision of their English governess. She did not dream that we were anywhere near, for so soon as she appeared in the offing we sternly forbade our little one even to clear his throat.

The heat—if I may bring it in evidence—was extreme. It was African. The power of the sun, directly one left the border of the indigo-blue wave, was so frightful, so relentless, that the mere thought of the few steps between the beach and luncheon was a burden, clad though one might be only in pyjamas.[3] Do you care for that sort of thing? Weeks on end? Yes, of course, it is proper to the south, it is classic weather, the sun of Homer,[4] the climate wherein human culture came to flower—and all the rest of it. But after a while it is too much for me, I reach a point where I begin to find it dull. The burning void of the sky, day after day, weighs one down; the high coloration, the enormous naïveté of the unrefracted light—they do, I dare say, induce light-heartedness, a carefree mood born of immunity from downpours and other meteorological caprices. But slowly, slowly, there makes itself felt a lack: the deeper, more complex needs of the northern soul remain unsatisfied. You are left barren—even it may be, in time, a little contemptuous. True without that stupid business of the whooping-cough I might not have been feeling these things. I was annoyed, very likely I wanted to feel them and so half-unconsciously seized upon an idea lying ready to hand to induce, or if not to induce, at least to justify and strengthen, my attitude. Up to this point, then, if you like, let us grant some ill will on our part. But the sea; and the mornings spent extended upon the fine sand in face of its eternal splendours—no, the sea could not conceivably induce such feelings. Yet it was none the less true that, despite all previous experience, we were not at home on the beach, we were not happy.

It was too soon, too soon. The beach, as I have said, was still in the hands of the middle-class native. It is a pleasing breed to look at, and among the young we saw much shapeliness and charm. Still,

3. Loungewear. 4. Greek epic poet; German tourists came south to vacation in the homeland of the ancient Greco-Roman civilization they so much admired.

we were necessarily surrounded by a great deal of very average humanity—a middle-class mob, which, you will admit, is not more charming under this sun than under one's own native sky. The voices these women have! It was sometimes hard to believe that we were in the land which is the western cradle of the art of song. "*Fuggièro!*" I can still hear that cry, as for twenty mornings long I heard it close behind me, breathy, full-throated, hideously stressed, with a harsh open *e*, uttered in accents of mechanical despair. "*Fuggièro! Rispondi almeno!*" Answer when I call you! The *sp* in *rispondi* was pronounced like *shp*, as Germans pronounce it; and this, on top of what I felt already, vexed my sensitive soul. The cry was addressed to a repulsive youngster whose sunburn had made disgusting raw sores on his shoulders. He outdid anything I have ever seen for ill-breeding, refractoriness, and temper and was a great coward to boot, putting the whole beach in an uproar, one day, because of his outrageous sensitiveness to the slightest pain. A sand-crab had pinched his toe in the water, and the minute injury made him set up a cry of heroic proportions—the shout of an antique hero in his agony—that pierced one to the marrow and called up visions of some frightful tragedy. Evidently he considered himself not only wounded, but poisoned as well; he crawled out on the sand and lay in apparently intolerable anguish, groaning "*Ohi!*" and "*Ohimè!*" and threshing about with arms and legs to ward off his mother's tragic appeals and the questions of the bystanders. An audience gathered round. A doctor was fetched—the same who had pronounced objective judgment on our whooping-cough—and here again acquitted himself like a man of science. Good-naturedly he reassured the boy, telling him that he was not hurt at all, he should simply go into the water again to relieve the smart. Instead of which, Fuggièro was borne off the beach, followed by a concourse of people. But he did not fail to appear next morning, nor did he leave off spoiling our children's sand-castles. Of course, always by accident. In short, a perfect terror.

And this twelve-year-old lad was prominent among the influences that, imperceptibly at first, combined to spoil our holiday and render it unwholesome. Somehow or other, there was a stiffness, a lack of innocent enjoyment. These people stood on their dignity—just why, and in what spirit, it was not easy at first to tell. They displayed much self-respectingness; towards each other and towards the foreigner their bearing was that of a person newly conscious of a sense of honour. And wherefore? Gradually we realized the political implications and understood that we were in the presence of a national ideal. The beach, in fact, was alive with patriotic children—a phenomenon as unnatural as it was depressing. Children are a human species and a society apart, a nation of their own, so to speak. On the basis of their common form of life, they find each other out with the greatest ease,

no matter how different their small vocabularies. Ours soon played with natives and foreigners alike. Yet they were plainly both puzzled and disappointed at times. There were wounded sensibilities, displays of assertiveness—or rather hardly assertiveness, for it was too self-conscious and too didactic to deserve the name. There were quarrels over flags, disputes about authority and precedence. Grown-ups joined in, not so much to pacify as to render judgment and enunciate principles. Phrases were dropped about the greatness and dignity of Italy, solemn phrases that spoilt the fun. We saw our two little ones retreat, puzzled and hurt, and were put to it to explain the situation. These people, we told them, were just passing through a certain stage, something rather like an illness, perhaps; not very pleasant, but probably unavoidable.

We had only our own carelessness to thank that we came to blows in the end with this "stage"—which, after all, we had seen and sized up long before now. Yes, it came to another "cross-purposes," so evidently the earlier ones had not been sheer accident. In a word, we became an offence to the public morals. Our small daughter—eight years old, but in physical development a good year younger and thin as a chicken—had had a good long bathe and gone playing in the warm sun in her wet costume. We told her that she might take off her bathing-suit, which was stiff with sand, rinse it in the sea, and put it on again, after which she must take care to keep it cleaner. Off goes the costume and she runs down naked to the sea, rinses her little jersey, and comes back. Ought we to have foreseen the outburst of anger and resentment which her conduct, and thus our conduct, called forth? Without delivering a homily on the subject, I may say that in the last decade our attitude towards the nude body and our feelings regarding it have undergone, all over the world, a fundamental change. There are things we "never think about" any more, and among them is the freedom we had permitted to this by no means provocative little childish body. But in these parts it was taken as a challenge. The patriotic children hooted. Fuggièro whistled on his fingers. The sudden buzz of conversation among the grown people in our neighbourhood boded no good. A gentleman in city togs, with a not very apropos bowler hat on the back of his head, was assuring his outraged womenfolk that he proposed to take punitive measures; he stepped up to us, and a philippic[5] descended on our unworthy heads, in which all the emotionalism of the sense-loving south spoke in the service of morality and discipline. The offence against decency of which we had been guilty was, he said, the more to be condemned because it was also a gross ingratitude and an insulting breach of his country's hospitality. We had crimi-

5. A scathing denunciation; named after the attacks on Philip II of Macedon by the Greek orator Demosthenes (384–322 B.C.).

nally injured not only the letter and spirit of the public bathing regulations, but also the honour of Italy; he, the gentleman in the city togs, knew how to defend that honour and proposed to see to it that our offence against the national dignity should not go unpunished.

We did our best, bowing respectfully, to give ear to this eloquence. To contradict the man, overheated as he was, would probably be to fall from one error into another. On the tips of our tongues we had various answers: as, that the word "hospitality," in its strictest sense, was not quite the right one, taking all the circumstances into consideration. We were not literally the guests of Italy, but of Signora Angiolieri, who had assumed the rôle of dispenser of hospitality some years ago on laying down that of familiar friend to Eleonora Duse. We longed to say that surely this beautiful country had not sunk so low as to be reduced to a state of hypersensitive prudishness. But we confined ourselves to assuring the gentleman that any lack of respect, any provocation on our parts, had been the furthest from our thoughts. And as a mitigating circumstance we pointed out the tender age and physical slightness of the little culprit. In vain. Our protests were waved away, he did not believe in them; our defence would not hold water. We must be made an example of. The authorities were notified, by telephone, I believe, and their representatives appeared on the beach. He said the case was "*molto grave.*"[6] We had to go with him to the Municipio up in the Piazza, where a higher official confirmed the previous verdict of "*molto grave,*" launched into a stream of the usual didactic phrases—the selfsame tune and words as the man in the bowler hat—and levied a fine and ransom of fifty lire. We felt that the adventure must willy-nilly be worth to us this much of a contribution to the economy of the Italian government; paid, and left. Ought we not at this point to have left Torre as well?

If we only had! We should thus have escaped that fatal Cipolla. But circumstances combined to prevent us from making up our minds to a change. A certain poet says that it is indolence that makes us endure uncomfortable situations. The *aperçu*[7] may serve as an explanation for our inaction. Anyhow, one dislikes voiding the field immediately upon such an event. Especially if sympathy from other quarters encourages one to defy it. And in the Villa Eleonora they pronounced as with one voice upon the injustice of our punishment. Some Italian after-dinner acquaintances found that the episode put their country in a very bad light, and proposed taking the man in the bowler hat to task, as one fellow-citizen to another. But the next day he and his party had vanished from the beach. Not on our account, of course. Though it might be that the consciousness of his impend-

6. "Very serious" (Italian). *Municipio:* Town Hall. 7. Observation (French).

ing departure had added energy to his rebuke; in any case his going was a relief. And, furthermore, we stayed because our stay had by now become remarkable in our own eyes, which is worth something in itself, quite apart from the comfort or discomfort involved. Shall we strike sail, avoid a certain experience so soon as it seems not expressly calculated to increase our enjoyment or our self-esteem? Shall we go away whenever life looks like turning in the slightest uncanny, or not quite normal, or even rather painful and mortifying? No, surely not. Rather stay and look matters in the face, brave them out; perhaps precisely in so doing lies a lesson for us to learn. We stayed on and reaped as the awful reward of our constancy the unholy and staggering experience with Cipolla.

I have not mentioned that the after season had begun, almost on the very day we were disciplined by the city authorities. The worshipful gentleman in the bowler hat, our denouncer, was not the only person to leave the resort. There was a regular exodus, on every hand you saw luggage-carts on their way to the station. The beach denationalized itself. Life in Torre, in the cafés and the pinetas, became more homelike and more European. Very likely we might even have eaten at a table in the glass veranda, but we refrained, being content at Signora Angiolieri's—as content, that is, as our evil star would let us be. But at the same time with this turn for the better came a change in the weather: almost to an hour it showed itself in harmony with the holiday calendar of the general public. The sky was overcast; not that it grew any cooler, but the unclouded heat of the entire eighteen days since our arrival, and probably long before that, gave place to a stifling sirocco air, while from time to time a little ineffectual rain sprinkled the velvety surface of the beach. Add to which, that two-thirds of our intended stay at Torre had passed. The colourless, lazy sea, with sluggish jellyfish floating in its shallows, was at least a change. And it would have been silly to feel retrospective longings after a sun that had caused us so many sighs when it burned down in all its arrogant power.

At this juncture, then, it was that Cipolla announced himself. Cavaliere[8] Cipolla he was called on the posters that appeared one day stuck up everywhere, even in the dining-room of Pensione Eleonora. A travelling virtuoso, an entertainer, "*forzatore, illusionista, prestidigatore,*" as he called himself, who proposed to wait upon the highly respectable population of Torre di Venere with a display of extraordinary phenomena of a mysterious and staggering kind. A conjuror! The bare announcement was enough to turn our children's heads. They had never seen anything of the sort, and now our present holiday was to afford them this new excitement. From that

8. "Knight" or "Sir" Cipolla (*Cipolla* is also Italian for "onion"); he is a "strong man, illusionist, conjuror."

moment on they besieged us with prayers to take tickets for the performance. We had doubts, from the first, on the score of the lateness of the hour, nine o'clock; but gave way, in the idea that we might see a little of what Cipolla had to offer, probably no great matter, and then go home. Besides, of course, the children could sleep late next day. We bought four tickets of Signora Angiolieri herself, she having taken a number of the stalls on commission to sell them to her guests. She could not vouch for the man's performance, and we had no great expectations. But we were conscious of a need for diversion, and the children's violent curiosity proved catching.

The Cavaliere's performance was to take place in a hall where during the season there had been a cinema with a weekly programme. We had never been there. You reached it by following the main street under the wall of the "*palazzo*,"[9] a ruin with a "For sale" sign, that suggested a castle and had obviously been built in lordlier days. In the same street were the chemist,[1] the hairdresser, and all the better shops; it led, so to speak, from the feudal past the bourgeois into the proletarian, for it ended off between two rows of poor fishing-huts, where old women sat mending nets before the doors. And here, among the proletariat, was the hall, not much more, actually, than a wooden shed, though a large one, with a turreted entrance, plastered on either side with layers of gay placards. Some while after dinner, then, on the appointed evening, we wended our way thither in the dark, the children dressed in their best and blissful with the sense of so much irregularity. It was sultry, as it had been for days; there was heat lightning now and then, and a little rain; we proceeded under umbrellas. It took us a quarter of an hour.

Our tickets were collected at the entrance, our places we had to find ourselves. They were in the third row left, and as we sat down we saw that, late though the hour was for the performance, it was to be interpreted with even more laxity. Only very slowly did an audience—who seemed to be relied upon to come late—begin to fill the stalls. These comprised the whole auditorium; there were no boxes. This tardiness gave us some concern. The children's cheeks were already flushed as much with fatigue as with excitement. But even when we entered, the standing-room at the back and in the side aisles was already well occupied. There stood the manhood of Torre di Venere, all and sundry, fisherfolk, rough-and-ready youths with bare forearms crossed over their striped jerseys. We were well pleased with the presence of this native assemblage, which always adds colour and animation to occasions like the present; and the children were frankly delighted. For they had friends among these people—acquaintances picked up on afternoon strolls to the further ends of

9. Mansion. 1. Drugstore.

the beach. We would be turning homeward, at the hour when the sun dropped into the sea, spent with the huge effort it had made and gilding with reddish gold the oncoming surf; and we would come upon bare-legged fisherfolk standing in rows, bracing and hauling with long-drawn cries as they drew in the nets and harvested in dripping baskets their catch, often so scanty, of *frutto di mare.*[2] The children looked on, helped to pull, brought out their little stock of Italian words, made friends. So now they exchanged nods with the "standing-room" clientèle; there was Guiscardo, there Antonio, they knew them by name and waved and called across in half-whispers, getting answering nods and smiles that displayed rows of healthy white teeth. Look, there is even Mario, Mario from the Esquisito, who brings us the chocolate. He wants to see the conjuror, too, and he must have come early, for he is almost in front; but he does not see us, he is not paying attention; that is a way he has, even though he is a waiter. So we wave instead to the man who lets out the little boats on the beach; he is there too, standing at the back.

It had got to a quarter past nine, it got to almost half past. It was natural that we should be nervous. When would the children get to bed? It had been a mistake to bring them, for now it would be very hard to suggest breaking off their enjoyment before it had got well under way. The stalls had filled in time; all Torre, apparently, was there: the guests of the Grand Hotel, the guests of Villa Eleonora, familiar faces from the beach. We heard English and German and the sort of French that Rumanians speak with Italians. Madame Angiolieri herself sat two rows behind us, with her quiet, bald-headed spouse, who kept stroking his moustache with the two middle fingers of his right hand. Everybody had come late, but nobody too late. Cipolla made us wait for him.

He made us wait. That is probably the way to put it. He heightened the suspense by his delay in appearing. And we could see the point of this, too—only not when it was carried to extremes. Towards half past nine the audience began to clap—an amiable way of expressing justifiable impatience, evincing as it does an eagerness to applaud. For the little ones, this was a joy in itself—all children love to clap. From the popular sphere came loud cries of "*Pronti!*" "*Cominciamo!*"[3] And lo, it seemed now as easy to begin as before it had been hard. A gong sounded, greeted by the standing rows with a many-voiced "Ah-h!" and the curtains parted. They revealed a platform furnished more like a schoolroom than like the theatre of a conjuring performance—largely because of the blackboard in the left foreground. There was a common yellow hat-stand, a few ordinary straw-bottomed chairs, and further back a little round table holding

2. Seafood. 3. "Ready! Let's begin!"

a water carafe and glass, also a tray with a liqueur glass and a flask of pale yellow liquid. We had still a few seconds of time to let these things sink in. Then, with no darkening of the house, Cavaliere Cipolla made his entry.

He came forward with a rapid step that expressed his eagerness to appear before his public and gave rise to the illusion that he had already come a long way to put himself at their service—whereas, of course, he had only been standing in the wings. His costume supported the fiction. A man of an age hard to determine, but by no means young; with a sharp, ravaged face, piercing eyes, compressed lips, small black waxed moustache, and a so-called imperial[4] in the curve between mouth and chin. He was dressed for the street with a sort of complicated evening elegance, in a wide black pelerine[5] with velvet collar and satin lining; which, in the hampered state of his arms, he held together in front with his white-gloved hands. He had a white scarf round his neck; a top hat with a curving brim sat far back on his head. Perhaps more than anywhere else the eighteenth century is still alive in Italy, and with it the charlatan and mountebank type so characteristic of the period. Only there, at any rate, does one still encounter really well-preserved specimens. Cipolla had in his whole appearance much of the historic type; his very clothes helped to conjure up the traditional figure with its blatantly, fantastically foppish air. His pretentious costume sat upon him, or rather hung upon him, most curiously, being in one place drawn too tight, in another a mass of awkward folds. There was something not quite in order about his figure, both front and back—that was plain later on. But I must emphasize the fact that there was not a trace of personal jocularity or clownishness in his pose, manner, or behaviour. On the contrary, there was complete seriousness, an absence of any humorous appeal; occasionally even a cross-grained pride, along with that curious, self-satisfied air so characteristic of the deformed. None of all this, however, prevented his appearance from being greeted with laughter from more than one quarter of the hall.

All the eagerness had left his manner. The swift entry had been merely an expression of energy, not of zeal. Standing at the footlights he negligently drew off his gloves, to display long yellow hands, one of them adorned with a seal ring with a lapis-lazuli in a high setting. As he stood there, his small hard eyes, with flabby pouches beneath them, roved appraisingly about the hall, not quickly, rather in a considered examination, pausing here and there upon a face with his lips clipped together, not speaking a word. Then with a display of skill as surprising as it was casual, he rolled his gloves into a ball and tossed them across a considerable distance into the glass on the

4. A small pointed beard, named after Napoleon III, Emperor of France (1808–1873). 5. Cloak.

table. Next from an inner pocket he drew forth a packet of cigarettes; you could see by the wrapper that they were the cheapest sort the government sells. With his fingertips he pulled out a cigarette and lighted it, without looking, from a quick-firing benzine lighter. He drew the smoke deep into his lungs and let it out again, tapping his foot, with both lips drawn in an arrogant grimace and the grey smoke streaming out between broken and saw-edged teeth.

With a keenness equal to his own his audience eyed him. The youths at the rear scowled as they peered at this cocksure creature to search out his secret weaknesses. He betrayed none. In fetching out and putting back the cigarettes his clothes got in his way. He had to turn back his pelerine, and in so doing revealed a riding-whip with a silver claw-handle that hung by a leather thong from his left forearm and looked decidedly out of place. You could see that he had on not evening clothes but a frock-coat, and under this, as he lifted it to get at his pocket, could be seen a striped sash worn about the body. Somebody behind me whispered that this sash went with his title of Cavaliere. I give the information for what it may be worth—personally, I never heard that the title carried such insignia with it. Perhaps the sash was sheer pose, like the way he stood there, without a word, casually and arrogantly puffing smoke into his audience's face.

People laughed, as I said. The merriment had become almost general when somebody in the "standing seats," in a loud, dry voice, remarked: "*Buona sera.*"[6]

Cipolla cocked his head. "Who was that?" asked he, as though he had been dared. "Who was that just spoke? Well? First so bold and now so modest? *Paura*,[7] eh?" He spoke with a rather high, asthmatic voice, which yet had a metallic quality. He waited.

"That was me," a youth at the rear broke into the stillness, seeing himself thus challenged. He was not far from us, a handsome fellow in a woollen shirt, with his coat hanging over one shoulder. He wore his surly, wiry hair in a high, dishevelled mop, the style affected by the youth of the awakened Fatherland; it gave him an African appearance that rather spoiled his looks. "*Bè!* That was me. It was your business to say it first, but I was trying to be friendly."

More laughter. The chap had a tongue in his head. "*Ha sciolto la scilinguágnolo,*"[8] I heard near me. After all, the retort was deserved.

"Ah, bravo!" answered Cipolla. "I like you, *giovanotto*. Trust me, I've had my eye on you for some time. People like you are just in my line. I can use them. And you are the pick of the lot, that's plain to see. You do what you like. Or is it possible you have ever not done what you liked—or even, maybe, what you didn't like? What

6. "Good evening." 7. "Afraid?" 8. "His tongue is well attached" (he speaks glibly). *Giovanotto*: young man. *Sistema americano*: the American way.

somebody else liked, in short? Hark ye, my friend, that might be a pleasant change for you, to divide up the willing and the doing and stop tackling both jobs at once. Division of labour, *sistema americano, sa!* For instance, suppose you were to show your tongue to this select and honourable audience here—your whole tongue, right down to the roots?"

"No, I won't," said the youth, hostilely. "Sticking out your tongue shows a bad bringing-up."

"Nothing of the sort," retorted Cipolla. "You would only be *doing* it. With all due respect to your bringing-up, I suggest that before I count ten, you will perform a right turn and stick out your tongue at the company here further than you knew yourself that you could stick it out."

He gazed at the youth, and his piercing eyes seemed to sink deeper into their sockets. "*Uno!*"[9] said he. He had let his riding-whip slide down his arm and made it whistle once through the air. The boy faced about and put out his tongue, so long, so extendedly, that you could see it was the very uttermost in tongue which he had to offer. Then turned back, stony-faced, to his former position.

"That was me," mocked Cipolla, with a jerk of his head towards the youth. "*Bè!* That was me." Leaving the audience to enjoy its sensations, he turned towards the little round table, lifted the bottle, poured out a small glass of what was obviously cognac, and tipped it up with a practised hand.

The children laughed with all their hearts. They had understood practically nothing of what had been said, but it pleased them hugely that something so funny should happen, straightaway, between that queer man up there and somebody out of the audience. They had no preconception of what an "evening" would be like and were quite ready to find this a priceless beginning. As for us, we exchanged a glance and I remember that involuntarily I made with my lips the sound that Cipolla's whip had made when it cut the air. For the rest, it was plain that people did not know what to make of a preposterous beginning like this to a sleight-of-hand performance. They could not see why the *giovanotto*, who after all in a way had been their spokesman, should suddenly have turned on them to vent his incivility. They felt that he had behaved like a silly ass and withdrew their countenances from him in favour of the artist, who now came back from his refreshment table and addressed them as follows:

"Ladies and gentlemen," said he, in his wheezing, metallic voice, "you saw just now that I was rather sensitive on the score of the rebuke this hopeful young linguist saw fit to give me"—"*questo linguista di belle speranze*"[1] was what he said, and we all laughed at

9. One! 1. "This would-be master of tongues."

the pun. "I am a man who sets some store by himself, you may take it from me. And I see no point in being wished a good-evening unless it is done courteously and in all seriousness. For anything else there is no occasion. When a man wishes me a good-evening he wishes himself one, for the audience will have one only if I do. So this lady-killer of Torre di Venere" (another thrust) "did well to testify that I have one tonight and that I can dispense with any wishes of his in the matter. I can boast of having good evenings almost without exception. One not so good does come my way now and again, but very seldom. My calling is hard and my health not of the best. I have a little physical defect which prevented me from doing my bit in the war for the greater glory of the Fatherland. It is perforce with my mental and spiritual parts that I conquer life—which after all only means conquering oneself. And I flatter myself that my achievements have aroused interest and respect among the educated public. The leading newspapers have lauded me, the *Corriere della Sera*[2] did me the courtesy of calling me a phenomenon, and in Rome the brother of the *Duce* honoured me by his presence at one of my evenings. I should not have thought that in a relatively less important place" (laughter here, at the expense of poor little Torre) "I should have to give up the small personal habits which brilliant and elevated audiences had been ready to overlook. Nor did I think I had to stand being heckled by a person who seems to have been rather spoilt by the favours of the fair sex." All this of course at the expense of the youth whom Cipolla never tired of presenting in the guise of *donnaiuolo*[3] and rustic Don Juan. His persistent thin-skinnedness and animosity were in striking contrast to the self-confidence and the worldly success he boasted of. One might have assumed that the *giovanotto* was merely the chosen butt of Cipolla's customary professional sallies, had not the very pointed witticisms betrayed a genuine antagonism. No one looking at the physical parts of the two men need have been at a loss for the explanation, even if the deformed man had not constantly played on the other's supposed success with the fair sex. "Well," Cipolla went on, "before beginning our entertainment this evening, perhaps you will permit me to make myself comfortable."

And he went towards the hat-stand to take off his things.

"*Parla benissimo;*"[4] asserted somebody in our neighbourhood. So far, the man had done nothing; but what he had said was accepted as an achievement, by means of that he had made an impression. Among southern peoples speech is a constituent part of the pleasure of living, it enjoys far livelier social esteem than in the north. That national cement, the mother tongue, is paid symbolic honours down

2. Major evening newspaper in Rome; *Duce* [Leader] refers to Benito Mussolini, the head of the Italian government at the time. 3. "Lady-killer." 4. "He speaks well."

here, and there is something blithely symbolical in the pleasure people take in their respect for its forms and phonetics. They enjoy speaking, they enjoy listening; and they listen with discrimination. For the way a man speaks serves as a measure of his personal rank; carelessness and clumsiness are greeted with scorn, elegance and mastery are rewarded with social éclat. Wherefore the small man too, where it is a question of getting his effect, chooses his phrase nicely and turns it with care. On this count, then, at least, Cipolla had won his audience; though he by no means belonged to the class of men which the Italian, in a singular mixture of moral and æsthetic judgments, labels "*simpatico.*"[5]

After removing his hat, scarf, and mantle he came to the front of the stage, settling his coat, pulling down his cuffs with their large cuff-buttons, adjusting his absurd sash. He had very ugly hair; the top of his head, that is, was almost bald, while a narrow, black-varnished frizz of curls ran from front to back as though stuck on; the side hair, likewise blackened, was brushed forward to the corners of the eyes—it was, in short, the hairdressing of an old-fashioned circus-director, fantastic, but entirely suited to his outmoded personal type and worn with so much assurance as to take the edge off the public's sense of humour. The little physical defect of which he had warned us was now all too visible, though the nature of it was even now not very clear; the chest was too high, as is usual in such cases, but the corresponding malformation of the back did not sit between the shoulders, it took the form of a sort of hips or buttocks hump, which did not indeed hinder his movements but gave him a grotesque and dipping stride at every step he took. However, by mentioning his deformity beforehand he had broken the shock of it, and a delicate propriety of feeling appeared to reign throughout the hall.

"At your service," said Cipolla. "With your kind permission, we will begin the evening with some arithmetical tests."

Arithmetic? That did not sound much like sleight-of-hand. We began to have our suspicions that the man was sailing under a false flag, only we did not yet know which was the right one. I felt sorry on the children's account; but for the moment they were content simply to be there.

The numerical test which Cipolla now introduced was as simple as it was baffling. He began by fastening a piece of paper to the upper right-hand corner of the blackboard; then lifting it up, he wrote something underneath. He talked all the while, relieving the dryness of his offering by a constant flow of words, and showed himself a practised speaker, never at a loss for conversational turns of phrase. It was in keeping with the nature of his performance, and at the same

5. "Sympathetic": pleasant to be with.

time vastly entertained the children, that he went on to eliminate the gap between stage and audience, which had already been bridged over by the curious skirmish with the fisher lad; he had representatives from the audience mount the stage, and himself descended the wooden steps to seek personal contact with his public. And again, with individuals, he fell into his former taunting tone. I do not know how far that was a deliberate feature of his system; he preserved a serious, even a peevish air, but his audience, at least the more popular section, seemed convinced that that was all part of the game. So then, after he had written something and covered the writing by the paper, he desired that two persons should come up on the platform and help to perform the calculations. They would not be difficult, even for people not clever at figures. As usual, nobody volunteered, and Cipolla took care not to molest the more select portion of his audience. He kept to the populace. Turning to two sturdy young louts standing behind us, he beckoned them to the front, encouraging and scolding by turns. They should not stand there gaping, he said, unwilling to oblige the company. Actually he got them in motion; with clumsy tread they came down the middle aisle, climbed the steps, and stood in front of the blackboard, grinning sheepishly at their comrades' shouts and applause. Cipolla joked with them for a few minutes, praised their heroic firmness of limb and the size of their hands, so well calculated to do this service for the public. Then he handed one of them the chalk and told him to write down the numbers as they were called out. But now the creature declared that he could not write! "*Non so scrivere*," said he in his gruff voice, and his companion added that neither did he.

God knows whether they told the truth or whether they wanted to make game of Cipolla. Anyhow, the latter was far from sharing the general merriment which their confession aroused. He was insulted and disgusted. He sat there on a straw-bottomed chair in the centre of the stage with his legs crossed, smoking a fresh cigarette out of his cheap packet; obviously it tasted the better for the cognac he had indulged in while the yokels were stumping up the steps. Again he inhaled the smoke and let it stream out between curling lips. Swinging his leg, with his gaze sternly averted from the two shamelessly chuckling creatures and from the audience as well, he stared into space as one who withdraws himself and his dignity from the contemplation of an utterly despicable phenomenon.

"Scandalous," said he, in a sort of icy snarl. "Go back to your places! In Italy everybody can write—in all her greatness there is no room for ignorance and unenlightenment. To accuse her of them, in the hearing of this international company, is a cheap joke, in which you yourselves cut a very poor figure and humiliate the government and the whole country as well. If it is true that Torre di

Venere is indeed the last refuge of such ignorance, then I must blush to have visited the place—being, as I already was, aware of its inferiority to Rome in more than one respect—"

Here Cipolla was interrupted by the youth with the Nubian[6] coiffure and his jacket across his shoulder. His fighting spirit, as we now saw, had only abdicated temporarily, and he now flung himself into the breach in defence of his native heath. "That will do," said he loudly. "That's enough jokes about Torre. We all come from the place and we won't stand strangers making fun of it. These two chaps are our friends. Maybe they are no scholars, but even so they may be straighter than some folks in the room who are so free with their boasts about Rome, though they did not build it either."

That was capital. The young man had certainly cut his eye-teeth. And this sort of spectacle was good fun, even though it still further delayed the regular performance. It is always fascinating to listen to an altercation. Some people it simply amuses, they take a sort of kill-joy pleasure in not being principals. Others feel upset and uneasy, and my sympathies are with these latter, although on the present occasion I was under the impression that all this was part of the show—the analphabetic yokels no less than the *giovanotto* with the jacket. The children listened well pleased. They understood not at all, but the sound of the voices made them hold their breath. So this was a "magic evening"—at least it was the kind they have in Italy. They expressly found it "lovely." Cipolla had stood up and with two of his scooping strides was at the footlights.

"Well, well, see who's here!" said he with grim cordiality. "An old acquaintance! A young man with his heart at the end of his tongue" (he used the word *linguaccia*, which means a coated tongue, and gave rise to much hilarity). "That will do, my friends," he turned to the yokels. "I do not need you now, I have business with this deserving young man here, *con questo torregiano di Venere*, this tower of Venus, who no doubt expects the gratitude of the fair as a reward for his prowess—"

"*Ah, non scherziamo!*[7] We're talking earnest," cried out the youth. His eyes flashed, and he actually made as though to pull off his jacket and proceed to direct methods of settlement.

Cipolla did not take him too seriously. We had exchanged apprehensive glances; but he was dealing with a fellow-countryman and had his native soil beneath his feet. He kept quite cool and showed complete mastery of the situation. He looked at his audience, smiled, and made a sideways motion of the head towards the young cockerel as though calling the public to witness how the man's bumptiousness only served to betray the simplicity of his mind. And then, for the

6. African. 7. "We aren't joking!"

second time, something strange happened, which set Cipolla's calm superiority in an uncanny light, and in some mysterious and irritating way turned all the explosiveness latent in the air into matter for laughter.

Cipolla drew still nearer to the fellow, looking him in the eye with a peculiar gaze. He even came half-way down the steps that led into the auditorium on our left, so that he stood directly in front of the trouble-maker, on slightly higher ground. The riding-whip hung from his arm.

"My son, you do not feel much like joking," he said. "It is only too natural, for anyone can see that you are not feeling too well. Even your tongue, which leaves something to be desired on the score of cleanliness, indicates acute disorder of the gastric system. An evening entertainment is no place for people in your state; you yourself, I can tell, were of several minds whether you would not do better to put on a flannel bandage and go to bed. It was not good judgment to drink so much of that very sour white wine this afternoon. Now you have such a colic you would like to double up with the pain. Go ahead, don't be embarrassed. There is a distinct relief that comes from bending over, in cases of intestinal cramp."

He spoke thus, word for word, with quiet impressiveness and a kind of stern sympathy, and his eyes, plunged the while deep in the young man's, seemed to grow very tired and at the same time burning above their enlarged tear-ducts—they were the strangest eyes, you could tell that not manly pride alone was preventing the young adversary from withdrawing his gaze. And presently, indeed, all trace of its former arrogance was gone from the bronzed young face. He looked open-mouthed at the Cavaliere and the open mouth was drawn in a rueful smile.

"Double over," repeated Cipolla. "What else can you do? With a colic like that you *must* bend. Surely you will not struggle against the performance of a perfectly natural action just because somebody suggests it to you?"

Slowly the youth lifted his forearms, folded and squeezed them across his body; it turned a little sideways, then bent, lower and lower, the feet shifted, the knees turned inward, until he had become a picture of writhing pain, until he all but grovelled upon the ground. Cipolla let him stand for some seconds thus, then made a short cut through the air with his whip and went with his scooping stride back to the little table, where he poured himself out a cognac.

"*Il boit beaucoup*,"[8] asserted a lady behind us. Was that the only thing that struck her? We could not tell how far the audience grasped the situation. The fellow was standing upright again, with a sheepish

8. "He drinks a lot" (French).

grin—he looked as though he scarcely knew how it had all happened. The scene had been followed with tense interest and applauded at the end; there were shouts of "*Bravo, Cipolla!*" and "*Bravo, giovanotto!*" Apparently the issue of the duel was not looked upon as a personal defeat for the young man. Rather the audience encouraged him as one does an actor who succeeds in an unsympathetic rôle. Certainly his way of screwing himself up with cramp had been highly picturesque, its appeal was directly calculated to impress the gallery—in short, a fine dramatic performance. But I am not sure how far the audience were moved by that natural tactfulness in which the south excels, or how far it penetrated into the nature of what was going on.

The Cavaliere, refreshed, had lighted another cigarette. The numerical tests might now proceed. A young man was easily found in the back row who was willing to write down on the blackboard the numbers as they were dictated to him. Him too we knew; the whole entertainment had taken on an intimate character through our acquaintance with so many of the actors. This was the man who worked at the greengrocer's in the main street; he had served us several times, with neatness and dispatch. He wielded the chalk with clerkly confidence, while Cipolla descended to our level and walked with his deformed gait through the audience, collecting numbers as they were given, in two, three, and four places, and calling them out to the grocer's assistant, who wrote them down in a column. In all this, everything on both sides was calculated to amuse, with its jokes and its oratorical asides. The artist could not fail to hit on foreigners, who were not ready with their figures, and with them he was elaborately patient and chivalrous, to the great amusement of the natives, whom he reduced to confusion in their turn, by making them translate numbers that were given in English or French. Some people gave dates concerned with great events in Italian history. Cipolla took them up at once and made patriotic comments. Somebody shouted "Number one!" The Cavaliere, incensed at this as at every attempt to make game of him, retorted over his shoulder that he could not take less than two-place figures. Whereupon another joker cried out "Number two!" and was greeted with the applause and laughter which every reference to natural functions is sure to win among southerners.

When fifteen numbers stood in a long straggling row on the board, Cipolla called for a general adding-match. Ready reckoners might add in their heads, but pencil and paper were not forbidden. Cipolla, while the work went on, sat on his chair near the blackboard, smoked and grimaced, with the complacent, pompous air cripples so often have. The five-place addition was soon done. Somebody announced the answer, somebody else confirmed it, a third had arrived at a

slightly different result, but the fourth agreed with the first and second. Cipolla got up, tapped some ash from his coat, and lifted the paper at the upper right-hand corner of the board to display the writing. The correct answer, a sum close on a million, stood there; he had written it down beforehand.

Astonishment, and loud applause. The children were overwhelmed. How had he done that, they wanted to know. We told them it was a trick, not easily explainable offhand. In short, the man was a conjuror. This was what a sleight-of-hand evening was like, so now they knew. First the fisherman had a cramp, and then the right answer was written down beforehand—it was all simply glorious, and we saw with dismay that despite the hot eyes and the hand of the clock at almost half past ten, it would be very hard to get them away. There would be tears. And yet it was plain that this magician did not "magick"—at least not in the accepted sense, of manual dexterity—and that the entertainment was not at all suitable for children. Again, I do not know, either, what the audience really thought. Obviously there was grave doubt whether its answers had been given of "free choice"; here and there an individual might have answered of his own motion, but on the whole Cipolla certainly selected his people and thus kept the whole procedure in his own hands and directed it towards the given result. Even so, one had to admire the quickness of his calculations, however much one felt disinclined to admire anything else about the performance. Then his patriotism, his irritable sense of dignity—the Cavaliere's own countrymen might feel in their element with all that and continue in a laughing mood; but the combination certainly gave us outsiders food for thought.

Cipolla himself saw to it—though without giving them a name—that the nature of his powers should be clear beyond a doubt to even the least-instructed person. He alluded to them, of course, in his talk—and he talked without stopping—but only in vague, boastful, self-advertising phrases. He went on awhile with experiments on the same lines as the first, merely making them more complicated by introducing operations in multiplying, subtracting, and dividing; then he simplified them to the last degree in order to bring out the method. He simply had numbers "guessed" which were previously written under the paper; and the guess was nearly always right. One guesser admitted that he had had in mind to give a certain number, when Cipolla's whip went whistling through the air, and a quite different one slipped out, which proved to be the "right" one. Cipolla's shoulders shook. He pretended admiration for the powers of the people he questioned. But in all his compliments there was something fleering and derogatory; the victims could scarcely have relished them much, although they smiled, and although they might easily have set down some part of the applause to their own credit. Moreover, I had not

the impression that the artist was popular with his public. A certain ill will and reluctance were in the air, but courtesy kept such feelings in check, as did Cipolla's competency and his stern self-confidence. Even the riding-whip, I think, did much to keep rebellion from becoming overt.

From tricks with numbers he passed to tricks with cards. There were two packs, which he drew out of his pockets, and so much I still remember, that the basis of the tricks he played with them was as follows: from the first pack he drew three cards and thrust them without looking at them inside his coat. Another person then drew three out of the second pack, and these turned out to be the same as the first three—not invariably all the three, for it did happen that only two were the same. But in the majority of cases Cipolla triumphed, showing his three cards with a little bow in acknowledgment of the applause with which his audience conceded his possession of strange powers—strange whether for good or evil. A young man in the front row, to our right, an Italian, with proud, finely chiselled features, rose up and said that he intended to assert his own will in his choice and consciously to resist any influence, of whatever sort. Under these circumstances, what did Cipolla think would be the result? "You will," answered the Cavaliere, "make my task somewhat more difficult thereby. As for the result, your resistance will not alter it in the least. Freedom exists, and also the will exists; but freedom of the will does not exist, for a will that aims at its own freedom aims at the unknown. You are free to draw or not to draw. But if you draw, you will draw the right cards—the more certainly, the more wilfully obstinate your behaviour."

One must admit that he could not have chosen his words better, to trouble the waters and confuse the mind. The refractory youth hesitated before drawing. Then he pulled out a card and at once demanded to see if it was among the chosen three. "But why?" queried Cipolla. "Why do things by halves?" Then, as the other defiantly insisted, "*E servito*,"[9] said the juggler, with a gesture of exaggerated servility; and held out the three cards fanwise, without looking at them himself. The left-hand card was the one drawn.

Amid general applause, the apostle of freedom sat down. How far Cipolla employed small tricks and manual dexterity to help out his natural talents, the deuce only knew. But even without them the result would have been the same: the curiosity of the entire audience was unbounded and universal, everybody both enjoyed the amazing character of the entertainment and unanimously conceded the professional skill of the performer. "*Lavora bene*,"[1] we heard, here and there in our neighbourhood; it signified the triumph of objective

9. "At your service." 1. "He does a good job."

judgment over antipathy and repressed resentment.

After his last, incomplete, yet so much the more telling success, Cipolla had at once fortified himself with another cognac. Truly he did "drink a lot," and the fact made a bad impression. But obviously he needed the liquor and the cigarettes for the replenishment of his energy, upon which, as he himself said, heavy demands were made in all directions. Certainly in the intervals he looked very ill, exhausted and hollow-eyed. Then the little glassful would redress the balance, and the flow of lively, self-confident chatter run on, while the smoke he inhaled gushed out grey from his lungs. I clearly recall that he passed from the card-tricks to parlour games—the kind based on certain powers which in human nature are higher or else lower than human reason: on intuition and "magnetic" transmission; in short, upon a low type of manifestation. What I do not remember is the precise order things came in. And I will not bore you with a description of these experiments; everybody knows them, everybody has at one time or another taken part in this finding of hidden articles, this blind carrying out of a series of acts, directed by a force that proceeds from organism to organism by unexplored paths. Everybody has had his little glimpse into the equivocal, impure, inexplicable nature of the occult, has been conscious of both curiosity and contempt, has shaken his head over the human tendency of those who deal in it to help themselves out with humbuggery, though, after all, the humbuggery is no disproof whatever of the genuineness of the other elements in the dubious amalgam. I can only say here that each single circumstance gains in weight and the whole greatly in impressiveness when it is a man like Cipolla who is the chief actor and guiding spirit in the sinister business. He sat smoking at the rear of the stage, his back to the audience while they conferred. The object passed from hand to hand which it was his task to find, with which he was to perform some action agreed upon beforehand. Then he would start to move zigzag through the hall, with his head thrown back and one hand out-stretched, the other clasped in that of a guide who was in on the secret but enjoined to keep himself perfectly passive, with his thoughts directed upon the agreed goal. Cipolla moved with the bearing typical in these experiments: now groping upon a false start, now with a quick forward thrust, now pausing as though to listen and by sudden inspiration correcting his course. The rôles seemed reversed, the stream of influence was moving in the contrary direction, as the artist himself pointed out, in his ceaseless flow of discourse. The suffering, receptive, performing part was now his, the will he had before imposed on others was shut out, he acted in obedience to a voiceless common will which was in the air. But he made it perfectly clear that it all came to the same thing. The capacity for self-surrender, he said, for becoming a tool, for the most uncondi-

tional and utter self-abnegation, was but the reverse side of that other power to will and to command. Commanding and obeying formed together one single principle, one indissoluble unity; he who knew how to obey knew also how to command, and conversely; the one idea was comprehended in the other, as people and leader were comprehended in one another. But that which was *done*, the highly exacting and exhausting performance, was in every case his, the leader's and mover's, in whom the will became obedience, the obedience will, whose person was the cradle and womb of both, and who thus suffered enormous hardship. Repeatedly he emphasized the fact that his lot was a hard one—presumably to account for his need of stimulant and his frequent recourse to the little glass.

Thus he groped his way forward, like a blind seer, led and sustained by the mysterious common will. He drew a pin set with a stone out of its hiding-place in an English-woman's shoe, carried it, halting and pressing on by turns, to another lady—Signora Angiolieri—and handed it to her on bended knee, with the words it had been agreed he was to utter. "I present you with this in token of my respect," was the sentence. Their sense was obvious, but the words themselves not easy to hit upon, for the reason that they had been agreed on in French; the language complication seemed to us a little malicious, implying as it did a conflict between the audience's natural interest in the success of the miracle, and their desire to witness the humiliation of this presumptuous man. It was a strange sight: Cipolla on his knees before the signora, wrestling, amid efforts at speech, after knowledge of the preordained words. "I must say something," he said, "and I feel clearly what it is I must say. But I also feel that if it passed my lips it would be wrong. Be careful not to help me unintentionally!" he cried out, though very likely that was precisely what he was hoping for. "*Pensez très fort*,"[2] he cried all at once, in bad French, and then burst out with the required words—in Italian, indeed, but with the final substantive pronounced in the sister tongue, in which he was probably far from fluent: he said *vénération* instead of *venerazione*, with an impossible nasal. And this partial success, after the complete success before it, the finding of the pin, the presentation of it on his knees to the right person—was almost more impressive than if he had got the sentence exactly right, and evoked bursts of admiring applause.

Cipolla got up from his knees and wiped the perspiration from his brow. You understand that this experiment with the pin was a single case, which I describe because it sticks in my memory. But he changed his method several times and improvised a number of variations suggested by his contact with his audience; a good deal of time thus

2. "Think very hard" (French).

went by. He seemed to get particular inspiration from the person of our landlady; she drew him on to the most extraordinary displays of clairvoyance. "It does not escape me, madame," he said to her, "that there is something unusual about you, some special and honourable distinction. He who has eyes to see descries about your lovely brow an aureola—if I mistake not, it once was stronger than now—a slowly paling radiance . . . hush, not a word! Don't help me. Beside you sits your husband—yes?" He turned towards the silent Signor Angiolieri. "You are the husband of this lady, and your happiness is complete. But in the midst of this happiness memories rise . . . the past, signora, so it seems to me, plays an important part in your present. You knew a king . . . has not a king crossed your path in bygone days?"

"No," breathed the dispenser of our midday soup, her golden-brown eyes gleaming in the noble pallor of her face.

"No? No, not a king; I meant that generally, I did not mean literally a king. Not a king, not a prince, and a prince after all, a king of a loftier realm; it was a great artist, at whose side you once—you would contradict me, and yet I am not wholly wrong. Well, then! It was a woman, a great, a world-renowned woman artist, whose friendship you enjoyed in your tender years, whose sacred memory overshadows and transfigures your whole existence. Her name? Need I utter it, whose fame has long been bound up with the Fatherland's, immortal as its own? Eleonora Duse," he finished, softly and with much solemnity.

The little woman bowed her head, overcome. The applause was like a patriotic demonstration. Nearly everyone there knew about Signora Angiolieri's wonderful past; they were all able to confirm the Cavaliere's intuition—not least the present guests of Casa Eleonora. But we wondered how much of the truth he had learned as the result of professional inquiries made on his arrival. Yet I see no reason at all to cast doubt, on rational grounds, upon powers which, before our very eyes, became fatal to their possessor.

At this point there was an intermission. Our lord and master withdrew. Now I confess that almost ever since the beginning of my tale I have looked forward with dread to this moment in it. The thoughts of men are mostly not hard to read; in this case they are very easy. You are sure to ask why we did not choose this moment to go away—and I must continue to owe you an answer. I do not know why. I cannot defend myself. By this time it was certainly eleven, probably later. The children were asleep. The last series of tests had been too long, nature had had her way. They were sleeping in our laps, the little one on mine, the boy on his mother's. That was, in a way, a consolation; but at the same time it was also ground for compassion and a clear leading to take them home to bed. And I give you my

word that we wanted to obey this touching admonition, we seriously wanted to. We roused the poor things and told them it was now high time to go. But they were no sooner conscious than they began to resist and implore—you know how horrified children are at the thought of leaving before the end of a thing. No cajoling has any effect, you have to use force. It was so lovely, they wailed. How did we know what was coming next? Surely we could not leave until after the intermission; they liked a little nap now and again—only not go home, only not go to bed, while the beautiful evening was still going on!

We yielded, but only for the moment, of course—so far as we knew—only for a little while, just a few minutes longer. I cannot excuse our staying, scarcely can I even understand it. Did we think, having once said A, we had to say B—having once brought the children hither we had to let them stay? No, it is not good enough. Were we ourselves so highly entertained? Yes, and no. Our feelings for Cavaliere Cipolla were of a very mixed kind, but so were the feelings of the whole audience, if I mistake not, and nobody left. Were we under the sway of a fascination which emanated from this man who took so strange a way to earn his bread; a fascination which he gave out independently of the programme and even between the tricks and which paralysed our resolve? Again, sheer curiosity may account for something. One was curious to know how such an evening turned out; Cipolla in his remarks having all along hinted that he had tricks in his bag stranger than any he had yet produced.

But all that is not it—or at least it is not all of it. More correct it would be to answer the first question with another. Why had we not left Torre di Venere itself before now? To me the two questions are one and the same, and in order to get out of the impasse I might simply say that I had answered it already. For, as things had been in Torre in general: queer, uncomfortable, troublesome, tense, oppressive, so precisely they were here in this hall tonight. Yes, more than precisely. For it seemed to be the fountainhead of all the uncanniness and all the strained feelings which had oppressed the atmosphere of our holiday. This man whose return to the stage we were awaiting was the personification of all that; and, as we had not gone away in general, so to speak, it would have been inconsistent to do it in the particular case. You may call this an explanation, you may call it inertia, as you see fit. Any argument more to the purpose I simply do not know how to adduce.

Well, there was an interval of ten minutes, which grew into nearly twenty. The children remained awake. They were enchanted by our compliance, and filled the break to their own satisfaction by renewing relations with the popular sphere, with Antonio, Guiscardo, and the canoe man. They put their hands to their mouths and called messages across, appealing to us for the Italian words. "Hope you

have a good catch tomorrow, a whole netful!" They called to Mario, Esquisito Mario: "*Mario, una ciocolata e biscotti!*" And this time he heeded and answered with a smile: "*Subito, signorini!*"[3] Later we had reason to recall this kindly, if rather absent and pensive smile.

Thus the interval passed, the gong sounded. The audience, which had scattered in conversation, took their places again, the children sat up straight in their chairs with their hands in their laps. The curtain had not been dropped. Cipolla came forward again, with his dipping stride, and began to introduce the second half of the programme with a lecture.

Let me state once for all that this self-confident cripple was the most powerful hypnotist I have ever seen in my life. It was pretty plain now that he threw dust in the public eye and advertised himself as a prestidigitator on account of police regulations which would have prevented him from making his living by the exercise of his powers. Perhaps this eye-wash is the usual thing in Italy; it may be permitted or even connived at by the authorities. Certainly the man had from the beginning made little concealment of the actual nature of his operations; and this second half of the programme was quite frankly and exclusively devoted to one sort of experiment. While he still practised some rhetorical circumlocutions, the tests themselves were one long series of attacks upon the will-power, the loss or compulsion of volition. Comic, exciting, amazing by turns, by midnight they were still in full swing; we ran the gamut of all the phenomena this natural-unnatural field has to show, from the unimpressive at one end of the scale to the monstrous at the other. The audience laughed and applauded as they followed the grotesque details; shook their heads, clapped their knees, fell very frankly under the spell of this stern, self-assured personality. At the same time I saw signs that they were not quite complacent, not quite unconscious of the peculiar ignominy which lay, for the individual and for the general, in Cipolla's triumphs.

Two main features were constant in all the experiments: the liquor glass and the claw-handled riding-whip. The first was always invoked to add fuel to his demoniac fires; without it, apparently, they might have burned out. On this score we might even have felt pity for the man; but the whistle of his scourge, the insulting symbol of his domination, before which we all cowered, drowned out every sensation save a dazed and outbraved submission to his power. Did he then lay claim to our sympathy to boot? I was struck by a remark he made—it suggested no less. At the climax of his experiments, by stroking and breathing upon a certain young man who had offered himself as a subject and already proved himself a particularly susceptible one,

3. "Mario, a hot chocolate and cookies!" "Right away, young sirs."

he had not only put him into the condition known as deep trance and extended his insensible body by neck and feet across the backs of two chairs, but had actually sat down on the rigid form as on a bench, without making it yield. The sight of this unholy figure in a frock-coat squatted on the stiff body was horrible and incredible; the audience, convinced that the victim of this scientific diversion must be suffering, expressed its sympathy: "*Ah, poveretto!*" Poor soul, poor soul! "*Poor soul!*" Cipolla mocked them, with some bitterness. "Ladies and gentlemen, you are barking up the wrong tree. *Sono io il poveretto.*[4] I am the person who is suffering, I am the one to be pitied." We pocketed the information. Very good. Maybe the experiment was at his expense, maybe it was he who had suffered the cramp when the *giovanotto* over there had made the faces. But appearances were all against it; and one does not feel like saying *poveretto* to a man who is suffering to bring about the humiliation of others.

I have got ahead of my story and lost sight of the sequence of events. To this day my mind is full of the Cavaliere's feats of endurance; only I do not recall them in their order—which does not matter. So much I do know: that the longer and more circumstantial tests, which got the most applause, impressed me less than some of the small ones which passed quickly over. I remember the young man whose body Cipolla converted into a board, only because of the accompanying remarks which I have quoted. An elderly lady in a cane-seated chair was lulled by Cipolla in the delusion that she was on a voyage to India and gave a voluble account of her adventures by land and sea. But I found this phenomenon less impressive than one which followed immediately after the intermission. A tall, well-built, soldierly man was unable to lift his arm, after the hunchback had told him that he could not and given a cut through the air with his whip. I can still see the face of that stately, mustachioed colonel smiling and clenching his teeth as he struggled to regain his lost freedom of action. A staggering performance! He seemed to be exerting his will, and in vain; the trouble, however, was probably simply that he could not will. There was involved here that recoil of the will upon itself which paralyses choice—as our tyrant had previously explained to the Roman gentleman.

Still less can I forget the touching scene, at once comic and horrible, with Signora Angiolieri. The Cavaliere, probably in his first bold survey of the room, had spied out her ethereal lack of resistance to his power. For actually he bewitched her, literally drew her out of her seat, out of her row, and away with him whither he willed. And in order to enhance his effect, he bade Signor Angiolieri call upon his wife by her name, to throw, as it were, all the weight of his

4. "*I* am the poor soul."

existence and his rights in her into the scale, to rouse by the voice of her husband everything in his spouse's soul which could shield her virtue against the evil assaults of magic. And how vain it all was! Cipolla was standing at some distance from the couple, when he made a single cut with his whip through the air. It caused our landlady to shudder violently and turn her face towards him. "Sofronia!" cried Signor Angiolieri—we had not known that Signora Angiolieri's name was Sofronia. And he did well to call, everybody saw that there was no time to lose. His wife kept her face turned in the direction of the diabolical Cavaliere, who with his ten long yellow fingers was making passes at his victim, moving backwards as he did so, step by step. Then Signora Angiolieri, her pale face gleaming, rose up from her seat, turned right round, and began to glide after him. Fatal and forbidding sight! Her face as though moonstruck, stiff-armed, her lovely hands lifted a little at the wrists, the feet as it were together, she seemed to float slowly out of her row and after the tempter. "Call her, sir, keep on calling," prompted the redoubtable man. And Signor Angiolieri, in a weak voice, called: "Sofronia!" Ah, again and again he called; as his wife went further off he even curved one hand round his lips and beckoned with the other as he called. But the poor voice of love and duty echoed unheard, in vain, behind the lost one's back; the signora swayed along, moonstruck, deaf, enslaved; she glided into the middle aisle and down it towards the fingering hunchback, towards the door. We were driven to the conviction, that she would have followed her master, had he so willed it, to the ends of the earth.

"*Accidente!*"[5] cried out Signor Angiolieri, in genuine affright, springing up as the exit was reached. But at the same moment the Cavaliere put aside, as it were, the triumphal crown and broke off. "Enough, signora, I thank you," he said, and offered his arm to lead her back to her husband. "Signor," he greeted the latter, "here is your wife. Unharmed, with my compliments, I give her into your hands. Cherish with all the strength of your manhood a treasure which is so wholly yours, and let your zeal be quickened by knowing that there are powers stronger than reason or virtue, and not always so magnanimously ready to relinquish their prey!"

Poor Signor Angiolieri, so quiet, so bald! He did not look as though he would know how to defend his happiness, even against powers much less demoniac than these which were now adding mockery to frightfulness. Solemnly and pompously the Cavaliere retired to the stage, amid applause to which his eloquence gave double strength. It was this particular episode, I feel sure, that set the seal upon his ascendancy. For now he made them dance, yes, literally; and the

5. "Blast it!"

dancing lent a dissolute, abandoned, topsy-turvy air to the scene, a drunken abdication of the critical spirit which had so long resisted the spell of this man. Yes, he had had to fight to get the upper hand—for instance against the animosity of the young Roman gentleman, whose rebellious spirit threatened to serve others as a rallying-point. But it was precisely upon the importance of example that the Cavaliere was so strong. He had the wit to make his attack at the weakest point and to choose as his first victim that feeble, ecstatic youth whom he had previously made into a board. The master had but to look at him, when this young man would fling himself back as though struck by lightning, place his hands rigidly at his sides, and fall into a state of military somnambulism, in which it was plain to any eye that he was open to the most absurd suggestion that might be made to him. He seemed quite content in his abject state, quite pleased to be relieved of the burden of voluntary choice. Again and again he offered himself as a subject and gloried in the model facility he had in losing consciousness. So now he mounted the platform, and a single cut of the whip was enough to make him dance to the Cavaliere's orders, in a kind of complacent ecstasy, eyes closed, head nodding, lank limbs flying in all directions.

It looked unmistakably like enjoyment, and other recruits were not long in coming forward: two other young men, one humbly and one well dressed, were soon jigging alongside the first. But now the gentleman from Rome bobbed up again, asking defiantly if the Cavaliere would engage to make him dance too, even against his will.

"Even against your will," answered Cipolla, in unforgettable accents. That frightful "*anche se non vuole*"[6] still rings in my ears. The struggle began. After Cipolla had taken another little glass and lighted a fresh cigarette he stationed the Roman at a point in the middle aisle and himself took up a position some distance behind, making his whip whistle through the air as he gave the order: "*Balla!*" His opponent did not stir. "*Balla!*" repeated the Cavaliere incisively, and snapped his whip. You saw the young man move his neck round in his collar; at the same time one hand lifted slightly at the wrist, one ankle turned outward. But that was all, for the time at least; merely a tendency to twitch, now sternly repressed, now seeming about to get the upper hand. It escaped nobody that here a heroic obstinacy, a fixed resolve to resist, must needs be conquered; we were beholding a gallant effort to strike out and save the honour of the human race. He twitched but danced not; and the struggle was so prolonged that the Cavaliere had to divide his attention between it and the stage, turning now and then to make his riding-whip whistle in the direction of the dancers, as it were to keep them in leash. At the same

6. "Even if you don't want to." *Balla!*: "Dance!"

time he advised the audience that no fatigue was involved in such activities, however long they went on, since it was not the automatons up there who danced, but himself. Then once more his eye would bore itself into the back of the Roman's neck and lay siege to the strength of purpose which defied him.

One saw it waver, that strength of purpose, beneath the repeated summons and whip-crackings. Saw with an objective interest which yet was not quite free from traces of sympathetic emotion—from pity, even from a cruel kind of pleasure. If I understand what was going on, it was the negative character of the young man's fighting position which was his undoing. It is likely that not willing is not a practicable state of mind; *not* to want to do something may be in the long run a mental content impossible to subsist on. Between not willing a certain thing and not willing at all—in other words, yielding to another person's will—there may lie too small a space for the idea of freedom to squeeze into. Again, there were the Cavaliere's persuasive words, woven in among the whip-crackings and commands, as he mingled effects that were his own secret with others of a bewilderingly psychological kind. "*Balla!*" said he. "Who wants to torture himself like that? Is forcing yourself your idea of freedom? *Una ballatina!* Why, your arms and legs are aching for it. What a relief to give way to them—there, you are dancing already! That is no struggle any more, it is a pleasure!" And so it was. The jerking and twitching of the refractory youth's limbs had at last got the upper hand; he lifted his arms, then his knees, his joints quite suddenly relaxed, he flung his legs and danced, and amid bursts of applause the Cavaliere led him to join the row of puppets on the stage. Up there we could see his face as he "enjoyed" himself; it was clothed in a broad grin and the eyes were half-shut. In a way, it was consoling to see that he was having a better time than he had had in the hour of his pride.

His "fall" was, I may say, an epoch. The ice was completely broken, Cipolla's triumph had reached its height. The Circe's wand,[7] that whistling leather whip with the claw handle, held absolute sway. At one time—it must have been well after midnight—not only were there eight or ten persons dancing on the little stage, but in the hall below a varied animation reigned, and a long-toothed Anglo-Saxoness in a pince-nez left her seat of her own motion to perform a tarantella[8] in the centre aisle. Cipolla was lounging in a cane-seated chair at the left of the stage, gulping down the smoke of a cigarette and breathing it impudently out through his bad teeth. He tapped his foot and shrugged his shoulders, looking down upon the aban-

7. In Homer's *Odyssey* (Book X) the goddess Circe changed men into animals with a stroke of her wand. 8. A lively Southern Italian dance. *Pince-nez:* Eyeglasses clipped to the bridge of the nose (without earpieces).

doned scene in the hall; now and then he snapped his whip backwards at a laggard upon the stage. The children were awake at the moment. With shame I speak of them. For it was not good to be here, least of all for them; that we had not taken them away can only be explained by saying that we had caught the general devil-may-careness of the hour. By that time it was all one. Anyhow, thank goodness, they lacked understanding for the disreputable side of the entertainment, and in their innocence were perpetually charmed by the unheard-of indulgence which permitted them to be present at such a thing as a magician's "evening." Whole quarter-hours at a time they drowsed on our laps, waking refreshed and rosy-cheeked, with sleep-drunken eyes, to laugh to bursting at the leaps and jumps the magician made those people up there make. They had not thought it would be so jolly; they joined with their clumsy little hands in every round of applause. And jumped for joy upon their chairs, as was their wont, when Cipolla beckoned to their friend Mario from the Esquisito, beckoned to him just like a picture in a book, holding his hand in front of his nose and bending and straightening the forefinger by turns.

Mario obeyed. I can see him now going up the stairs to Cipolla, who continued to beckon him, in that droll, picture-book sort of way. He hesitated for a moment at first; that, too, I recall quite clearly. During the whole evening he had lounged against a wooden pillar at the side entrance, with his arms folded, or else with his hands thrust into his jacket pockets. He was on our left, near the youth with the militant hair, and had followed the performance attentively, so far as we had seen, if with no particular animation and God knows how much comprehension. He could not much relish being summoned thus, at the end of the evening. But it was only too easy to see why he obeyed. After all, obedience was his calling in life; and then, how should a simple lad like him find it within his human capacity to refuse compliance to a man so throned and crowned as Cipolla at that hour? Willy-nilly he left his column and with a word of thanks to those making way for him he mounted the steps with a doubtful smile on his full lips.

Picture a thickset youth of twenty years, with clipt hair, a low forehead, and heavy-lidded eyes of an indefinite grey, shot with green and yellow. These things I knew from having spoken with him, as we often had. There was a saddle of freckles on the flat nose, the whole upper half of the face retreated behind the lower, and that again was dominated by thick lips that parted to show the salivated teeth. These thick lips and the veiled look of the eyes lent the whole face a primitive melancholy—it was that which had drawn us to him from the first. In it was not the faintest trace of brutality—indeed, his hands would have given the lie to such an idea, being unusually

slender and delicate even for a southerner. They were hands by which one liked being served.

We knew him humanly without knowing him personally, if I may make that distinction. We saw him nearly every day, and felt a certain kindness for his dreamy ways, which might at times be actual inattentiveness, suddenly transformed into a redeeming zeal to serve. His mien was serious, only the children could bring a smile to his face. It was not sulky, but uningratiating, without intentional effort to please—or, rather, it seemed to give up being pleasant in the conviction that it could not succeed. We should have remembered Mario in any case, as one of those homely recollections of travel which often stick in the mind better than more important ones. But of his circumstances we knew no more than that his father was a petty clerk in the Municipio and his mother took in washing.

His white waiter's-coat became him better than the faded striped suit he wore, with a gay coloured scarf instead of a collar, the ends tucked into his jacket. He neared Cipolla, who however did not leave off that motion of his finger before his nose, so that Mario had to come still closer, right up to the chair-seat and the master's legs. Whereupon the latter spread out his elbows and seized the lad, turning him so that we had a view of his face. Then gazed him briskly up and down, with a careless, commanding eye.

"Well, *ragazzo mio*,[9] how comes it we make acquaintance so late in the day? But believe me, I made yours long ago. Yes, yes, I've had you in my eye this long while and known what good stuff you were made of. How could I go and forget you again? Well, I've had a good deal to think about. . . . Now tell me, what is your name? The first name, that's all I want."

"My name is Mario," the young man answered, in a low voice.

"Ah, Mario. Very good. Yes, yes, there is such a name, quite a common name, a classic name too, one of those which preserve the heroic traditions of the Fatherland. *Bravo! Salve!*" And he flung up his arm slantingly above his crooked shoulder, palm outward, in the Roman salute. He may have been slightly tipsy by now, and no wonder; but he spoke as before, clearly, fluently, and with emphasis. Though about this time there had crept into his voice a gross, autocratic note, and a kind of arrogance was in his sprawl.

"Well, now, Mario *mio*," he went on, "it's a good thing you came this evening, and that's a pretty scarf you've got on; it is becoming to your style of beauty. It must stand you in good stead with the girls, the pretty pretty girls of Torre—"

From the row of youths, close by the place where Mario had been standing, sounded a laugh. It came from the youth with the militant

9. "My boy."

hair. He stood there, his jacket over his shoulder, and laughed outright, rudely and scornfully.

Mario gave a start. I think it was a shrug, but he may have started and then hastened to cover the movement by shrugging his shoulders, as much as to say that the neckerchief and the fair sex were matters of equal indifference to him.

The Cavaliere gave a downward glance.

"We needn't trouble about him," he said. "He is jealous, because your scarf is so popular with the girls, maybe partly because you and I are so friendly up here. Perhaps he'd like me to put him in mind of his colic—I could do it free of charge. Tell me, Mario. You've come here this evening for a bit of fun—and in the daytime you work in an iron-monger's shop?"

"In a café," corrected the youth.

"Oh, in a café. That's where Cipolla nearly came a cropper! What you are is a cup-bearer, a Ganymede[1]—I like that, it is another classical allusion—*Salvietta!*" Again the Cavaliere saluted, to the huge gratification of his audience.

Mario smiled too. "But before that," he interpolated, in the interest of accuracy, "I worked for a while in a shop in Portoclemente." He seemed visited by a natural desire to assist the prophecy by dredging out its essential features.

"There, didn't I say so? In an ironmonger's shop?"

"They kept combs and brushes," Mario got round it.

"Didn't I say that you were not always a Ganymede? Not always at the sign of the serviette? Even when Cipolla makes a mistake, it is a kind that makes you believe in him. Now tell me: Do you believe in me?"

An indefinite gesture.

"A half-way answer," commented the Cavaliere. "Probably it is not easy to win your confidence. Even for me, I can see, it is not so easy. I see in your features a reserve, a sadness, *un tratto di malinconia*[2] . . . tell me" (he seized Mario's hand persuasively) "have you troubles?"

"*Nossignore*," answered Mario, promptly and decidedly.

"You *have* troubles," insisted the Cavaliere, bearing down the denial by the weight of his authority. "Can't I see? Trying to pull the wool over Cipolla's eyes, are you? Of course, about the girls—it is a girl, isn't it? You have love troubles?"

Mario gave a vigorous head-shake. And again the *giovanotto*'s brutal laugh rang out. The Cavaliere gave heed. His eyes were roving about somewhere in the air: but he cocked an ear to the sound, then swung his whip backwards, as he had once or twice before in his conversa-

1. A young boy, waiter or cup-bearer to the gods. *Salvietta*: "Napkin!" 2. "A melancholy air." *Nossignore*: "No sir."

tion with Mario, that none of his puppets might flag in their zeal. The gesture had nearly cost him his new prey: Mario gave a sudden start in the direction of the steps. But Cipolla had him in his clutch.

"Not so fast," said he. "That would be fine, wouldn't it? So you want to skip, do you, Ganymede, right in the middle of the fun, or, rather, when it is just beginning? Stay with me, I'll show you something nice. I'll convince you. You have no reason to worry, I promise you. This girl—you know her and others know her too—what's her name? Wait! I read the name in your eyes, it is on the tip of my tongue and yours too—"

"Silvestra!" shouted the *giovanotto* from below.

The Cavaliere's face did not change.

"Aren't there the forward people?" he asked, not looking down, more as in undisturbed converse with Mario. "Aren't there the young fighting-cocks that crow in season and out? Takes the word out of your mouth, the conceited fool, and seems to think he has some special right to it. Let him be. But Silvestra, your Silvestra—ah, what a girl that is! What a prize! Brings your heart into your mouth to see her walk or laugh or breathe, she is so lovely. And her round arms when she washes, and tosses her head back to get the hair out of her eyes! An angel from paradise!"

Mario started at him, his head thrust forward. He seemed to have forgotten the audience, forgotten where he was. The red rings round his eyes had got larger, they looked as though they were painted on. His thick lips parted.

"And she makes you suffer, this angel," went on Cipolla, "or, rather, you make yourself suffer for her—there is a difference, my lad, a most important difference, let me tell you. There are misunderstandings in love, maybe nowhere else in the world are there so many. I know what you are thinking: what does this Cipolla, with his little physical defect, know about love? Wrong, all wrong, he knows a lot. He has a wide and powerful understanding of its workings, and it pays to listen to his advice. But let's leave Cipolla out, cut him out altogether and think only of Silvestra, your peerless Silvestra! What! Is she to give any young gamecock the preference, so that he can laugh while you cry? To prefer him to a chap like you, so full of feeling and so sympathetic? Not very likely, is it? It is impossible—we know better, Cipolla and she. If I were to put myself in her place and choose between the two of you, a tarry lout like that—a codfish, a sea-urchin—and a Mario, a knight of the serviette, who moves among gentlefolk and hands round refreshments with an air—my word, but my heart would speak in no uncertain tones—it knows to whom I gave it long ago. It is time that he should see and understand, my chosen one! It is time that you see me and recognize me, Mario, my beloved! Tell me, who am I?"

It was grisly, the way the betrayer made himself irresistible, wreathed and coquetted with his crooked shoulder, languished with the puffy eyes, and showed his splintered teeth in a sickly smile. And alas, at his beguiling words, what was come of our Mario? It is hard for me to tell, hard as it was for me to see; for here was nothing less than an utter abandonment of the inmost soul, a public exposure of timid and deluded passion and rapture. He put his hands across his mouth, his shoulders rose and fell with his pantings. He could not, it was plain, trust his eyes and ears for joy, and the one thing he forgot was precisely that he could not trust them. "Silvestra!" he breathed, from the very depths of his vanquished heart.

"Kiss me!" said the hunchback. "Trust me, I love thee. Kiss me here." And with the tip of his index finger, hand, arm, and little finger outspread, he pointed to his cheek, near the mouth. And Mario bent and kissed him.

It had grown very still in the room. There was a monstrous moment, grotesque and thrilling, the moment of Mario's bliss. In that evil span of time, crowded with a sense of the illusiveness of all joy, one sound became audible, and that not quite at once, but on the instant of the melancholy and ribald meeting between Mario's lips and the repulsive flesh which thrust itself forward for his caress. It was the sound of a laugh, from the *giovanotto* on our left. It broke into the dramatic suspense of the moment, coarse, mocking, and yet—or I must have been grossly mistaken—with an undertone of compassion for the poor bewildered, victimized creature. It had a faint ring of that "*Poveretto*" which Cipolla had declared was wasted on the wrong person, when he claimed the pity for his own.

The laugh still rang in the air when the recipient of the caress gave his whip a little swish, low down, close to his chair-leg, and Mario started up and flung himself back. He stood in that posture staring, his hands one over the other on those desecrated lips. Then he beat his temples with his clenched fists, over and over; turned and staggered down the steps, while the audience applauded, and Cipolla sat there with his hands in his lap, his shoulders shaking. Once below, and even while in full retreat, Mario hurled himself round with legs flung wide apart; one arm flew up, and two flat shattering detonations crashed through applause and laughter.

There was instant silence. Even the dancers came to a full stop and stared about, struck dumb. Cipolla bounded from his seat. He stood with his arms spread out, slanting as though to ward everybody off, as though next moment he would cry out: "Stop! Keep back! Silence! What was that?" Then, in that instant, he sank back in his seat, his head rolling on his chest; in the next he had fallen sideways to the floor, where he lay motionless, a huddled heap of clothing, with limbs awry.

The commotion was indescribable. Ladies hid their faces, shuddering, on the breasts of their escorts. There were shouts for a doctor, for the police. People flung themselves on Mario in a mob, to disarm him, to take away the weapon that hung from his fingers—that small, dull-metal, scarcely pistol-shaped tool with hardly any barrel—in how strange and unexpected a direction had fate levelled it!

And now—now finally, at last—we took the children and led them towards the exit, past the pair of *carabinieri*[3] just entering. Was that the end, they wanted to know, that they might go in peace? Yes, we assured them, that was the end. An end of horror, a fatal end. And yet a liberation—for I could not, and I cannot, but find it so!

3. Policemen.

RAINER MARIA RILKE
1875–1926

In many ways, Rilke exists between traditions: inheritor of the Symbolist tradition in his allusive imagery and intuitions of universal order, modernist in the "thing-centered" concreteness of his individual descriptions, precursor of the existentialists in his constant struggle to comprehend the self's relation to the universe. The best-known and most influential German poet of the twentieth century, Rilke has been read and translated outside Europe in countries as far apart as the United States and Japan—visibly able to speak to a variety of cultures and audiences in spite of the fact that he is perhaps the least socially-oriented poet of his time.

Born in Prague on December 4, 1875, to German-speaking parents who separated when he was nine, Rainer Maria Rilke had an unhappy childhood that included being dressed as a girl when he was young (thus his mother compensated for the earlier loss of a baby daughter) and being sent to military academies, where he was lonely and miserable, from 1886 to 1891. Illness caused his departure from the second academy and, after a year in business school, he worked in his uncle's law firm and studied at the University of Prague. Rilke hoped to persuade his family that he should devote himself to a literary career rather than business or law, and energetically wrote poetry (*Sacrifice to the Lares*, 1895, *Crowned by Dream*, 1896), plays, stories, and reviews. Moving to Munich in 1897, he met and fell in love with a fascinating and cultured older woman, Lou Andreas-Salomé, who would be a constant influence on him throughout his life. He accompanied Andreas-Salomé and her husband to Russia in 1899, where he met Tolstoy and the painter Leonid Pasternak and—fascinated with Russian mysticism and the Russian landscape—wrote most of the poems later published as *The Book of Hours, The Book of Monastic Life* (1905), as well as a romantic verse tale that became extremely popular, *The Tale of Love and Death of Cornet Christoph Rilke* (1906). After a second trip to Russia, Rilke spent some time

at an artists' colony called Worpswede where he met his future wife, the sculptress Clara Westhoff. They were married in March 1901 and settled in a cottage near the colony where Rilke wrote the second part of *The Book of Hours, The Book of Pilgrimage*. He and Clara separated in the following year, and Rilke moved to Paris where he embarked on a study of the sculptor Auguste Rodin (1903).

Unhappy in Paris, where he felt lonely and isolated, he fled to Italy in 1903 to write the last section of *The Book of Hours, The Book of Poverty and Death*. Nonetheless, he found there a new kind of literary and artistic inspiration. He read French writers and especially Baudelaire, whose minutely realistic but strangely beautiful description of a rotting carcass ("A Carcass") initiated, he felt, "the entire development toward objective expression, which we now recognize in Cézanne." In Rodin, too, he recognized a workmanlike dedication to the technical demands of his craft, an intense concentration on visible, tangible objects, and above all, a belief in art as an essentially religious activity. Although he wrote in distress to his friend Lou Andreas-Salomé, complaining of nightmares and a sense of failure, it is at this time (and with her encouragement) that Rilke began his major work. The anguished, semi-autobiographical spiritual confessions of *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge* (1910) date to this period, as do a series of *New Poems* (1907–08) in which he abandoned his earlier, impressionistic and romantic style and developed a more intense symbolic vision focused on objects. The *New Poems* emphasized physical reality, the absolute otherness and "thing-like" nature of what was observed—be it fountain, panther, flower, human being, or the "Archaic Torso of Apollo" presented here. "Thing-poems" *(Dinggedichte)*, in fact, is a term often used to describe Rilke's writing at this time, with its open emphasis on material description. In a letter to Lou Andreas-Salomé, he described the way that ancient art objects took on a peculiar luster once they were detached from history and seen as "things" in and for themselves: "No subject matter is attached to them, no irrelevant voice interrupts the silence of their concentrated reality . . . no history casts a shadow over their naked clarity—: they *are*. That is all . . . one day one of them reveals itself to you, and shines like a first star."

Such "things" are not dead or inanimate but supremely alive, filled with a strange vitality before the poet's glance: the charged sexuality of the marble torso, the metamorphosis of the Spanish dance in which the dancer's flame-like dress "becomes a furnace / from which, like startled rattlesnakes, the long / naked arms uncoil, aroused and clicking" ("Spanish Dancer"), or the caged panther's circling "like a ritual dance around a center / in which a mighty will stands paralyzed" ("The Panther"). If "things" are not dead, neither is death unambiguous: when Rilke retells the ancient myth of Orpheus and his lost wife, Eurydice, the dead woman is seen as achieving a new and fuller existence in the underworld. "Deep within herself. Being dead / filled her beyond fulfillment. . . . She was already loosened like long hair, / poured out like fallen rain, / shared like a limitless supply. / She was already root." Themes of the interpenetration of life and death, the visible and invisible world, and creativity itself are taken up in Rilke's next major work, the sequence of ten elegies called the *Duino Elegies* (1923) which he was to begin in 1912 while spending the winter in Duino Castle near Trieste.

The composition of the *Duino Elegies** came in two bursts of inspiration separated by ten years. Despite Rilke's increasing reputation and the popularity of his earlier work, he felt frustrated and unhappy. It was not that he lacked friends or activity: based in Paris, he corresponded actively and traveled widely, visiting Italy, Flanders, Germany, Austria, Egypt, and Algeria. But social pressures and everyday anxieties kept him overly occupied, and when a patroness, Princess Marie von Thurn und Taxis-Hohenlohe, proposed that he stay by himself in her castle at Duino during the winter of 1911–12, he was delighted. "The necessity to be alone, alone for a long time, builds stronger in me every day. . . . People (whether it be my fault or theirs) wear me out." The story has been told many times of how Rilke, walking on the rocks above the sea and puzzling over how to answer a bothersome business letter that had just arrived, seemed to hear in the roar of the wind the first lines of his elegy: "Who, if I cried out, would hear me among the angels' / hierarchies?" By February he had written the first and second elegies, and when he left Duino Castle in May he had conceived the whole cycle and written fragments of the third, sixth, ninth, and tenth.

Completion did not come easily in the following years, with the advent of World War I. After writing the third Duino elegy in Paris in 1913, Rilke left for Munich—never dreaming that his apartment and personal property would soon be confiscated as that of an enemy alien. In April 1915, everything was sold at public auction; that summer, Duino Castle was bombarded and reduced to ruins. Rilke wrote the somber fourth elegy in Munich on November 22 and 23, and the next day was called up for the draft. Three weeks later, he was a clerk in the War Archives Office in Vienna where he drew precise vertical and horizontal lines on paper until June 1916, when the intercession of friends released him from military service. Rilke composed little after this experience and feared that he would never be able to complete the Duino sequence. In 1922, however, a friend's purchase of the tiny Château de Muzot (pronounced Muzotte) in Switzerland gave him a peaceful place to retire and write. He not only completed the *Duino Elegies* in Muzot, but wrote in addition—as a memorial for the young daughter of a friend—a two-part sequence of fifty-five sonnets, the *Sonnets to Orpheus* (1923).

With the *Duino Elegies* and the *Sonnets to Orpheus*, Rilke's last great works were complete. The melancholy philosophic vision of the early elegies had described an Angel of absolute reality, whose self-contained perfection was terrifyingly separate from mortal concerns; in the later elegies and the *Sonnets*, the poet balanced the idea of Angelic perfection with a newly important human role for the artist, who serves as a bridge between two worlds. To the poet's initial sense of helplessness and alienation, the later poems respond that all creatures need the artist's transforming glance in order to reach full being. If the Angel is "that creature in whom the transformation of the visible into the invisible . . . already appears in its completion . . . who guarantees the recognition of a higher level of reality in the invisible," then also the artist has the mission of bringing about this transformation. "It is our task to imprint this temporary, perishable earth into

* An elegy is a mournful lyric poem, usually a lament for loss, and generally of medium length.

ourselves so deeply, so painfully and passionately, that its essence can rise again, 'invisibly,' inside us. We are the bees of the invisible. We wildly collect the honey of the visible, to store it in the great golden hive of the invisible." *Elegies* and *Sonnets* support each other in this shared endeavor, and move toward a more positive statement of artistic "praise"—the celebration of simple Things—as the dominant Angel of the *Elegies* gives way to the human poet Orpheus, who in turn retires into the background of the later *Sonnets* before Eurydice, the woman whose passing into the realm of the dead brings her fuller being. With this major affirmation of the essential unity of life and death, Rilke closed his two complementary sequences ("the little rust-colored sail of the Sonnets and the Elegies' gigantic white canvas") and wrote little—chiefly poems in French—over the next few years. Increasingly ill with leukemia, he died on December 29, 1926, as the result of a sudden infection after pricking himself on roses he cut for a friend in his garden.

Despite their differences of length and style, the "Archaic Torso of Apollo" and the first and ninth Duino elegies are all concerned with the contrast of angelic perfection and flawed human existence. Art is the key in each case, although what the poet feels intuitively in the first poem remains to be analyzed and affirmed in the latter two. The "Archaic Torso of Apollo" is written in Petrarchan sonnet form, and takes as its point of departure a fifth-century B.C. Greek sculpture on display in the Louvre Museum in Paris. This headless marble torso is only a "thing": it should strike us as a lifeless, even defaced chunk of stone. Yet such is the perfection of its luminous sensuality—descended, the speaker suggests, from the brilliant gaze of its missing head and "ripening" eyes—that it seems impossibly alive, and an inner radiance bursts star-like from the marble. The *human* perfection of this marble torso, a perfection achieved through artistic vision, challenges and puts to shame the observer's own puny existence. Nor is there any place to escape from the lesson, once it is recognized: instead, "You must change your life."

The ten *Duino Elegies* also explore the same ambiguous relationship of life and art but in a more extended narrative style; they take up in addition one of Rilke's favorite themes, the complex tension between life and death in which human beings often appear puppets on a falsely real stage, ephemeral beings whose greatest achievements are finally reduced to nothing. The first and ninth elegies have a special corresponding relationship inside the overall sequence. To the question phrased desperately in the first: "Whom can we ever turn to / in our need?" the ninth responds that we must turn to ourselves, and to the artist's ability to comprehend and transmute the objects of this earth. In "The First Elegy," human alienation and distress are evident even to the beasts who, more attuned to nature, know that human beings are "not really at home" in the world. The poet himself fails to notice the simplest things as they call out for recognition—a star, a wave, or the sound of a violin—because he yearns for purer existence. Yet he too cannot attain the ideal: reaching out for perfect love, his arms embrace only emptiness. If there is an ideal essence of human qualities, he realizes, it is lifted above earthly ties: heroes survive in their reputation, and the purest love is a "soaring, objectless love" that does not depend on being answered, and recognizes

that there is no permanence on earth—"no place where we can remain." Rilke's characteristic examples of an idealized human essence are women, unrequited love, and those dying young: "What speaks to me of humanity," he wrote, "is the phenomenon of those have died young and, even more absolutely, purely, inexhaustibly: *the woman in love.*" To these he gives his entire sympathy and he evokes, at the end of "The First Elegy," the gentle surprise of the newly-dead for whom "it is strange to inhabit the earth no longer, to give up customs one barely had time to learn. . . ." Rilke celebrates the passage into eternity of these crucially "human" lives, and suggests that the celebration itself is important because it provides a nourishing myth for the living, who are otherwise overwhelmed by their sense of mortal loss. Such is the role of art: when the poet assumes the all-embracing perspective of angelic vision his lament (like the ancient dirge for Linus) transcends grief by filling the Void with unexpected and comforting harmony.

"The Ninth Elegy" begins by stressing the peculiar paradox of the human condition: why, being mortal, do we not live serenely and happily as part of nature—like the laurel leaf? Why is it "human" to long for some further destiny? The response, as in "The First Elegy," involves art; but whereas earlier it was the poet's special mission to give profundity to human lives, here he responds to a universal need. "Everything here / apparently needs us . . . Us, the most fleeting of all." The "unsayable" reality of the Angel is not the reality of earth, and the poet's human magic resides in finding some "pure word" that names things in their essence, says them "*more* intensely than the Things themselves / ever dreamed of existing." Such a poet presents earthly Things to the unearthly Angel in a way the latter, astonished, can never know. Ultimately, Rilke is celebrating the power of human creativity: like the rope maker in Rome, or the potter along the Nile, he observes reality and creates from it a new being. For the poet, however, it is a process of making the visible angelically "invisible," and a bridge between two worlds; he "delivers" Things by absorbing them into his imagination's inner dimension. "Earth, isn't this what you want: to arise within us, / *invisible?*" Rilke's poetic journey, in the *Elegies* as in the *Sonnets to Orpheus* which follow, was an inward journey that preserved what was most alive and valuable in human existence by subjecting it to the transfiguring perspective of art.

J. F. Hendry's *The Sacred Threshold, A Life of Rainer Maria Rilke* (1983) is a brief and readable biography with numerous citations from Rilke's letters and work. Heinz F. Peters', *Rainer Maria Rilke: Masks and the Man* (1977; reprint 1960), is a biographical and thematic study of Rilke's work and influence. Romano Guardini examines the elegies in *Rilke's Duino Elegies* (1961).

Archaic Torso of Apollo[1]

We cannot know his legendary head[2]
with eyes like ripening fruit. And yet his torso

1. Translated by Stephen Mitchell. The first poem in the second volume of Rilke's *New Poems* (1908), which were dedicated "to my good friend, Auguste Rodin" (the French sculptor, 1840–1917, whose secretary Rilke was for a brief period and on whom he wrote two monographs in 1903 and 1907). The poem itself was inspired by an ancient Greek statue discovered at Miletus (a Greek colony on the coast of Asia Minor) that was called simply the *Torso of a Youth from Miletus*; since the god Apollo was an ideal of youthful male beauty, his name was often associated with such statues. 2. In a torso, the head and limbs are missing.

is still suffused with brilliance from inside,
like a lamp, in which his gaze, now turned to low,

gleams in all its power. Otherwise
the curved breast could not dazzle you so, nor could
a smile run through the placid hips and thighs
to that dark center where procreation flared.

Otherwise this stone would seem defaced
beneath the translucent cascade of the shoulders
and would not glisten like a wild beast's fur:

would not, from all the borders of itself,
burst like a star: for here there is no place
that does not see you. You must change your life.

Archaïscher Torso Apollos

Wir kannten nicht sein unerhörtes Haupt,
darin die Augenäpfel reiften. Aber
sein Torso glüht noch wie ein Kandelaber,
in dem sein Schauen, nur zurückgeschraubt,

sich hält und glänzt. Sonst könnte nicht der Bug
der Brust dich blenden, und im leisen Drehen
der Lenden könnte nicht ein Lächeln gehen
zu jener Mitte, die die Zeugung trug.

Sonst stünde dieser Stein entstellt und kurz
unter der Schultern durchsichtigem Sturz
und flimmerte nicht so wie Raubtierfelle;

und bräche nicht aus allen seinen Rändern
aus wie ein Stern: denn da ist keine Stelle,
die dich nicht sieht. Du mußt dein Leben ändern.

Duino Elegies[3]

The First Elegy

Who, if I cried out, would hear me among the angels'[4]
hierarchies? and even if one of them pressed me
suddenly against his heart: I would be consumed
in that overwhelming existence. For beauty is nothing

3. Translated by Stephen Mitchell. 4. "The 'angel' of the Elegies has nothing to do with the angel of the Christian heaven. . . . The angel of the Elegies is that being which stands for the idea of recognizing a higher order of reality in invisibility." [Rilke: Letter to his Polish translator Witold Hulewicz, November 13, 1925.]

but the beginning of terror, which we still are just able to endure,
and we are so awed because it serenely disdains
to annihilate us. Every angel is terrifying.
And so I hold myself back and swallow the call-note
of my dark sobbing. Ah, whom can we ever turn to
in our need? Not angels, not humans,
and already the knowing animals are aware
that we are not really at home in
our interpreted[5] world. Perhaps there remains for us
some tree on a hillside, which every day we can take
into our vision; there remains for us yesterday's street
and the loyalty of a habit so much at ease
when it stayed with us that it moved in and never left.
Oh and night: there is night, when a wind full of infinite space
gnaws at our faces. Whom would it not remain for—that longed-
after,
mildly disillusioning presence, which the solitary heart
so painfully meets. Is it any less difficult for lovers?
But they keep on using each other to hide their own fate.
Don't you know *yet?* Fling the emptiness out of your arms
into the spaces we breathe; perhaps the birds
will feel the expanded air with more passionate flying.

Yes—the springtimes needed you. Often a star
was waiting for you to notice it. A wave rolled toward you
out of the distant past, or as you walked
under an open window, a violin
yielded itself to your hearing. All this was mission.
But could you accomplish it? Weren't you always
distracted by expectation, as if every event
announced a beloved? (Where can you find a place
to keep her, with all the huge strange thoughts inside you
going and coming and often staying all night.)
But when you feel longing, sing of women in love;
for their famous passion is still not immortal. Sing
of women abandoned and desolate (you envy them, almost)
who could love so much more purely than those who were gratified.
Begin again and again the never-attainable praising;
remember: the hero lives on; even his downfall was
merely a pretext for achieving his final birth.
But Nature, spent and exhausted, takes lovers back
into herself, as if there were not enough strength
to create them a second time. Have you imagined

5. Unlike animals, who live in unconscious harmony with earth, human beings conceptualize whatever they see.

Gaspara Stampa[6] intensely enough so that any girl
deserted by her beloved might be inspired
by that fierce example of soaring, objectless love
and might say to herself, "Perhaps I can be like her"?
Shouldn't this most ancient of sufferings finally grow
more fruitful for us? Isn't it time that we lovingly
freed ourselves from the beloved and, quivering, endured:[7]
as the arrow endures the bowstring's tension, so that
gathered in the snap of release it can be more than
itself. For there is no place where we can remain.

Voices. Voices. Listen, my heart, as only
saints have listened: until the gigantic call lifted them
off the ground; yet they kept on, impossibly,
kneeling and didn't notice at all:
so complete was their listening. Not that you could endure
God's voice—far from it. But listen to the voice of the wind
and the ceaseless message that forms itself out of silence.
It is murmuring toward you now from those who died young.
Didn't their fate, whenever you stepped into a church
in Naples or Rome, quietly come to address you?
Or high up, some eulogy entrusted you with a mission,
as, last year, on the plaque in Santa Maria Formosa.[8]
What they want of me is that I gently remove the appearance
of injustice about their death—which at times
slightly hinders their souls from proceeding onward.
Of course, it is strange to inhabit the earth no longer,
to give up customs one barely had time to learn,
not to see roses and other promising Things
in terms of a human future; no longer to be
what one was in infinitely anxious hands; to leave
even one's own first name behind, forgetting it
as easily as a child abandons a broken toy.
Strange to no longer desire one's desires. Strange
to see meanings that clung together once, floating away
in every direction. And being dead is hard work
and full of retrieval before one can gradually feel
a trace of eternity.—Though the living are wrong to believe
in the too-sharp distinctions which they themselves have created.
Angels (they say) don't know whether it is the living

6. An Italian poet (1523–1554) who wrote a series of two hundred sonnets recording her unhappy love for Count Collalto, who abandoned her. 7. Rilke recalls a passage from the *Portuguese Letters* (a seventeenth-century French novel supposedly written by a Portuguese nun) in which the heroine, Marianna Alcoforado, writes that her love no longer depends on its being reciprocated by the man who has clearly abandoned her. 8. A church in Venice (which Rilke visited in 1911) where a plaque commemorating the death of a Hermann Wilhelm in 1593 reads, in part, "I have not perished but live for myself in cold marble" (*non perii at gelido in marmore vivo mihi*).

they are moving among, or the dead. The eternal torrent
whirls all ages along in it, through both realms
forever, and their voices are drowned out in its thunderous roar.

In the end, those who were carried off early no longer need us:
they are weaned from earth's sorrows and joys, as gently as children
outgrow the soft breasts of their mothers. But we, who do need
such great mysteries, we for whom grief is so often
the source of our spirit's growth—: could we exist without *them?*
Is the legend meaningless that tells how, in the lament for Linus,[9]
the daring first notes of song pierced through the barren numbness;
and then in the startled space which a youth as lovely as a god
had suddenly left forever, the Void felt for the first time
that harmony which now enraptures and comforts and helps us.

The Ninth Elegy

Why, if this interval of being can be spent serenely
in the form of a laurel,[1] slightly darker than all
other green, with tiny waves on the edges
of every leaf (like the smile of a breeze)—: why then
have to be human—and, escaping from fate,
keep longing for fate? . . .

Oh *not* because happiness *exists*,
that too-hasty profit snatched from approaching loss.
Not out of curiosity, not as practice for the heart, which
would exist in the laurel too. . . .

But because *truly* being here is so much; because everything here
apparently needs us, this fleeting world, which in some strange way
keeps calling to us. Us, the most fleeting of all.
Once for each thing. Just once; no more. And we too,
just once. And never again. But to have been
this once, completely, even if only once:
to have been at one with the earth, seems beyond undoing.

And so we keep pressing on, trying to achieve it,
trying to hold it firmly in our simple hands,
in our overcrowded gaze, in our speechless heart.
Trying to become it.—Whom can we give it to? We would
hold on to it all, forever . . . Ah, but what can we take along
into that other realm? Not the art of looking,

9. The Linus-song (Homer, *Iliad* XVIII, 570) is a dirge for a youth who died young and whose death is associated with the passing of summer; those paralyzed by his loss were revived only by the perfect music of the song of mourning (attributed to Apollo or Orpheus). 1. The nymph Daphne, escaping from the pursuit of her would-be lover Apollo, was changed by that god into a laurel tree. [Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, I, 548ff.]

which is learned so slowly, and nothing that happened here. Nothing.
The sufferings, then. And, above all, the heaviness,
and the long experience of love,—just what is wholly
unsayable. But later, among the stars,
what good is it—*they* are *better* as they are: unsayable.
For when the traveler returns from the mountain-slopes into the valley,
he brings, not a handful of earth, unsayable to others, but instead
some word he has gained, some pure word, the yellow and blue
gentian. Perhaps we are *here* in order to say: house,
bridge, fountain, gate, pitcher, fruit-tree, window—
at most: column, tower. . . . But to *say* them, you must understand,
oh to say them *more* intensely than the Things themselves
ever dreamed of existing. Isn't the secret intent
of this taciturn earth, when it forces lovers together,
that inside their boundless emotion all things may shudder with joy?
Threshold: what it means for two lovers
to be wearing down, imperceptibly, the ancient threshold of their door—
they too, after the many who came before them
and before those to come. . . . , lightly.

Here is the time for the *sayable, here* is its homeland.
Speak and bear witness. More than ever
the Things that we might experience are vanishing, for
what crowds them out and replaces them is an imageless act.
An act under a shell, which easily cracks open as soon as
the business inside outgrows it and seeks new limits.
Between the hammers our heart
endures, just as the tongue does
between the teeth and, despite that,
still is able to praise.

Praise this world to the angel, not the unsayable one,
you can't impress *him* with glorious emotion; in the universe
where he feels more powerfully, you are a novice. So show him
something simple which, formed over generations,
lives as our own, near our hand and within our gaze.
Tell him of Things. He will stand astonished; as *you* stood
by the rope-maker in Rome or the potter along the Nile.
Show him how happy a Thing can be, how innocent and ours,
how even lamenting grief purely decides to take form,
serves as a Thing, or dies into a Thing—, and blissfully
escapes far beyond the violin.—And these Things,
which live by perishing, know you are praising them; transient,

they look to us for deliverance: us, the most transient of all.
They want us to change them, utterly, in our invisible heart,
within—oh endlessly—within us! Whoever we may be at last.

Earth, isn't this what you want: to arise within us,
invisible? Isn't it your dream
to be wholly invisible someday?—O Earth: invisible!
What, if not transformation, is your urgent command?
Earth, my dearest, I will. Oh believe me, you no longer
need your springtimes to win me over—one of them,
ah, even one, is already too much for my blood.
Unspeakably I have belonged to you, from the first.
You were always right, and your holiest inspiration
is our intimate companion, Death.

Look, I am living. On what? Neither childhood nor future
grows any smaller. . . . Superabundant being
wells up in my heart.

FRANZ KAFKA
1883–1924

Although Kafka was born in Prague in 1883 and died in 1924, generations of twentieth-century readers have considered him their contemporary and a representative of the age. His predicament, as W. H. Auden put it, is the "predicament of modern man," and the world of his imagination held many terrors which are all too familiar today. The vision and structure of Kafka's fictional world have long fascinated contemporary writers, who see in them a peculiarly timely combination of the most mundane, pedestrian realism and a nightmare imagination that lifts daily events to an allusively symbolic and infinitely interpretable level. Whether evoking the multilayered bureaucracy of the modern state, the sense of guilt experienced by those facing powerful and incomprehensible authority (patriarchal, political, or religious), or the frustrated vulnerability of characters who are unable to establish viable human relations, Kafka finds familiar images to convey the most prevalent themes of modern literature: the helpless yearning towards meaning in a universe that will not respond, and the oppressive alienation of individual lives in modern industrial society. It is the ordinariness of his world that helps convince the reader, even when that ordinariness is later distorted by illogical events and their grotesque implications. Such a combination of ordinariness and expanded meaning is found in writers—however different—who have read and absorbed Kafka's lesson: Beckett, Pinter, Robbe-Grillet, García Márquez.

Kafka was born into cultural alienation. Jewish (though not truly part of the Jewish community) in Catholic Czechoslovakia; son of a German-speak-

ing shopkeeper when German was the language of the imposed Austro-Hungarian government; and drawn to literature when his father—a domineering, self-made man—pushed him toward success in business, he was constantly part of two incompatible contexts. Nor was he happier at home. Resenting his father's overbearing nature and feeling deprived of maternal love, he nonetheless lived with his parents for most of his life and complained in long letters about his coldness and inability to love (despite numerous liaisons). Kafka took a degree in law in order to qualify himself for a position in a large accident-insurance corporation, where he worked until illness forced his retirement in 1922. By the time of his death from tuberculosis two years later, he had published a number of short stories and two novellas (*The Metamorphosis*, 1915; *In the Penal Colony*, 1919), but left behind him the manuscripts of three near-complete novels which—considering himself a failure—he asked to have burned. Instead, Kafka's executor Max Brod published the novels (*The Trial*, 1925; *The Castle*, 1926; *Amerika*, 1927) and a biography celebrating the genius of his tormented, guilt-ridden friend.

In spite of the indubitable fact that Franz Kafka became a respected senior executive handling claims, litigations, public relations, and his institute's annual reports, and was one of the few top German executives retained when Czechoslovakia finally gained independence in 1918, his image in the modern imagination is derived from the portraits of inner anguish given in his fiction, diaries, and letters. This "Kafka" is a tormented and sensitive soul, guiltily resentful of his job in a giant bureaucracy, unable to free himself from his family or to cope with the demands of love, physically feeble, and constantly beset by feelings of inferiority and doom in an existence whose laws he can never quite understand. "Before the Law," a parable published in Kafka's lifetime and included in *The Trial*, recounts the archetypal setting of the "Kafka" character: a countryman waits and waits throughout his lifetime for permission to enter a crucial Gate, where the doorkeeper (the first of many) constantly refuses him entrance. He tries everything from good behavior to bribes without success. Finally, as the now-aged countryman dies in frustration, he is told that the gate existed only for him, and that it is now being closed. For the countryman (as for Vladimir and Estragon in Beckett's later *Waiting for Godot*, and indeed for much modern literature), there is no response. The Law that governs our existence is all-powerful but irrational; at least it is not to be understood by its human suppliants, a lesson which Kafka could have derived equally well from his readings in the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, in Nietzsche, or in the Jewish Talmud.

The combination of down-to-earth, matter-of-fact setting and unreal or nightmarish events is the hallmark of Kafka's style. His characters speak everyday language and react in a common-sense way when such a response (given the situation) is utterly grotesque. A young businessman is changed overnight into a giant beetle *(The Metamorphosis)* or charged with undefined crimes and finally executed *(The Trial)*; a would-be land surveyor is unable to communicate with the castle that employs him and keeps sending incomprehensible messages *(The Castle)*; a visitor to a penal colony observes a gigantic machine whose function is to execute condemned criminals by inscribing their sentence deeper and deeper into the flesh *(In the Penal Colony)*. The term "surrealist" is often attached to this blend of everyday reality

and dream configuration, with its implication of psychic undercurrents and cosmic significance stirring beneath the most ordinary-seeming existence. Kafka, however, had no connection with the Surrealists, whose vision of a miraculous level of existence hidden behind everyday life is the obverse of his heroes' vain attempts to maintain control over the impossible.

Kafka's stories are not allegories, although many readers have been tempted to find in them a particular underlying message. A political reading sees them as indictments of faceless bureaucracy controlling individual lives in the modern totalitarian state, and in fact Kafka's works cannot be published in Czechoslovakia. The sense of being found guilty by an entire society recalls the traditional theme of the Wandering Jew, and predicts for many the Holocaust of World War II (in fact, Kafka's three sisters died in concentration camps). His heroes' self-conscious quest to fit into some meaningful structure, their attempt ceaselessly to do the right thing when there is no rational way of knowing what that is, is the very picture of absurdity and alienation that existentialist philosophers and writers examined during and after World War II. The assumption that there is a Law, and the presence of protagonists who die in search for purity ("The Hunger Artist") or in a humble admission of guilt *(The Trial)* allow the stories to be taken as religious metaphors. Kafka's desperately lucid analysis of the way his parents' influence shaped an impressionable child into an unhappy adult ("Letter to My Father") articulates emotional tangles and parent-child rivalry with an openness and detail that recalls decades of psychoanalytical criticism following Freud. The picture of a sick society where individual rights and sensitivity no longer count, and unreasoning torment is visited on the ignorant, has been read as an indictment of disintegrating modern culture. Yet no one allegorical interpretation is finally possible, for all these potential meanings overlap as they expand towards social, familial, political, philosophical, and religious dimensions and constitute the richly allusive texture of separate tales by a master storyteller.

The Metamorphosis, Kafka's longest complete work published in his lifetime, is first of all a consummate story in which the question "What happens next?" never loses interest from the moment that Gregor Samsa wakes up to find himself transformed. "It was no dream," no nightmarish fantasy in which Gregor temporarily identified himself with other downtrodden vermin of society. Instead, this grotesque transformation is permanent, a single unshakable fact that renders almost comic his family's calculations and attempts to adjust. "The terror of art," said Kafka in a conversation about *The Metamorphosis*, is that "the dream reveals the reality," and this dream become reality sheds light on the intolerable nature of Gregor's daily existence. The other side of his job is its mechanical rigidity, personal rivalries, and threatening suspicion of any deviation from the norm. Gregor himself is part of this world, as he shows when he fawns on the manager and tries to manipulate him by criticizing the boss.

More disturbing is the transformation that takes place in Gregor's family, where the expected love and support turns into shamed acceptance and animal resentment now that Gregor has let the family down. Mother and sister are ineffectual, and their sympathy slowly disappears in disgust. Gregor's father quickly reassumes his position of authority and beats the beetle back

into his room: first with the businesslike newspaper and manager's cane, and later with a barrage of apples from the family table. Just before his death Gregor has become an "it" whose death is warmly wished by the whole family—and perhaps they are right, in one of Kafka's ironies. The beetle's death brings not remorse but a new lease on life to his family. Weak and passive when Gregor took care of them, they regain strength and vitality under the pressure of earning a living. Mother, father, and sister celebrate Gregor's death with a holiday trip out of town, into the sunshine and open air, where they make plans for the future.

Gregor Samsa may be a pathetic figure but he is not a tragic one. In his passiveness and unvoiced resentment, his willingness to exist at a surface level of adjustment to job and family, he has become an accomplice in his own fate. His descent into animal consciousness is not a true pilgrimage to inner awareness, even though it involves letting go the trappings of civilization. Rather, it is an obscuring of consciousness that is perfectly represented when he is swept out onto the dustheap at the end. From that point on, it is the family's story, continuing a career that has meant death for Gregor and joyous survival for his family, but in which both are reduced to existence on an animal level.

Anthony Thorlby, *Kafka: A Study* (1972) is a brief general introduction. Heinz Politzer, *Franz Kafka: Parable and Paradox* (rev. 1966), presents an interesting, readable study of symbolic relationships. Ernest Pawel's *The Nightmare of Reason, A Life of Franz Kafka* (1984), is an excellent contemporary biography with penetrating descriptions of his family and friends. Max Brod, *Franz Kafka: A Biography*, translated by G. Humphrey Roberts and Richard Winston (1960), is an early, admiring biography by a close friend and Kafka's executor.

The Metamorphosis[1]

I

When Gregor Samsa woke up one morning from unsettling dreams, he found himself changed in his bed into a monstrous vermin. He was lying on his back as hard as armor plate, and when he lifted his head a little, he saw his vaulted brown belly, sectioned by arch-shaped ribs, to whose dome the cover, about to slide off completely, could barely cling. His many legs, pitifully thin compared with the size of the rest of him, were waving helplessly before his eyes.

"What's happened to me?" he thought. It was no dream. His room, a regular human room, only a little on the small side, lay quiet between the four familiar walls. Over the table, on which an unpacked line of fabric samples was all spread out—Samsa was a traveling salesman—hung the picture which he had recently cut out of a glossy magazine and lodged in a pretty gilt frame. It showed a lady done up

1. Translated by Stanley Corngold.

in a fur hat and a fur boa, sitting upright and raising up against the viewer a heavy fur muff in which her whole forearm had disappeared.

Gregor's eyes then turned to the window, and the overcast weather—he could hear raindrops hitting against the metal window ledge—completely depressed him. "How about going back to sleep for a few minutes and forgetting all this nonsense," he thought, but that was completely impracticable, since he was used to sleeping on his right side and in his present state could not get into that position. No matter how hard he threw himself onto his right side, he always rocked onto his back again. He must have tried it a hundred times, closing his eyes so as not to have to see his squirming legs, and stopped only when he began to feel a slight, dull pain in his side, which he had never felt before.

"Oh God," he thought, "what a grueling job I've picked. Day in, day out—on the road. The upset of doing business is much worse than the actual business in the home office, and besides, I've got the torture of traveling, worrying about changing trains, eating miserable food at all hours, constantly seeing new faces, no relationships that last or get more intimate. To the devil with it all!" He felt a slight itching up on top of his belly; shoved himself slowly on his back closer to the bedpost, so as to be able to lift his head better; found the itchy spot, studded with small white dots which he had no idea what to make of; and wanted to touch the spot with one of his legs but immediately pulled it back, for the contact sent a cold shiver through him.

He slid back again into his original position. "This getting up so early," he thought, "makes anyone a complete idiot. Human beings have to have their sleep. Other traveling salesmen live like harem women. For instance, when I go back to the hotel before lunch to write up the business I've done, these gentlemen are just having breakfast. That's all I'd have to try with my boss; I'd be fired on the spot. Anyway, who knows if that wouldn't be a very good thing for me. If I didn't hold back for my parents' sake, I would have quit long ago, I would have marched up to the boss and spoken my piece from the bottom of my heart. He would have fallen off the desk! It is funny, too, the way he sits on the desk and talks down from the heights to the employees, especially when they have to come right up close on account of the boss's being hard of hearing. Well, I haven't given up hope completely; once I've gotten the money together to pay off my parents' debt to him—that will probably take another five or six years—I'm going to do it without fail. Then I'm going to make the big break. But for the time being I'd better get up, since my train leaves at five."

And he looked over at the alarm clock, which was ticking on the

chest of drawers. "God Almighty!" he thought. It was six-thirty, the hands were quietly moving forward, it was actually past the half-hour, it was already nearly a quarter to. Could it be that the alarm hadn't gone off? You could see from the bed that it was set correctly for four o'clock; it certainly had gone off, too. Yes, but was it possible to sleep quietly through a ringing that made the furniture shake? Well, he certainly hadn't slept quietly, but probably all the more soundly for that. But what should he do now? The next train left at seven o'clock; to make it, he would have to hurry like a madman, and the line of samples wasn't packed yet, and he himself didn't feel especially fresh and ready to march around. And even if he did make the train, he could not avoid getting it from the boss, because the messenger boy had been waiting at the five-o'clock train and would have long ago reported his not showing up. He was a tool of the boss, without brains or backbone. What if he were to say he was sick? But that would be extremely embarrassing and suspicious because during his five years with the firm Gregor had not been sick even once. The boss would be sure to come with the health-insurance doctor, blame his parents for their lazy son, and cut off all excuses by quoting the health-insurance doctor, for whom the world consisted of people who were completely healthy but afraid to work. And, besides, in this case would he be so very wrong? In fact, Gregor felt fine, with the exception of his drowsiness, which was really unnecessary after sleeping so late, and he even had a ravenous appetite.

Just as he was thinking all this over at top speed, without being able to decide to get out of bed—the alarm clock had just struck a quarter to seven—he heard a cautious knocking at the door next to the head of his bed. "Gregor," someone called—it was his mother—"it's a quarter to seven. Didn't you want to catch the train?" What a soft voice! Gregor was shocked to hear his own voice answering, unmistakably his own voice, true, but in which, as if from below, an insistent distressed chirping intruded, which left the clarity of his words intact only for a moment really, before so badly garbling them as they carried that no one could be sure if he had heard right. Gregor had wanted to answer in detail and to explain everything, but, given the circumstances, confined himself to saying, "Yes, yes, thanks, Mother, I'm just getting up." The wooden door must have prevented the change in Gregor's voice from being noticed outside, because his mother was satisfied with this explanation and shuffled off. But their little exchange had made the rest of the family aware that, contrary to expectations, Gregor was still in the house, and already his father was knocking on one of the side doors, feebly but with this fist. "Gregor, Gregor," he called, "what's going on?" And after a little while he called again in a deeper, warning voice, "Gregor! Gregor!" At the other side door, however, his sister moaned

gently, "Gregor? Is something the matter with you? Do you want anything?" Toward both sides Gregor answered: "I'm all ready," and made an effort, by meticulous pronunciation and by inserting long pauses between individual words, to eliminate everything from his voice that might betray him. His father went back to his breakfast, but his sister whispered, "Gregor, open up, I'm pleading with you." But Gregor had absolutely no intention of opening the door and complimented himself instead on the precaution he had adopted from his business trips, of locking all the doors during the night even at home.

First of all he wanted to get up quietly, without any excitement; get dressed; and the main thing, have breakfast, and only then think about what to do next, for he saw clearly that in bed he would never think things through to a rational conclusion. He remembered how even in the past he had often felt some kind of slight pain, possibly caused by lying in an uncomfortable position, which, when he got up, turned out to be purely imaginary, and he was eager to see how today's fantasy would gradually fade away. That the change in his voice was nothing more than the first sign of a bad cold, an occupational ailment of the traveling salesman, he had no doubt in the least.

It was very easy to throw off the cover; all he had to do was puff himself up a little, and it fell off by itself. But after this, things got difficult, especially since he was so unusually broad. He would have needed hands and arms to lift himself up, but instead of that he had only his numerous little legs, which were in every different kind of perpetual motion and which, besides, he could not control. If he wanted to bend one, the first thing that happened was that it stretched itself out; and if he finally succeeded in getting this leg to do what he wanted, all the others in the meantime, as if set free, began to work in the most intensely painful agitation. "Just don't stay in bed being useless," Gregor said to himself.

First he tried to get out of bed with the lower part of his body, but this lower part—which by the way he had not seen yet and which he could not form a clear picture of—proved too difficult to budge; it was taking so long; and when finally, almost out of his mind, he lunged forward with all his force, without caring, he had picked the wrong direction and slammed himself violently against the lower bedpost, and the searing pain he felt taught him that exactly the lower part of his body was, for the moment anyway, the most sensitive.

He therefore tried to get the upper part of his body out of bed first and warily turned his head toward the edge of the bed. This worked easily, and in spite of its width and weight, the mass of his body finally followed, slowly, the movement of his head. But when at last

he stuck his head over the edge of the bed into the air, he got too scared to continue any further, since if he finally let himself fall in this position, it would be a miracle if he didn't injure his head. And just now he had better not for the life of him lose consciousness; he would rather stay in bed.

But when, once again, after the same exertion, he lay in his original position, sighing, and again watched his little legs struggling, if possible more fiercely, with each other and saw no way of bringing peace and order into this mindless motion, he again told himself that it was impossible for him to stay in bed and that the most rational thing was to make any sacrifice for even the smallest hope of freeing himself from the bed. But at the same time he did not forget to remind himself occasionally that thinking things over calmly—indeed, as calmly as possible—was much better than jumping to desperate decisions. At such moments he fixed his eyes as sharply as possible on the window, but unfortunately there was little confidence and cheer to be gotten from the view of the morning fog, which shrouded even the other side of the narrow street. "Seven o'clock already," he said to himself as the alarm clock struck again, "seven o'clock already and still such a fog." And for a little while he lay quietly, breathing shallowly, as if expecting, perhaps, from the complete silence the return of things to the way they really and naturally were.

But then he said to himself, "Before it strikes a quarter past seven, I must be completely out of bed without fail. Anyway, by that time someone from the firm will be here to find out where I am, since the office opens before seven." And now he started rocking the complete length of his body out of the bed with a smooth rhythm. If he let himself topple out of bed in this way, his head, which on falling he planned to lift up sharply, would presumably remain unharmed. His back seemed to be hard; nothing was likely to happen to it when it fell onto the carpet. His biggest misgiving came from his concern about the loud crash that was bound to occur and would probably create, if not terror, at least anxiety behind all the doors. But that would have to be risked.

When Gregor's body already projected halfway out of bed—the new method was more of a game than a struggle, he only had to keep on rocking and jerking himself along—he thought how simple everything would be if he could get some help. Two strong persons—he thought of his father and the maid—would have been completely sufficient; they would only have had to shove their arms under his arched back, in this way scoop him off the bed, bend down with their burden, and then just be careful and patient while he managed to swing himself down onto the floor, where his little legs would hopefully acquire some purpose. Well, leaving out the fact that the doors were locked, should he really call for help? In spite of all his

miseries, he could not repress a smile at this thought.

He was already so far along that when he rocked more strongly he could hardly keep his balance, and very soon he would have to commit himself, because in five minutes it would be a quarter past seven—when the doorbell rang. "It's someone from the firm," he said to himself and almost froze, while his little legs only danced more quickly. For a moment everything remained quiet. "They're not going to answer," Gregor said to himself, captivated by some senseless hope. But then, of course, the maid went to the door as usual with her firm stride and opened up. Gregor only had to hear the visitor's first word of greeting to know who it was—the office manager himself. Why was only Gregor condemned to work for a firm where at the slightest omission they immediately suspected the worst? Were all employees louts without exception, wasn't there a single loyal, dedicated worker among them who, when he had not fully utilized a few hours of the morning for the firm, was driven half-mad by pangs of conscience and was actually unable to get out of bed? Really, wouldn't it have been enough to send one of the apprentices to find out—if this prying were absolutely necessary—did the manager himself have to come, and did the whole innocent family have to be shown in this way that the investigation of this suspicious affair could be entrusted only to the intellect of the manager? And more as a result of the excitement produced in Gregor by these thoughts than as a result of any real decision, he swung himself out of bed with all his might. There was a loud thump, but it was not a real crash. The fall was broken a little by the carpet, and Gregor's back was more elastic than he had thought, which explained the not very noticeable muffled sound. Only he had not held his head carefully enough and hit it; he turned it and rubbed it on the carpet in anger and pain.

"Something fell in there," said the manager in the room on the left. Gregor tried to imagine whether something like what had happened to him today could one day happen even to the manager; you really had to grant the possibility. But, as if in rude reply to this question, the manager took a few decisive steps in the next room and made his patent leather boots creak. From the room on the right his sister whispered, to inform Gregor, "Gregor, the manager is here." "I know," Gregor said to himself; but he did not dare raise his voice enough for his sister to hear.

"Gregor," his father now said from the room on the left, "the manager has come and wants to be informed why you didn't catch the early train. We don't know what we should say to him. Besides, he wants to speak to you personally. So please open the door. He will certainly be so kind as to excuse the disorder of the room." "Good morning, Mr. Samsa," the manager called in a friendly voice. "There's something the matter with him," his mother said to the

manager while his father was still at the door, talking. "Believe me, sir, there's something the matter with him. Otherwise how would Gregor have missed a train? That boy has nothing on his mind but the business. It's almost begun to rile me that he never goes out nights. He's been back in the city for eight days now, but every night he's been home. He sits there with us at the table, quietly reading the paper or studying timetables. It's already a distraction for him when he's busy working with his fretsaw. For instance, in the span of two or three evenings he carved a little frame. You'll be amazed how pretty it is; it's hanging inside his room. You'll see it right away when Gregor opens the door. You know, I'm glad that you've come, sir. We would never have gotten Gregor to open the door by ourselves; he's so stubborn. And there's certainly something wrong with him, even though he said this morning there wasn't." "I'm coming right away," said Gregor slowly and deliberately, not moving in order not to miss a word of the conversation. "I haven't any other explanation myself," said the manager. "I hope it's nothing serious. On the other hand, I must say that we businessmen—fortunately or unfortunately, whichever you prefer—very often simply have to overcome a slight indisposition for business reasons." "So can the manager come in now?" asked his father, impatient, and knocked on the door again. "No," said Gregor. In the room on the left there was an embarrassing silence; in the room on the right his sister began to sob.

Why didn't his sister go in to the others? She had probably just got out of bed and not even started to get dressed. Then what was she crying about? Because he didn't get up and didn't let the manager in, because he was in danger of losing his job, and because then the boss would start hounding his parents about the old debts? For the time being, certainly, her worries were unnecessary. Gregor was still here and hadn't the slightest intention of letting the family down. True, at the moment he was lying on the carpet, and no one knowing his condition could seriously have expected him to let the manager in. But just because of this slight discourtesy, for which an appropriate excuse would easily be found later on, Gregor could not simply be dismissed. And to Gregor it seemed much more sensible to leave him alone now than to bother him with crying and persuasion. But it was just the uncertainty that was tormenting the others and excused their behavior.

"Mr. Samsa," the manager now called, raising his voice, "what's the matter? You barricade yourself in your room, answer only 'yes' and 'no,' cause your parents serious, unnecessary worry, and you neglect—I mention this only in passing—your duties to the firm in a really shocking manner. I am speaking here in the name of your parents and of your employer and ask you in all seriousness for an

immediate, clear explanation. I'm amazed, amazed. I thought I knew you to be a quiet, reasonable person, and now you suddenly seem to want to start strutting about, flaunting strange whims. The head of the firm did suggest to me this morning a possible explanation for your tardiness—it concerned the cash payments recently entrusted to you—but really, I practically gave my word of honor that this explanation could not be right. But now, seeing your incomprehensible obstinacy, I am about to lose even the slightest desire to stick up for you in any way at all. And your job is not the most secure. Originally I intended to tell you all this in private, but since you make me waste my time here for nothing, I don't see why your parents shouldn't hear too. Your performance of late has been very unsatisfactory; I know it is not the best season for doing business, we all recognize that; but a season for not doing any business, there is no such thing, Mr. Samsa, such a thing cannot be tolerated."

"But sir," cried Gregor, beside himself, in his excitement forgetting everything else, "I'm just opening up, in a minute. A slight indisposition, a dizzy spell, prevented me from getting up. I'm still in bed. But I already feel fine again. I'm just getting out of bed. Just be patient for a minute! I'm not as well as I thought yet. But really I'm fine. How something like this could just take a person by surprise! Only last night I was fine, my parents can tell you, or wait, last night I already had a slight premonition. They must have been able to tell by looking at me. Why didn't I report it to the office! But you always think that you'll get over a sickness without staying home. Sir! Spare my parents! There's no basis for any of the accusations that you're making against me now; no one has ever said a word to me about them. Perhaps you haven't seen the last orders I sent in. Anyway, I'm still going on the road with the eight o'clock train; these few hours of rest have done me good. Don't let me keep you, sir. I'll be at the office myself right away, and be so kind as to tell them this, and give my respects to the head of the firm."

And while Gregor hastily blurted all this out, hardly knowing what he was saying, he had easily approached the chest of drawers, probably as a result of the practice he had already gotten in bed, and now he tried to raise himself up against it. He actually intended to open the door, actually present himself and speak to the manager; he was eager to find out what the others, who were now so anxious to see him, would say at the sight of him. If they were shocked, then Gregor had no further responsibility and could be calm. But if they took everything calmly, then he, too, had no reason to get excited and could, if he hurried, actually be at the station by eight o'clock. At first he slid off the polished chest of drawers a few times, but at last, giving himself a final push, he stood upright; he no longer paid any attention to the pains in his abdomen, no matter how much they

were burning. Now he let himself fall against the back of a nearby chair, clinging to its slats with his little legs. But by doing this he had gotten control of himself and fell silent, since he could now listen to what the manager was saying.

"Did you understand a word?" the manager was asking his parents. "He isn't trying to make fools of us, is he?" "My God," cried his mother, already in tears, "maybe he's seriously ill, and here we are, torturing him. Grete! Grete!" she then cried. "Mother?" called his sister from the other side. They communicated by way of Gregor's room. "Go to the doctor's immediately. Gregor is sick. Hurry, get the doctor. Did you just hear Gregor talking?" "That was the voice of an animal," said the manager, in a tone conspicuously soft compared with the mother's yelling. "Anna!" "Anna!" the father called through the foyer into the kitchen, clapping his hands, "get a locksmith right away!" And already the two girls were running with rustling skirts through the foyer—how could his sister have gotten dressed so quickly?—and tearing open the door to the apartment. The door could not be heard slamming; they had probably left it open, as is the custom in homes where a great misfortune has occurred.

But Gregor had become much calmer. It was true that they no longer understood his words, though they had seemed clear enough to him, clearer than before, probably because his ear had grown accustomed to them. But still, the others now believed that there was something the matter with him and were ready to help him. The assurance and confidence with which the first measures had been taken did him good. He felt integrated into human society once again and hoped for marvelous, amazing feats from both the doctor and the locksmith, without really distinguishing sharply between them. In order to make his voice as clear as possible for the crucial discussions that were approaching, he cleared his throat a little—taking pains, of course, to do so in a very muffled manner, since this noise, too, might sound different from human coughing, a thing he no longer trusted himself to decide. In the next room, meanwhile, everything had become completely still. Perhaps his parents were sitting at the table with the manager, whispering; perhaps they were all leaning against the door and listening.

Gregor slowly lugged himself toward the door, pushing the chair in front of him, then let go of it, threw himself against the door, held himself upright against it—the pads on the bottom of his little legs exuded a little sticky substance—and for a moment rested there from the exertion. But then he got started turning the key in the lock with his mouth. Unfortunately it seemed that he had no real teeth—what was he supposed to grip the key with?—but in compensation his jaws, of course, were very strong; with their help he actually got the key moving and paid no attention to the fact that he was undoubtedly

hurting himself in some way, for a brown liquid came out of his mouth, flowed over the key, and dripped onto the floor. "Listen," said the manager in the next room, "he's turning the key." This was great encouragement to Gregor; but everyone should have cheered him on, his father and mother too. "Go, Gregor," they should have called, "keep going, at that lock, harder, harder!" And in the delusion that they were all following his efforts with suspense, he clamped his jaws madly on the key with all the strength he could muster. Depending on the progress of the key, he danced around the lock; holding himself upright only by his mouth, he clung to the key, as the situation demanded, or pressed it down again with the whole weight of his body. The clearer click of the lock as it finally snapped back literally woke Gregor up. With a sigh of relief he said to himself, "So I didn't need the locksmith after all," and laid his head down on the handle in order to open wide one wing of the double doors.

Since he had to use this method of opening the door, it was really opened very wide while he himself was still invisible. He first had to edge slowly around the one wing of the door, and do so very carefully if he was not to fall flat on his back just before entering. He was still busy with this difficult maneuver and had no time to pay attention to anything else when he heard the manager burst out with a loud "Oh!"—it sounded like a rush of wind—and now he could see him, standing closest to the door, his hand pressed over his open mouth, slowly backing away, as if repulsed by an invisible, unrelenting force. His mother—in spite of the manager's presence she stood with her hair still unbraided from the night, sticking out in all directions—first looked at his father with her hands clasped, then took two steps toward Gregor, and sank down in the midst of her skirts spreading out around her, her face completely hidden on her breast. With a hostile expression his father clenched his fist, as if to drive Gregor back into his room, then looked uncertainly around the living room, shielded his eyes with his hands, and sobbed with heaves of his powerful chest.

Now Gregor did not enter the room after all but leaned against the inside of the firmly bolted wing of the door, so that only half his body was visible and his head above it, cocked to one side and peeping out at the others. In the meantime it had grown much lighter; across the street one could see clearly a section of the endless, grayish-black building opposite—it was a hospital—with its regular windows starkly piercing the façade; the rain was still coming down, but only in large, separately visible drops that were also pelting the ground literally one at a time. The breakfast dishes were laid out lavishly on the table, since for his father breakfast was the most important meal

of the day, which he would prolong for hours while reading various newspapers. On the wall directly opposite hung a photograph of Gregor from his army days, in a lieutenant's uniform, his hand on his sword, a carefree smile on his lips, demanding respect for his bearing and his rank. The door to the foyer was open, and since the front door was open too, it was possible to see out onto the landing and the top of the stairs going down.

"Well," said Gregor—and he was thoroughly aware of being the only one who had kept calm—"I'll get dressed right away, pack up my samples, and go. Will you, will you please let me go? Now, sir, you see, I'm not stubborn and I'm willing to work; traveling is a hardship, but without it I couldn't live. Where are you going, sir? To the office? Yes? Will you give an honest report of everything? A man might find for a moment that he was unable to work, but that's exactly the right time to remember his past accomplishments and to consider that later on, when the obstacle has been removed, he's bound to work all the harder and more efficiently. I'm under so many obligations to the head of the firm, as you know very well. Besides, I also have my parents and my sister to worry about. I'm in a tight spot, but I'll also work my way out again. Don't make things harder for me than they already are. Stick up for me in the office, please. Traveling salesmen aren't well liked there, I know. People think they make a fortune leading the gay life. No one has any particular reason to rectify this prejudice. But you, sir, you have a better perspective on things than the rest of the office, an even better perspective, just between the two of us, than the head of the firm himself, who in his capacity as owner easily lets his judgment be swayed against an employee. And you also know very well that the traveling salesman, who is out of the office practically the whole year round, can so easily become the victim of gossip, coincidences, and unfounded accusations, against which he's completely unable to defend himself, since in most cases he knows nothing at all about them except when he returns exhausted from a trip, and back home gets to suffer on his own person the grim consequences, which can no longer be traced back to their causes. Sir, don't go away without a word to tell me you think I'm at least partly right!"

But at Gregor's first words the manager had already turned away and with curled lips looked back at Gregor only over his twitching shoulder. And during Gregor's speech he did not stand still for a minute but, without letting Gregor out of his sight, backed toward the door, yet very gradually, as if there were some secret prohibition against leaving the room. He was already in the foyer, and from the sudden movement with which he took his last step from the living room, one might have thought he had just burned the sole of his

foot. In the foyer, however, he stretched his right hand far out toward the staircase, as if nothing less than an unearthly deliverance were awaiting him there.

Gregor realized that he must on no account let the manager go away in this mood if his position in the firm were not to be jeopardized in the extreme. His parents did not understand this too well; in the course of the years they had formed the conviction that Gregor was set for life in this firm; and furthermore, they were so preoccupied with their immediate troubles that they had lost all consideration for the future. But Gregor had this forethought. The manager must be detained, calmed down, convinced, and finally won over; Gregor's and the family's future depended on it! If only his sister had been there! She was perceptive; she had already begun to cry when Gregor was still lying calmly on his back. And certainly the manager, this ladies' man, would have listened to her; she would have shut the front door and in the foyer talked him out of his scare. But his sister was not there, Gregor had to handle the situation himself. And without stopping to realize that he had no idea what his new faculties of movement were, and without stopping to realize either that his speech had possibly—indeed, probably—not been understood again, he let go of the wing of the door; he shoved himself through the opening, intending to go to the manager, who was already on the landing, ridiculously holding onto the banisters with both hands; but groping for support, Gregor immediately fell down with a little cry onto his numerous little legs. This had hardly happened when for the first time that morning he had a feeling of physical well-being; his little legs were on firm ground; they obeyed him completely, as he noted to his joy; they even strained to carry him away wherever he wanted to go; and he already believed that final recovery from all his sufferings was imminent. But at that very moment, as he lay on the floor rocking with repressed motion, not far from his mother and just opposite her, she, who had seemed so completely self-absorbed, all at once jumped up, her arms stretched wide, her fingers spread, and cried, "Help, for God's sake, help!" held her head bent as if to see Gregor better, but inconsistently darted madly backward instead; had forgotten that the table laden with the breakfast dishes stood behind her; sat down on it hastily, as if her thoughts were elsewhere, when she reached it; and did not seem to notice at all that near her the big coffeepot had been knocked over and coffee was pouring in a steady stream onto the rug.

"Mother, Mother," said Gregor softly and looked up at her. For a minute the manager had completely slipped his mind; on the other hand at the sight of the spilling coffee he could not resist snapping his jaws several times in the air. At this his mother screamed once more, fled from the table, and fell into the arms of his father, who

came rushing up to her. But Gregor had no time now for his parents; the manager was already on the stairs; with his chin on the banister, he was taking a last look back. Gregor was off to a running start, to be as sure as possible of catching up with him; the manager must have suspected something like this, for he leaped down several steps and disappeared; but still he shouted "Agh," and the sound carried through the whole staircase. Unfortunately the manager's flight now seemed to confuse his father completely, who had been relatively calm until now, for instead of running after the manager himself, or at least not hindering Gregor in his pursuit, he seized in his right hand the manager's cane, which had been left behind on a chair with his hat and overcoat, picked up in his left hand a heavy newspaper from the table, and stamping his feet, started brandishing the cane and the newspaper to drive Gregor back into his room. No plea of Gregor's helped, no plea was even understood; however humbly he might turn his head, his father merely stamped his feet more forcefully. Across the room his mother had thrown open a window in spite of the cool weather, and leaning out, she buried her face, far outside the window, in her hands. Between the alley and the staircase a strong draft was created, the window curtains blew in, the newspapers on the table rustled, single sheets fluttered across the floor. Pitilessly his father came on, hissing like a wild man. Now Gregor had not had any practice at all walking in reverse, it was really very slow going. If Gregor had only been allowed to turn around, he could have gotten into his room right away, but he was afraid to make his father impatient by this time-consuming gyration, and at any minute the cane in his father's hand threatened to come down on his back or his head with a deadly blow. Finally, however, Gregor had no choice, for he noticed with horror that in reverse he could not even keep going in one direction; and so, incessantly throwing uneasy side-glances at his father, he began to turn around as quickly as possible, in reality turning only very slowly. Perhaps his father realized his good intentions, for he did not interfere with him; instead, he even now and then directed the maneuver from afar with the tip of his cane. If only his father did not keep making this intolerable hissing sound! It made Gregor lose his head completely. He had almost finished the turn when—his mind continually on this hissing—he made a mistake and even started turning back around to his original position. But when he had at last successfully managed to get his head in front of the opened door, it turned out that his body was too broad to get through as it was. Of course in his father's present state of mind it did not even remotely occur to him to open the other wing of the door in order to give Gregor enough room to pass through. He had only the fixed idea that Gregor must return to his room as quickly as possible. He would never have allowed the

complicated preliminaries Gregor needed to go through in order to stand up on one end and perhaps in this way fit through the door. Instead he drove Gregor on, as if there were no obstacle, with exceptional loudness; the voice behind Gregor did not sound like that of only a single father; now this was really no joke any more, and Gregor forced himself—come what may—into the doorway. One side of his body rose up, he lay lop-sided in the opening, one of his flanks was scraped raw, ugly blotches marred the white door, soon he got stuck and could not have budged any more by himself, his little legs on one side dangled tremblingly in midair, those on the other were painfully crushed against the floor—when from behind his father gave him a hard shove, which was truly his salvation, and bleeding profusely, he flew far into his room. The door was slammed shut with the cane, then at last everything was quiet.

II

It was already dusk when Gregor awoke from his deep, comalike sleep. Even if he had not been disturbed, he would certainly not have woken up much later, for he felt that he had rested and slept long enough, but it seemed to him that a hurried step and a cautious shutting of the door leading to the foyer had awakened him. The light of the electric street-lamps lay in pallid streaks on the ceiling and on the upper parts of the furniture, but underneath, where Gregor was, it was dark. Groping clumsily with his antennae, which he was only now beginning to appreciate, he slowly dragged himself toward the door to see what had been happening there. His left side felt like one single long, unpleasantly tautening scar, and he actually had to limp on his two rows of legs. Besides, one little leg had been seriously injured in the course of the morning's events—it was almost a miracle that only one had been injured—and dragged along lifelessly.

Only after he got to the door did he notice what had really attracted him— the smell of something to eat. For there stood a bowl filled with fresh milk, in which small slices of white bread were floating. He could almost have laughed for joy, since he was even hungrier than he had been in the morning, and he immediately dipped his head into the milk, almost to over his eyes. But he soon drew it back again in disappointment; not only because he had difficulty eating on account of the soreness in his left side—and he could eat only if his whole panting body cooperated—but because he didn't like the milk at all, although it used to be his favorite drink, and that was certainly why his sister had put it in the room; in fact, he turned away from the bowl almost with repulsion and crawled back to the middle of the room.

In the living room, as Gregor saw through the crack in the door, the gas had been lit, but while at this hour of the day his father was in the habit of reading the afternoon newspaper in a loud voice to his mother and sometimes to his sister too, now there wasn't a sound. Well, perhaps this custom of reading aloud, which his sister was always telling him and writing him about, had recently been discontinued altogether. But in all the other rooms too it was just as still, although the apartment certainly was not empty. "What a quiet life the family has been leading," Gregor said to himself, and while he stared rigidly in front of him into the darkness, he felt very proud that he had been able to provide such a life in so nice an apartment for his parents and his sister. But what now if all the peace, the comfort, the contentment were to come to a horrible end? In order not to get involved in such thoughts, Gregor decided to keep moving, and he crawled up and down the room.

During the long evening first one of the side doors and then the other was opened a small crack and quickly shut again; someone had probably had the urge to come in and then had had second thoughts. Gregor now settled into position right by the living-room door, determined somehow to get the hesitating visitor to come in, or at least to find out who it might be; but the door was not opened again, and Gregor waited in vain. In the morning, when the doors had been locked, everyone had wanted to come in; now that he had opened one of the doors and the others had evidently been opened during the day, no one came in, and now the keys were even inserted on the outside.

It was late at night when the light finally went out in the living room, and now it was easy for Gregor to tell that his parents and his sister had stayed up so long, since, as he could distinctly hear, all three were now retiring on tiptoe. Certainly no one would come in to Gregor until the morning; and so he had ample time to consider undisturbed how best to rearrange his life. But the empty high-ceilinged room in which he was forced to lie flat on the floor made him nervous, without his being able to tell why—since it was, after all, the room in which he had lived for the past five years—and turning half unconsciously and not without a slight feeling of shame, he scuttled under the couch where, although his back was a little crushed and he could not raise his head any more, he immediately felt very comfortable and was only sorry that his body was too wide to go completely under the couch.

There he stayed the whole night, which he spent partly in a sleepy trance, from which hunger pangs kept waking him with a start, partly in worries and vague hopes, all of which, however, led to the conclusion that for the time being he would have to lie low and, by being patient and showing his family every possible consideration,

help them bear the inconvenience which he simply had to cause them in his present condition.

Early in the morning—it was still almost night—Gregor had the opportunity of testing the strength of the resolutions he had just made, for his sister, almost fully dressed, opened the door from the foyer and looked in eagerly. She did not see him right away, but when she caught sight of him under the couch—God, he had to be somewhere, he couldn't just fly away—she became so frightened that she lost control of herself and slammed the door shut again. But, as if she felt sorry for her behavior, she immediately opened the door again and came in on tiptoe, as if she were visiting someone seriously ill or perhaps even a stranger. Gregor had pushed his head forward just to the edge of the couch and was watching her. Would she notice that he had left the milk standing, and not because he hadn't been hungry, and would she bring in a dish of something he'd like better? If she were not going to do it of her own free will, he would rather starve than call it to her attention, although, really, he felt an enormous urge to shoot out from under the couch, throw himself at his sister's feet, and beg her for something good to eat. But his sister noticed at once, to her astonishment, that the bowl was still full, only a little milk was spilled around it; she picked it up immediately—not with her bare hands, of course, but with a rag—and carried it out. Gregor was extremely curious to know what she would bring him instead, and he racked his brains on the subject. But he would never have been able to guess what his sister, in the goodness of her heart, actually did. To find out his likes and dislikes, she brought him a wide assortment of things, all spread out on an old newspaper: old, half-rotten vegetables; bones left over from the evening meal, caked with congealed white sauce; some raisins and almonds; a piece of cheese, which two days before Gregor had declared inedible; a plain slice of bread, a slice of bread and butter, and one with butter and salt. In addition to all this she put down some water in the bowl apparently permanently earmarked for Gregor's use. And out of a sense of delicacy, since she knew that Gregor would not eat in front of her, she left hurriedly and even turned the key, just so that Gregor should know that he might make himself as comfortable as he wanted. Gregor's legs began whirring now that he was going to eat. Besides, his bruises must have completely healed, since he no longer felt any handicap, and marveling at this he thought how, over a month ago, he had cut his finger very slightly with a knife and how this wound was still hurting him only the day before yesterday. "Have I become less sensitive?" he thought, already sucking greedily at the cheese, which had immediately and forcibly attracted him ahead of all the other dishes. One right after the other, and with eyes streaming with tears of contentment, he devoured the cheese, the vegeta-

bles, and the sauce; the fresh foods, on the other hand, he did not care for; he couldn't even stand their smell and even dragged the things he wanted to eat a bit further away. He had finished with everything long since and was just lying lazily at the same spot when his sister slowly turned the key as a sign for him to withdraw. That immediately startled him, although he was almost asleep, and he scuttled under the couch again. But it took great self-control for him to stay under the couch even for the short time his sister was in the room, since his body had become a little bloated from the heavy meal, and in his cramped position he could hardly breathe. In between slight attacks of suffocation he watched with bulging eyes as his unsuspecting sister took a broom and swept up, not only his leavings, but even the foods which Gregor had left completely untouched—as if they too were no longer usable—and dumping everything hastily into a pail, which she covered with a wooden lid, she carried everything out. She had hardly turned her back when Gregor came out from under the couch, stretching and puffing himself up.

This, then, was the way Gregor was fed each day, once in the morning, when his parents and the maid were still asleep, and a second time in the afternoon after everyone had had dinner, for then his parents took a short nap again, and the maid could be sent out by his sister on some errand. Certainly they did not want him to starve either, but perhaps they would not have been able to stand knowing any more about his meals than from hearsay, or perhaps his sister wanted to spare them even what was possibly only a minor torment, for really, they were suffering enough as it was.

Gregor could not find out what excuses had been made to get rid of the doctor and the locksmith on that first morning, for since the others could not understand what he said, it did not occur to any of them, not even to his sister, that he could understand what they said, and so he had to be satisfied, when his sister was in the room, with only occasionally hearing her sighs and appeals to the saints. It was only later, when she had begun to get used to everything—there could never, of course, be any question of a complete adjustment—that Gregor sometimes caught a remark which was meant to be friendly or could be interpreted as such. "Oh, he liked what he had today," she would say when Gregor had tucked away a good helping, and in the opposite case, which gradually occurred more and more frequently, she used to say, almost sadly, "He's left everything again."

But if Gregor could not get any news directly, he overheard a great deal from the neighboring rooms, and as soon as he heard voices, he would immediately run to the door concerned and press his whole body against it. Especially in the early days, there was no conversation that was not somehow about him, if only implicitly. For two whole days there were family consultations at every mealtime about

how they should cope; this was also the topic of discussion between meals, for at least two members of the family were always at home, since no one probably wanted to stay home alone and it was impossible to leave the apartment completely empty. Besides, on the very first day the maid—it was not completely clear what and how much she knew of what had happened—had begged his mother on bended knees to dismiss her immediately; and when she said goodbye a quarter of an hour later, she thanked them in tears for the dismissal, as if for the greatest favor that had ever been done to her in this house, and made a solemn vow, without anyone asking her for it, not to give anything away to anyone.

Now his sister, working with her mother, had to do the cooking too; of course that did not cause her much trouble, since they hardly ate anything. Gregor was always hearing one of them pleading in vain with one of the others to eat and getting no answer except, "Thanks, I've had enough," or something similar. They did not seem to drink anything either. His sister often asked her father if he wanted any beer and gladly offered to go out for it herself; and when he did not answer, she said, in order to remove any hesitation on his part, that she could also send the janitor's wife to get it, but then his father finally answered with a definite "No," and that was the end of that.

In the course of the very first day his father explained the family's financial situation and prospects to both the mother and the sister. From time to time he got up from the table to get some kind of receipt or notebook out of the little strongbox he had rescued from the collapse of his business five years before. Gregor heard him open the complicated lock and secure it again after taking out what he had been looking for. These explanations by his father were to some extent the first pleasant news Gregor had heard since his imprisonment. He had always believed that his father had not been able to save a penny from the business, at least his father had never told him anything to the contrary, and Gregor, for his part, had never asked him any questions. In those days Gregor's sole concern had been to do everything in his power to make the family forget as quickly as possible the business disaster which had plunged everyone into a state of total despair. And so he had begun to work with special ardor and had risen almost overnight from stock clerk to traveling salesman, which of course had opened up very different money-making possibilities, and in no time his successes on the job were transformed, by means of commissions, into hard cash that could be plunked down on the table at home in front of his astonished and delighted family. Those had been wonderful times, and they had never returned, at least not with the same glory, although later on Gregor earned enough money to meet the expenses of the entire family and actually did so. They had just gotten used to it, the family as well as Gregor, the money

was received with thanks and given with pleasure, but no special feeling of warmth went with it any more. Only his sister had remained close to Gregor, and it was his secret plan that she who, unlike him, loved music and could play the violin movingly, should be sent next year to the Conservatory, regardless of the great expense involved, which could surely be made up for in some other way. Often during Gregor's short stays in the city, the Conservatory would come up in his conversations with his sister, but always merely as a beautiful dream which was not supposed to come true, and his parents were not happy to hear even these innocent allusions; but Gregor had very concrete idea on the subject and he intended solemnly to announce his plan on Christmas Eve.

Thoughts like these, completely useless in his present state, went through his head as he stood glued to the door, listening. Sometimes out of general exhaustion he could not listen any more and let his head bump carelessly against the door, but immediately pulled it back again, for even the slight noise he made by doing this had been heard in the next room and made them all lapse into silence. "What's he carrying on about in there now?" said his father after a while, obviously turning toward the door, and only then would the interrupted conversation gradually be resumed.

Gregor now learned in a thorough way—for his father was in the habit of often repeating himself in his explanations, partly because he himself had not dealt with these matters for a long time, partly, too, because his mother did not understand everything the first time around—that in spite of all their misfortunes a bit of capital, a very little bit, certainly, was still intact from the old days, which in the meantime had increased a little through the untouched interest. But besides that, the money Gregor had brought home every month—he had kept only a few dollars for himself—had never been completely used up and had accumulated into a tidy principal. Behind his door Gregor nodded emphatically, delighted at this unexpected foresight and thrift. Of course he actually could have paid off more of his father's debt to the boss with this extra money, and the day on which he could have gotten rid of his job would have been much closer, but now things were undoubtedly better the way his father had arranged them.

Now this money was by no means enough to let the family live off the interest; the principal was perhaps enough to support the family for one year, or at the most two, but that was all there was. So it was just a sum that really should not be touched and that had to be put away for a rainy day; but the money to live on would have to be earned. Now his father was still healthy, certainly, but he was an old man who had not worked for the past five years and who in any case could not be expected to undertake too much; during these five years,

which were the first vacation of his hard-working yet unsuccessful life, he had gained a lot of weight and as a result had become fairly sluggish. And was his old mother now supposed to go out and earn money, when she suffered from asthma, when a walk through the apartment was already an ordeal for her, and when she spent every other day lying on the sofa under the open window, gasping for breath? And was his sister now supposed to work—who for all her seventeen years was still a child and whom it would be such a pity to deprive of the life she had led until now, which had consisted of wearing pretty clothes, sleeping late, helping in the house, enjoying a few modest amusements, and above all playing the violin? At first, whenever the conversation turned to the necessity of earning money, Gregor would let go of the door and throw himself down on the cool leather sofa which stood beside it, for he felt hot with shame and grief.

Often he lay there the whole long night through, not sleeping a wink and only scrabbling on the leather for hours on end. Or, not balking at the huge effort of pushing an armchair to the window, he would crawl up to the window sill and, propped up in the chair, lean against the window, evidently in some sort of remembrance of the feeling of freedom he used to have from looking out the window. For, in fact, from day to day he saw things even a short distance away less and less distinctly; the hospital opposite, which he used to curse because he saw so much of it, was now completely beyond his range of vision, and if he had not been positive that he was living in Charlotte Street—a quiet but still very much a city street—he might have believed that he was looking out of his window into a desert where the gray sky and the gray earth were indistinguishably fused. It took his observant sister only twice to notice that his armchair was standing by the window for her to push the chair back to the same place by the window each time she had finished cleaning the room, and from then on she even left the inside casement of the window open.

If Gregor had only been able to speak to his sister and thank her for everything she had to do for him, he could have accepted her services more easily; as it was, they caused him pain. Of course his sister tried to ease the embarrassment of the whole situation as much as possible, and as time went on, she naturally managed it better and better, but in time Gregor, too, saw things much more clearly. Even the way she came in was terrible for him. Hardly had she entered the room than she would run straight to the window without taking time to close the door—though she was usually so careful to spare everyone the sight of Gregor's room—then tear open the casements with eager hands, almost as if she were suffocating, and remain for a little while at the window even in the coldest weather, breathing

deeply. With this racing and crashing she frightened Gregor twice a day; the whole time he cowered under the couch, and yet he knew very well that she would certainly have spared him this if only she had found it possible to stand being in a room with him with the window closed.

One time—it must have been a month since Gregor's metamorphosis, and there was certainly no particular reason any more for his sister to be astonished at Gregor's appearance—she came a little earlier than usual and caught Gregor still looking out the window, immobile and so in an excellent position to be terrifying. It would not have surprised Gregor if she had not come in, because his position prevented her from immediately opening the window, but not only did she not come in, she even sprang back and locked the door; a stranger might easily have thought that Gregor had been lying in wait for her, wanting to bite her. Of course Gregor immediately hid under the couch, but he had to wait until noon before his sister came again, and she seemed much more uneasy than usual. He realized from this that the sight of him was still repulsive to her and was bound to remain repulsive to her in the future, and that she probably had to overcome a lot of resistance not to run away at the sight of even the small part of his body that jutted out from under the couch. So, to spare her even this sight, one day he carried the sheet on his back to the couch—the job took four hours—and arranged it in such a way that he was now completely covered up and his sister could not see him even when she stooped. If she had considered this sheet unnecessary, then of course she could have removed it, for it was clear enough that it could not be for his own pleasure that Gregor shut himself off altogether, but she left the sheet the way it was, and Gregor thought that he had even caught a grateful look when one time he cautiously lifted the sheet a little with his head in order to see how his sister was taking the new arrangement.

During the first two weeks, his parents could not bring themselves to come in to him, and often he heard them say how much they appreciated his sister's work, whereas until now they had frequently been annoyed with her because she had struck them as being a little useless. But now both of them, his father and his mother, often waited outside Gregor's room while his sister straightened it up, and as soon as she came out she had to tell them in great detail how the room looked, what Gregor had eaten, how he had behaved this time, and whether he had perhaps shown a little improvement. His mother, incidentally, began relatively soon to want to visit Gregor, but his father and his sister at first held her back with reasonable arguments to which Gregor listened very attentively and of which he wholeheartedly approved. But later she had to be restrained by force, and then when she cried out, "Let me go to Gregor, he is my unfortunate

boy! Don't you understand that I have to go to him?" Gregor thought that it might be a good idea after all if his mother did come in, not every day of course, but perhaps once a week; she could still do everything much better than his sister, who, for all her courage, was still only a child and in the final analysis had perhaps taken on such a difficult assignment only out of childish flightiness.

Gregor's desire to see his mother was soon fulfilled. During the day Gregor did not want to show himself at the window, if only out of consideration for his parents, but he couldn't crawl very far on his few square yards of floor space, either; he could hardly put up with just lying still even at night; eating soon stopped giving him the slightest pleasure, so, as a distraction, he adopted the habit of crawling criss-cross over the walls and the ceiling. He especially liked hanging from the ceiling; it was completely different from lying on the floor; one could breathe more freely; a faint swinging sensation went through the body; and in the almost happy absent-mindedness which Gregor felt up there, it could happen to his own surprise that he let go and plopped onto the floor. But now, of course, he had much better control of his body than before and did not hurt himself even from such a big drop. His sister immediately noticed the new entertainment Gregor had discovered for himself—after all, he left behind traces of his sticky substance wherever he crawled—and so she got it into her head to make it possible for Gregor to crawl on an altogether wider scale by taking out the furniture which stood in his way—mainly the chest of drawers and the desk. But she was not able to do this by herself; she did not dare ask her father for help; the maid would certainly not have helped her, for although this girl, who was about sixteen, was bravely sticking it out after the previous cook had left, she had asked for the favor of locking herself in the kitchen at all times and of only opening the door on special request. So there was nothing left for his sister to do except to get her mother one day when her father was out. And his mother did come, with exclamations of excited joy, but she grew silent at the door of Gregor's room. First his sister looked to see, of course, that everything in the room was in order; only then did she let her mother come in. Hurrying as fast as he could, Gregor had pulled the sheet down lower still and pleated it more tightly—it really looked just like a sheet accidently thrown over the couch. This time Gregor also refrained from spying from under the sheet; he renounced seeing his mother for the time being and was simply happy that she had come after all. "Come on, you can't see him," his sister said, evidently leading her mother in by the hand. Now Gregor could hear the two frail women moving the old chest of drawers—heavy for anyone—from its place and his sister insisting on doing the harder part of the job herself, ignoring the warnings of her mother, who was afraid that she would overexert

herself. It went on for a long time. After struggling for a good quarter of an hour, his mother said that they had better leave the chest where it was, because, in the first place, it was too heavy, they would not finish before his father came, and with the chest in the middle of the room, Gregor would be completely barricaded; and, in the second place, it was not at all certain that they were doing Gregor a favor by removing his furniture. To her the opposite seemed to be the case; the sight of the bare wall was heart-breaking; and why shouldn't Gregor also have the same feeling, since he had been used to his furniture for so long and would feel abandoned in the empty room. "And doesn't it look," his mother concluded very softly—in fact she had been almost whispering the whole time, as if she wanted to avoid letting Gregor, whose exact whereabouts she did not know, hear even the sound of her voice, for she was convinced that he did not understand the words—"and doesn't it look as if by removing his furniture we were showing him that we have given up all hope of his getting better and are leaving him to his own devices without any consideration? I think the best thing would be to try to keep the room exactly the way it was before, so that when Gregor comes back to us again, he'll find everything unchanged and can forget all the more easily what's happened in the meantime."

When he heard his mother's words, Gregor realized that the monotony of family life, combined with the fact that not a soul had addressed a word directly to him, must have addled his brain in the course of the past two months, for he could not explain to himself in any other way how in all seriousness he could have been anxious to have his room cleared out. Had he really wanted to have his warm room, comfortably fitted with furniture that had always been in the family, changed into a cave, in which, of course, he would be able to crawl around unhampered in all directions but at the cost of simultaneously, rapidly, and totally forgetting his human past? Even now he had been on the verge of forgetting, and only his mother's voice, which he had not heard for so long, had shaken him up. Nothing should be removed; everything had to stay; he could not do without the beneficial influence of the furniture on his state of mind; and if the furniture prevented him from carrying on this senseless crawling around, then that was no loss but rather a great advantage.

But his sister unfortunately had a different opinion; she had become accustomed, certainly not entirely without justification, to adopt with her parents the role of the particularly well-qualified expert whenever Gregor's affairs were being discussed; and so her mother's advice was now sufficient reason for her to insist, not only on the removal of the chest of drawers and the desk, which was all she had been planning at first, but also on the removal of all the furniture with the exception of the indispensable couch. Of course it was not only childish

defiance and the self-confidence she had recently acquired so unexpectedly and at such a cost that led her to make this demand; she had in fact noticed that Gregor needed plenty of room to crawl around in; and on the other hand, as best she could tell, he never used the furniture at all. Perhaps, however, the romantic enthusiasm of girls her age, which seeks to indulge itself at every opportunity, played a part, by tempting her to make Gregor's situation even more terrifying in order that she might do even more for him. Into a room in which Gregor ruled the bare walls all alone, no human being beside Grete was ever likely to set foot.

And so she did not let herself be swerved from her decision by her mother, who, besides, from the sheer anxiety of being in Gregor's room, seemed unsure of herself, soon grew silent, and helped her daughter as best she could to get the chest of drawers out of the room. Well, in a pinch Gregor could do without the chest, but the desk had to stay. And hardly had the women left the room with the chest, squeezing against it and groaning, than Gregor stuck his head out from under the couch to see how he could feel his way into the situation as considerately as possible. But unfortunately it had to be his mother who came back first, while in the next room Grete was clasping the chest and rocking it back and forth by herself, without of course budging it from the spot. His mother, however, was not used to the sight of Gregor, he could have made her ill, and so Gregor, frightened, scuttled in reverse to the far end of the couch but could not stop the sheet from shifting a little at the front. That was enough to put his mother on the alert. She stopped, stood still for a moment, and then went back to Grete.

Although Gregor told himself over and over again that nothing special was happening, only a few pieces of furniture were being moved, he soon had to admit that this coming and going of the women, their little calls to each other, the scraping of the furniture along the floor had the effect on him of a great turmoil swelling on all sides, and as much as he tucked in his head and his legs and shrank until his belly touched the floor, he was forced to admit that he would not be able to stand it much longer. They were clearing out his room; depriving him of everything that he loved; they had already carried away the chest of drawers, in which he kept the fretsaw and other tools; were now budging the desk firmly embedded in the floor, the desk he had done his homework on when he was a student at business college, in high school, yes, even in public school—now he really had no more time to examine the good intentions of the two women, whose existence, besides, he had almost forgotten, for they were so exhausted that they were working in silence, and one could hear only the heavy shuffling of their feet.

And so he broke out—the women were just leaning against the

desk in the next room to catch their breath for a minute—changed his course four times, he really didn't know what to salvage first, then he saw hanging conspicuously on the wall, which was otherwise bare already, the picture of the lady all dressed in furs, hurriedly crawled up on it and pressed himself against the glass, which gave a good surface to stick to and soothed his hot belly. At least no one would take away this picture, while Gregor completely covered it up. He turned his head toward the living-room door to watch the women when they returned.

They had not given themselves much of a rest and were already coming back; Grete had put her arm around her mother and was practically carrying her. "So what should we take now?" said Grete and looked around. At that her eyes met Gregor's as he clung to the wall. Probably only because of her mother's presence she kept her self-control, bent her head down to her mother to keep her from looking around, and said, though in a quavering and thoughtless voice: "Come, we'd better go back into the living room for a minute." Grete's intent was clear to Gregor, she wanted to bring his mother into safety and then chase him down from the wall. Well, just let her try! He squatted on his picture and would not give it up. He would rather fly in Grete's face.

But Grete's words had now made her mother really anxious; she stepped to one side, caught sight of the gigantic brown blotch on the flowered wallpaper, and before it really dawned on her that what she saw was Gregor, cried in a hoarse, bawling voice: "Oh, God, Oh, God!"; and as if giving up completely, she fell with outstretched arms across the couch and did not stir. "You, Gregor!" cried his sister with raised fist and piercing eyes. These were the first words she had addressed directly to him since his metamorphosis. She ran into the next room to get some kind of spirits to revive her mother; Gregor wanted to help too—there was time to rescue the picture—but he was stuck to the glass and had to tear himself loose by force; then he too ran into the next room, as if he could give his sister some sort of advice, as in the old days; but then had to stand behind her doing nothing while she rummaged among various little bottles; moreover, when she turned around she was startled, a bottle fell on the floor and broke, a splinter of glass wounded Gregor in the face, some kind of corrosive medicine flowed around him; now without waiting any longer, Grete grabbed as many little bottles as she could carry and ran with them inside to her mother; she slammed the door behind her with her foot. Now Gregor was cut off from his mother, who was perhaps near death through his fault; he could not dare open the door if he did not want to chase away his sister, who had to stay with his mother; now there was nothing for him to do except wait; and tormented by self-reproaches and worry, he began to crawl, crawled

over everything, walls, furniture and ceiling, and finally in desperation, as the whole room was beginning to spin, fell down onto the middle of the big table.

A short time passed; Gregor lay there prostrate; all around, things were quiet, perhaps that was a good sign. Then the doorbell rang. The maid, of course, was locked up in her kitchen and so Grete had to answer the door. His father had come home. "What's happened?" were his first words; Grete's appearance must have told him everything. Grete answered in a muffled voice, her face was obviously pressed against her father's chest; "Mother fainted, but she's better now. Gregor's broken out." "I knew it," his father said. "I kept telling you, but you women don't want to listen." It was clear to Gregor that his father had put the worst interpretation on Grete's all-too-brief announcement and assumed that Gregor was guilty of some outrage. Therefore Gregor now had to try to calm his father down, since he had neither the time nor the ability to enlighten him. And so he fled to the door of his room and pressed himself against it for his father to see, as soon as he came into the foyer, that Gregor had the best intentions of returning to his room immediately and that it was not necessary to drive him back; if only the door were opened for him, he would disappear at once.

But his father was in no mood to notice such subtleties; "Ah!" he cried as he entered, in a tone that sounded as if he were at once furious and glad. Gregor turned his head away from the door and lifted it toward his father. He had not really imagined his father looking like this, as he stood in front of him now; admittedly Gregor had been too absorbed recently in his newfangled crawling to bother as much as before about events in the rest of the house and should really have been prepared to find some changes. And yet, and yet—was this still his father? Was this the same man who in the old days used to lie wearily buried in bed when Gregor left on a business trip; who greeted him on his return in the evening, sitting in his bathrobe in the armchair, who actually had difficulty getting to his feet but as a sign of joy only lifted up his arms; and who, on the rare occasions when the whole family went out for a walk, on a few Sundays in June and on the major holidays, used to shuffle along with great effort between Gregor and his mother, who were slow walkers themselves, always a little more slowly than they, wrapped in his old overcoat, always carefully planting down his crutch-handled cane, and, when he wanted to say something, nearly always stood still and assembled his escort around him? Now, however, he was holding himself very erect, dressed in a tight-fitting blue uniform with gold buttons, the kind worn by messengers at banking concerns; above the high stiff collar of the jacket his heavy chin protruded; under his bushy eyebrows his black eyes darted bright, piercing glances; his

usually rumpled white hair was combed flat, with a scrupulously exact, gleaming part. He threw his cap—which was adorned with a gold monogram, probably that of a bank—in an arc across the entire room onto the couch, and with the tails of his long uniform jacket slapped back, his hands in his pants pockets, went for Gregor with a sullen look on his face. He probably did not know himself what he had in mind; still he lifted his feet unusually high off the floor, and Gregor staggered at the gigantic size of the soles of his boots. But he did not linger over this, he had known right from the first day of his new life that his father considered only the strictest treatment called for in dealing with him. And so he ran ahead of his father, stopped when his father stood still, and scooted ahead again when his father made even the slightest movement. In this way they made more than one tour of the room, without anything decisive happening; in fact the whole movement did not even have the appearance of a chase because of its slow tempo. So Gregor kept to the floor for the time being, especially since he was afraid that his father might interpret a flight onto the walls or the ceiling as a piece of particular nastiness. Of course Gregor had to admit that he would not be able to keep up even this running for long, for whenever his father took one step, Gregor had to execute countless movements. He was already beginning to feel winded, just as in the old days he had not had very reliable lungs. As he now staggered around, hardly keeping his eyes open in order to gather all his strength for the running; in his obtuseness not thinking of any escape other than by running; and having almost forgotten that the walls were at his disposal, though here of course they were blocked up with elaborately carved furniture full of notches and points—at that moment a lightly flung object hit the floor right near him and rolled in front of him. It was an apple; a second one came flying right after it; Gregor stopped dead with fear; further running was useless, for his father was determined to bombard him. He had filled his pockets from the fruit bowl on the buffet and was now pitching one apple after another, for the time being without taking good aim. These little red apples rolled around on the floor as if electrified, clicking into each other. One apple, thrown weakly, grazed Gregor's back and slid off harmlessly. But the very next one that came flying after it literally forced its way into Gregor's back; Gregor tried to drag himself away, as if the startling, unbelievable pain might disappear with a change of place; but he felt nailed to the spot and stretched out his body in a complete confusion of all his senses. With his last glance he saw the door of his room burst open, as his mother rushed out ahead of his screaming sister, in her chemise, for his sister had partly undressed her while she was unconscious in order to let her breathe more freely; saw his mother run up to his father and on the way her unfastened petticoats slide to the

floor one by one; and saw as, stumbling over the skirts, she forced herself onto his father, and embracing him, in complete union with him—but now Gregor's sight went dim—her hands clasping his father's neck, begged for Gregor's life.

III

Gregor's serious wound, from which he suffered for over a month—the apple remained imbedded in his flesh as a visible souvenir since no one dared to remove it—seemed to have reminded even his father that Gregor was a member of the family, in spite of his present pathetic and repulsive shape, who could not be treated as an enemy; that, on the contrary, it was the commandment of family duty to swallow their disgust and endure him, endure him and nothing more.

And now, although Gregor had lost some of his mobility probably for good because of his wound, and although for the time being he needed long, long minutes to get across his room, like an old war veteran—crawling above ground was out of the question—for this deterioration of his situation he was granted compensation which in his view was entirely satisfactory: every day around dusk the living-room door—which he was in the habit of watching closely for an hour or two beforehand—was opened, so that, lying in the darkness of his room, invisible from the living room, he could see the whole family sitting at the table under the lamp and could listen to their conversation, as it were with general permission; and so it was completely different from before.

Of course these were no longer the animated conversations of the old days, which Gregor used to remember with a certain nostalgia in small hotel rooms when he'd had to throw himself wearily into the damp bedding. Now things were mostly very quiet. Soon after supper his father would fall asleep in his armchair; his mother and sister would caution each other to be quiet; his mother, bent low under the light, sewed delicate lingerie for a clothing store; his sister, who had taken a job as a salesgirl, was learning shorthand and French in the evenings in order to attain a better position some time in the future. Sometimes his father woke up, and as if he had absolutely no idea that he had been asleep, said to his mother, "Look how long you're sewing again today!" and went right back to sleep, while mother and sister smiled wearily at each other.

With a kind of perverse obstinacy his father refused to take off his official uniform even in the house; and while his robe hung uselessly on the clothes hook, his father dozed, completely dressed, in his chair, as if he were always ready for duty and were waiting even here for the voice of his superior. As a result his uniform, which had not been new to start with, began to get dirty in spite of all the mother's

and sister's care, and Gregor would often stare all evening long at this garment, covered with stains and gleaming with its constantly polished gold buttons, in which the old man slept most uncomfortably and yet peacefully.

As soon as the clock struck ten, his mother tried to awaken his father with soft encouraging words and then persuade him to go to bed, for this was no place to sleep properly, and his father badly needed his sleep, since he had to be at work at six o'clock. But with the obstinacy that had possessed him ever since he had become a messenger, he always insisted on staying at the table a little longer, although he invariably fell asleep and then could be persuaded only with the greatest effort to exchange his armchair for bed. However much mother and sister might pounce on him with little admonitions, he would slowly shake his head for a quarter of an hour at a time, keeping his eyes closed, and would not get up. Gregor's mother plucked him by the sleeves, whispered blandishments into his ear, his sister dropped her homework in order to help her mother, but all this was of no use. He only sank deeper into his armchair. Not until the women lifted him up under his arms did he open his eyes, look alternately at mother and sister, and usually say, "What a life. So this is the peace of my old age." And leaning on the two women, he would get up laboriously, as if he were the greatest weight on himself, and let the women lead him to the door, where, shrugging them off, he would proceed independently, while Gregor's mother threw down her sewing and his sister her pen as quickly as possible so as to run after his father and be of further assistance.

Who in this overworked and exhausted family had time to worry about Gregor any more than was absolutely necessary? The household was stinted more and more; now the maid was let go after all; a gigantic bony cleaning woman with white hair fluttering about her head came mornings and evenings to do the heaviest work; his mother took care of everything else, along with all her sewing. It even happened that various pieces of family jewelry, which in the old days his mother and sister had been overjoyed to wear at parties and celebrations, were sold, as Gregor found out one evening from the general discussion of the prices they had fetched. But the biggest complaint was always that they could not give up the apartment, which was much too big for their present needs, since no one could figure out how Gregor was supposed to be moved. But Gregor understood easily that it was not only consideration for him which prevented their moving, for he could easily have been transported in a suitable crate with a few air holes; what mainly prevented the family from moving was their complete hopelessness and the thought that they had been struck by a misfortune as none of their relatives and acquaintances had ever been hit. What the world demands of poor people they did

to the utmost of their ability; his father brought breakfast for the minor officials at the bank, his mother sacrificed herself to the underwear of strangers, his sister ran back and forth behind the counter at the request of the customers; but for anything more than this they did not have the strength. And the wound in Gregor's back began to hurt anew when mother and sister, after getting his father to bed, now came back, dropped their work, pulled their chairs close to each other and sat cheek to cheek; when his mother, pointing to Gregor's room, said, "Close that door, Grete"; and when Gregor was back in darkness, while in the other room the women mingled their tears or stared dry-eyed at the table.

Gregor spent the days and nights almost entirely without sleep. Sometimes he thought that the next time the door opened he would take charge of the family's affairs again, just as he had done in the old days; after this long while there again appeared in his thoughts the boss and the manager, the salesmen and the trainees, the handyman who was so dense, two or three friends from other firms, a chambermaid in a provincial hotel—a happy fleeting memory—a cashier in a millinery store, whom he had courted earnestly but too slowly—they all appeared, intermingled with strangers or people he had already forgotten; but instead of helping him and his family, they were all inaccessible, and he was glad when they faded away. At other times he was in no mood to worry about his family, he was completely filled with rage at his miserable treatment, and although he could not imagine anything that would pique his appetite, he still made plans for getting into the pantry to take what was coming to him, even if he wasn't hungry. No longer considering what she could do to give Gregor a special treat, his sister, before running to business every morning and afternoon, hurriedly shoved any old food into Gregor's room with her foot; and in the evening, regardless of whether the food had only been toyed with or—the most usual case—had been left completely untouched, she swept it out with a swish of the broom. The cleaning up of Gregor's room, which she now always did in the evenings, could not be done more hastily. Streaks of dirt ran along the walls, fluffs of dust and filth lay here and there on the floor. At first, whenever his sister came in, Gregor would place himself in those corners which were particularly offending, meaning by his position in a sense to reproach her. But he could probably have stayed there for weeks without his sister's showing any improvement; she must have seen the dirt as clearly as he did, but she had just decided to leave it. At the same time she made sure—with an irritableness that was completely new to her and which had in fact infected the whole family—that the cleaning of Gregor's room remain her province. One time his mother had submitted Gregor's room to a

major housecleaning, which she managed only after employing a couple of pails of water—all this dampness, of course, irritated Gregor too and he lay prostrate, sour and immobile, on the couch—but his mother's punishment was not long in coming. For hardly had his sister noticed the difference in Gregor's room that evening than, deeply insulted, she ran into the living room and, in spite of her mother's imploringly uplifted hands, burst out in a fit of crying, which his parents—his father had naturally been startled out of his armchair—at first watched in helpless amazement; until they too got going; turning to the right, his father blamed his mother for not letting his sister clean Gregor's room; but turning to the left, he screamed at his sister that she would never again be allowed to clean Gregor's room; while his mother tried to drag his father, who was out of his mind with excitement, into the bedroom; his sister, shaken with sobs, hammered the table with her small fists; and Gregor hissed loudly with rage because it did not occur to any of them to close the door and spare him such a scene and a row.

But even if his sister, exhausted from her work at the store, had gotten fed up with taking care of Gregor as she used to, it was not necessary at all for his mother to take her place and still Gregor did not have to be neglected. For now the cleaning woman was there. This old widow, who thanks to her strong bony frame had probably survived the worst in a long life, was not really repelled by Gregor. Without being in the least inquisitive, she had once accidentally opened the door of Gregor's room, and at the sight of Gregor—who, completely taken by surprise, began to race back and forth although no one was chasing him—she had remained standing, with her hands folded on her stomach, marveling. From that time on she never failed to open the door a crack every morning and every evening and peek in hurriedly at Gregor. In the beginning she also used to call him over to her with words she probably considered friendly, like, "Come over here for a minute, you old dung beetle!" or "Look at that old dung beetle!" To forms of address like these Gregor would not respond but remained immobile where he was, as if the door had not been opened. If only they had given this cleaning woman orders to clean up his room every day, instead of letting her disturb him uselessly whenever the mood took her. Once, early in the morning—heavy rain, perhaps already a sign of approaching spring, was beating on the window panes—Gregor was so exasperated when the cleaning woman started in again with her phrases that he turned on her, of course slowly and decrepitly, as if to attack. But the cleaning woman, instead of getting frightened, simply lifted up high a chair near the door, and as she stood there with her mouth wide open, her intention was clearly to shut her mouth only when the chair in her

hand came crashing down on Gregor's back. "So, is that all there is?" she asked when Gregor turned around again, and she quietly put the chair back in the corner.

Gregor now hardly ate anything anymore. Only when he accidentally passed the food laid out for him would he take a bite into his mouth just for fun, hold it in for hours, and then mostly spit it out again. At first he thought that his grief at the state of his room kept him off food, but it was the very changes in his room to which he quickly became adjusted. His family had gotten into the habit of putting in this room things for which they could not find any other place, and now there were plenty of these, since one of the rooms in the apartment had been rented to three boarders. These serious gentlemen—all three had long beards, as Gregor was able to register once through a crack in the door—were obsessed with neatness, not only in their room, but since they had, after all, moved in here, throughout the entire household and especially in the kitchen. They could not stand useless, let alone dirty junk. Besides, they had brought along most of their own household goods. For this reason many things had become superfluous, and though they certainly weren't salable, on the other hand they could not just be thrown out. All these things migrated into Gregor's room. Likewise the ash can and the garbage can from the kitchen. Whatever was not being used at the moment was just flung into Gregor's room by the cleaning woman, who was always in a big hurry; fortunately Gregor generally saw only the object involved and the hand that held it. Maybe the cleaning woman intended to reclaim the things as soon as she had a chance or else to throw out everything together in one fell swoop, but in fact they would have remained lying wherever they had been thrown in the first place if Gregor had not squeezed through the junk and set it in motion, at first from necessity, because otherwise there would have been no room to crawl in, but later with growing pleasure, although after such excursions, tired to death and sad, he did not budge again for hours.

Since the roomers sometimes also had their supper at home in the common living room, the living-room door remained closed on certain evenings, but Gregor found it very easy to give up the open door, for on many evenings when it was opened he had not taken advantage of it, but instead, without the family's noticing, had lain in the darkest corner of his room. But once the cleaning woman had left the living-room door slightly open, and it also remained opened a little when the roomers came in in the evening and the lamp was lit. They sat down at the head of the table where in the old days his father, his mother, and Gregor had eaten, unfolded their napkins, and picked up their knives and forks. At once his mother appeared in the doorway with a platter of meat, and just behind her came his

sister with a platter piled high with potatoes. A thick vapor steamed up from the food. The roomers bent over the platters set in front of them as if to examine them before eating, and in fact the one who sat in the middle, and who seemed to be regarded by the other two as an authority, cut into a piece of meat while it was still on the platter, evidently to find out whether it was tender enough or whether it should perhaps be sent back to the kitchen. He was satisfied, and mother and sister, who had been watching anxiously, sighed with relief and began to smile.

The family itself ate in the kitchen. Nevertheless, before going into the kitchen, his father came into this room and, bowing once, cap in hand, made a turn around the table. The roomers rose as one man and mumbled something into their beards. When they were alone again, they ate in almost complete silence. It seemed strange to Gregor that among all the different noises of eating he kept picking up the sound of their chewing teeth, as if this were a sign to Gregor that you needed teeth to eat with and that even with the best make of toothless jaws you couldn't do a thing. "I'm hungry enough," Gregor said to himself, full of grief, "but not for these things. Look how these roomers are gorging themselves, and I'm dying!"

On this same evening—Gregor could not remember having heard the violin during the whole time—the sound of violin playing came from the kitchen. The roomers had already finished their evening meal, the one in the middle had taken out a newspaper, given each of the two others a page, and now, leaning back, they read and smoked. When the violin began to play, they became attentive, got up, and went on tiptoe to the door leading to the foyer, where they stood in a huddle. They must have been heard in the kitchen, for his father called, "Perhaps the playing bothers you, gentlemen? It can be stopped right away." "On the contrary," said the middle roomer. "Wouldn't the young lady like to come in to us and play in here where it's much roomier and more comfortable?" "Oh, certainly," called Gregor's father, as if he were the violinist. The boarders went back into the room and waited. Soon Gregor's father came in with the music stand, his mother with the sheet music, and his sister with the violin. Calmly his sister got everything ready for playing; his parents—who had never rented out rooms before and therefore behaved toward the roomers with excessive politeness—did not even dare sit down on their own chairs; his father leaned against the door, his right hand inserted between two buttons of his uniform coat, which he kept closed; but his mother was offered a chair by one of the roomers, and since she left the chair where the roomer just happened to put it, she sat in a corner to one side.

His sister began to play. Father and mother, from either side, attentively followed the movements of her hands. Attracted by the

playing, Gregor had dared to come out a little further and already had his head in the living room. It hardly surprised him that lately he was showing so little consideration for the others; once such consideration had been his greatest pride. And yet he would never have had better reason to keep hidden; for now, because of the dust which lay all over his room and blew around at the slightest movement, he too was completely covered with dust; he dragged around with him on his back and along his sides fluff and hairs and scraps of food; his indifference to everything was much too deep for him to have gotten on his back and scrubbed himself clean against the carpet, as once he had done several times a day. And in spite of his state, he was not ashamed to inch out a little farther on the immaculate living-room floor.

Admittedly no one paid any attention to him. The family was completely absorbed by the violin-playing; the roomers, on the other hand, who at first had stationed themselves, hands in pockets, much too close behind his sister's music stand, so that they could all have followed the score, which certainly must have upset his sister, soon withdrew to the window, talking to each other in an undertone, their heads lowered, where they remained, anxiously watched by his father. It now seemed only too obvious that they were disappointed in their expectation of hearing beautiful or entertaining violin-playing, had had enough of the whole performance, and continued to let their peace be disturbed only out of politeness. Especially the way they all blew the cigar smoke out of their nose and mouth toward the ceiling suggested great nervousness. And yet his sister was playing so beautifully. Her face was inclined to one side, sadly and probingly her eyes followed the lines of music. Gregor crawled forward a little farther, holding his head close to the floor, so that it might be possible to catch her eye. Was he an animal, that music could move him so? He felt as if the way to the unknown nourishment he longed for were coming to light. He was determined to force himself on until he reached his sister, to pluck at her skirt, and to let her know in this way that she should bring her violin into his room, for no one here appreciated her playing the way he would appreciate it. He would never again let her out of his room—at least not for as long as he lived; for once, his nightmarish looks would be of use to him; he would be at all the doors of his room at the same time and hiss and spit at the aggressors; his sister, however, should not be forced to stay with him, but would do so of her own free will; she should sit next to him on the couch, bending her ear down to him, and then he would confide to her that he had had the firm intention of sending her to the Conservatory, and that, if the catastrophe had not intervened, he would have announced this to everyone last Christmas—certainly Christmas had come and gone?—without taking notice of

any objections. After this declaration his sister would burst into tears of emotion, and Gregor would raise himself up to her shoulder and kiss her on the neck which, ever since she started going out to work, she kept bare, without a ribbon or collar.

"Mr. Samsa!" the middle roomer called to Gregor's father and without wasting another word pointed his index finger at Gregor, who was slowly moving forward. The violin stopped, the middle roomer smiled first at his friends, shaking his head, and then looked at Gregor again. Rather than driving Gregor out, his father seemed to consider it more urgent to start by soothing the roomers although they were not at all upset, and Gregor seemed to be entertaining them more than the violin-playing. He rushed over to them and tried with outstretched arms to drive them into their room and at the same time with his body to block their view of Gregor. Now they actually did get a little angry—it was not clear whether because of his father's behavior or because of their dawning realization of having had without knowing it such a next door neighbor as Gregor. They demanded explanations from his father; in their turn they raised their arms, plucked excitedly at their beards, and, dragging their feet, backed off toward their room. In the meantime his sister had overcome the abstracted mood into which she had fallen after her playing had been so suddenly interrupted; and all at once, after holding violin and bow for a while in her slackly hanging hands and continuing to follow the score as if she were still playing, she pulled herself together, laid the instrument on the lap of her mother—who was still sitting in her chair, fighting for breath, her lungs violently heaving—and ran into the next room, which the roomers, under pressure from her father, were nearing more quickly than before. One could see the covers and bolsters on the beds, obeying his sister's practiced hands, fly up and arrange themselves. Before the boarders had reached the room, she had finished turning down the beds and had slipped out. Her father seemed once again to be gripped by his perverse obstinacy to such a degree that he completely forgot any respect still due his tenants. He drove them on and kept on driving until, already at the bedroom door, the middle boarder stamped his foot thunderingly and thus brought him to a standstill. "I herewith declare," he said, raising his hand and casting his eyes around for Gregor's mother and sister too, "that in view of the disgusting conditions prevailing in this apartment and family"—here he spat curtly and decisively on the floor—"I give notice as of now. Of course I won't pay a cent for the days I have been living here, either; on the contrary, I shall consider taking some sort of action against you with claims that—believe me—will be easy to substantiate." He stopped and looked straight in front of him, as if he were expecting something. And in fact his two friends at once chimed in with the words, "We too give notice as of

now." Thereupon he grabbed the door knob and slammed the door with a bang.

Gregor's father, his hands groping, staggered to his armchair and collapsed into it; it looked as if he were stretching himself out for his usual evening nap, but the heavy drooping of his head, as if it had lost all support, showed that he was certainly not asleep. All this time Gregor had lain quietly at the spot where the roomers had surprised him. His disappointment at the failure of his plan—but perhaps also the weakness caused by so much fasting—made it impossible for him to move. He was afraid with some certainty that in the very next moment a general debacle would burst over him, and he waited. He was not even startled by the violin as it slipped from under his mother's trembling fingers and fell off her lap with a reverberating clang.

"My dear parents," said his sister and by way of an introduction pounded her hand on the table, "things can't go on like this. Maybe you don't realize it, but I do. I won't pronounce the name of my brother in front of this monster, and so all I say is: we have to try to get rid of it. We've done everything humanly possible to take care of it and to put up with it; I don't think anyone can blame us in the least."

"She's absolutely right," said his father to himself. His mother, who still could not catch her breath, began to cough dully behind her hand, a wild look in her eyes.

His sister rushed over to his mother and held her forehead. His father seemed to have been led by Grete's words to more definite thoughts, had sat up, was playing with the cap of his uniform among the plates which were still lying on the table from the roomers' supper, and from time to time looked at Gregor's motionless form.

"We must try to get rid of it," his sister now said exclusively to her father, since her mother was coughing too hard to hear anything. "It will be the death of you two, I can see it coming. People who already have to work as hard as we do can't put up with this constant torture at home, too. I can't stand it anymore either." And she broke out crying so bitterly that her tears poured down onto her mother's face, which she wiped off with mechanical movements of her hand.

"Child," said her father kindly and with unusual understanding, "but what can we do?"

Gregor's sister only shrugged her shoulders as a sign of the bewildered mood that had now gripped her as she cried, in contrast with her earlier confidence.

"If he could understand us," said her father, half questioning; in the midst of her crying Gregor's sister waved her hand violently as a sign that that was out of the question.

"If he could understand us," his father repeated and by closing his eyes, absorbed his daughter's conviction of the impossibility of the

idea, "then maybe we could come to an agreement with him. But the way things are———"

"It has to go," cried his sister. "That's the only answer, Father. You just have to try to get rid of the idea that it's Gregor. Believing it for so long, that is our real misfortune. But how can it be Gregor? If it were Gregor, he would have realized long ago that it isn't possible for human beings to live with such a creature, and he would have gone away of his own free will. Then we wouldn't have a brother, but we'd be able to go on living and honor his memory. But as things are, this animal persecutes us, drives the roomers away, obviously wants to occupy the whole apartment and for us to sleep in the gutter. Look, Father," she suddenly shrieked, "he's starting in again!" And in a fit of terror that was completely incomprehensible to Gregor, his sister abandoned even her mother, literally shoved herself off from her chair, as if she would rather sacrifice her mother than stay near Gregor, and rushed behind her father, who, upset only by her behavior, also stood up and half-lifted his arms in front of her as if to protect her.

But Gregor had absolutely no intention of frightening anyone, let alone his sister. He had only begun to turn around in order to trek back to his room; certainly his movements did look peculiar, since his ailing condition made him help the complicated turning maneuver along with his head, which he lifted up many times and knocked against the floor. He stopped and looked around. His good intention seemed to have been recognized; it had only been a momentary scare. Now they all watched him, silent and sad. His mother lay in her armchair, her legs stretched out and pressed together, her eyes almost closing from exhaustion; his father and his sister sat side by side, his sister had put her arm around her father's neck.

Now maybe they'll let me turn around, Gregor thought and began his labors again. He could not repress his panting from the exertion, and from time to time he had to rest. Otherwise no one harassed him, he was left completely on his own. When he had completed the turn, he immediately began to crawl back in a straight line. He was astonished at the great distance separating him from his room and could not understand at all how, given his weakness, he had covered the same distance a little while ago almost without realizing it. Constantly intent only on rapid crawling, he hardly noticed that not a word, not an exclamation from his family interrupted him. Only when he was already in the doorway did he turn his head—not completely, for he felt his neck stiffening; nevertheless he still saw that behind him nothing had changed except that his sister had gotten up. His last glance ranged over his mother, who was now fast asleep.

He was hardly inside his room when the door was hurriedly slammed

shut, firmly bolted, and locked. Gregor was so frightened at the sudden noise behind him that his little legs gave way under him. It was his sister who had been in such a hurry. She had been standing up straight, ready and waiting, then she had leaped forward nimbly, Gregor had not even heard her coming, and she cried "Finally!" to her parents as she turned the key in the lock.

"And now?" Gregor asked himself, looking around in the darkness. He soon made the discovery that he could no longer move at all. It did not surprise him; rather, it seemed unnatural that until now he had actually been able to propel himself on these thin little legs. Otherwise he felt relatively comfortable. He had pains, of course, throughout his whole body, but it seemed to him that they were gradually getting fainter and fainter and would finally go away altogether. The rotten apple in his back and the inflamed area around it, which were completely covered with fluffy dust, already hardly bothered him. He thought back on his family with deep emotion and love. His conviction that he would have to disappear was, if possible, even firmer than his sister's. He remained in this state of empty and peaceful reflection until the tower clock struck three in the morning. He still saw that outside the window everything was beginning to grow light. Then, without his consent, his head sank down to the floor, and from his nostrils streamed his last weak breath.

When early in the morning the cleaning woman came—in sheer energy and impatience she would slam all the doors so hard although she had often been asked not to, that once she had arrived, quiet sleep was no longer possible anywhere in the apartment—she did not at first find anything out of the ordinary on paying Gregor her usual short visit. She thought that he was deliberately lying motionless, pretending that his feelings were hurt; she credited him with unlimited intelligence. Because she happened to be holding the long broom, she tried from the doorway to tickle Gregor with it. When this too produced no results, she became annoyed and jabbed Gregor a little, and only when she had shoved him without any resistance to another spot did she begin to take notice. When she quickly became aware of the true state of things, she opened her eyes wide, whistled softly, but did not dawdle; instead, she tore open the door of the bedroom and shouted at the top of her voice into the darkness: "Come and have a look, it's croaked; it's lying there, dead as a doornail!"

The couple Mr. and Mrs. Samsa sat up in their marriage bed and had a struggle overcoming their shock at the cleaning woman before they could finally grasp her message. But then Mr. and Mrs. Samsa hastily scrambled out of bed, each on his side, Mr. Samsa threw the blanket around his shoulders, Mrs. Samsa came out in nothing but her nightgown; dressed this way, they entered Gregor's room. In the meantime the door of the living room had also opened, where Grete

had been sleeping since the roomers had moved in; she was fully dressed, as if she had not been asleep at all; and her pale face seemed to confirm this. "Dead?" said Mrs. Samsa and looked inquiringly at the cleaning woman, although she could scrutinize everything for herself and could recognize the truth even without scrutiny. "I'll say," said the cleaning woman, and to prove it she pushed Gregor's corpse with her broom a good distance sideways. Mrs. Samsa made a movement as if to hold the broom back but did not do it. "Well," said Mr. Samsa, "now we can thank God!" He crossed himself, and the three women followed his example. Grete, who never took her eyes off the corpse, said, "Just look how thin he was. Of course he didn't eat anything for such a long time. The food came out again just the way it went in." As a matter of fact, Gregor's body was completely flat and dry; this was obvious now for the first time, really, since the body was no longer raised up by his little legs and nothing else distracted the eye.

"Come in with us for a little while, Grete," said Mrs. Samsa with a melancholy smile, and Grete, not without looking back at the corpse, followed her parents into their bedroom. The cleaning woman shut the door and opened the window wide. Although it was early in the morning, there was already some mildness mixed in with the fresh air. After all, it was already the end of March.

The three boarders came out of their room and looked around in astonishment for their breakfast; they had been forgotten. "Where's breakfast?" the middle roomer grumpily asked the cleaning woman. But she put her finger to her lips and then hastily and silently beckoned the boarders to follow her into Gregor's room. They came willingly and then stood, their hands in the pockets of their somewhat shabby jackets, in the now already very bright room, surrounding Gregor's corpse.

At that point the bedroom door opened, and Mr. Samsa appeared in his uniform, his wife on one arm, his daughter on the other. They all looked as if they had been crying; from time to time Grete pressed her face against her father's sleeve.

"Leave my house immediately," said Mr. Samsa and pointed to the door, without letting go of the women. "What do you mean by that?" said the middle roomer, somewhat nonplussed, and smiled with a sugary smile. The two others held their hands behind their back and incessantly rubbed them together, as if in joyful anticipation of a big argument, which could only turn out in their favor. "I mean just what I say," answered Mr. Samsa and with his two companions marched in a straight line toward the roomer. At first the roomer stood still and looked at the floor, as if the thoughts inside his head were fitting themselves together in a new order. "So, we'll go, then," he said and looked up at Mr. Samsa as if, suddenly over-

come by a fit of humility, he were asking for further permission even for this decision. Mr. Samsa merely nodded briefly several times, his eyes wide open. Thereupon the roomer actually went immediately into the foyer, taking long strides; his two friends had already been listening for a while, their hands completely still, and now they went hopping right after him, as if afraid that Mr. Samsa might get into the foyer ahead of them and interrupt the contact with their leader. In the foyer all three took their hats from the coatrack, pulled their canes from the umbrella stand, bowed silently, and left the apartment. In a suspicious mood which proved completely unfounded, Mr. Samsa led the two women out onto the landing; leaning over the banister, they watched the three roomers slowly but steadily going down the long flight of stairs, disappearing on each landing at a particular turn of the stairway and a few moments later emerging again; the farther down they got, the more the Samsa family's interest in them wore off, and when a butcher's boy with a carrier on his head came climbing up the stairs with a proud bearing, toward them and then up on past them, Mr. Samsa and the women quickly left the banister and all went back, as if relieved, into their apartment.

They decided to spend this day resting and going for a walk; they not only deserved a break in their work, they absolutely needed one. And so they sat down at the table and wrote three letters of excuse, Mr. Samsa to the management of the bank, Mrs. Samsa to her employer, and Grete to the store owner. While they were writing, the cleaning woman came in to say that she was going, since her morning's work was done. The three letter writers at first simply nodded without looking up, but as the cleaning woman still kept lingering, they looked up, annoyed. "Well?" asked Mr. Samsa. The cleaning woman stood smiling in the doorway, as if she had some great good news to announce to the family but would do so only if she were thoroughly questioned. The little ostrich feather which stood almost upright on her hat and which had irritated Mr. Samsa the whole time she had been with them swayed lightly in all directions. "What do you want?" asked Mrs. Samsa, who inspired the most respect in the cleaning woman. "Well," the cleaning woman answered, and for good-natured laughter could not immediately go on, "look, you don't have to worry about getting rid of the stuff next door. It's already been taken care of." Mrs. Samsa and Grete bent down over their letters, as if to continue writing; Mr. Samsa, who noticed that the cleaning woman was now about to start describing everything in detail, stopped her with a firmly outstretched hand. But since she was not going to be permitted to tell her story, she remembered that she was in a great hurry, cried, obviously insulted, "So long, everyone," whirled around wildly, and left the apartment with a terrible slamming of doors.

"We'll fire her tonight," said Mr. Samsa, but did not get an answer from either his wife or his daughter, for the cleaning woman seemed to have ruined their barely regained peace of mind. They got up, went to the window, and stayed there, holding each other tight. Mr. Samsa turned around in his chair toward them and watched them quietly for a while. Then he called, "Come on now, come over here. Stop brooding over the past. And have a little consideration for me, too." The women obeyed him at once, hurried over to him, fondled him, and quickly finished their letters.

Then all three of them left the apartment together, something they had not done in months, and took the trolley into the open country on the outskirts of the city. The car, in which they were the only passengers, was completely filled with warm sunshine. Leaning back comfortably in their seats, they discussed their prospects for the time to come, and it seemed on closer examination that these weren't bad at all, for all three positions—about which they had never really asked one another in any detail—were exceedingly advantageous and especially promising for the future. The greatest immediate improvement in their situation would come easily, of course, from a change in apartments; they would now take a smaller and cheaper apartment, but one better situated and in every way simpler to manage than the old one, which Gregor had picked for them. While they were talking in this vein, it occurred almost simultaneously to Mr. and Mrs. Samsa, as they watched their daughter getting livelier and livelier, that lately, in spite of all the troubles which had turned her cheeks pale, she had blossomed into a good-looking, shapely girl. Growing quieter and communicating almost unconsciously through glances, they thought that it would soon be time, too, to find her a good husband. And it was like a confirmation of their new dreams and good intentions when at the end of the ride their daughter got up first and stretched her young body.

ANNA AKHMATOVA

1889–1966

The voice of Anna Akhmatova is intensely personal, whether she speaks as lover, wife, and mother, or as a national poet commemorating the mute agony of millions. From the subjective love lyrics of her earliest work to the communal mourning of *Requiem* and the many-layered drama of *Poem without a Hero*, she expresses universal themes in terms of individual experience, and historical events through the filter of basic emotions like fear, love, hope, and pain. Akhmatova is one of the great Russian poets of the twentieth century, but she retains a broad sense of European culture, both

past and present, and fills her later works with references to Western music, literature, and art that give a startling breadth and scope to her very personalized poetry. Too cosmopolitan and too independent to be tolerated by the authorities, Akhmatova was viciously attacked and her books suppressed (1922–40) because they did not fit the government-approved model of literature: they were too "individualistic" and were not "socially useful." Although she was rehabilitated in the sixties and achieved recognized status as national poet, Akhmatova was read in secret for a long time, chiefly for the perfection of her early love lyrics. After the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953, however, her collected poems—including poems of the war years and unknown texts written during the periods of enforced silence—brought the full range of her work to public attention.

She was born Anna Andreevna Gorenko on June 11, 1889, in a suburb of the Black Sea port of Odessa and in a traditional society that she described as "Dostoevsky's Russia." Her father was a maritime engineer and her mother a strong-willed woman of populist sympathies who belonged to an early revolutionary group, "People's Will." The poet took the pen name of Akhmatova from her maternal great-grandmother, who was of Tatar descent. Her family soon moved to Tsarskoe Selo ("the Tsar's Village"), a small town outside St. Petersburg (now Leningrad) that had been for centuries the summer palace of the tsars, and also—perhaps more important for Akhmatova—a place where the great Romantic poet Pushkin wrote his youthful works. She attended the local school at Tsarskoe Selo, but completed her degree in Kiev; in 1907, she briefly studied law at the Kiev College for Women before moving to St. Petersburg to study literature.

In Tsarskoe Selo, Akhmatova met Nikolai Gumilyov, whom she would marry in April 1910. After their marriage, the couple visited Paris during the spring of 1910 and 1911, meeting many writers and artists including Amedeo Modigliani, who sketched Akhmatova several times, and with whom she recalled wandering around Paris and reading aloud the poetry of Paul Verlaine. It was a time of change in the arts, and when the couple returned to St. Petersburg Gumilyov helped organize a Poets' Guild that became the core of a new small literary movement, Acmeism, which rejected the romantic, quasi-religious aims of Russian Symbolism, and (like Imagism) valued clarity and concreteness, and a closeness to things of this earth. The Symbolist–Acmeist debate went on inside a lively literary and social life while the three main figures of Acmeism—Akhmatova, Gumilyov, and Osip Mandel'shtam—gained a reputation as important poets.

Akhmatova's first collection of poems, *Evening*, was published in the spring of 1912; it is an intensely personal collection of lyrics in which the poet describes evening as a time of awakening to love—and grief. There is a new clarity and directness to these traditionally romantic subjects, however, as for the first time in Russian poetry a woman in love expresses and analyzes her own emotions. In October of the same year, her son, Lev Gumilyov, was born; it was his arrest and imprisonment in 1935 that inspired the first poems of the cycle that would become *Requiem*. Lev was ultimately imprisoned for a total of fourteen years as the government sought a way to punish his mother, who would not or could not write according to the approved Socialist Realist style praising the government. Even after she had become

a national poet known for her patriotic poetry during World War II, Akhmatova was still criticized by the Stalinist régime as a reactionary "half-harlot, half-nun" who wrote subjective love lyrics without social significance: the love poetry of *Evening*, *Rosary* (1914), and *The White Flock* (1917, published a month before the revolution).

The White Flock was published during the first World War, whose destruction so shocked Akhmatova that she wrote, "This untimely death is so terrible / I cannot look at God's world." Yet more bloodshed was to follow in the civil war following the Revolution of 1917. Akhmatova refused to flee abroad, as many Russians were doing. Her marriage with Gumilyov was breaking up, and they divorced in 1918; she remarried an Assyriologist, Vladimir Shileiko, who did not approve of his wife's writing poetry and burned some of her poems (she divorced him in 1928). Akhmatova's political difficulties began in 1922. Although she and Gumilyov were divorced, his arrest and execution for counterrevolutionary activities in 1921 put her own status into question. After 1922 and the publication of *Anno Domini*, she was no longer allowed to publish, and was forced into the unwilling withdrawal from public activity that Russians call "internal emigration." Officially forgotten, she was not forgotten in fact; in the schools, her poems were copied out by hand and circulated among students who would never hear her name mentioned in a literature class.

Depending on a meager and irregular pension, Akhmatova prepared essays on the life and works of Pushkin, and wrote poems that would not appear until much later. Stalin's "Great Purge" of 1935–38 sent millions of people to prison camps, and made the thirties a time of terror and uncertainty for everyone. It is this fear and misery that is expressed in *Requiem*, as the poet blends personal references to her own life with an awareness of the common plight. The art critic Nikolai Punin, with whom she lived from 1926 to 1940, was arrested briefly in 1935; Osip Mandel'shtam, her great friend, was exiled to Voronezh in May 1934, and then sent to a prison camp in 1938 where he died the same year; her son, Lev, was arrested briefly in 1935 and then again in 1938, remaining imprisoned until 1941 when he was allowed to enroll in military service. Akhmatova wrote of Mandel'shtam (but perhaps of them all), that ". . . in the room of the disgraced poet / Fear and the Muse take turns on watch. / And the night goes on / which does not know of dawn." A temporary lifting of the ban against her works in 1940 did not last; although she was allowed to publish a new collection, *From Six Books*, the edition was recalled by officials after six months.

It was in 1940 that Akhmatova became interested in larger musical forms, and began thinking in terms of cycles of poems instead of her accustomed separate lyrics. She envisaged a larger framework for the core poems of *Requiem* in this year, and wrote the Dedication and two Epilogues. She also began work on the *Poem without a Hero*, a long and complex verse narrative in three parts which sums up many of her earlier themes: love, death, creativity, the unity of European culture and the suffering of her people. During the war the poet was allowed a partial return to public life, addressing women on the radio during the siege of Leningrad in 1941, and writing patriotic lyrics such as the famous "Courage" (published in *Pravda* in 1942) which rallied the Russian people to defend their homeland (and national language)

from enslavement. In spite of her patriotic activities, she was subject to vicious official attacks after the war. Stalin's Minister of Culture, Andrei Zhdanov, in a famous Report of 1946 proclaimed the doctrine of Socialist Realism as the official style, and attacked Akhmatova's "individualistic" writing as the "poetry of an overwrought upper-class lady who frantically races back and forth between boudoir and chapel." Akhmatova was immediately expelled from the Writer's Union, which meant that she was not officially recognized as a professional writer (and hence could not earn her living in that career).

Unable once more to publish her work, she supported herself between 1946 and 1958 by translating poetry from a number of foreign languages. Her son had been arrested again in 1949 and, hoping to obtain his release, she wrote the kind of adulatory poetry in praise of Stalin that the regime required. The cycle "In Praise of Peace," published in 1950, contains such clumsy imitations of Socialist Realist poetry that it has been considered a parody: "Where a tank rumbled, there is now a peaceful tractor . . ." Her son nonetheless remained in prison until 1956.

During the slow thaw that followed Stalin's death in 1953, Akhmatova was rehabilitated. Gradually her poems were allowed back into print; an edition of selected poems with added texts was published in 1958, and in the same year she was even elected to an honorary position on the executive council of the Writer's Union. In 1965 a larger collection appeared, *The Flight of Time*, which contained a new series called *The Seventh Book* as well as part of the still-unfinished *Poem without a Hero*. She took an interest in the young writers who flocked to her, and supported those who—like Josif Brodsky—were accused by the new order of being a "parasite on the state." Akhmatova's work was already recognized internationally: Robert Frost visited her on his trip to Russia in 1962, *Requiem* was first published "without her consent" in Munich in 1963 (it has never been published in the Soviet Union), and in 1964 she traveled to Italy to receive the Taormina poetry prize. She was surrounded by admirers when she visited England in 1965 to receive an honorary degree from Oxford University. Her death in 1966 signaled the end of an era in modern Russian poetry, for she was the last of the famous "quartet" that also included Mandel'shtam, Tsvetaeva, and Pasternak.

Requiem is a lyrical cycle, a series of poems written on a common theme, but it is also a short epic narrative. The story it tells is acutely personal, even autobiographical, but like an epic it also transcends personal significance and describes (as in *The Song of Roland*) a moment in the history of a nation. Akhmatova, who has seen her husband and son arrested and her friends die in prison camps, is only one of millions who have suffered similar losses in the purges of the nineteen thirties. The preface, dedication, and two epilogues to *Requiem* constitute a framework examining this image of a common fate, while the core of numbered poems develop a more subjective picture, and the stages of an individual drama. In the inner poems, Akhmatova blends her separate personal losses—husband, son, and friends—to create a single focus, the figure of a mother grieving for her condemned son. In the frame, the poet identifies herself with the crowd of women with whom she waited for seventeen months outside the Leningrad prison—women who, in turn, represent bereaved women throughout Russia. The "I" of the speaker

throughout remains anonymous, in spite of the fact that she describes her personal emotions in the central poems; her identity is that of a sorrowing mother, and she is distinguished from her fellow-suffers only by the poetic gift which makes her the "tormented mouth, / Through which a hundred million of my people cry." *Requiem* is at once a public and a private poem, a picture of individual grief simultaneously linked to a national disaster, and a vision of community suffering that extends past even national disaster into medieval Russian history and Greek mythology, and onto a plane of religious universalism with recurrent Christian imagery that culminates in a central symbol of maternal suffering: Mary, the mother of Christ.

The Dedication and Prologue establish the context for the poem as a whole: the mass arrests in the nineteen thirties after the assassination on December 1, 1934, of Sergei Kirov, the top Party official in Leningrad. The women waiting outside the Kresty ("Crosses") prison of Leningrad arrive at dawn in the coldest of weather, waiting for news of their loved ones, hoping to be allowed to pass them a parcel or a letter, and fearing the sentence of death or exile to the prison camps of frozen Siberia. Instead of living a natural life where "someone . . . / Still feels the sunset's glow," these women and the prisoners are forced into a suspended existence of separation and uncertainty in which all values are inverted and the city itself has become only the setting for its prisons. It is a situation before which the great forces of nature bow in silent horror.

With the numbered poems, Akhmatova recounts the growing anguish of a bereaved mother as her son is arrested and sentenced to death. The speaker describes her husband's arrest at dawn, in the midst of the family. Her son was arrested later, and in the rest of the poem she relives her numbed incomprehension as she struggles against the increasing likelihood that he will be condemned to death. Recalling her own carefree adolescence in contrast to her current position as she weeps outside the prison walls, or pleads with Stalin to relent, the mother has a premonition of his fate that pushes her into the temporary relief of insanity and forgetting, and to a desire for her own arrest and death. After sentence is passed, the traumatized mother can only speak of his execution in oblique terms that are at once universal and potentially consoling: by shifting the image of death onto the plane of the Crucifixion and God's will. It is a tragedy that cannot be comprehended or looked at directly just as, she suggests, at the Crucifixion "No one as much as dared to look" at the grieving Mary. In the two epilogues, the grieving speaker returns from religious transcendence to earth and current history. Here she takes on a newly composite identity, seeing herself not as an isolated sufferer but as reciprocally identified with the women whose fate she has shared. It is their memory she perpetuates by writing *Requiem* and it is in their memory that she herself lives on. No longer the victim of purely personal tragedy, she has become a bronze statue commemorating a community of suffering, a figure shaped by circumstances into a monument of public and private grief.

Sam Driver's *Anna Akhmatova* (1922) is an excellent introduction to Akhmatova's work and its historical context that stresses the years up to 1922. Amanda Haight's *Anna Akhmatova: A Poetic Pilgrimage* (1976) is a detailed and perceptive study of the range of Akhmatova's work by a writer who was

able to consult with the poet during the two years before her death. An essay by Kees Verheul, "Public Themes in the Poetry of Anna Akhmatova," *Russian Literature*, 1 (1971), 73–112, is particularly relevant to the themes of *Requiem*.

Requiem[1]

No, not under a foreign heavenly-cope,[2] and
Not canopied by foreign wings—
I was with my people in those hours,
There where, unhappily, my people were.

In the fearful years of the Yezhov terror[3] I spent seventeen months in prison queues in Leningrad. One day somebody "identified" me. Beside me, in the queue, there was a woman with blue lips. She had, of course, never heard of me; but she suddenly came out of that trance so common to us all and whispered in my ear (everybody spoke in whispers there): "Can you describe this?" And I said: "Yes, I can." And then something like the shadow of a smile crossed what had once been her face.

1 April 1957, Leningrad[4]

Dedication

The mountains bow before this anguish,
The great river does not flow.
In mortal sadness the convicts languish;
The bolts stay frozen. There's someone who
Still feels the sunset's glow,
Someone who can still distinguish
Day from night, for whom the fresh
Wind blows. But we[5] don't know it, we're obsessive,
We only hear the tramp of boots, abrasive
Keys scraping against our flesh.
Rising as though for early mass,
Through the capital of beasts we'd thread.
Met, more breathless than the dead,
Mistier Neva,[6] lower sun. Ahead,
Hope was still singing, endlessly evasive.
The sentence! and now at last tears flood.

1. Translated by D. M. Thomas. 2. Beneath the vault of heaven. The epigraph was written in 1961. 3. In 1937–38, mass arrests were carried out by the secret police, headed by Nikolai Yezhov. 4. The prose preface was written after her son had been released from prison and it was possible to think of editing the poem for publication. 5. The women waiting in line before the prison gates. 6. The large river that flows through Leningrad.

She'd thought the months before were loneliness!
She's thrown down like a rock.
The heart gives up its blood.
Yet goes . . . swaying . . . she can still walk.
My friends of those two years I stood
In hell—oh all my chance friends lost
Beyond the circle of the moon, I cry
Into the blizzards of the permafrost:[7]
Goodbye. Goodbye.

Prologue

In those years only the dead smiled,
Glad to be at rest:
And Leningrad city swayed like
A needless appendix to its prisons.
It was then that the railway-yards
Were asylums of the mad;
Short were the locomotives'
Farewell songs.
Stars of death stood
Above us, and innocent Russia
Writhed under bloodstained boots, and
Under the tyres of Black Marias.[8]

1

They took you[9] away at daybreak. Half waking, as though at a wake, I followed.
In the dark chamber children were crying,
In the image-case,[1] candlelight guttered.
At your lips, the chill of an ikon,
A deathly sweat at your brow.
I shall go creep to our wailing wall,[2]
Crawl to the Kremlin towers.

7. Victims of the purges who were not executed were condemned to prison camps in Siberia, where the ground never thawed. Their wives were allowed to accompany them into exile, although they had to live in towns at a distance from the camps. 8. Police cars for conveying those arrested. 9. Akhmatova's third husband, the art historian Nikolai Punin, was arrested at dawn while the children (his daughter and her cousin) cried. 1. The small case where the ikon—a small religious painting—was kept, and before which a candle was kept lit. Punin has kissed the ikon before being taken away. 2. The Russian text refers literally to the wives of the Streltsy (rebellious troops executed in 1698 by Peter the Great), who watched the men be killed.

2

Gently flows the gentle Don,[3]
Yellow moonlight leaps the sill,

Leaps the sill and stops aston-
ished as it sees the shade

Of a woman lying ill,
Of a woman stretched alone.

Son in irons and husband clay.[4]
Pray. Pray.

3

No, it is not I, it is someone else who is suffering.
I could not have borne it. And this thing which has
happened,
Let them cover it with black cloths,
And take away the lanterns. . .
Night.

4

Someone should have shown you—little jester,
Little teaser, blue-veined charm-
er, laughing-eyed, lionised, sylvan-princessly
Sinner[5]—to what point you would come:
How, the three hundredth in a queue,
You'd stand at the prison gate
And with your hot tears
Burn through the New-Year ice.
How many lives are ending there! Yet it's
Mute, even the prison-poplar's
Tongue's in its cheek as it's swaying.

3. The great Russian river, often celebrated in folk songs. This poem is modeled on a simple, rhythmic urban folk song known as a *chastuska*. 4. Akhmatova's first husband, the poet Nikolai Gumilyov, was shot in 1921. 5. Akhmatova recalls her early carefree and privileged life in Tsarskoe Selo.

5

For seventeen months, I've called you
To come home, I've pleaded
—O my son, my terror!—grovelled
At the hangman's[6] feet.
All is confused eternally—
So much, I can't say who's
Man, who's beast any more, nor even
How long till execution.
Simply the flowers of dust,
Censers ringing, tracks from a far
Settlement to nowhere's ice.
And everywhere the glad
Eye of a huge star's
Still tightening vice.[7]

6

Lightly the weeks are flying,
What has happened, I can't take in.
Just as, my dearest, the white
Nights[8] first watched you in prison,
So they again gaze down
With their warm aquiline eyes and
Of your cross transcendent
And of death I hear them speak.

7
The Sentence

Then fell the word of stone on
My still existing, still heaving breast.
Never mind, I was not unprepared, and
Shall manage to adjust to it somehow.

Thank God, I've many things to do today—I
Need to kill and kill again

6. Stalin. Akhmatova wrote a letter to him pleading for the release of her son. 7. In the Russian, a great star stares into her eyes, threatening death. 8. In Leningrad (due to its location far north), the nights around the summer solstice are never totally dark.

My memory, turn my heart to stone, as
Well as practise skills gone rusty, such

As to live, for instance. . . . Then there's always
Summer, calling out my Black Sea dress![9]
Yes, long ago I knew this day:
This radiant day, and this empty house.

8
To Death

You will come in any case, so why not now?
Life is very hard: I'm waiting for you.
I have turned off the lights and thrown the door wide open
For you, so simple and so marvellous.
Take on any form you like.
Why not burst in like a poisoned shell,
Or steal in like a bandit with his knuckleduster,
Or like a typhus-germ?
Or like a fairy-tale of your own invention[1]—
Stolen from you and loathsomely repeated,
Where I can see, behind you in the doorway,
The police-cap and the white-faced concierge?
I don't care how. The Yenisei[2] is swirling,
The Pole Star glittering. And eyes
I love are closing on the final horror.

9

Already madness trails its wing
Decisively across my mind;
I drink its fiery wine and sink
Into the valley of the blind.

I yield to it the victory:
There is no time, there is no room
Except to sue for peace with my
—However strange—delirium.

9. There are many holiday resorts on the Black Sea. 1. A denunciation to the police for imaginary crimes, common during the purges as people hastened to protect themselves by accusing their neighbor. 2. A river in Siberia along which were many prison camps.

I fall upon my knees, I pray
For mercy. It makes no concession.
Clearly I must take away
With me not one of my possessions—

Not the stone face, hollow blanks
Of eyes, my son's, through pain's exquisite
Chisel; not the dead's closed ranks[3]
In the hour of prison visits;

Not the dear coolness of his hands;
Nor, dimmed in distances's elision,
Like limetrees' shady turbulence,
His parting words of consolation.

10
Crucifixion

"Mother, do not weep for Me,
who am in the grave."

I

Angelic choirs the unequalled hour exalted,
And heaven disintegrated into flame.
Unto the Father: "Why hast Thou forsaken . . .!"[4]
But to the Mother: "Do not weep for me . . ."[5]

II

Magdalina beat her breast and wept, while
The loved disciple[6] seemed hammered out of stone.
But, for the Mother, where she stood in silence,—
No one as much as dared to look that way.

Epilogue

I

There I learned how faces fell apart,
How fear looks out from under the eyelids,

3. The image of all the dead created by the purges; in the Russian, the day when the storm came. 4. Christ's last words from the Cross [*Matthew* 27:46.] 5. These words and the epigraph refer to a line from the Russian Orthodox prayer sung at services on Easter Saturday: "Weep not for Me, Mother, when thou lookest in the grave." Christ is comforting Mary with the promise of his resurrection. 6. The apostle John.

How deep are the hieroglyphics
Cut by suffering on people's cheeks.
There I learned how silver can inherit
The black, the ash-blond, overnight,
The smiles that faded from the poor in spirit,
Terror's dry coughing sound.
And I pray not only for myself,
But also for all those who stood there
In bitter cold, or in the July heat,
Under the red blind prison-wall.

II

Again the hands of the clock are nearing
The unforgettable hour.[7] I see, hear, touch

All of you: the cripple they had to support
Painfully to the end of the line; the moribund;

And the girl who would shake her beautiful head and
Say: "I come here as if it were home."

I should like to call you all by name,
But they have lost the lists. . . .[8]

I have woven for them a great shroud[9]
Out of the poor words I overheard them speak.

I remember them always and everywhere,
And if they shut my tormented mouth,

Through which a hundred million of my people cry,
Let them remember me also. . . .

And if ever in this country they should want
To build me a monument

I consent to that honour,
But only on condition that they

7. The memorial hour, the time to remember their shared suffering. 8. The lists of prisoners were taken away and lost. 9. The Russian word also evokes the tenth-century appearance of the Virgin in a church, where she extended her veil over the people in protection—the occasion of a religious festival celebrated on October 1.

Erect it not on the sea-shore where I was born:
My last links there were broken long ago,

Nor by the stump in the Royal Gardens,[1]
Where an inconsolable young shade is seeking me,

But here, where I stood for three hundred hours
And where they never, never opened the doors for me.

Lest in blessed death I should forget
The grinding scream of the Black Marias,

The hideous clanging gate, the old
Woman wailing like a wounded beast.

And may the melting snow drop like tears
From my motionless bronze eyelids,

And the prison pigeons coo above me
And the ships sail slowly down the Neva.

1. The gardens and park surrounding the summer palace in Tsarskoe Selo. The "shade" is a ghost, probably the restless spirit of Akhmatova's executed husband Gumilyov, who wooed her in Tsarskoe Selo. Akhmatova writes elsewhere of the stump of a favorite willow in the gardens, and of the poet Pushkin (1799–1837) whom she describes as walking in the park.

BERTOLT BRECHT
1898–1956

Bertolt Brecht is a dominant figure in modern drama not only as the author of half a dozen plays which rank as modern classics, but as the first master of a powerful new concept of theater. Dissatisfied with the traditional notion, derived from Aristotle's *Poetics*, that drama should draw its spectators into identification with and sympathy for the characters, and with the Realist aesthetic of naturalness and psychological credibility, he saw only harm in such uncritical submission to illusions created on stage. Like Pirandello, Brecht believed that the modern stage should break open the closed world established as a dramatic convention by writers like Ibsen and Chekhov, whose audiences were to look at the action from a distance, as if it were a slice of real life going on behind an invisible "fourth wall." Unlike Pirandello, however, Brecht did not stress the anguish of individuals in society and the difficulty of knowing who we are; his focus was the community at

large, and social responsibility. For Brecht, a political activist, the modern audience must not be allowed to indulge in passive emotional identification at a safe distance, or in the subjective whirlpool of existential identity crises. His characters are to be seen as members of society, and his audience must be educated and moved to action. The movement called "epic theater," which was born in the twenties, suited his needs well, and through his plays, theoretical writings, and dramatic productions he developed its basic ideas into one of the most powerful theatrical styles of the century.

Eugen Berthold Brecht was born in the medieval town of Augsburg, Bavaria, on February 10, 1898. His father was a respected town citizen, director of a paper mill, and a Catholic. His mother, the daughter of a civil servant from the Black Forest, was a Protestant who raised young Berthold in her own faith. (The spelling *Bertolt* was adopted later.) Brecht attended local schools until 1917, when he enrolled in Munich University to study natural science and medicine. He continued his studies while acting as drama critic for an Augsburg newspaper and writing his own plays: *Drums in the Night* (1918) won the Kleist Prize in 1922. In 1918, Brecht was mobilized for a year as an orderly in a military hospital, and he pursued medical studies at Munich until 1921. In 1929 he married Helene Weigel, an actress who worked closely with him and for whom he wrote many leading roles. Together, they would direct and make famous the theater group founded for them in 1949 in East Berlin: the Berliner Ensemble.

Moving to Berlin, Brecht worked briefly with the directors Max Reinhardt and Erwin Piscator but was chiefly interested in his own writing. In this pre-Marxist period he is especially concerned with the plight of the individual common man, pushed around by social and economic forces beyond his control until he loses both identity and humanity. In *A Man's a Man* (1924–25), the timid dock worker Galy Gay is transformed by fright and persuasion into another person, the ferociously successful soldier Jeriah Jip. When Jip turns up at the end of the play, he is given Gay's former papers and forced to assume Gay's old identity. The play teaches that human personalities can be broken down and reassembled like a machine; the only weapon against such mindless manipulation is awareness, an awareness that enables people to understand and control their destiny.

Most of Brecht's plays are didactic, either openly or by implication. After he became a fervent Marxist in the mid-twenties, he considered it even more his moral and artistic duty to encourage the audience to remedy social ills. *The Threepenny Opera* (1928), a ballad opera written with composer Kurt Weill (1900–1950) and modeled on John Gay's eighteenth-century *Beggars' Opera*, satirizes capitalist society from the point of view of outcasts and romantic thieves. Brecht also wrote a number of "lesson" plays intended to set forth Communist doctrine and to instruct the workers of Germany in the meaning of social revolution. The lesson was particularly harsh in *The Measures Taken* (1930), which described the necessary execution of a young Party member who had broken discipline and helped the local poor, thus postponing the revolution. Such drama, however doctrinally pure, was not likely to win adherents to the cause, and the lesson plays were condemned as unattractive and "intellectualist" by the Communist press in Berlin and Moscow.

Brecht's unorthodoxy, his pacifism, his enthusiasm for Marx, and his desire to create an activist popular theater that would embody a Marxist view of art all put him at odds with the rising power of Hitler's National Socialism. He fled Germany for Denmark in 1933, before the Nazis could include him in their purge of left-wing intellectuals; in 1935, he was deprived of his German citizenship. Brecht was to flee several more times as the Nazi invasions expanded throughout Europe: in 1939 he went to Sweden, in 1940 to Finland, and in 1941 to America, where he joined a colony of German expatriates in Santa Monica, California, working for the film industry. This was the period of some of his greatest plays: *The Life of Galileo* (1938–39), which attacks society for suppressing Galileo's discovery that the earth revolves around the sun, but also condemns the scientist for not insisting openly on the truth; *Mother Courage and Her Children* (1939), the play reprinted here; *The Good Woman of Setzuan* (1938–40), which shows how an instinctively good and generous person can only survive in this world by putting on a mask of hardness and calculation; and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (1944–45), which adapts the legendary choice of Solomon between two mothers who claim the same infant and decides in favor of the servant girl—who cared for the child—over the wealthy mother (the implied comparison is between those who do the work of society and those who merely profit from their possessions). In America, Brecht arranged for the translation of his work into English, and *Galileo*, with Charles Laughton in the title role, was produced in 1947. In the same year, he was questioned by the House Un-American Activities Committee as part of a wide-ranging inquiry into possible Communist activity in the entertainment business. No charges were brought, but he left for Europe the day after being brought before the Committee.

After leaving the United States, Brecht worked for a year in Zurich before going to Berlin with his wife, Helene Weigel, to stage *Mother Courage*. The East Berlin government offered the couple a position as director of their own troupe, the "Berliner Ensemble," and Brecht—who had just finished a theoretical work on the theater, *A Little Organon for the Theater* (1949)—turned his attention to the professional role of director. Although the East Berliners subsidized Brecht's work and advertised the artist's presence among them as a tribute to their own political system, they also obliged him to defend some of his plays against charges of political unorthodoxy and indeed to revise them. After 1934, the prevailing Communist Party view had upheld a style called "socialist realism," whose goal was to offer simple messages and to foster identification with revolutionary heroes. Brecht's mind was too keen and questioning, too attracted by irony and paradox, for him to provide the simplistic drama desired or to have a comfortable relation with authority of the right or of the left. After settling in East Berlin, he wrote no major new plays but only minor propaganda pieces and adaptations of classical works such as Molière's *Don Juan* and Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*. As an additional measure of protection, he took out Austrian citizenship through his wife's nationality. Brecht died in Berlin on August 14, 1956.

The "epic theater" for which Brecht is known derives its name from a famous essay "On Epic and Dramatic Poetry" by Goethe and Schiller, who in 1797 described *dramatic* poetry as pulling the audience into emotional

identification, in contrast to *epic* poetry, which by being distanced in the time, place, and nature of the action could be absorbed in calm contemplation. The idea of an epic theater is a paradox: how can a play engage an audience that is still held at a distance? Brecht's solution was to employ many "alienation effects" that were genuinely dramatic, but that prevented total identification with the characters and forced spectators to think critically about what was taking place. These alienation effects have since become standard production techniques in the modern theater. In spite of Brecht's intentions and frequent revisions, however, the characters and situations of his plays remain emotionally engrossing, especially in his best-known works, such as *Mother Courage and Her Children*.

Brecht's concept of an epic theater touches on all aspects: dramatic structure, stage setting, music, and the actor's performance. The structure is to be open, episodic, and broken by dramatic or musical interludes. It is a "chronicle" that recounts events in an epic or distanced perspective. Episodes may also be performed independently as self-contained dramatic parables, instead of being organically tied to a centrally developing plot. Skits appear between scenes: in *A Man's a Man*, there is a fantastic interlude in which an elephant is accused of having murdered its mother. Sometimes a narrator comments on the action *(Three-Penny Opera, A Man's a Man)*. The alienation effects are also heightened by setting most of the plays in faraway lands (China in *The Good Woman of Setzuan*, India in *A Man's a Man*, England in *The Three-Penny Opera*, Russia in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, Chicago in *Saint Joan of the Stockyards* and *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*) or distant times (the seventeenth century in *Mother Courage*, Renaissance Italy in *Galileo*, or an imagined ghostly afterlife in *The Trial of Lucullus*).

Stagecraft and performance further support Brecht's concept of a critical, intellectualized theater. Events on stage are announced beforehand by signs, or are accompanied by projected films and images during the action itself. Place names are printed on signs and suspended over the actors, and footlights and stage machinery are openly displayed. Songs that interrupt the dramatic action are addressed directly to the audience, and are often heralded by a sign Brecht called a "musical emblem: in *Mother Courage*, 'a trumpet, a drum, a flag, and electric globes that lit up.' " In addition, Brecht described a special kind of acting: actors should "demonstrate" their parts instead of being submerged in them. At rehearsals, Brecht often asked actors to speak their parts in the third person instead of the first. Masks were occasionally used for wicked people, or soldiers' faces chalked white to suggest a stylized fear. Such constant artificiality injected into all aspects of the performance makes it difficult for the audience to identify completely and unselfconsciously with the characters on stage.

Audiences may react emotionally to Brecht's plays and characters, but their reactions are never simple. Brecht's characters are complex and inhabit complex situations. Galileo is both a dedicated scientist who sacrifices his reputation for honesty so as to complete his work, and a weak sensualist who fails to realize how his recantation will affect others' pursuit of scientific knowledge. In *The Good Woman of Setzuan*, the overgenerous Shen Te can survive only by periodically adopting the mask of a harshly practical "cousin,"

Shui Ta. Mother Courage is both a tragic mother figure and a small-time profiteer who loses her children as she battens on war. Brecht's work teems with such paradoxes at all levels. He is a cynic who deflates religious zeal, militant patriotism, and heroic example as delusions that lead the masses on to futile sacrifice; yet he is also a preacher who makes prominent use of traditional Biblical language and imagery, and themes of individual sacrifice.

Mother Courage, written shortly after Brecht turned forty, combines all these elements. The play is set in Germany, in the middle years of the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648), a conflict involving all Europe and believed at the time of Brecht's writing to have destroyed half the German population. But senseless violence, religious intolerance, artificial patriotism, and cynical opportunism were equally apparent in seventeenth-century Germany and in the Nazi state, and the setting gave Brecht what he needed to write a strongly pacifist play in 1939, the year in which World War II was to begin.

Mother Courage evoked the sympathy of early audiences for her tragic inability to prevent her children's death. Such was not Brecht's intention, and he rewrote several sections of the play to bring out her avarice and blindness, and her belief that she can use the war and profit from others' misery without endangering her own family. To Brecht, the tragedy of her life lay in her failure to relate the general fate of society to that of her own family. In trying to manipulate the system for her personal advantage, she denied the personal rights of others: she called to others to enlist but not to her own children, and she would rather sell shirts to the officers than use them to bind a peasant's wounds. Yet the war that Mother Courage saw as a good provider ended by killing her three children, and even sooner because of their virtues (Eilif's martial zeal, Swiss Cheese's honesty, Kattrin's pity). Mother Courage is ruined, all the more so since she has learned nothing from the war and does not protest it. Instead, her bitter "Song of the Great Capitulation" presents compromise as inevitable, and at the end of the play she is chasing after a new regiment to continue her peddler's career.

Each of the twelve parable-like scenes of *Mother Courage* presents a particular aspect or lesson of the war. Setting and props encourage the audience to see the action as a "demonstration" by drawing attention to the way the play is put on. Signs or titles are projected onto a screen to announce what is about to happen; a revolving stage and projected backgrounds suggest the wagon's travels in a highly stylized way; a group of musicians sits in full view beside the stage to accompany the songs; realistic but sketchy three-dimensional structures represent buildings. The main piece of stage furniture is Mother Courage's canteen wagon, whose increasingly dilapidated appearance reveals her fall from prosperity into lonely poverty. In the first scene, the whole family appears with the wagon: at the end, Mother Courage pulls it alone.

Brecht hoped that *Mother Courage* would show its audiences "that in wartime the big profits are not made by little people. That war, which is a continuation of business by other means, makes the human virtues fatal even to their possessors. That no sacrifice is too great for the struggle against war." This last point is demonstrated by Kattrin's death, for she is the only one of Mother Courage's family whose virtue is not perverted by the war,

and whose death is meant to provide a moral example. Drumming frantically to awaken the endangered city of Halle, she sacrifices her life to save the city's threatened children. Religious and secular themes join at this point as they do so often in the course of the play, for Kattrin acts immediately after hearing the peasant family bemoan their helplessness and pray to God for miraculous aid. It is action like hers, not passive prayer, that Brecht hopes to evoke with his epic theater. Both the play itself and its self-conscious, "alienated" staging try to move the audience toward a clearer understanding of forces in society, and to a responsible choice of their own roles.

Martin Esslin provides a basic biography and overview in *Brecht, The Man and His Work* (1974, rev. ed.). *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, edited and translated by John Willett (1964), contains Brecht's own essays and lectures on his theater. Other views of Brecht are found in Peter Demetz, ed., *Brecht: A Collection of Critical Essays* (1962). Ronald Hayman's *Brecht: A Biography* (1983) offers a detailed view of Brecht's life.

Mother Courage and Her Children[1]

A Chronicle of the Thirty Years' War[2]

Characters

MOTHER COURAGE
KATTRIN, *her mute daughter*
EILIF, *her elder son*
SWISS CHEESE, *her younger son*
THE RECRUITER
THE SERGEANT
THE COOK
THE GENERAL
THE CHAPLAIN
THE ORDNANCE OFFICER
YVETTE POTTIER
THE MAN WITH THE PATCH OVER HIS EYE
THE OTHER SERGEANT
THE OLD COLONEL
A CLERK
A YOUNG SOLDIER
AN OLDER SOLDIER
A PEASANT
THE PEASANT'S WIFE
THE YOUNG MAN
THE OLD WOMAN
ANOTHER PEASANT
THE PEASANT WOMAN
A YOUNG PEASANT
THE LIEUTENANT
SOLDIERS
A VOICE

1. Translated by Ralph Manheim. 2. Actually a series of wars fought in central Europe from 1618 to 1648. At the time *Mother Courage* opens, in 1624, a Swedish army has been fighting in Poland for three years. After winning the coastal province of Livonia (now part of the U.S.S.R.), it invades Germany in 1630 under the command of King Gustavus Adolphus. The king however fails to relieve the siege of Magdeburg by the imperial general Johan Tserclaes, Count of Tilly, and the Protestant bishopric is burned to the ground. Gustavus Adolphus later defeats Tilly in two major battles, but in 1632 both are killed, and two years later the Swedish force is destroyed by the Imperial army. The ensuing peace is brief, for in 1635 a new Swedish army, joined by troops from Catholic France, renews the fighting. This last phase of the war has just begun at the end of *Mother Courage*, and lasting peace will come only twelve years later.

Brecht is true to history as he knew it; only recently have historians disputed the traditional belief that the war devastated Germany and halved its population.

1

Spring 1624. General Oxenstjerna recruits troops in Dalarna for the Polish campaign. The canteen woman, Anna Fierling, known as Mother Courage, loses a son.[3]

Highway near a city.

A sergeant and a recruiter stand shivering.

THE RECRUITER. How can anybody get a company together in a place like this? Sergeant, sometimes I feel like committing suicide. The general wants me to recruit four platoons by the twelfth, and the people around here are so depraved I can't sleep at night. I finally get hold of a man, I close my eyes and pretend not to see that he's chicken-breasted and he's got varicose veins, I get him good and drunk and he signs up. While I'm paying for the drinks, he steps out, I follow him to the door because I smell a rat: Sure enough, he's gone, like a fart out of a goose. A man's word doesn't mean a thing, there's no honor, no loyalty. This place has undermined my faith in humanity, sergeant.

THE SERGEANT. It's easy to see these people have gone too long without a war. How can you have morality without a war, I ask you? Peace is a mess, it takes a war to put things in order. In peacetime the human race goes to the dogs. Man and beast are treated like so much dirt. Everybody eats what they like, a big piece of cheese on white bread, with a slice of meat on top of the cheese. Nobody knows how many young men or good horses there are in that town up ahead, they've never been counted. I've been in places where they hadn't had a war in as much as seventy years, the people had no names, they didn't even know who they were. It takes a war before you get decent lists and records; then your boots are done up in bales and your grain in sacks, man and beast are properly counted and marched away, because people realize that without order they can't have a war.

THE RECRUITER. How right you are!

THE SERGEANT. Like all good things, a war is hard to get started. But once it takes root, it's vigorous; then people are as scared of peace as dice players are of laying off, because they'll have to reckon up their losses. But at first they're scared of war. It's the novelty.

THE RECRUITER. Say, there comes a wagon. Two women and two young fellows. Keep the old woman busy, sergeant. If this is another flop, you won't catch me standing out in this April wind any more.

3. The heading for this and each new scene is projected on a screen on stage; it situates the action and tells what will happen. *General Oxenstjerna*: One of the Swedish generals. *Dalarna*: a rural province in central Sweden. A canteen women sells provisions to soldiers; Mother Courage's wagon is "a cross between a military vehicle and a general store." [Brecht's note.]

[*A Jew's harp*[4] *is heard. Drawn by two young men, a covered wagon approaches. In the wagon sit Mother Courage and her mute daughter Kattrin*]

MOTHER COURAGE. Good morning, sergeant.

SERGEANT. [*Barring the way*] Good morning, friends. Who are you?

MOTHER COURAGE. Business people. [*Sings*]

Hey, Captains, make the drum stop drumming
And let your soldiers take a seat.
Here's Mother Courage, with boots she's coming
To help along their aching feet.
How can they march off to the slaughter
With baggage, cannon, lice and fleas
Across the rocks and through the water
Unless their boots are in one piece?
The spring is come. Christian, revive![5]
The snowdrifts melt. The dead lie dead.
And if by chance you're still alive
It's time to rise and shake a leg.

O Captains, don't expect to send them
To death with nothing in their crops.
First you must let Mother Courage mend them
In mind and body with her schnapps.[6]
On empty bellies it's distressing
To stand up under shot and shell.
But once they're full, you have my blessing
To lead them to the jaws of hell.
The spring is come. Christian, revive!
The snowdrifts melt, the dead lie dead.
And if by chance you're still alive
It's time to rise and shake a leg.

THE SERGEANT. Halt, you scum. Where do you belong?

THE ELDER SON. Second Finnish Regiment.

THE SERGEANT. Where are your papers?

MOTHER COURAGE. Papers?

THE YOUNGER SON. But she's Mother Courage!

THE SERGEANT. Never heard of her. Why Courage?

MOTHER COURAGE. They call me Courage, sergeant, because when I saw ruin staring me in the face I drove out of Riga through cannon fire with fifty loaves of bread in my wagon. They were getting moldy, it was high time, I had no choice.

4. A small, twangy instrument held against the teeth, associated with country music. 5. The phrase in German parodies religious announcements of Easter and Christ's resurrection. 6. Liquor, especially gin. (The original says *wein*, or wine.)

THE SERGEANT. No wisecracks. Where are your papers?

MOTHER COURAGE. [*Fishing a pile of papers out of a tin box and climbing down*] Here are my papers, sergeant. There's a whole missal, picked it up in Alt-Ötting[7] to wrap cucumbers in, and a map of Moravia, God knows if I'll ever get there, if I don't it's total loss. And this here certifies that my horse hasn't got hoof-and-mouth disease, too bad, he croaked on us, he cost fifteen guilders,[8] but not out of my pocket, glory be. Is that enough paper?

THE SERGEANT. Are you trying to pull my leg? I'll teach you to get smart. You know you need a license.

MOTHER COURAGE. You mind your manners and don't go telling my innocent children that I'd go anywhere near your leg, it's indecent. I want no truck with you. My license in the Second Regiment is my honest face, and if you can't read it, that's not my fault. I'm not letting anybody put his seal on it.

THE RECRUITER. Sergeant, I detect a spirit of insubordination in this woman. In our camp we need respect for authority.

MOTHER COURAGE. Wouldn't sausage be better?

THE SERGEANT. Name.

MOTHER COURAGE. Anna Fierling.

THE SERGEANT. Then you're all Fierlings?

MOTHER COURAGE. What do you mean? Fierling is my name. Not theirs.

THE SERGEANT. Aren't they all your children?

MOTHER COURAGE. That they are, but why should they all have the same name? [*Pointing at the elder son*] This one, for instance. His name is Eilif Nojocki. How come? Because his father always claimed to be called Kojocki or Mojocki. The boy remembers him well, except the one he remembers was somebody else, a Frenchman with a goatee. But aside from that, he inherited his father's intelligence, that man could strip the pants off a peasant's ass without his knowing it. So, you see, we've each got our own name.

THE SERGEANT. Each different, you mean?

MOTHER COURAGE. Don't act so innocent.

THE SERGEANT. I suppose that one's a Chinaman? [*Indicating the younger son*]

MOTHER COURAGE. Wrong. He's Swiss.

THE SERGEANT. After the Frenchman?

MOTHER COURAGE. What Frenchman? I never heard of any Frenchman. Don't get everything balled up or we'll be here all day. He's Swiss, but his name is Fejos, the name has nothing to do with his father. He had an entirely different name, he was an engineer,

7. A place of pilgrimage fifty miles east of Munich in the south German kingdom of Bavaria. *Missal:* Prayer book. 8. The basic unit of Dutch money, also called a *florin*. When Brecht was writing, one guilder was worth about twenty-five cents.

built fortifications, but he drank.

[*Swiss Cheese nods, beaming; the mute Kattrin is also tickled*]

THE SERGEANT. Then how can his name be Fejos?

MOTHER COURAGE. I wouldn't want to offend you, but you haven't got much imagination. Naturally his name is Fejos because when he came I was with a Hungarian, it was all the same to him, he was dying of kidney trouble though he never touched a drop, a very decent man. The boy takes after him.

THE SERGEANT. But you said he wasn't his father?

MOTHER COURAGE. He takes after him all the same. I call him Swiss Cheese, how come, because he's good at pulling the wagon. [*Pointing at her daughter*] Her name is Kattrin Haupt, she's half German.

THE SERGEANT. A fine family, I must say.

MOTHER COURAGE. Yes, I've been all over the world with my wagon.

THE SERGEANT. It's all being taken down. [*He takes it down*] You're from Bamberg, Bavaria. What brings you here?

MOTHER COURAGE. I couldn't wait for the war to kindly come to Bamberg.

THE RECRUITER. You wagon pullers ought to be called Jacob Ox and Esau[9] Ox. Do you ever get out of harness?

EILIF. Mother, can I clout him one on the kisser? I'd like to.

MOTHER COURAGE. And I forbid you. You stay put. And now, gentlemen, wouldn't you need a nice pistol, or a belt buckle, yours is all worn out, sergeant.

THE SERGEANT. I need something else. I'm not blind. Those young fellows are built like tree trunks, big broad chests, sturdy legs. Why aren't they in the army? That's what I'd like to know.

MOTHER COURAGE. [*Quickly*] Nothing doing, sergeant. My children aren't cut out for soldiers.

THE RECRUITER. Why not? There's profit in it, and glory. Peddling shoes is woman's work. [*To Eilif*] Step up; let's feel if you've got muscles or if you're a sissy.

MOTHER COURAGE. He's a sissy. Give him a mean look and he'll fall flat on his face.

THE RECRUITER. And kill a calf if it happens to be standing in the way. [*Tries to lead him away*]

MOTHER COURAGE. Leave him alone. He's not for you.

THE RECRUITER. He insulted me. He referred to my face as a kisser. Him and me will now step out in the field and discuss this thing as man to man.

EILIF. Don't worry, mother. I'll take care of him.

MOTHER COURAGE. You stay put. You no-good! I know you, always fighting. He's got a knife in his boot, he's a knifer.

9. Biblical twin brothers (Genesis 25:7).

THE RECRUITER. I'll pull it out of him like a milk tooth. Come on, boy.

MOTHER COURAGE. Sergeant, I'll report you to the colonel. He'll throw you in the lock-up. The lieutenant is courting my daughter.

THE SERGEANT. No rough stuff, brother. [*To Mother Courage*] What have you got against the army? Wasn't his father a soldier? Didn't he die fair and square? You said so yourself.

MOTHER COURAGE. He's only a child. You want to lead him off to slaughter, I know you. You'll get five guilders for him.

THE RECRUITER. He'll get a beautiful cap and top boots.

EILIF. Not from you.

MOTHER COURAGE. Oh, won't you come fishing with me? said the fisherman to the worm. [*To Swiss Cheese*] Run and yell that they're trying to steal your brother. [*She pulls a knife*] Just try to steal him. I'll cut you down, you dogs. I'll teach you to put him in your war! We do an honest business in ham and shirts, we're peaceful folk.

THE SERGEANT. I can see by the knife how peaceful you are. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, put that knife away, you bitch. A minute ago you admitted you lived off war, how else would you live, on what? How can you have a war without soldiers?

MOTHER COURAGE. It doesn't have to be my children.

THE SERGEANT. I see. You'd like the war to eat the core and spit out the apple. You want your brood to batten on war, tax-free. The war can look out for itself, is that it? You call yourself Courage, eh? And you're afraid of the war that feeds you. Your sons aren't afraid of it, I can see that.

EILIF. I'm not afraid of any war.

THE SERGEANT. Why should you be? Look at me: Has the soldier's life disagreed with me? I was seventeen when I joined up.

MOTHER COURAGE. You're not seventy yet.

THE SERGEANT. I can wait.

MOTHER COURAGE. Sure. Under ground.

THE SERGEANT. Are you trying to insult me? Telling me I'm going to die?

MOTHER COURAGE. But suppose it's the truth? I can see the mark on you. You look like a corpse on leave.

SWISS CHEESE. She's got second sight. Everybody says so. She can tell the future.

THE RECRUITER. Then tell the sergeant his future. It might amuse him.

THE SERGEANT. I don't believe in that stuff.

MOTHER COURAGE. Give me your helmet. [*He gives it to her*]

THE SERGEANT. It doesn't mean any more than taking a shit in the grass. But go ahead for the laugh.

MOTHER COURAGE. [*Takes a sheet of parchment and tears it in two*] Eilif, Swiss Cheese, Kattrin: That's how we'd all be torn apart if we got mixed up too deep in the war. [*To the sergeant*] Seeing it's you, I'll do it for nothing. I make a black cross on this piece. Black is death.

SWISS CHEESE. She leaves the other one blank. Get it?

MOTHER COURAGE. Now I fold them, and now I shake them up together. Same as we're all mixed up together from the cradle to the grave. And now you draw, and you'll know the answer.

[*The sergeant hesitates*]

THE RECRUITER. [*To Eilif*] I don't take everybody, I'm known to be picky and choosey, but you've got spirit, I like that.

THE SERGEANT. [*Fishing in the helmet*] Damn foolishness! Hocus-pocus!

SWISS CHEESE. He's pulled a black cross. He's through.

THE RECRUITER. Don't let them scare you, there's not enough bullets for everybody.

THE SERGEANT. [*Hoarsely*] You've fouled me up.

MOTHER COURAGE. You fouled yourself up the day you joined the army. And now we'll be going, there isn't a war every day, I've got to take advantage.

THE SERGEANT. Hell and damnation! Don't try to hornswoggle me. We're taking your bastard to be a soldier.

EILIF. I'd like to be a soldier, mother.

MOTHER COURAGE. You shut your trap, you Finnish devil.

EILIF. Swiss Cheese wants to be a soldier too.

MOTHER COURAGE. That's news to me. I'd better let you draw too, all three of you. [*She goes to the rear to mark crosses on slips of parchment*]

THE RECRUITER. [*To Eilif*] It's been said to our discredit that a lot of religion goes on in the Swedish camp, but that's slander to blacken our reputation. Hymn singing only on Sunday, one verse! And only if you've got a voice.

MOTHER COURAGE. [*Comes back with the slips in the sergeant's helmet*] Want to sneak away from their mother, the devils, and run off to war like calves to a salt lick. But we'll draw lots on it, then they'll see that the world is no vale of smiles[1] with a "Come along, son, we're short on generals." Sergeant, I'm very much afraid they won't come through the war. They've got terrible characters, all three of them. [*She holds out the helmet to Eilif*] There. Pick a slip. [*He picks one and unfolds it. She snatches it away from him*] There you have it. A cross! Oh, unhappy mother that I am, Oh, mother of sorrows. Has he got to die? Doomed to perish in the

1. Parodying the traditional description of this world as a "vale of tears."

springtime of his life? If he joins the army, he'll bite the dust, that's sure. He's too brave, just like his father. If he's not smart, he'll go the way of all flesh, the slip proves it. [*She roars at him*] Are you going to be smart?

EILIF. Why not?

MOTHER COURAGE. The smart thing to do is to stay with your mother, and if they make fun of you and call you a sissy, just laugh.

THE RECRUITER. If you're shitting in your pants, we'll take your brother.

MOTHER COURAGE. I told you to laugh. Laugh! And now you pick, Swiss Cheese. I'm not so worried about you, you're honest. [*He picks a slip*] Oh! Why, have you got that strange look? It's got to be blank. There can't be a cross on it. No, I can't lose you. [*She takes the slip*] A cross? Him too? Maybe it's because he's so stupid. Oh, Swiss Cheese, you'll die too, unless you're very honest the whole time, the way I've taught you since you were a baby, always bringing back the change when I sent you to buy bread. That's the only way you can save yourself. Look sergeant, isn't that a black cross?

THE SERGEANT. It's a cross all right. I don't see how I could have pulled one. I always stay in the rear. [*To the recruiter*] It's on the up and up. Her own get it too.

SWISS CHEESE. I get it too. But I can take a hint.

MOTHER COURAGE. [*To Kattrin*] Now you're the only one I'm sure of, you're a cross[2] yourself because you've got a good heart. [*She holds up the helmet to Kattrin in the wagon, but she herself takes out the slip*] It's driving me to despair. It can't be right, maybe I mixed them wrong. Don't be too good-natured, Kattrin, don't, there's a cross on your path too. Always keep very quiet, that ought to be easy seeing you're dumb. Well, now you know. Be careful, all of you, you'll need to be. And now we'll climb up and drive on. [*She returns the sergeant's helmet and climbs up into the wagon*]

THE RECRUITER. [*To the sergeant*] Do something!

THE SERGEANT. I'm not feeling so good.

THE RECRUITER. Maybe you caught cold when you took your helmet off in the wind. Tell her you want to buy something. Keep her busy. [*Aloud*] You could at least take a look at that buckle, sergeant. After all, selling things is these good people's living. Hey, you, the sergeant wants to buy that belt buckle.

MOTHER COURAGE. Half a guilder. A buckle like that is worth two guilders. [*She climbs down*]

THE SERGEANT. It's not new. This wind! I can't examine it here. Let's go where it's quiet. [*He goes behind the wagon with the buckle*]

MOTHER COURAGE. I haven't noticed wind.

2. I.e., a heavy burden.

THE SERGEANT. Maybe it is worth half a guilder. It's silver.

MOTHER COURAGE. [*Joins him behind the wagon*] Six solid ounces.

THE RECRUITER. [*To Eilif*] And then we'll have a drink, just you and me. I've got your enlistment bonus right here. Come on.

[*Eilif stands undecided*]

MOTHER COURAGE. All right. Half a guilder.

THE SERGEANT. I don't get it. I always stay in the rear. There's no safer place for a sergeant. You can send the men up forward to win glory. You've spoiled my dinner. It won't go down, I know it, not a bite.

MOTHER COURAGE. Don't take it to heart. Don't let it spoil your appetite. Just keep behind the lines. Here, take a drink of schnapps, man. [*She hands him the bottle*]

THE RECRUITER. [*Has taken Eilif's arm and is pulling him away toward the rear*] A bonus of ten guilders, and you'll be a brave man and you'll fight for the king, and the women will tear each other's hair out over you. And you can clout me one on the kisser for insulting you. [*Both go out*]

[*Mute Kattrin jumps down from the wagon and emits raucous sounds*]

MOTHER COURAGE. Just a minute, Kattrin. Just a minute. The sergeant's paying up. [*Bites the half guilder*] I'm always suspicious of money. I'm a burnt child, sergeant. But your coin is good. And now we'll be going. Where's Eilif?

SWISS CHEESE. He's gone with the recruiter.

MOTHER COURAGE. [*Stands motionless, then*] You simple soul. [*To Kattrin*] I know. You can't talk, you couldn't help it.

THE SERGEANT. You could do with a drink yourself, mother. That's the way it goes. Soldiering isn't the worst thing in the world. You want to live off the war, but you want to keep you and yours out of it. Is that it?

MOTHER COURAGE. Now you'll have to pull with your brother, Kattrin.

[*Brother and sister harness themselves to the wagon and start pulling. Mother Courage walks beside them. The wagon rolls off*]

THE SERGEANT. [*Looking after them*]

If you want the war to work for you
You've got to give the war its due.

2

In 1625 and 1626 Mother Courage crosses Poland in the train[3] of the Swedish armies. Outside the fortress of Wallhof she meets her

3. I.e., with the supplies and baggage at the end of the line of march. *Wallhof:* Fictional city.

son again.—A capon is successfully sold, the brave son's fortunes are at their zenith.

The general's tent.

Beside it the kitchen. The thunder of cannon. The cook is arguing with Mother Courage, who is trying to sell him a capon.

THE COOK. Sixty hellers[4] for that pathetic bird?

MOTHER COURAGE. Pathetic bird? You mean this plump beauty? Are you trying to tell me that a general who's the biggest eater for miles around—God help you if you haven't got anything for his dinner—can't afford a measly sixty hellers?

THE COOK. I can get a dozen like it for ten hellers right around the corner.

MOTHER COURAGE. What, you'll find a capon like this right around the corner? With a siege on and everybody so starved you can see right through them. Maybe you'll scare up a rat, maybe, I say, 'cause they've all been eaten, I've seen five men chasing a starved rat for hours. Fifty hellers for a giant capon in the middle of a siege.

THE COOK. We're not besieged; they are. We're the besiegers, can't you get that through your head?

MOTHER COURAGE. But we haven't got anything to eat either, in fact we've got less than the people in the city. They've hauled it all inside. I hear their life is one big orgy. And look at us. I've been around to the peasants, they haven't got a thing.

THE COOK. They've got plenty. They hide it.

MOTHER COURAGE. [*Triumphantly*] Oh, no! They're ruined, that's what they are. They're starving. I've seen them. They're so hungry they're digging up roots. They lick their fingers when they've eaten a boiled strap. That's the situation. And here I've got a capon and I'm supposed to let it go for forty hellers.

THE COOK. Thirty, not forty. Thirty, I said.

MOTHER COURAGE. It's no common capon. They tell me this bird was so talented that he wouldn't eat unless they played music, he had his own favorite march. He could add and subtract, that's how intelligent he was. And you're trying to tell me forty hellers is too much. The general will bite your head off if there's nothing to eat.

THE COOK. You know what I'm going to do? [*He takes a piece of beef and sets his knife to it*] Here I've got a piece of beef. I'll roast it. Think it over. This is your last chance.

MOTHER COURAGE. Roast and be damned. It's a year old.

THE COOK. A day old. That ox was running around only yesterday

4. A small coin formerly used in Austria and Germany.

afternoon, I saw him with my own eyes.

MOTHER COURAGE. Then he must have stunk on the hoof.

THE COOK. I'll cook it five hours if I have to. We'll see if it's still tough. [*He cuts it*]

MOTHER COURAGE. Use plenty of pepper, maybe the general won't notice the stink.

[*The general, a chaplain, and Eilif enter the tent*]

THE GENERAL. [*Slapping Eilif on the back*] All right, son, into your general's tent you go, you'll sit at my right hand. You've done a heroic deed and you're a pious trooper, because this is a war of religion and what you did was done for God, that's what counts with me. I'll reward you with a gold bracelet when I take the city. We come here to save their souls and what do those filthy, shameless peasants do? They drive their cattle away. And they stuff their priests with meat, front and back. But you taught them a lesson. Here's a tankard of red wine for you. [*He pours*] We'll down it on one gulp. [*They do so*] None for the chaplain, he's got his religion. What would you like for dinner, sweetheart?

EILIF. A scrap of meat. Why not?

THE GENERAL. Cook! Meat!

THE COOK. And now he brings company when there's nothing to eat.

[*Wanting to listen, Mother Courage makes him stop talking*]

EILIF. Cutting down peasants whets the appetite.

MOTHER COURAGE. God, it's my Eilif.

THE COOK. Who?

MOTHER COURAGE. My eldest. I haven't seen hide nor hair of him in two years, he was stolen from me on the highway. He must be in good if the general invites him to dinner, and what have you got to offer? Nothing. Did you hear what the general's guest wants for dinner? Meat! Take my advice, snap up this capon. The price is one guilder.

THE GENERAL. [*Has sat down with Eilif. Bellows*] Food, Lamb, you lousy, no-good cook, or I'll kill you.

THE COOK. All right, hand it over. This is extortion.

MOTHER COURAGE. I thought it was a pathetic bird.

THE COOK. Pathetic is the word. Hand it over. Fifty hellers! It's highway robbery.

MOTHER COURAGE. One guilder, I say. For my eldest son, the general's honored guest, I spare no expense.

THE COOK. [*Gives her the money*] Then pluck it at least while I make the fire.

MOTHER COURAGE. [*Sits down to pluck the capon*] Won't he be glad to see me! He's my brave, intelligent son. I've got a stupid one too, but he's honest. The girl's a total loss. But at least she doesn't talk, that's something.

THE GENERAL. Take another drink, son, it's my best Falerno,[5] I've only got another barrel or two at the most, but it's worth it to see that there's still some true faith in my army. The good shepherd here just looks on, all he knows how to do is preach. Can he do anything? No. And now, Eilif my son, tell us all about it, how cleverly you hoodwinked those peasants and captured those twenty head of cattle. I hope they'll be here soon.

EILIF. Tomorrow. Maybe the day after.

MOTHER COURAGE. Isn't my Eilif considerate, not bringing those oxen in until tomorrow, or you wouldn't have even said hello to my capon.

EILIF. Well, it was like this: I heard the peasants were secretly—mostly at night—rounding up the oxen they'd hidden in a certain forest. The city people had arranged to come and get them. I let them round the oxen up, I figured they'd find them easier than I would. I made my men ravenous for meat, put them on short rations for two days until their mouths watered if they even heard a word beginning with *me* . . . like measles.

THE GENERAL. That was clever of you.

EILIF. Maybe. The rest was a pushover. Except the peasants had clubs and there were three times more of them and they fell on us like bloody murder. Four of them drove me into a clump of bushes, they knocked my sword out of my hand and yelled: Surrender! Now what'll I do, I says to myself, they'll make hash out of me.

THE GENERAL. What did you do?

EILIF. I laughed.

THE GENERAL. You laughed?

EILIF. I laughed. Which led to a conversation. The first thing you know, I'm bargaining. Twenty guilders is too much for that ox, I say, how about fifteen? Like I'm meaning to pay. They're flummoxed, they scratch their heads. Quick, I reach for my sword and mow them down. Necessity knows no law. See what I mean?

THE GENERAL. What do you say to that, shepherd?

CHAPLAIN. Strictly speaking, that maxim is not in the Bible. But our Lord was able to turn five loaves into five hundred.[6] So there was no question of poverty; he could tell people to love their neighbors because their bellies were full. Nowadays it's different.

THE GENERAL. [*Laughs*] Very different. All right, you Pharisee,[7] take a swig. [*To Eilif*] You mowed them down, splendid, so my fine troops could have a decent bite to eat. Doesn't the Good Book say: "Whatsoever thou doest for the least of my brethren, thou doest

5. A famous wine made from grapes grown in Falerno in Italy. 6. Episode in the Gospels when Jesus fed five thousand people with five loaves and two fishes (Matthew 15:33 ff.).
7. Religious hypocrite, quibbler on religious doctrine.

for me"?[8] And what have you done for them? You've got them a good chunk of beef for their dinner. They're not used to moldy crusts; in the old days they had a helmetful of white bread and wine before they went out to fight for God.

EILIF. Yes, I reached for my sword and I mowed them down.

THE GENERAL. You're a young Caesar. You deserve to see the king.

EILIF. I have, in the distance. He shines like a light. He's my ideal.

THE GENERAL. You're a something like him already, Eilif. I know the worth of a brave soldier like you. When I find one, I treat him like my own son. [*He leads him to the map*] Take a look at the situation, Eilif; we've still got a long way to go.

MOTHER COURAGE. [*Who has been listening starts plucking her capon furiously*] He must be a rotten general.

THE COOK. Eats like a pig, but why rotten?

MOTHER COURAGE. Because he needs brave soldiers, that's why. If he planned his campaigns right, what would he need brave soldiers for? The run-of-the-mill would do. Take it from me, whenever you find a lot of virtues, it shows that something's wrong.

THE COOK. I'd say it proves that something is all right.

MOTHER COURAGE. No, that something's wrong. See, when a general or a king is real stupid and leads his men up shit creek, his troops need courage, that's a virtue. If he's stingy and doesn't hire enough soldiers, they've all got to be Herculeses. And if he's a slob and lets everything go to pot, they've got to be as sly as serpents or they're done for. And if he's always expecting too much of them, they need an extra dose of loyalty. A country that's run right, or a good king or a good general, doesn't need any of these virtues. You don't need virtues in a decent country, the people can all be perfectly ordinary, medium-bright, and cowards too for my money.

THE GENERAL I bet your father was a soldier.

EILIF. A great soldier, I'm told. My mother warned me about it. Makes me think of a song.

THE GENERAL. Sing it! [*Bellowing*] Where's that food!

EILIF. It is called: The Song of the Old Wife and the Soldier.

[*He sings, doing a war dance with his saber*]

A gun or a pike they can kill who they like
And the torrent will swallow a wader
You had better think twice before battling with ice
Said the old wife to the soldier.
Cocking his rifle he leapt to his feet
Laughing for joy as he heard the drum beat
The wars cannot hurt me, he told her.

8. Spoken by Jesus in the Gospels (Matthew 25:40 ff.).

He shouldered his gun and he picked up his knife
To see the wide world. That's the soldier's life.
Those were the words of the soldier.

Ah, Deep will they lie who wise counsel defy
Learn wisdom from those that are older
Oh, don't venture too high or you'll fall from the sky
Said the old wife to the soldier.
But the young soldier with knife and with gun
Only laughed a cold laugh and stepped into the run.
The water can't hurt me, he told her.
And when the moon on the rooftop shines white
We'll be coming back. You can pray for that night.
Those were the words of the soldier.

MOTHER COURAGE. [*In the kitchen, continues the song, beating a pot with a spoon*]

Like the smoke you'll be gone and no warmth linger on
And your deeds only leave me the colder!
Oh, see the smoke race. Oh, dear God keep him safe!
That's what she said of the soldier.

EILIF. What's that?

MOTHER COURAGE. [*Goes on singing*]
And the young soldier with knife and with gun
Was swept from his feet till he sank in the run
And the torrent swallowed the waders.
Cold shone the moon on the rooftop white
But the soldier was carried away with the ice
And what was it she heard from the soldier?
Like the smoke he was gone and no warmth lingered on
And his deeds only left her the colder.
Ah, deep will they lie who wise counsel defy!
That's what she said to the soldier.

THE GENERAL. What do they think they're doing in my kitchen?

EILIF. [*Has gone into the kitchen. He embraces his mother*] Mother! It's you! Where are the others?

MOTHER COURAGE. [*In his arms*] Snug as a bug in a rug. Swiss Cheese is paymaster of the Second Regiment; at least he won't be fighting, I couldn't keep him out altogether.

EILIF. And how about your feet?

MOTHER COURAGE. Well, it's hard getting my shoes on in the morning.

THE GENERAL. [*Has joined them*] Ah, so you're his mother. I hope you've got more sons for me like this fellow here.

EILIF. Am I lucky! There you're sitting in the kitchen hearing your son being praised.

MOTHER COURAGE. I heard it all right! [*She gives him a slap in the face*]

EILIF. [*Holding his cheek*] For capturing the oxen?

MOTHER COURAGE. No. For not surrendering when the four of them were threatening to make hash out of you! Didn't I teach you to take care of yourself? You Finnish devil!

[*The general and the chaplain laugh*]

3

Three years later Mother Courage and parts of a Finnish[9] regiment are taken prisoner. She is able to save her daughter and her wagon, but her honest son dies.

Army camp.

Afternoon. On a pole the regimental flag. Mother Courage has stretched a clothesline between her wagon, on which all sorts of merchandise is hung in display, and a large cannon. She and Kattrin are folding washing and piling it on the cannon. At the same time she is negotiating with an ordnance officer[1] *over a sack of bullets. Swiss Cheese, now in the uniform of a paymaster, is looking on. A pretty woman, Yvette Pottier, is sitting with a glass of brandy in front of her, sewing a gaudy-colored hat. She is in her stocking feet, her red high-heeled shoes are on the ground beside her.*

THE ORDNANCE OFFICER. I'll let you have these bullets for two guilders. It's cheap, I need the money, because the colonel's been drinking with the officers for two days and we're out of liquor.

MOTHER COURAGE. That's ammunition for the troops. If it's found here, I'll be court-martialed. You punks sell their bullets and the men have nothing to shoot at the enemy.

THE ORDNANCE OFFICER. Don't be hard-hearted, you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours.

MOTHER COURAGE. I'm not taking any army property. Not at that price.

THE ORDNANCE OFFICER. You can sell it for five guilders, maybe eight, to the ordnance officer of the Fourth before the day is out, if you're quiet about it and give him a receipt for twelve. He hasn't an ounce of ammunition left.

9. Finland was under Swedish rule at this time.

1. Officer in charge of weapons, particularly explosives.

MOTHER COURAGE. Why don't you do it yourself?

THE ORDNANCE OFFICER. Because I don't trust him, he's a friend of mine.

MOTHER COURAGE. [*Takes the sack*] Hand it over. [*To Kattrin*] Take it back there and pay him one and a half guilders. [*In response to the ordnance officer's protest*] One and a half guilders, I say. [*Kattrin drags the sack behind the wagon, the ordnance officer follows her. Mother Courage to Swiss Cheese*] Here's your underdrawers, take good care of them, this is October, might be coming on fall, I don't say it will be, because I've learned that nothing is sure to happen the way we think, not even the seasons. But whatever happens, your regimental funds have to be in order. Are your funds in order?

SWISS CHEESE. Yes, mother.

MOTHER COURAGE. Never forget that they made you paymaster because you're honest and not brave like your brother, and especially because you're too simple-minded to get the idea of making off with the money. That's a comfort to me. And don't go mislaying your drawers.

SWISS CHEESE. No, mother. I'll put them under my mattress. [*Starts to go*]

ORDNANCE OFFICER. I'll go with you, paymaster.

MOTHER COURAGE. Just don't teach him any of your tricks.

[*Without saying good-bye the ordnance officer goes out with Swiss Cheese*]

YVETTE. [*Waves her hand after the ordnance officer*] You might say good-bye, officer.

MOTHER COURAGE. [*To Yvette*] I don't like to see those two together. He's not the right kind of company for my Swiss Cheese. But the war's getting along pretty well. More countries are joining in all the time, it can go on for another four, five years, easy. With a little planning ahead, I can do good business if I'm careful. Don't you know you shouldn't drink in the morning with your sickness?

YVETTE. Who says I'm sick, it's slander.

MOTHER COURAGE. Everybody says so.

YVETTE. Because they're all liars. Mother Courage, I'm desperate. They all keep out of my way like I'm a rotten fish on account of those lies. What's the good of fixing my hat? [*She throws it down*] That's why I drink in the morning, I never used to, I'm getting crow's-feet, but it doesn't matter now. In the Second Finnish Regiment they all know me. I should have stayed home when my first love walked out on me. Pride isn't for the likes of us. If we can't put up with shit, we're through.

MOTHER COURAGE. Just don't start in on your Pieter and how it all happened in front of my innocent daughter.

YVETTE. She's just the one to hear it, it'll harden her against love.
MOTHER COURAGE. Nothing can harden them.
YVETTE. Then I'll talk about it because it makes me feel better. It begins with my growing up in fair Flanders, because if I hadn't I'd never have laid eyes on him and I wouldn't be here in Poland now, because he was an army cook, blond, a Dutchman, but skinny. Kattrin, watch out for the skinny ones, but I didn't know that then, and another thing I didn't know is that he had another girl even then, and they all called him Pete the Pipe, because he didn't even take his pipe out of his mouth when he was doing it, that's all it meant to him. [*She sings the Song of Fraternization*]

When I was only sixteen
The foe came into our land.
He laid aside his saber
And with a smile he took my hand.
After the May parade
The May light starts to fade.
The regiment dressed by the right[2]
Then drums were beaten, that's the drill.[3]
The foe took us behind the hill
And fraternized all night.

There were so many foes came
And mine worked in the mess.[4]
I loathed him in the daytime.
At night I loved him none the less.
After the May parade
The May light starts to fade.
The regiment dressed by the right
Then drums were beaten, that's the drill.
The foe took us behind the hill
And fraternized all night.

The love which came upon me
Was wished on me by fate.
My friends could never grasp why
I found it hard to share their hate.
The fields were wet with dew
When sorrow first I knew.
The regiment dressed by the right
Then drums were beaten, that's the drill.

2. I.e., each man aligned himself with the man on his right to form straight ranks for the parade. 3. I.e., that's the usual thing. 4. The kitchen.

And then the foe, my lover still
Went marching from our sight.

Well, I followed him, but I never found him. That was five years ago. [*She goes behind the wagon with an unsteady gait*]

MOTHER COURAGE. You've left your hat.

YVETTE. Anybody that wants it can have it.

MOTHER COURAGE. Let that be a lesson to you, Kattrin. Have no truck with soldiers. It's love that makes the world go round, so you'd better watch out. Even with a civilian it's no picnic. He says he'd kiss the ground you put your little feet on, talking of feet, did you wash yours yesterday, and then you're his slave. Be glad you're dumb, that way you'll never contradict yourself or want to bite your tongue off because you've told the truth, it's a gift of God to be dumb. Here comes the general's cook, I wonder what he wants.

[*The cook and the chaplain enter*]

THE CHAPLAIN. I've got a message for you from your son Eilif. The cook here thought he'd come along, he's taken a shine to you.

THE COOK. I only came to get a breath of air.

MOTHER COURAGE. You can always do that here if you behave, and if you don't, I can handle you. Well, what does he want? I've got no money to spare.

THE CHAPLAIN. Actually he wanted me to see his brother, the paymaster.

MOTHER COURAGE. He's not here any more, or anywhere else either. He's not his brother's paymaster. I don't want him leading him into temptation and being smart at his expense [*Gives him money from the bag slung around her waist*] Give him this, it's a sin, he's speculating on mother love and he ought to be ashamed.

THE COOK. He won't do it much longer, then he'll be marching off with his regiment, maybe to his death, you never can tell. Better make it a little more, you'll be sorry later. You women are hard-hearted, but afterwards you're sorry. A drop of brandy wouldn't have cost much when it was wanted, but it wasn't given, and later, for all you know, he'll be lying in the cold ground and you can't dig him up again.

THE CHAPLAIN. Don't be sentimental, cook. There's nothing wrong with dying in battle, it's a blessing, and I'll tell you why. This is a war of religion. Not a common war, but a war for the faith, and therefore pleasing to God.

THE COOK. That's a fact. In a way you could call it a war, because of the extortion and killing and looting, not to mention a bit of rape, but it's a war of religion, which makes it different from all other wars, that's obvious. But it makes a man thirsty all the same, you've got to admit that.

THE CHAPLAIN. [*To Mother Courage, pointing at the cook*] I tried to discourage him, but he says you've turned his head, he sees you in his dreams.

THE COOK. [*Lights a short-stemmed pipe*] All I want is a glass of brandy from your fair hand, nothing more sinful. I'm already so shocked by the jokes the chaplain's been telling me, I bet I'm still red in the face.

MOTHER COURAGE. And him a clergyman! I'd better give you fellows something to drink or you'll be making me immoral propositions just to pass the time.

THE CHAPLAIN. This is temptation, said the deacon, and succumbed to it. [*Turning toward Kattrin as he leaves*] And who is this delightful young lady?

MOTHER COURAGE. She's not delightful, she's a respectable young lady.

[*The chaplain and the cook go behind the wagon with Mother Courage. Kattrin looks after them, then she walks away from the washing and approaches the hat. She picks it up, sits down and puts on the red shoes. From the rear Mother Courage is heard talking politics with the chaplain and the cook*]

MOTHER COURAGE. The Poles here in Poland shouldn't have butted in. All right, our king marched his army into their country. But instead of keeping the peace, the Poles start butting into their own affairs and attack the king while he's marching quietly through the landscape. That was a breach of the peace and the blood is on their head.

THE CHAPLAIN. Our king had only one thing in mind; freedom. The emperor had everybody under his yoke, the Poles as much as the Germans; the king had to set them free.

THE COOK. I see it this way, your brandy's first-rate, I can see why I liked your face, but we were talking about the king. This freedom he was trying to introduce into Germany cost him a fortune, he had to levy a salt tax in Sweden, which, as I said, cost the poor people a fortune. Then he had to put the Germans in jail and break them on the rack because they liked being the emperor's slaves. Oh yes, the king made short shrift of anybody that didn't want to be free. In the beginning he only wanted to protect Poland against wicked people, especially the emperor, but the more he ate the more he wanted, and pretty soon he was protecting all of Germany.[5] But the Germans didn't take it lying down and the king got nothing but trouble for all his kindness and expense, which he naturally had to defray from taxes, which made for bad blood, but that didn't discourage him. He had one thing in his favor, the

5. Allusion to Hitler's expansion of German territory allegedly to protect German-speaking peoples, first in Bohemia and then, in 1938, through the annexation of Austria.

word of God, which was lucky, because otherwise people would have said he was doing it all for himself and what he hoped to get out of it. As it was, he always had a clear conscience and that was all he really cared about.

MOTHER COURAGE. It's easy to see you're not a Swede, or you wouldn't talk like that about the Hero-King.

THE CHAPLAIN. You're eating his bread, aren't you?

THE COOK. I don't eat his bread, I bake it.

MOTHER COURAGE. He can't be defeated because his men believe in him. [*Earnestly*] When you listen to the big wheels talk, they're making war for reasons of piety, in the name of everything that's fine and noble. But when you take another look, you see that they're not so dumb; they're making war for profit. If they weren't, the small fry like me wouldn't have anything to do with it.[6]

THE COOK. That's a fact.

THE CHAPLAIN. And it wouldn't hurt you as a Dutchman to take a look at that flag up there before you express opinions in Poland.

MOTHER COURAGE. We're all good Protestants here! Prosit![7]

[*Kattrin has started strutting about with Yvette's hat on, imitating Yvette's gait.*]

[*Suddenly cannon fire and shots are heard. Drums. Mother Courage, the cook, and the chaplain run out from behind the wagon, the two men still with glasses in hand. The ordnance officer and a soldier rush up to the cannon and try to push it away*]

MOTHER COURAGE. What's going on? Let me get my washing first, you lugs. [*She tries to rescue her washing*]

THE ORDNANCE OFFICER. The Catholics. They're attacking. I don't know as we'll get away. [*To the soldier*] Get rid of the gun! [*Runs off*]

THE COOK. Christ, I've got to find the general. Courage, I'll be back for a little chat in a day or two. [*Rushes out*]

MOTHER COURAGE. Stop, you've forgotten your pipe.

THE COOK. [*From the distance*] Keep it for me! I'll need it.

MOTHER COURAGE. Just when we were making a little money!

THE CHAPLAIN. Well, I guess I'll be going too. It might be dangerous though, with the enemy so close. Blessed are the peaceful[8] is the best motto in wartime. If only I had a cloak to cover up with.

MOTHER COURAGE. I'm not lending any cloaks, not on your life. I've had bitter experience in that line.

THE CHAPLAIN. But my religion puts me in special danger.

6. The German expression can also be translated, "Wouldn't be doing the same thing." 7. Cheers! 8. A parody of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" (*Matthew* 5:9).

MOTHER COURAGE. [*Bringing him a cloak*] It's against my better conscience. And now run along.

THE CHAPLAIN. Thank you kindly, you've got a good heart. But maybe I'd better sit here a while. The enemy might get suspicious if they see me running.

MOTHER COURAGE. [*To the soldier*] Leave it lay, you fool, you won't get paid extra. I'll take care of it for you, you'd only get killed.

THE SOLDIER. [*Running away*] I tried. You're my witness.

MOTHER COURAGE. I'll swear it on the Bible. [*Sees her daughter with the hat*] What are you doing with that floozy hat? Take it off, have you gone out of your mind? Now of all times, with the enemy on top of us? [*She tears the hat off Kattrin's head*] You want them to find you and make a whore out of you? And those shoes! Take them off, you woman of Babylon![9] [*She tries to pull them off*] Jesus Christ, chaplain, make her take those shoes off! I'll be right back. [*She runs to the wagon*]

YVETTE. [*Enters, powdering her face*] What's this I hear? The Catholics are coming? Where is my hat? Who's been stamping on it? I can't be seen like this if the Catholics are coming. What'll they think of me? I haven't even got a mirror. [*To the chaplain*] How do I look? Too much powder?

THE CHAPLAIN. Just right.

YVETTE. And where are my red shoes? [*She doesn't see them because Kattrin hides her feet under her skirt*] I left them here. I've got to get back to my tent. In my bare feet. It's disgraceful! [*Goes out*]

[*Swiss Cheese runs in carrying a small box*]

MOTHER COURAGE. [*Comes out with her hands full of ashes. To Kattrin*] Ashes. [*To Swiss Cheese*] What you got there?

SWISS CHEESE. The regimental funds.

MOTHER COURAGE. Throw it away! No more paymastering for you.

SWISS CHEESE. I'm responsible for it. [*He goes rear*]

MOTHER COURAGE. [*To the chaplain*] Take your clergyman's coat off, chaplain, or they'll recognize you, cloak or no cloak. [*She rubs Kattrin's face with ashes*] Hold still! There. With a little dirt you'll be safe. What a mess! The sentries were drunk. Hide your light under a bushel,[1] as the Good Book says. When a soldier, especially a Catholic, sees a clean face, she's a whore before she knows it. Nobody feeds them for weeks. When they finally loot some provisions, the next thing they want is women. That'll do it. Let me look at you. Not bad. Like you'd been wallowing in a pigsty.

9. Sinful woman. The ancient Asian city of Babylon is a Biblical locus for sin and decadence: "Babylon the great, mother of harlots and of earth's abominations" (Revelation 17:5). 1. Also parodies the Sermon on the Mount: "Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel [basket] but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house" (Matthew 5:15).

Stop shaking. You're safe now. [*To Swiss Cheese*] What did you do with the cashbox?

SWISS CHEESE. I thought I'd put it in the wagon.

MOTHER COURAGE. [*Horrified*] What! In my wagon? Of all the sinful stupidity! If my back is turned for half a second! They'll hang us all!

SWISS CHEESE. Then I'll put it somewhere else, or I'll run away with it.

MOTHER COURAGE. You'll stay right here. It's too late.

THE CHAPLAIN. [*Still changing, comes forward*] Heavens, the flag!

MOTHER COURAGE. [*Takes down the regimental flag*] Bozhe moi![2] I'm so used to it I don't see it. Twenty-five years I've had it.

[*The cannon fire grows louder*]

[*Morning, three days later. The cannon is gone. Mother Courage, Kattrin, the chaplain, and Swiss Cheese are sitting dejectedly over a meal*]

SWISS CHEESE. This is the third day I've been sitting here doing nothing; the sergeant has always been easy on me, but now he must be starting to wonder: where can Swiss Cheese be with the cashbox?

MOTHER COURAGE. Be glad they haven't tracked you down.

THE CHAPLAIN. What about me? I can't hold a service here either. The Good Book says: "Whosoever hath a full heart, his tongue runneth over."[3] Heaven help me if mine runneth over.

MOTHER COURAGE. That's the way it is. Look what I've got on my hands: one with a religion and one with a cashbox. I don't know which is worse.

THE CHAPLAIN. Tell yourself that we're in the hands of God.

MOTHER COURAGE. I don't think we're that bad off, but all the same I can't sleep at night. If it weren't for you, Swiss Cheese, it'd be easier. I think I've put myself in the clear. I told them I was against the antichrist;[4] he's a Swede with horns, I told them, and I'd noticed the left horn was kind of worn down. I interrupted the questioning to ask where I could buy holy candles cheap. I knew what to say because Swiss Cheese's father was a Catholic and he used to make jokes about it. They didn't really believe me, but their regiment had no provisioner, so they looked the other way. Maybe we stand to gain. We're prisoners, but so are lice on a dog.

THE CHAPLAIN. This milk is good. Though there's not much of it or of anything else. Maybe we'll have to cut down on our Swedish

2. My God! (Polish and Russian expression.) 3. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," Biblical proverb meaning that one's words reflect the good or evil in one's heart. (Jesus to the Pharisees, Matthew 12:34.) 4. Figure of evil, whose appearance on earth is supposed to prefigure the end of the world and the coming of the Last Judgment.

appetites. But such is the lot of the vanquished.

MOTHER COURAGE. Who's vanquished? Victory and defeat don't always mean the same thing to the big wheels up top and the small fry underneath. Not by a long shot. In some cases defeat is a blessing to the small fry. Honor's lost, but nothing else. One time in Livonia[5] our general got such a shellacking from the enemy that in the confusion I laid hands on a beautiful white horse from the baggage train. That horse pulled my wagon for seven months, until we had a victory and they checked up. On the whole, you can say that victory and defeat cost us plain people plenty. The best thing for us is when politics gets bogged down. [*To Swiss Cheese*] Eat!

SWISS CHEESE. I've lost my appetite. How's the sergeant going to pay the men?

MOTHER COURAGE. Troops never get paid when they're running away.

SWISS CHEESE. But they've got it coming to them. If they're not paid, they don't need to run. Not a step.

MOTHER COURAGE. Swiss Cheese, you're too conscientious, it almost frightens me. I brought you up to be honest, because you're not bright, but somewhere it's got to stop. And now me and the chaplain are going to buy a Catholic flag and some meat. Nobody can buy meat like the chaplain, he goes into a trance and heads straight for the best piece, I guess it makes his mouth water and that shows him the way. At least they let me carry on my business. Nobody cares about a shopkeeper's religion, all they want to know is the price. Protestant pants are as warm as any other kind.

THE CHAPLAIN. Like the friar[6] said when somebody told him the Lutherans were going to stand the whole country on its head. They'll always need beggars, he says. [*Mother Courage disappears into the wagon*] But she's worried about that cashbox. They've taken no notice of us so far, they think we're all part of the wagon, but how long can that go on?

SWISS CHEESE. I can take it away.

THE CHAPLAIN. That would be almost more dangerous. What if somebody sees you? They've got spies. Yesterday morning, just as I'm relieving myself, one of them jumps out of the ditch. I was so scared I almost let out a prayer. That would have given me away. I suppose they think they can tell a Protestant by the smell of his shit. He was a little runt with a patch over one eye.

MOTHER COURAGE. [*Climbing down from the wagon with a basket*] Look what I've found. You shameless slut! [*She holds up the red shoes triumphantly*] Yvette's red shoes! She's swiped them in cold blood. It's your fault. Who told her she was a delightful young lady? [*She puts them into the basket*] I'm giving them back. Steal-

5. Region of the east Baltic, now part of the U.S.S.R. 6. A mendicant or beggar monk.

ing Yvette's shoes! She ruins herself for money, that I can understand. But you'd like to do it free of charge, for pleasure. I've told you, you'll have to wait for peace. No soldiers! Just wait for peace with your worldly ways.

THE CHAPLAIN. She doesn't seem very worldly to me.

MOTHER COURAGE. Too worldly for me. In Dalarna she was like a stone, which is all they've got around there. The people used to say: We don't see the cripple. That's the way I like it. That way she's safe. [*To Swiss Cheese*] You leave that box where it is, hear? And keep an eye on your sister, she needs it. The two of you will be the death of me. I'd sooner take care of a bag of fleas. [*She goes off with the chaplain. Kattrin starts clearing away the dishes*]

SWISS CHEESE. Won't be many more days when I can sit in the sun in my shirtsleeves. [*Kattrin points to a tree*] Yes, the leaves are all yellow. [*Kattrin asks him, by means of gestures, whether he wants a drink*] Not now. I'm thinking. [*Pause*] She says she can't sleep. I'd better get the cashbox out of here, I've found a hiding place. All right, get me a drink. [*Kattrin goes behind the wagon*] I'll hide it in the rabbit hole down by the river until I can take it away. Maybe late tonight, I'll go get it and take it to the regiment. I wonder how far they've run in three days? Won't the sergeant be surprised! Well, Swiss Cheese, this is a pleasant disappointment, that's what he'll say. I trust you with the regimental cashbox and you bring it back.

[*As Kattrin comes out from behind the wagon with a glass of brandy, she comes face to face with two men. One is a sergeant. The other removes his hat and swings it through the air in a ceremonious greeting. He has a patch over one eye*]

THE MAN WITH THE PATCH. Good morning, my dear. Have you by any chance seen a man from the headquarters of the Second Finnish Regiment?

[*Scared out of her wits, Kattrin runs front, spilling the brandy. The two exchange looks and withdraw after seeing Swiss Cheese sitting there*]

SWISS CHEESE. [*Starting up from his thoughts*] You've spilled half of it. What's the fuss about? Poke yourself in the eye? I don't understand you. I'm getting out of here, I've made up my mind, it's best. [*He stands up. She does everything she can think of to call his attention to the danger. He only evades her*] I wish I could understand you. Poor thing, I know you're trying to tell me something, you just can't say it. Don't worry about spilling the brandy, I'll be drinking plenty more. What's one glass? [*He takes the cashbox out of the wagon and hides it under his jacket*] I'll be right back. Let me go, you're making me angry. I know you mean well. If only you could talk.

[*When she tries to hold him back, he kisses her and tears himself away. He goes out. She is desperate, she races back and forth, uttering short inarticulate sounds. The chaplain and Mother Courage come back. Kattrin gesticulates wildly at her mother*]

MOTHER COURAGE. What's the matter? You're all upset. Has somebody hurt you? Where's Swiss Cheese? Tell it to me in order, Kattrin. Your mother understands you. What, the no-good's taken the cashbox? I'll hit him over the head with it, the sneak. Take your time, don't talk nonsense, use your hands, I don't like it when you howl like a dog, what will the chaplain think? It gives him the creeps. A one-eyed man?

THE CHAPLAIN. The one-eyed man is a spy. Did they arrest Swiss Cheese? [*Kattrin shakes her head and shrugs her shoulders*] We're done for.

MOTHER COURAGE. [*Takes a Catholic flag out of her basket. The chaplain fastens it to the flagpole*] Hoist the new flag!

THE CHAPLAIN. [*Bitterly*] All good Catholics here.

[*Voices are heard from the rear. The two men bring in Swiss Cheese*]

SWISS CHEESE. Let me go, I haven't done anything. Stop twisting my shoulder, I'm innocent.

THE SERGEANT. He belongs here. You know each other.

MOTHER COURAGE. What makes you think that?

SWISS CHEESE. I don't know them. I don't even know who they are. I had a meal here, it cost me ten hellers. Maybe you saw me sitting here, it was too salty.

THE SERGEANT. Who are you anyway?

MOTHER COURAGE. We're respectable people. And it's true. He had a meal here. He said it was too salty.

THE SERGEANT. Are you trying to tell me you don't know each other?

MOTHER COURAGE. Why should I know him? I don't know everybody. I don't ask people what their name is or if they're heathens; if they pay, they're not heathens. Are you a heathen?

SWISS CHEESE. Of course not.

THE CHAPLAIN. He ate his meal and he behaved himself. He didn't open his mouth except when he was eating. Then you have to.

THE SERGEANT. And who are you?

MOTHER COURAGE. He's only my bartender. You gentlemen must be thirsty, I'll get you a drink of brandy, you must be hot and tired.

THE SERGEANT. We don't drink on duty. [*To Swiss Cheese*] You were carrying something. You must have hidden it by the river. You had something under your jacket when you left here.

MOTHER COURAGE. Was it really him?

SWISS CHEESE. I think you must have seen somebody else. I saw a man running with something under his jacket. You've got the wrong man.

MOTHER COURAGE. That's what I think too, it's a misunderstanding. These things happen. I'm a good judge of people. I'm Mother Courage, you've heard of me, everybody knows me. Take it from me, this man has an honest face.

THE SERGEANT. We're looking for the cashbox of the Second Finnish Regiment. We know what the man in charge of it looks like. We've been after him for two days. You're him.

SWISS CHEESE. I'm not.

THE SERGEANT. Hand it over. If you don't you're a goner, you know that. Where is it?

MOTHER COURAGE. [*With urgency*] He'd hand it over, wouldn't he, knowing he was a goner if he didn't? I've got it, he'd say, take it, you're stronger. He's not that stupid. Speak up, you stupid idiot, the sergeant's giving you a chance.

SWISS CHEESE. But I haven't got it.

THE SERGEANT. In that case come along. We'll get it out of you.

[*They lead him away*]

MOTHER COURAGE. [*Shouts after them*] He'd tell you. He's not that stupid. And don't twist his shoulder off! [*Runs after them*]

[*The same evening. The chaplain and mute Kattrin are washing dishes and scouring knives*]

THE CHAPLAIN. That boy's in trouble. There are cases like that in the Bible. Take the Passion of our Lord and Savior. There's an old song about it. [*He sings the Song of the Hours*]

In the first hour Jesus mild
Who had prayed since even
Was betrayed and led before
Pontius[7] the heathen.

Pilate found him innocent
Free from fault and error.
Therefore, having washed his hands
Sent him to King Herod.

In the third hour he was scourged
Stripped and clad in scarlet
And a plaited crown of thorns
Set upon his forehead.

On the Son of Man they spat
Mocked him and made merry.
Then the cross of death was brought
Given him to carry.

7. Roman judge before whom Jesus was arraigned by the Scribes (Matthew 27:1–24).

At the sixth hour with two thieves
To the cross they nailed him
And the people and the thieves
Mocked him and reviled him.

This is Jesus King of Jews
Cried they in derision
Till the sun withdrew its light
From that awful vision.

At the ninth hour Jesus wailed
Why hast thou me forsaken?
Soldiers brought him vinegar
Which he left untaken.

Then he yielded up the ghost
And the earth was shaken.
Rended was the temple's veil[8]
And the saints were wakened.

Soldiers broke the two thieves' legs
As the night descended
Thrust a spear in Jesus' side
When his life had ended.

Still they mocked, as from his wound
Flowed the blood and water
Thus blasphemed the Son of Man
With their cruel laughter.

MOTHER COURAGE. [*Enters in a state of agitation*] His life's at stake. But they say the sergeant will listen to reason. Only it mustn't come out that he's our Swiss Cheese, or they'll say we've been giving him aid and comfort. All they want is money. But where will we get the money? Hasn't Yvette been here? I met her just now, she's latched onto a colonel, he's thinking of buying her a provisioner's business.

THE CHAPLAIN. Are you really thinking of selling?

MOTHER COURAGE. How else can I get the money for the sergeant?

THE CHAPLAIN. But what will you live on?

MOTHER COURAGE. That's the hitch.

[*Yvette Pottier comes in with a doddering colonel*]

8. Matthew reports that at the moment of Jesus's death, the veil or curtain in the temple which set off the sanctuary was torn from top to bottom; the earth shook, and dead men rose from their graves (Matthew 27:51–3).

YVETTE. [*Embracing Mother Courage*] My dear Mother Courage. Here we are again! [*Whispering*] He's willing. [*Aloud*] This is my dear friend who advises me on business matters. I just chanced to hear that you wish to sell your wagon, due to circumstances. I might be interested.

MOTHER COURAGE. Mortgage it, not sell it, let's not be hasty. It's not so easy to buy a wagon like this in wartime.

YVETTE. [*Disappointed*] Only mortgage it? I thought you wanted to sell it. In that case, I don't know if I'm interested. [*To the colonel*] What do you think?

THE COLONEL. Just as you say, my dear.

MOTHER COURAGE. It's only being mortgaged.

YVETTE. I thought you needed money.

MOTHER COURAGE. [*Firmly*] I need the money, but I'd rather run myself ragged looking for an offer than sell now. The wagon is our livelihood. It's an opportunity for you, Yvette, God knows when you'll find another like it and have such a good friend to advise you. See what I mean?

YVETTE. My friend thinks I should snap it up, but I don't know. If it's only being mortgaged . . . Don't you agree that we ought to buy?

THE COLONEL. Yes, my dear.

MOTHER COURAGE. Then you'll have to look for something that's for sale, maybe you'll find something if you take your time and your friend goes around with you. Maybe in a week or two you'll find the right thing.

YVETTE. Then we'll go looking, I love to go looking for things, and I love to go around with you, Poldi, it's a real pleasure. Even if it takes two weeks. When would you pay the money back if you get it?

MOTHER COURAGE. I can pay it back in two weeks, maybe one.

YVETTE. I can't make up my mind, Poldi, chéri,[9] tell me what to do. [*She takes the colonel aside*] I know she's got to sell, that's definite. The lieutenant, you know who I mean, the blond one, he'd be glad to lend me the money. He's mad about me, he says I remind him of somebody. What do you think?

THE COLONEL. Keep away from that lieutenant. He's no good. He'll take advantage. Haven't I told you I'd buy you something, pussykins?

YVETTE. I can't accept it from you. But then if you think the lieutenant might take advantage . . . Poldi, I'll accept it from you.

THE COLONEL. I hope so.

YVETTE. Your advice is to take it?

9. Darling. *Poldi:* Pet name for Leopold.

THE COLONEL. That's my advice.

YVETTE. [*Goes back to Mother Courage*] My friend advises me to do it. Write me out a receipt, say the wagon belongs to me complete with stock and furnishings when the two weeks are up. We'll take the inventory right now, then I'll bring you the two hundred guilders. [*To the colonel*] You go back to camp, I'll join you in a little while, I've got to take inventory, I don't want anything missing from my wagon. [*She kisses him. He leaves. She climbs up in the wagon*] I don't see very many boots.

MOTHER COURAGE. Yvette. This is no time to inspect your wagon if it is yours. You promised to see the sergeant about my Swiss Cheese, you've got to hurry. They say he's to be court-martialed in an hour.

YVETTE. Just let me count the shirts.

MOTHER COURAGE. [*Pulls her down by the skirt*] You hyena, it's Swiss Cheese, his life's at stake. And don't tell anybody where the offer comes from, in heaven's name say it's your gentleman friend, or we'll all get it, they'll say we helped him.

YVETTE. I've arranged to meet One-Eye in the woods, he must be there already.

THE CHAPLAIN. And there's no need to start out with the whole two hundred, offer a hundred and fifty, that's plenty.

MOTHER COURAGE. Is it your money? You just keep out of this. Don't worry, you'll get your bread and soup. Go on now and don't haggle. It's his life. [*She gives Yvette a push to start her on her way*]

THE CHAPLAIN. I didn't mean to butt in, but what are we going to live on? You've got an unemployable daughter on your hands.

MOTHER COURAGE. You muddlehead, I'm counting on the regimental cashbox. They'll allow for his expenses, won't they?

THE CHAPLAIN. But will she handle it right?

MOTHER COURAGE. It's in her own interest. If I spend her two hundred, she gets the wagon. She's mighty keen on it, how long can she expect to hold on to her colonel? Kattrin, you scour the knives, use pumice. And you, don't stand around like Jesus on the Mount of Olives,[1] bestir yourself, wash those glasses, we're expecting at least fifty for dinner, and then it'll be the same old story: "Oh my feet, I'm not used to running around, I don't run around in the pulpit." I think they'll set him free. Thank God they're open to bribery. They're not wolves, they're human and out for money. Bribe-taking in humans is the same as mercy in God. It's our only hope. As long as people take bribes, you'll have mild sentences and even the innocent will get off once in a while.

YVETTE. [*Comes in panting*] They want two hundred. And we've got

1. The ridge of hills outside Jerusalem where Jesus waited after the Last Supper to be captured and taken before the high priest.

to be quick. Or it'll be out of their hands. I'd better take One-Eye to see my colonel right away. He confessed that he'd had the cashbox, they put the thumb screws on him. But he threw it in the river when he saw they were after him. The box is gone. Should I run and get the money from my colonel?

MOTHER COURAGE. The box is gone? How will I get my two hundred back?

YVETTE. Ah, so you thought you could take it out of the cashbox? You thought you'd put one over on me. Forget it. If you want to save Swiss Cheese, you'll just have to pay, or maybe you'd like me to drop the whole thing and let you keep your wagon?

MOTHER COURAGE. This is something I hadn't reckoned with. But don't rush me, you'll get the wagon, I know it's down the drain, I've had it for seventeen years. Just let me think a second, it's all so sudden. What'll I do, I can't give them two hundred, I guess you should have bargained. If I haven't got a few guilders to fall back on, I'll be at the mercy of the first Tom, Dick, or Harry. Say I'll give them a hundred and twenty, I'll lose my wagon anyway.

YVETTE. They won't go along. One-Eye's in a hurry, he's so keyed-up he keeps looking behind him. Hadn't I better give them the whole two hundred?

MOTHER COURAGE. [*In despair*] I can't do it. Thirty years I've worked. She's twenty-five and no husband. I've got her to keep too. Don't needle me, I know what I'm doing. Say a hundred and twenty or nothing doing.

YVETTE. It's up to you. [*Goes out quickly*]

[*Mother Courage looks neither at the chaplain nor at her daughter. She sits down to help Kattrin scour the knives*]

MOTHER COURAGE. Don't break the glasses. They're not ours any more. Watch what you're doing, you'll cut yourself. Swiss Cheese will be back, I'll pay two hundred if I have to. You'll have your brother. With eighty guilders we can buy a peddler's pack and start all over. Worse things have happened.

THE CHAPLAIN. The Lord will provide.

MOTHER COURAGE. Rub them dry. [*They scour the knives in silence. Suddenly Kattrin runs sobbing behind the wagon*]

YVETTE. [*Comes running*] They won't go along. I warned you. One-Eye wanted to run out on me, he said it was no use. He said we'd hear the drums any minute, meaning he'd been sentenced. I offered a hundred and fifty. He didn't even bother to shrug his shoulders. When I begged and pleaded, he promised to wait till I'd spoken to you again.

MOTHER COURAGE. Say I'll give him the two hundred. Run. [*Yvette runs off. They sit in silence. The chaplain has stopped washing the glasses*]

Maybe I bargained too long. [*Drums are heard in the distance. The chaplain stands up and goes to the rear. Mother Courage remains seated. It grows dark. The drums stop. It grows light again. Mother Courage has not moved*]

YVETTE. [*Enters, very pale*] Now you've done it with your haggling and wanting to keep your wagon. Eleven bullets he got, that's all. I don't know why I bother with you any more, you don't deserve it. But I've picked up a little information. They don't believe the cashbox is really in the river. They suspect it's here and they think you were connected with him. They're going to bring him here, they think maybe you'll give yourself away when you see him. I'm warning you: You don't know him, or you're all dead ducks. I may as well tell you, they're right behind me. Should I keep Kattrin out of the way? [*Mother Courage shakes her head*] Does she know? Maybe she didn't hear the drums or maybe she didn't understand.

MOTHER COURAGE. She knows. Get her.

[*Yvette brings Kattrin, who goes to her mother and stands beside her. Mother Courage takes her by the hand. Two soldiers come in with a stretcher on which something is lying under a sheet. The sergeant walks beside them. They set the stretcher down*]

THE SERGEANT. We've got a man here and we don't know his name. We need it for the records. He had a meal with you. Take a look, see if you know him. [*He removes the sheet*] Do you know him? [*Mother Courage shakes her head*] What? You'd never seen him before he came here for a meal? [*Mother Courage shakes her head*] Pick him up. Throw him on the dump. Nobody knows him. [*They carry him away*]

4

Mother Courage sings the Song of the Great Capitulation.

Outside an officer's tent.

Mother Courage is waiting. A clerk looks out of the tent.

THE CLERK. I know you. You had a Protestant paymaster at your place, he was hiding. I wouldn't put in any complaints if I were you.

MOTHER COURAGE. I'm putting in a complaint. I'm innocent. If I take this lying down, it'll look as if I had a guilty conscience. First they ripped up my whole wagon with their sabers, then they wanted me to pay a fine of five talers[2] for no reason at all.

2. German silver coins.

THE CLERK. I'm advising you for your own good: Keep your trap shut. We haven't got many provisioners and we'll let you keep on with your business, especially if you've got a guilty conscience and pay a fine now and then.

MOTHER COURAGE. I'm putting in a complaint.

THE CLERK. Have it your way. But you'll have to wait till the captain can see you. [*Disappears into the tent*]

A YOUNG SOLDIER. [*Enters in a rage*] Bouque la Madonne![3] Where's that stinking captain? He embezzled my reward and now he's drinking it up with his whores. I'm going to get him!

AN OLDER SOLDIER. [*Comes running after him*] Shut up. They'll put you in the stocks!

THE YOUNG SOLDIER. Come on out, you crook! I'll make chops out of you. Embezzling my reward! Who jumps in the river? Not another man in the whole squad, only me. And I can't even buy myself a beer. I won't stand for it. Come on out and let me cut you to pieces!

THE OLDER SOLDIER. Holy Mary! He'll ruin himself.

MOTHER COURAGE. They didn't give him a reward?

THE YOUNG SOLDIER. Let me go. I'll run you through too, the more the merrier.

THE OLDER SOLDIER. He saved the colonel's horse and they didn't give him a reward. He's young, he hasn't been around long.

MOTHER COURAGE. Let him go, he's not a dog, you don't have to tie him up. Wanting a reward is perfectly reasonable. Why else would he distinguish himself?

THE YOUNG SOLDIER. And him drinking in there! You're all a lot of yellowbellies. I distinguished myself and I want my reward.

MOTHER COURAGE. Young man, don't shout at me. I've got my own worries and besides, go easy on your voice, you may need it. You'll be hoarse when the captain comes out, you won't be able to say boo and he won't be able to put you in the stocks till you're blue in the face. People that yell like that don't last long, maybe half an hour, then they're so exhausted you have to sing them to sleep.

THE YOUNG SOLDIER. I'm not exhausted and who wants to sleep? I'm hungry. They make our bread out of acorns and hemp seed, and they skimp on that. He's whoring away my reward and I'm hungry. I'll murder him.

MOTHER COURAGE. I see. You're hungry. Last year your general made you cut across the fields to trample down the grain. I could have sold a pair of boots for ten guilders if anybody'd had ten guilders and if I'd had any boots. He thought he'd be someplace else this year, but now he's still here and everybody's starving. I can see

3. Screw the Virgin! (French)

that you might be good and mad.

THE YOUNG SOLDIER. He can't do this to me, save your breath, I won't put up with injustice.

MOTHER COURAGE. You're right, but for how long? How long won't you put up with injustice? An hour? Two hours? You see, you never thought of that, though it's very important, because it's miserable in the stocks when it suddenly dawns on you that you *can* put up with injustice.

THE YOUNG SOLDIER. I don't know why I listen to you. Bouque la Madonne! Where's the captain?

MOTHER COURAGE. You listen to me because I'm not telling you anything new. You know your temper has gone up in smoke, it was a short temper and you need a long one, but that's a hard thing to come by.

THE YOUNG SOLDIER. Are you trying to say I've no right to claim my reward?

MOTHER COURAGE. Not at all. I'm only saying your temper isn't long enough, it won't get you anywhere. Too bad. If you had a long temper, I'd even egg you on. Chop the bastard up, that's what I'd say, but suppose you don't chop him up, because your tail's drooping and you know it. I'm left standing there like a fool and the captain takes it out on me.

THE OLDER SOLDIER. You're right. He's only blowing off steam.

THE YOUNG SOLDIER. We'll see about that. I'll cut him to pieces. [*He draws his sword*] When he comes, I'll cut him to pieces.

THE CLERK. [*Looks out*] The captain will be here in a moment. Sit down.

[*The young soldier sits down*]

MOTHER COURAGE. There he sits. What did I tell you? Sitting, aren't you? Oh, they know us like a book, they know how to handle us. Sit down! And down we sit. You can't start a riot sitting down. Better not stand up again, you won't be able to stand the way you were standing before. Don't be embarrassed on my account, I'm no better, not a bit of it. We were full of piss and vinegar, but they've bought it off. Look at me. No back talk, it's bad for business. Let me tell you about the great capitulation. [*She sings the Song of the Great Capitulation*][4]

When I was young, no more than a spring chicken
I too thought that I was really quite the cheese
(No common peddler's daughter, not I with my looks and my talent and striving for higher things!)
One little hair in the soup would make me sicken

4. Mother Courage punctuates the story of her own gradual disillusionment with proverbs and common sayings that represent a folk wisdom of successful adjustment.

And at me no man would dare to sneeze.
(It's all or nothing, no second best for me. I've got what it takes,
the rules are for somebody else!)
But a chickadee
Sang wait and see!
And you go marching with the show
In step, however fast or slow
And rattle off your little song:
It won't be long.
And then the whole thing slides.
You think God provides—
But you've got it wrong.

And before one single year had wasted
I had learned to swallow down the bitter brew
(Two kids on my hands and the price of bread and who do they
take me for anyway!)
Man, the double-edged shellacking that I tasted
On my ass and knees I was when they were through.
(You've got to get along with people, one good turn deserves another,
no use trying to ram your head through the wall!)
And the chickadee
Sang wait and see!
And she goes marching with the show
In step, however fast or slow
And rattles off her little song:
It won't be long.
And then the whole thing slides
You think God provides—
But you've got it wrong.

I've seen many fired by high ambition
No star's big or high enough to reach out for.
(It's ability that counts, where there's a will there's a way, one way
or another, we'll swing it!)
Then while moving mountains they get a suspicion
That to wear a straw hat is too big a chore.
(No use being too big for your britches!)
And the chickadee
Sings wait and see!
And they go marching with the show
In step, however fast or slow
And rattle off their little song:
It won't be long.

And then the whole thing slides!
You think God provides—
But you've got it wrong!

MOTHER COURAGE. [*To the young soldier*] So here's what I think: Stay here with your sword if your anger's big enough, I know you have good reason, but if it's a short quick anger, better make tracks!

THE YOUNG SOLDIER. Kiss my ass! [*He staggers off, the older soldier after him*]

THE CLERK. [*Sticking his head out*] The captain is here. You can put in your complaint now.

MOTHER COURAGE. I've changed my mind. No complaint. [*She goes out*]

5

Two years have passed. The war has spread far and wide. With scarcely a pause Mother Courage's little wagon rolls through Poland, Moravia, Bavaria, Italy, and back again to Bavaria in 1631. Tilly's victory at Magdeburg[5] costs Mother Courage four officers' shirts.

Mother Courage's wagon has stopped in a devastated village.

Thin military music is heard from the distance. Two soldiers at the bar are being waited on by Kattrin and Mother Courage. One of them is wearing a lady's fur coat over his shoulders.

MOTHER COURAGE. What's that? You can't pay? No money, no schnapps. Plenty of victory marches for the Lord but no pay for the men.

THE SOLDIER. I want my schnapps. I came too late for the looting. The general skunked us: permission to loot the city for exactly one hour. Says he's not a monster; the mayor must have paid him.

THE CHAPLAIN. [*Staggers in*] There's still some wounded in the house. The peasant and his family. Help me, somebody, I need linen.

[*The second soldier goes out with him. Kattrin gets very excited and tries to persuade her mother to hand out linen*]

MOTHER COURAGE. I haven't got any. The regiment's bought up all my bandages. You think I'm going to rip up my officers' shirts for the likes of them?

THE CHAPLAIN. [*Calling back*] I need linen, I tell you.

MOTHER COURAGE. [*Sitting down on the wagon steps to keep Kattrin out*] Nothing doing. They don't pay, they got nothing to pay with.

THE CHAPLAIN. [*Bending over a woman whom he has carried out*] Why did you stay here in all that gunfire?

5. City 80 miles west of Berlin, besieged by the Imperial Army in 1630.

THE PEASANT WOMAN. [*Feebly*] Farm.

MOTHER COURAGE. You won't catch them leaving their property. And I'm expected to foot the bill. I won't do it.

THE FIRST SOLDIER. They're Protestants. Why do they have to be Protestants?

MOTHER COURAGE. Religion is the least of their worries. They've lost their farm.

THE SECOND SOLDIER. They're no Protestants. They're Catholics like us.

THE FIRST SOLDIER. How do we know who we're shooting at?

A PEASANT. [*Whom the Chaplain brings in*] They got my arm.

THE CHAPLAIN. Where's the linen?

[*All look at Mother Courage, who does not move*]

MOTHER COURAGE. I can't give you a thing. What with all my taxes, duties, fees and bribes! [*Making guttural sounds, Kattrin picks up a board and threatens her mother with it*] Are you crazy? Put that board down, you slut, or I'll smack you. I'm not giving anything, you can't make me. I've got to think of myself. [*The chaplain picks her up from the step and puts her down on the ground. Then he fishes out some shirts and tears them into strips*]

My shirts! Half a guilder apiece! I'm ruined!

[*The anguished cry of a baby is heard from the house*]

THE PEASANT. The baby's still in there!

[*Kattrin runs in*]

THE CHAPLAIN. [*To the woman*] Don't move. They're bringing him out.

MOTHER COURAGE. Get her out of there. The roof'll cave in.

THE CHAPLAIN. I'm not going in there again.

MOTHER COURAGE. [*Torn*] Don't run hog-wild with my expensive linen.

[*Kattrin emerges from the ruins carrying an infant*]

MOTHER COURAGE. Oh, so you've found another baby to carry around with you? Give that baby back to its mother this minute, or it'll take me all day to get it away from you. Do you hear me? [*To the second soldier*] Don't stand there gaping, go back and tell them to stop that music, I can see right here that they've won a victory. Your victory's costing me a pretty penny.

[*Kattrin rocks the baby in her arms, humming a lullaby*]

MOTHER COURAGE. There she sits, happy in all this misery; give it back this minute, the mother's coming to. [*She pounces on the first soldier who has been helping himself to the drinks and is now making off with the bottle*] Pshagreff![6] Beast! Haven't you had enough victories for today? Pay up.

6. Son of a bitch! (Polish)

FIRST SOLDIER. I'm broke.

MOTHER COURAGE. [*Tears the fur coat off him*] Then leave the coat here, it's stolen anyway.

THE CHAPLAIN. There's still somebody in there.

6

Outside Ingolstadt[7] in Bavaria Mother Courage attends the funeral of Tilly, the imperial field marshal. Conversations about heroes and the longevity of the war. The chaplain deplores the waste of his talents. Mute Kattrin gets the red shoes. 1632.

Inside Mother Courage's tent.

A bar open to the rear. Rain. In the distance drum rolls and funeral music. The chaplain and the regimental clerk are playing a board game. Mother Courage and her daughter are taking inventory.

THE CHAPLAIN. The procession's starting.

MOTHER COURAGE. It's a shame about the general—socks: twenty-two pairs—I hear he was killed by accident. On account of the fog in the fields. He's up front encouraging the troops. "Fight to the death, boys," he sings out. Then he rides back, but he gets lost in the fog and rides back forward. Before you know it he's in the middle of the battle and stops a bullet—lanterns: we're down to four. [*A whistle from the rear. She goes to the bar*] You men ought to be ashamed, running out on your late general's funeral! [*She pours drinks*]

THE CLERK. They shouldn't have been paid before the funeral. Now they're getting drunk instead.

THE CHAPLAIN. [*To the clerk*] Shouldn't you be at the funeral?

THE CLERK. In this rain?

MOTHER COURAGE. With you it's different, the rain might spoil your uniform. It seems they wanted to ring the bells, naturally, but it turned out the churches had all been shot to pieces by his orders, so the poor general won't hear any bells when they lower him into his grave. They're going to fire a three-gun salute instead, so it won't be too dull—seventeen sword belts.

CRIES. [*From the bar*] Hey! Brandy!

MOTHER COURAGE. Money first! No, you can't come into my tent with your muddy boots! You can drink outside, rain or no rain. [*To the clerk*] I'm only letting officers in. It seems the general had been having his troubles. Mutiny in the Second Regiment because

7. City 40 miles north of Munich.

he hadn't paid them. It's a war of religion, he says, should they profit by their faith?

[Funeral march. All look to the rear]

THE CHAPLAIN. Now they're marching past the body.

MOTHER COURAGE. I feel sorry when a general or an emperor passes away like this, maybe he thought he'd do something big, that posterity would still be talking about and maybe put up a statue in his honor, conquer the world, for instance, that's a nice ambition for a general, he doesn't know any better. So he knocks himself out, and then the common people come and spoil it all, because what do they care about greatness, all they care about is a mug of beer and maybe a little company. The most beautiful plans have been wrecked by the smallness of the people that are supposed to carry them out. Even an emperor can't do anything by himself, he needs the support of his soldiers and his people. Am I right?

THE CHAPLAIN. [*Laughing*] Courage, you're right, except about the soldiers. They do their best. With those fellows out there, for instance, drinking their brandy in the rain, I'll undertake to carry on one war after another for a hundred years, two at once if I have to, and I'm not a general by trade.

MOTHER COURAGE. Then you don't think the war might stop?

THE CHAPLAIN. Because the general's dead? Don't be childish. They grow by the dozen, there'll always be plenty of heroes.

MOTHER COURAGE. Look here, I'm not asking you for the hell of it. I've been wondering whether to lay in supplies while they're cheap, but if the war stops, I can throw them out the window.

THE CHAPLAIN. I understand. You want a serious answer. There have always been people who say: "The war will be over some day." I say there's no guarantee the war will ever be over. Naturally a brief intermission is conceivable. Maybe the war needs a breather, a war can even break its neck, so to speak. There's always a chance of that, nothing is perfect here below. Maybe there never will be a perfect war, one that lives up to all our expectations. Suddenly, for some unforeseen reason, a war can bog down, you can't think of everything. Some little oversight and your war's in trouble. And then you've got to pull it out of the mud. But the kings and emperors, not to mention the pope, will always come to its help in adversity. On the whole, I'd say this war has very little to worry about, it'll live to a ripe old age.

A SOLDIER. [*Sings at the bar*]

A drink, and don't be slow!
A soldier's got to go
And fight for his religion.

Make it double, this is a holiday.

MOTHER COURAGE. If I could only be sure . . .
THE CHAPLAIN. Figure it out for yourself. What's to stop the war?
THE SOLDIER. [*Sings*]

Your breasts, girl, don't be slow!
A soldier's got to go
And ride away to Pilsen.[8]

THE CLERK. [*Suddenly*] But why can't we have peace? I'm from Bohemia, I'd like to go home when the time comes.
THE CHAPLAIN. Oh, you'd like to go home? Ah, peace! What becomes of the hole when the cheese has been eaten?
THE SOLDIER. [*Sings*]

Play cards, friends, don't be slow!
A soldier's got to go
No matter if it's Sunday.

A prayer, priest, don't be slow!
A soldier's got to go
And die for king and country.

THE CLERK. In the long run nobody can live without peace.
THE CHAPLAIN. The way I see it, war gives you plenty of peace. It has its peaceful moments. War meets every need, including the peaceful ones, everything's taken care of, or your war couldn't hold its own. In a war you can shit the same as in the dead of peace, you can stop for a beer between battles, and even on the march you can always lie down on your elbows and take a little nap by the roadside. You can't play cards when you're fighting; but then you can't when you're plowing in the dead of peace either, but after a victory the sky's the limit. Maybe you've had a leg shot off, at first you raise a howl; you make a big thing of it. But then you calm down or they give you schnapps, and in the end you're hopping around again and the war's no worse off than before. And what's to prevent you from multiplying in the thick of the slaughter, behind a barn or someplace, in the long run how can they stop you, and then the war has your progeny to help it along. Take it from me, the war will always find an answer. Why would it have to stop?

[*Kattrin has stopped working and is staring at the chaplain*]

MOTHER COURAGE. Then I'll buy the merchandise. You've con-

8. City in Bohemia, near the German border.

vinced me. [*Kattrin suddenly throws down a basket full of bottles and runs out*] Kattrin! [*Laughs*] My goodness, the poor thing's been hoping for peace. I promised her she'd get a husband when peace comes. [*She runs after her*]

THE CLERK. [*Getting up*] I win, you've been too busy talking. Pay up.

MOTHER COURAGE. [*Comes back with Kattrin*] Be reasonable, the war'll go on a little longer and we'll make a little more money, then peace will be even better. Run along to town now, it won't take you ten minutes, and get the stuff from the Golden Lion, only the expensive things, we'll pick up the rest in the wagon later, it's all arranged, the regimental clerk here will go with you. They've almost all gone to the general's funeral, nothing can happen to you. Look sharp, don't let them take anything away from you, think of your dowry.

[*Kattrin puts a kerchief over her head and goes with the clerk*]

THE CHAPLAIN. Is it all right letting her go with the clerk?

MOTHER COURAGE. Who'd want to ruin her? She's not pretty enough.

THE CHAPLAIN. I've come to admire the way you handle your business and pull through every time. I can see why they call you Mother Courage.

MOTHER COURAGE. Poor people need courage. Why? Because they're sunk. In their situation it takes gumption just to get up in the morning. Or to plow a field in the middle of a war. They even show courage by bringing children into the world, because look at the prospects. The way they butcher and execute each other, think of the courage they need to look each other in the face. And putting up with an emperor and a pope takes a whale of a lot of courage, because those two are the death of the poor. [*She sits down, takes a small pipe from her pocket and smokes*] You could be making some kindling.

THE CHAPLAIN. [*Reluctantly takes his jacket off and prepares to chop*] Chopping wood isn't really my trade, you know, I'm a shepherd of souls.

MOTHER COURAGE. Sure. But I have no soul and I need firewood.

THE CHAPLAIN. What's that pipe?

MOTHER COURAGE. Just a pipe.

THE CHAPLAIN. No, it's not "just a pipe," it's a very particular pipe.

MOTHER COURAGE. Really?

THE CHAPLAIN. It's the cook's pipe from the Oxenstjerna regiment.

MOTHER COURAGE. If you know it all, why the mealy-mouthed questions?

THE CHAPLAIN. I didn't know if *you* knew. You could have been rummaging through your belongings and laid hands on some pipe and picked it up without thinking.

MOTHER COURAGE. Yes. Maybe that's how it was.

THE CHAPLAIN. Except it wasn't. You knew who that pipe belongs to.

MOTHER COURAGE. What of it?

THE CHAPLAIN. Courage, I'm warning you. It's my duty. I doubt if you ever lay eyes on the man again, but that's no calamity, in fact you're lucky. If you ask me, he wasn't steady. Not at all.

MOTHER COURAGE. What makes you say that? He was a nice man.

THE CHAPLAIN. Oh, you think he was nice? I differ. Far be it from me to wish him any harm, but I can't say he was nice. I'd say he was a scheming Don Juan.[9] If you don't believe me, take a look at his pipe. You'll have to admit that it shows up his character.

MOTHER COURAGE. I don't see anything. It's beat up.

THE CHAPLAIN. It's half bitten through. A violent man. That is the pipe of a ruthless, violent man, you must see that if you've still got an ounce of good sense.

MOTHER COURAGE. Don't wreck my chopping block.

THE CHAPLAIN. I've told you I wasn't trained to chop wood. I studied theology. My gifts and abilities are being wasted on muscular effort. The talents that God gave me are lying fallow. That's a sin. You've never heard me preach. With one sermon I can whip a regiment into such a state that they take the enemy for a flock of sheep. Then men care no more about their lives than they would about a smelly old sock that they're ready to throw away in hopes of final victory. God has made me eloquent. You'll swoon when you hear me preach.

MOTHER COURAGE. I don't want to swoon. What good would that do me?

THE CHAPLAIN. Courage, I've often wondered if maybe you didn't conceal a warm heart under that hard-bitten talk of yours. You too are human, you need warmth.

MOTHER COURAGE. The best way to keep this tent warm is with plenty of firewood.

THE CHAPLAIN. Don't try to put me off. Seriously, Courage, I sometimes wonder if we couldn't make our relationship a little closer. I mean, seeing that the whirlwind of war has whirled us so strangely together.

MOTHER COURAGE. Seems to me it's close enough. I cook your meals and you do chores, such as chopping wood, for instance.

THE CHAPLAIN. [*Goes toward her*] You know what I mean by "closer"; it has nothing to do with meals and chopping wood and such mundane needs. Don't harden your heart, let it speak.

MOTHER COURAGE. Don't come at me with that ax. That's too close a relationship.

9. Philanderer.

THE CHAPLAIN. Don't turn it to ridicule. I'm serious. I've given it careful thought.

MOTHER COURAGE. Chaplain, don't be silly. I like you, I don't want to have to scold you. My aim in life is to get through, me and my children and my wagon. I don't think of it as mine and besides I'm not in the mood for private affairs. Right now I'm taking a big risk, buying up merchandise with the general dead and everybody talking peace. What'll you do if I'm ruined? See? You don't know. Chop that wood, then we'll be warm in the evening, which is a good thing in times like these. Now what? [*She stands up*]

[*Enter Kattrin out of breath, with a wound across her forehead and over one eye. She is carrying all sort of things, packages, leather goods, a drum, etc.*]

MOTHER COURAGE. What's this? Assaulted? On the way back? She was assaulted on the way back. Must have been that soldier that got drunk here! I shouldn't have let you go! Throw the stuff down! It's not bad, only a flesh wound. I'll bandage it, it'll heal in a week. They're worse than wild beasts. [*She bandages the wound*]

THE CHAPLAIN. I can't find fault with them. At home they never raped anybody. I blame the people that start wars, they're the ones that dredge up man's lowest instincts.

MOTHER COURAGE. Didn't the clerk bring you back? That's because you're respectable, they don't give a damn. It's not a deep wound, it won't leave a mark. There, all bandaged. Don't fret, I've got something for you. I've been keeping it for you on the sly, it'll be a surprise. [*She fishes Yvette's red shoes out of a sack*] See? You've always wanted them. Now you've got them. Put them on quick before I regret it. It won't leave a mark, though I wouldn't mind if it did. The girls that attract them get the worst of it. They drag them around till there's nothing left of them. If you don't appeal to them, they won't harm you. I've seen girls with pretty faces, a few years later they'd have given a wolf the creeps. They can't step behind a bush without fearing the worst. It's like trees. The straight tall ones get chopped down for ridgepoles, the crooked ones enjoy life. In other words, it's a lucky break. The shoes are still in good condition, I've kept them nicely polished.

[*Kattrin leaves the shoes where they are and crawls into the wagon*]

THE CHAPLAIN. I hope she won't be disfigured.

MOTHER COURAGE. There'll be a scar. She can stop waiting for peace.

THE CHAPLAIN. She didn't let them take anything.

MOTHER COURAGE. Maybe I shouldn't have drummed it into her. If I only knew what went on in her head. One night she stayed out, the only time in all these years. Afterwards she traipsed around as usual, except she worked harder. I never could find out what hap-

pened. I racked my brains for quite some time. [*She picks up the articles brought by Kattrin and sorts them angrily*] That's war for you! A fine way to make a living!

[*Cannon salutes are heard*]

THE CHAPLAIN. Now they're burying the general. This is a historic moment.

MOTHER COURAGE. To me it's a historic moment when they hit my daughter over the eye. She's a wreck, she'll never get a husband now, and she's so crazy about children. It's the war that made her dumb too, a soldier stuffed something in her mouth when she was little. I'll never see Swiss Cheese again and where Eilif is, God knows. God damn the war.

7

Mother Courage at the height of her business career.

Highway.

The chaplain, Mother Courage, and her daughter Kattrin are pulling the wagon. New wares are hanging on it. Mother Courage is wearing a necklace of silver talers.

MOTHER COURAGE. Stop running down the war. I won't have it. I know it destroys the weak, but the weak haven't a chance in peacetime either. And war is a better provider. [*Sings*]

If you're not strong enough to take it
The victory will find you dead.
A war is only what you make it.
It's business, not with cheese but lead.

And what good is it staying in one place? The stay-at-homes are the first to get it. [*Sings*]

Some people think they'd like to ride out
The war, leave danger to the brave
And dig themselves a cozy hideout—
They'll dig themselves an early grave.
I've seen them running from the thunder
To find a refuge from the war
But once they're resting six feet under
They wonder what they hurried for.

[*They plod on*]

8

In the same year Gustavus Adolphus, King of Sweden, is killed at the battle of Lützen.[1] Peace threatens to ruin Mother Courage's business. Her brave son performs one heroic deed too many and dies an ignominious death.

A camp.

A summer morning. An old woman and her son are standing by the wagon. The son is carrying a large sack of bedding.

MOTHER COURAGE'S VOICE. [*From the wagon*] Does it have to be at this unearthly hour?

THE YOUNG MAN. We've walked all night, twenty miles, and we've got to go back today.

MOTHER COURAGE'S VOICE. What can I do with bedding? The people haven't any houses.

THE YOUNG MAN. Wait till you've seen it.

THE OLD WOMAN. She won't take it either. Come on.

THE YOUNG MAN. They'll sell the roof from over our heads for taxes. Maybe she'll give us three guilders if you throw in the cross. [*Bells start ringing*] Listen, mother!

VOICES. [*From the rear*] Peace! The king of Sweden is dead!

MOTHER COURAGE. [*Sticks her head out of the wagon. She has not yet done her hair*] Why are the bells ringing in the middle of the week?

THE CHAPLAIN. [*Crawls out from under the wagon*] What are they shouting?

MOTHER COURAGE. Don't tell me peace has broken out when I've just taken in more supplies.

THE CHAPLAIN. [*Shouting toward the rear*] Is it true? Peace?

VOICE. Three weeks ago, they say. But we just found out.

THE CHAPLAIN. [*To Mother Courage*] What else would they ring the bells for?

VOICE. There's a whole crowd of Lutherans, they've driven their carts into town. They brought the news.

THE YOUNG MAN. Mother, it's peace. What's the matter?

[*The old woman has collapsed*]

MOTHER COURAGE. [*Going back into the wagon*] Heavenly saints! Kattrin, peace! Put your black dress on! We're going to church. We owe it to Swiss Cheese. Can it be true?

THE YOUNG MAN. The people here say the same thing. They've made

1. Town a few miles from the great Protestant city of Leipzig.

peace. Can you get up? [*The old woman stands up, still stunned*] I'll get the saddle shop started again. I promise. Everything will be all right. Father will get his bed back. Can you walk? [*To the chaplain*] She fainted. It was the news. She thought peace would never come again. Father said it would. We'll go straight home. [*Both go out*]

MOTHER COURAGE'S VOICE. Give her some brandy.

THE CHAPLAIN. They're gone.

MOTHER COURAGE'S VOICE. What's going on in camp?

THE CHAPLAIN. A big crowd. I'll go see. Shouldn't I put on my clericals?

MOTHER COURAGE'S VOICE. Better make sure before you step out in your antichrist costume. I'm glad to see peace, even if I'm ruined. At least I've brought two of my children through the war. Now I'll see my Eilif again.

THE CHAPLAIN. Look who's coming down the road. If it isn't the general's cook!

THE COOK. [*Rather bedraggled, carrying a bundle*] Can I believe my eyes? The chaplain!

THE CHAPLAIN. Courage! A visitor!

[*Mother Courage climbs down*]

THE COOK. Didn't I promise to come over for a little chat as soon as I had time? I've never forgotten your brandy, Mrs. Fierling.

MOTHER COURAGE. Mercy, the general's cook! After all these years! Where's Eilif, my eldest?

THE COOK. Isn't he here yet? He left ahead of me, he was coming to see you too.

THE CHAPLAIN. I'll put on my clericals, wait for me. [*Goes out behind the wagon*]

MOTHER COURAGE. Then he'll be here any minute. [*Calls into the wagon*] Kattrin, Eilif's coming! Bring the cook a glass of brandy! [*Kattrin does not appear*] Put a lock of hair over it, and forget it! Mr. Lamb is no stranger. [*Gets the brandy herself*] She won't come out. Peace doesn't mean a thing to her, it's come too late. They hit her over the eye, there's hardly any mark, but she thinks people are staring at her.

THE COOK. Ech, war! [*He and Mother Courage sit down*]

MOTHER COURAGE. Cook, you find me in trouble. I'm ruined.

THE COOK. What? Say, that's a shame.

MOTHER COURAGE. Peace has done me in. Only the other day I stocked up. The chaplain's advice. And now they'll all demobilize and leave me sitting on my merchandise.

THE COOK. How could you listen to the chaplain? If I'd had time, I'd have warned you against him, but the Catholics came too soon. He's a fly-by-night. So now he's the boss here?

MOTHER COURAGE. He washed my dishes and helped me pull the wagon.

THE COOK. Him? Pulling? I guess he's told you a few of his jokes too, I wouldn't put it past him, he has an unsavory attitude toward women, I tried to reform him, it was hopeless. He's not steady.

MOTHER COURAGE. Are you steady?

THE COOK. If nothing else, I'm steady. Prosit!

MOTHER COURAGE. Steady is no good. I've only lived with one steady man, thank the Lord. I never had to work so hard, he sold the children's blankets when spring came, and he thought my harmonica was unchristian. In my opinion you're not doing yourself any good by admitting you're steady.

THE COOK. You've still got your old bite, but I respect you for it.

MOTHER COURAGE. Don't tell me you've been dreaming about my old bite.

THE COOK. Well, here we sit, with the bells of peace and your world-famous brandy, that hasn't its equal.

MOTHER COURAGE. The bells of peace don't strike my fancy right now. I don't see them paying the men, they're behindhand already. Where does that leave me with my famous brandy? Have you been paid?

THE COOK. [*Hesitantly*] Not really. That's why we demobilized ourselves. Under the circumstances, I says to myself, why should I stay on? I'll go see my friends in the meantime. So here we are.

MOTHER COURAGE. You mean you're out of funds?

THE COOK. If only they'd stop those damn bells! I'd be glad to go into some kind of business. I'm sick of being a cook. They give me roots and shoe leather to work with, and then they throw the hot soup in my face. A cook's got a dog's life these days. I'd rather be in combat, but now we've got peace. [*The chaplain appears in his original dress*] We'll discuss it later.

THE CHAPLAIN. It's still in good condition. There were only a few moths in it.

THE COOK. I don't see why you bother. They won't take you back. Who are you going to inspire now to be an honest soldier and earn his pay at the risk of his life? Besides, I've got a bone to pick with you. Advising this lady to buy useless merchandise on the ground that the war would last forever.

THE CHAPLAIN. [*Heatedly*] And why, I'd like to know, is it any of your business?

THE COOK. Because it's unscrupulous. How can you meddle in other people's business and give unsolicited advice?

THE CHAPLAIN. Who's meddling? [*To Mother Courage*] I didn't know you were accountable to this gentleman, I didn't know you were so intimate with him.

MOTHER COURAGE. Don't get excited, the cook is only giving his private opinion. And you can't deny that your war was a dud.

THE CHAPLAIN. Courage, don't blaspheme against peace. You're a battlefield hyena.

MOTHER COURAGE. What am I?

THE COOK. If you insult this lady, you'll hear from me.

THE CHAPLAIN. I'm not talking to you. Your intentions are too obvious. [*To Mother Courage*] But when I see you picking up peace with thumb and forefinger like a snotty handkerchief, it revolts my humanity; you don't want peace, you want war, because you profit by it, but don't forget the old saying: "He hath need of a long spoon that eateth with the devil."

MOTHER COURAGE. I've no use for war and war hasn't much use for me. Anyway, I'm not letting anybody call me a hyena, you and me are through.

THE CHAPLAIN. How can you complain about peace when it's such a relief to everybody else? On account of the old rags in your wagon?

MOTHER COURAGE. My merchandise isn't old rags, it's what I live off, and so did you.

THE CHAPLAIN. Off war, you mean. Aha!

THE COOK. [*To the chaplain*] You're a grown man, you ought to know there's no sense in giving advice. [*To Mother Courage*] The best thing you can do now is to sell off certain articles quick, before the prices hit the floor. Dress yourself and get started, there's no time to lose.

MOTHER COURAGE. That's very sensible advice. I think I'll do it.

THE CHAPLAIN. Because the cook says so!

MOTHER COURAGE. Why didn't *you* say so? He's right, I'd better run over to the market. [*She goes into the wagon*]

THE COOK. My round, chaplain. No presence of mind. Here's what you should have said: me give you advice? All I ever did was talk politics! Don't try to take me on. Cockfighting is undignified in a clergyman.

THE CHAPLAIN. If you don't shut up, I'll murder you, undignified or not.

THE COOK. [*Taking off his shoe and unwinding the wrappings from his feet*] If the war hadn't made a godless bum out of you, you could easily come by a parsonage now that peace is here. They won't need cooks, there's nothing to cook, but people still do a lot of believing, that hasn't changed.

THE CHAPLAIN. See here, Mr. Lamb. Don't try to squeeze me out. Being a bum has made me a better man. I couldn't preach to them any more.

[*Yvette Pottier enters, elaborately dressed in black, with a cane.*

She is much older and fatter and heavily powdered. Behind her a servant]

YVETTE. Hello there! Is this the residence of Mother Courage?

THE CHAPLAIN. Right you are. With whom have we the pleasure?

YVETTE. The Countess Starhemberg, my good people. Where is Mother Courage.

THE CHAPLAIN. [*Calls into the wagon*] Countess Starhemberg wishes to speak to you!

MOTHER COURAGE. I'm coming.

YVETTE. It's Yvette!

MOTHER COURAGE'S VOICE. My goodness! It's Yvette!

YVETTE. Just dropped in to see how you're doing. [*The cook has turned around in horror*] Pieter!

THE COOK. Yvette!

YVETTE. Blow me down! How did you get here?

THE COOK. In a cart.

THE CHAPLAIN. Oh, you know each other? Intimately?

YVETTE. I should think so. [*She looks the cook over*] Fat!

THE COOK. You're not exactly willowy yourself.

YVETTE. All the same I'm glad I ran into you, you bum. Now I can tell you what I think of you.

THE CHAPLAIN. Go right ahead, spare no details, but wait until Courage comes out.

MOTHER COURAGE. [*Comes out with all sorts of merchandise*] Yvette! [*They embrace*] But what are you in mourning for?

YVETTE. Isn't it becoming? My husband the colonel died a few years ago.

MOTHER COURAGE. The old geezer that almost bought my wagon?

YVETTE. His elder brother.

MOTHER COURAGE. You must be pretty well fixed. It's nice to find somebody that's made a good thing out of the war.

YVETTE. Oh well, it's been up and down and back up again.

MOTHER COURAGE. Let's not say anything bad about colonels. They make money by the bushel.

THE CHAPLAIN. If I were you, I'd put my shoes back on again. [*To Yvette*] Countess Starhemberg, you promised to tell us what you think of this gentleman.

THE COOK. Don't make a scene here.

MOTHER COURAGE. He's a friend of mine, Yvette.

YVETTE. He's Pete the Pipe, that's who he is.

THE COOK. Forget the nicknames, my name is Lamb.

MOTHER COURAGE. [*Laughs*] Pete the Pipe! That drove the women crazy! Say, I've saved your pipe.

THE CHAPLAIN. And smoked it.

YVETTE. It's lucky I'm here to warn you. He's the worst rotter that ever infested the coast of Flanders. He ruined more girls than he's got fingers.

THE COOK. That was a long time ago. I've changed.

YVETTE. Stand up when a lady draws you into a conversation! How I loved this man! And all the while he was seeing a little bandy-legged brunette, ruined her, too, naturally.

THE COOK. Seems to me I started you off on a prosperous career.

YVETTE. Shut up, you depressing wreck! Watch your step with him, his kind are dangerous even when they've gone to seed.

MOTHER COURAGE. [*To Yvette*] Come along, I've got to sell my stuff before the prices drop. Maybe you can help me, with your army connections. [*Calls into the wagon*] Kattrin, forget about church, I'm running over to the market. When Eilif comes, give him a drink. [*Goes out with Yvette*]

YVETTE. [*In leaving*] To think that such a man could lead me astray! I can thank my lucky stars that I was able to rise in the world after that. I've put a spoke in your wheel, Pete the Pipe, and they'll give me credit for it in heaven when my time comes.

THE CHAPLAIN. Our conversation seems to illustrate the old adage: The mills of God grind slowly.[2] What do you think of my jokes now?

THE COOK. I'm just unlucky. I'll come clean: I was hoping for a hot meal. I'm starving. And now they're talking about me, and she'll get the wrong idea. I think I'll beat it before she comes back.

THE CHAPLAIN. I think so too.

THE COOK. Chaplain, I'm fed up on peace already. Men are sinners from the cradle, fire and sword are their natural lot. I wish I were cooking for the general again. God knows where he is, I'd roast a fine fat capon, with mustard sauce and a few carrots.

THE CHAPLAIN. Red cabbage. Red cabbage with capon.

THE COOK. That's right, but he wanted carrots.

THE CHAPLAIN. He was ignorant.

THE COOK. That didn't prevent you from gorging yourself.

THE CHAPLAIN. With repugnance.

THE COOK. Anyway you'll have to admit those were good times.

THE CHAPLAIN. I might admit that.

THE COOK. Now you've called her a hyena, your good times here are over. What are you staring at?

THE CHAPLAIN. Eilif? [*Eilif enters, followed by soldiers with pikes. His hands are fettered. He is deathly pale*] What's wrong?

EILIF. Where's mother?

THE CHAPLAIN. Gone to town.

2. From a saying by Friedrich von Logan (1605–1655), as translated by Longfellow: "Though the mills of God grind slowly, / Yet they grind exceeding small."

EILIF. I heard she was here. They let me come and see her.

THE COOK. [*To the soldiers*] Where are you taking him?

A SOLDIER. No good place.

THE CHAPLAIN. What has he done?

THE SOLDIER. Broke into a farm. The peasant's wife is dead.

THE CHAPLAIN. How could you do such a thing?

EILIF. It's what I've been doing all along.

THE COOK. But in peacetime!

EILIF. Shut your trap. Can I sit down till she comes?

THE SOLDIER. We haven't time.

THE CHAPLAIN. During the war they honored him for it, he sat at the general's right hand. Then it was bravery. Couldn't we speak to the officer?

THE SOLDIER. No use. What's brave about taking a peasant's cattle?

THE COOK. It was stupid.

EILIF. If I'd been stupid, I'd have starved, wise guy.

THE COOK. And for being smart your head comes off.

THE CHAPLAIN. Let's get Kattrin at least.

EILIF. Leave her be. Get me a drink of schnapps.

THE SOLDIER. No time. Let's go!

THE CHAPLAIN. And what should we tell your mother?

EILIF. Tell her it wasn't any different, tell her it was the same. Or don't tell her anything.

[*The soldiers drive him away*]

THE CHAPLAIN. I'll go with you on your hard journey.

EILIF. I don't need any sky pilot.

THE CHAPLAIN. You don't know yet. [*He follows him*]

THE COOK. [*Calls after them*] I'll have to tell her, she'll want to see him.

THE CHAPLAIN. Better not tell her anything. Or say he was here and he'll come again, maybe tomorrow. I'll break it to her when I get back. [*Hurries out*]

[*The cook looks after them, shaking his head, then he walks anxiously about. Finally he approaches the wagon*]

THE COOK. Hey! Come on out! I can see why you'd hide from peace. I wish I could do it myself. I'm the general's cook, remember? Wouldn't you have a bite to eat, to do me till your mother gets back? A slice of ham or just a piece of bread while I'm waiting. [*He looks in*] She's buried her head in a blanket.

[*The sound of gunfire in the rear*]

MOTHER COURAGE. [*Runs in. She is out of breath and still has her merchandise*] Cook, the peace is over, the war started up again three days ago. I hadn't sold my stuff yet when I found out. Heaven be praised! They're shooting each other up in town, the Catholics and Lutherans. We've got to get out of here. Kattrin, start pack-

ing. What have *you* got such a long face about? What's wrong?

THE COOK. Nothing.

MOTHER COURAGE. Something's wrong, I can tell by your expression.

THE COOK. Maybe it's the war starting up again. Now I probably won't get anything hot to eat before tomorrow night.

MOTHER COURAGE. That's a lie, cook.

THE COOK. Eilif was here. He couldn't stay.

MOTHER COURAGE. He was here? Then we'll see him on the march. I'm going with our troops this time. How does he look?

THE COOK. The same.

MOTHER COURAGE. He'll never change. The war couldn't take him away from me. He's smart. Could you help me pack? [*She starts packing*] Did he tell you anything? Is he in good with the general? Did he say anything about his heroic deeds?

THE COOK. [*Gloomily*] They say he's been at one of them again.

MOTHER COURAGE. Tell me later, we've got to be going. [*Kattrin emerges*] Kattrin, peace is over. We're moving. [*To the cook*] What's the matter with you?

THE COOK. I'm going to enlist.

MOTHER COURAGE. I've got a suggestion. Why don't . . . ? Where's the chaplain?

THE COOK. Gone to town with Eilif.

MOTHER COURAGE. Then come a little way with me, Lamb. I need help.

THE COOK. That incident with Yvette . . .

MOTHER COURAGE. It hasn't lowered you in my estimation. Far from it. Where there's smoke there's fire. Coming?

THE COOK. I won't say no.

MOTHER COURAGE. The Twelfth Regiment has shoved off. Take the shaft. Here's a chunk of bread. We'll have to circle around to meet the Lutherans. Maybe I'll see Eilif tonight. He's my favorite. It's been a short peace. And we're on the move again. [*She sings, while the cook and Kattrin harness themselves to the wagon*]

From Ulm to Metz, from Metz to Pilsen[3]
Courage is right there in the van.
The war both in and out of season
With shot and shell will feed its man.
But lead alone is not sufficient
The war needs soldiers to subsist!
Its diet elseways is deficient.
The war is hungry! So enlist!

3. Ulm is about 80 miles west of Munich. Metz, in the province of Lorraine (ceded to France at the end of the Thirty Years' War), is about 200 miles west of Ulm; to travel from Metz to Pilsen one must cross the whole of Germany.

9

The great war of religion has been going on for sixteen years. Germany has lost more than half its population. Those whom the slaughter has spared have been laid low by epidemics. Once-flourishing countrysides are ravaged by famine. Wolves prowl through the charred ruins of the cities. In the fall of 1634 we find Mother Courage in Germany, in the Fichtelgebirge[4] at some distance from the road followed by the Swedish armies. Winter comes early and is exceptionally severe. Business is bad, begging is the only resort. The cook receives a letter from Utrecht[5] and is dismissed.

Outside a half-demolished presbytery.

Gray morning in early winter. Gusts of wind. Mother Courage and the cook in shabby sheepskins by the wagon.

THE COOK. No light. Nobody's up yet.

MOTHER COURAGE. But it's a priest. He'll have to crawl out of bed to ring the bells. Then he'll get himself a nice bowl of hot soup.

THE COOK. Go on, you saw the village, everything's been burned to a crisp.

MOTHER COURAGE. But somebody's here, I heard a dog bark.

THE COOK. If the priest's got anything, he won't give it away.

MOTHER COURAGE. Maybe if we sing . . .

THE COOK. I've had it up to here. [*Suddenly*] I got a letter from Utrecht. My mother's died of cholera and the tavern belongs to me. Here's the letter if you don't believe me. It's no business of yours what my aunt says about my evil ways, but never mind, read it.

MOTHER COURAGE[6] [*Reads the letter*] Lamb, I'm sick of roaming around, myself. I feel like a butcher's dog that pulls the meat cart but doesn't get any for himself. I've nothing left to sell and the people have no money to pay for it. In Saxony a man in rags tried to foist a cord of books on me for two eggs, and in Württemberg they'd have let their plow go for a little bag of salt. What's the good of plowing? Nothing grows but brambles. In Pomerania[7] they say the villagers have eaten up all the babies, and that nuns have been caught at highway robbery.

THE COOK. It's the end of the world.

MOTHER COURAGE. Sometimes I have visions of myself driving through hell, selling sulfur and brimstone, or through heaven peddling

4. A range of mountains in Germany near the Bohemian border. 5. City in the south of Holland. 6. In this scene, Mother Courage and the Cook for the first time use *du*, the familiar form of *you* in German. (The familiar form is used between lovers, close friends and family, and young people; the formal *Sie* is used otherwise.) 7. Saxony, Württemberg, and Pomerania are German principalities.

refreshments to the roaming souls. If me and the children I've got left could find a place where there's no shooting, I wouldn't mind a few years of peace and quiet.

THE COOK. We could open up the tavern again. Think it over, Anna. I made up my mind last night; with or without you, I'm going back to Utrecht. In fact I'm leaving today.

MOTHER COURAGE. I'll have to talk to Kattrin. It's kind of sudden, and I don't like to make decisions in the cold with nothing in my stomach. Kattrin! [*Kattrin climbs out of the wagon*] Kattrin, I've got something to tell you. The cook and me are thinking of going to Utrecht. They've left him a tavern there. You'd be living in one place, you'd meet people. A lot of men would be glad to get a nice, well-behaved girl, looks aren't everything. I'm all for it. I get along fine with the cook. I've got to hand it to him: He's got a head for business. We'd eat regular meals, wouldn't that be nice? And you'd have your own bed, wouldn't you like that? It's no life on the road, year in year out. You'll go to rack and ruin. You're crawling with lice already. We've got to decide, you see, we could go north with the Swedes, they must be over there. [*She points to the left*] I think we'll do it, Kattrin.

THE COOK. Anna, could I have a word with you alone?

MOTHER COURAGE. Get back in the wagon, Kattrin.

[*Kattrin climbs back in*]

THE COOK. I interrupted you because I see there's been a misunderstanding, I thought it was too obvious to need saying. But if it isn't, I'll just have to say it. You can't take her, it's out of the question. Is that plain enough for you?

[*Kattrin sticks her head out of the wagon and listens*]

MOTHER COURAGE. You want me to leave Kattrin?

THE COOK. Look at it this way. There's no room in the tavern. It's not one of those places with three taprooms. If the two of us put our shoulder to the wheel, we can make a living, but not three, it can't be done. Kattrin can keep the wagon.

MOTHER COURAGE. I'd been thinking she could find a husband in Utrecht.

THE COOK. Don't make me laugh! How's she going to find a husband? At her age? And dumb! And with that scar!

MOTHER COURAGE. Not so loud.

THE COOK. Shout or whisper, the truth's the truth. And that's another reason why I can't have her in the tavern. The customers won't want a sight like that staring them in the face. Can you blame them?

MOTHER COURAGE. Shut up. Not so loud, I say.

THE COOK. There's a light in the presbytery. Let's sing.

MOTHER COURAGE. How could she pull the wagon by herself? She's

afraid of the war. She couldn't stand it. The dreams she must have! I hear her groaning at night. Especially after battles. What she sees in her dreams, God knows. It's pity that makes her suffer so. The other day the wagon hit a hedgehog, I found it hidden in her blanket.

THE COOK. The tavern's too small. [*He calls*] Worthy gentleman and members of the household! We shall now sing the Song of Solomon, Julius Caesar, and other great men, whose greatness didn't help them any. Just to show you that we're God-fearing people ourselves, which makes it hard for us, especially in the winter. [*They sing*]

You saw the wise King Solomon[8]
You know what came of him.
To him all hidden things were plain.
He cursed the hour gave birth to him
And saw that everything was vain.
How great and wise was Solomon!
Now think about his case. Alas
A useful lesson can be won.
It's wisdom that had brought him to that pass!
How happy is the man with none!

Our beautiful song proves that virtues are dangerous things, better steer clear of them, enjoy life, eat a good breakfast, a bowl of hot soup, for instance. Take me, I haven't got any soup and wish I had, I'm a soldier, but what has my bravery in all those battles got me, nothing, I'm starving, I'd be better off if I'd stayed home like a yellowbelly. And I'll tell you why.

You saw the daring Caesar[9] next
You know what he became.
They deified him in his life
But then they killed him just the same.
And as they raised the fatal knife
How loud he cried: "You too, my son!"
Now think about his case. Alas
A useful lesson can be won.
It's daring that had brought him to that pass!
How happy is the man with none!

8. Old Testament ruler celebrated for his wisdom. In line 4 of the stanza, the cook confuses Solomon with the Biblical Job, who does curse the day he was born. (Job 3:1).

9. (100–44 B.C.), Roman general and dictator, assassinated by a republican clique including his young friend Brutus when suspected of imperial ambitions.

[*In an undertone*] They're not even looking out. Worthy gentleman and members of the household! Maybe you'll say, all right, if bravery won't keep body and soul together, try honesty. That may fill your belly or at least get you a drop to drink. Let's look into it.

You've heard of honest Socrates[1]
Who never told a lie.
They weren't so grateful as you'd think
Instead they sentenced him to die
And handed him the poisoned drink.
How honest was the people's noble son!
Now think about his case. Alas
A useful lesson can be won.
His honesty had brought him to that pass.
How happy is the man with none!

Yes, they tell us to be charitable and to share what we have, but what if we haven't got anything? Maybe philanthropists have a rough time of it too, it stands to reason, they need a little something for themselves. Yes, charity is a rare virtue, because it doesn't pay.

St. Martin[2] couldn't bear to see
His fellows in distress.
He saw a poor man in the snow.
"Take half my cloak!" He did, and lo!
They both of them froze none the less.
He thought his heavenly reward was won.
Now think about his case. Alas
A useful lesson can be won.
Unselfishness had brought him to that pass.
How happy is the man with none!

That's our situation. We're God-fearing folk, we stick together, we don't steal, we don't murder, we don't set fire to anything! You could say that we set an example which bears out the song, we sink lower and lower, we seldom see any soup, but if we were different, if we were thieves and murderers, maybe our bellies would be full. Because virtue isn't rewarded, only wickedness, the world needn't be like this, but it is.

1. Greek philosopher, condemned to death in 399 B.C. for teaching the young to question accepted beliefs. 2. (A.D. 330–397) As a young soldier in the Roman army, Martin divided his military cloak with a beggar. He dreamed of Christ that night and was baptized thereafter, later becoming Bishop of Tours.

And here you see God-fearing folk
Observing God's ten laws.
So far He hasn't taken heed.
You people sitting warm indoors
Help to relieve our bitter need!
Our virtue can be counted on.
Now think about our case. Alas
A useful lesson can be won.
The fear of God has brought us to this pass.
How happy is the man with none!

VOICE. [*From above*] Hey, down there! Come on up! We've got some good thick soup.

MOTHER COURAGE. Lamb, I couldn't get anything down. I know what you say makes sense, but is it your last word? We've always been good friends.

THE COOK. My last word. Think it over.

MOTHER COURAGE. I don't need to think it over. I won't leave her.

THE COOK. It wouldn't be wise, but there's nothing I can do. I'm not inhuman, but it's a small tavern. We'd better go in now, or there won't be anything left, we'll have been singing in the cold for nothing.

MOTHER COURAGE. I'll get Kattrin.

THE COOK. Better bring it down for her. They'll get a fright if the three of us barge in. [*They go out*]

[*Kattrin climbs out of the wagon. She is carrying a bundle. She looks around to make sure the others are gone. Then she spreads out an old pair of the cook's trousers and a skirt belonging to her mother side by side on a wheel of the wagon so they can easily be seen. She is about to leave with her bundle when Mother Courage comes out of the house*]

MOTHER COURAGE. [*With a dish of soup*] Kattrin! Stop! Kattrin! Where do you think you're going with that bundle? Have you taken leave of your wits? [*She examines the bundle*] She's packed her things. Were you listening? I've told him it's no go with Utrecht and his lousy tavern, what would we do there? A tavern's no place for you and me. The war still has a thing or two up its sleeve for us. [*She sees the trousers and skirt*] You're stupid. Suppose I'd seen that and you'd been gone? [*Kattrin tries to leave, Mother Courage holds her back*] And don't go thinking I've given him the gate on your account. It's the wagon. I won't part with the wagon, I'm used to it, it's not you, it's the wagon. We'll go in the other direction, we'll put the cook's stuff out here where he'll find it, the fool. [*She climbs up and throws down a few odds and ends, to join the trousers*] There. Now we're shut of him, you won't see me taking

anyone else into the business. From now on it's you and me. This winter will go by like all the rest. Harness up, it looks like snow.

[*They harness themselves to the wagon, turn it around and pull it away. When the cook comes out he sees his things and stands dumbfounded*]

10

Throughout 1635 Mother Courage and her daughter Kattrin pull the wagon over the roads of central Germany in the wake of the increasingly bedraggled armies.

Highway.

Mother Courage and Kattrin are pulling the wagon. They come to a peasant's house. A voice is heard singing from within.

THE VOICE.

The rose bush in our garden
Rejoiced our hearts in spring
It bore such lovely flowers.
We planted it last season
Before the April showers.
A garden is a blessèd thing
It bore such lovely flowers.

When winter comes a-stalking
And gales great snow storms bring
They trouble us but little.
We've lately finished caulking
The roof with moss and wattle.
A sheltering roof's a blessèd thing
When winter comes a-stalking.

[*Mother Courage and Kattrin have stopped to listen. Then they move on*]

11

January 1636. The imperial troops threaten the Protestant city of Halle.[3] The stone speaks. Mother Courage loses her daughter and goes on alone. The end of the war is not in sight.

3. Protestant city 20 miles northwest of Leipzig.

The wagon, much the worse for wear, is standing beside a peasant house with an enormous thatch roof. The house is built against the side of a stony hill. Night.

A lieutenant and three soldiers in heavy armor step out of the woods.

THE LIEUTENANT. I don't want any noise. If anybody yells, run him through with your pikes.

FIRST SOLDIER. But we need a guide. We'll have to knock if we want them to come out.

THE LIEUTENANT. Knocking sounds natural. It could be a cow bumping against the barn wall.

[*The soldiers knock on the door. A peasant woman opens. They hold their hands over her mouth. Two soldiers go in*]

A MAN'S VOICE. [*Inside*] Who's there?

[*The soldiers bring out a peasant and his son*]

THE LIEUTENANT. [*Points to the wagon, in which Kattrin has appeared*] There's another one. [*A soldier pulls her out*] Anybody else live here?

THE PEASANT COUPLE. This is our son.—That's a dumb girl.—Her mother's gone into the town on business—Buying up people's belongings, they're selling cheap because they're getting out.—They're provisioners.

THE LIEUTENANT. I'm warning you to keep quiet, one squawk and you'll get a pike over the head. All right. I need somebody who can show us the path to the city. [*Points to the young peasant*] You. Come here!

THE YOUNG PEASANT. I don't know no path.

THE SECOND SOLDIER. [*Grinning*] He don't know no path.

THE YOUNG PEASANT. I'm not helping the Catholics.

THE LIEUTENANT. [*To the second soldier*] Give him a feel of your pike!

THE YOUNG PEASANT. [*Forced down on his knees and threatened with the pike*] You can kill me. I won't do it.

THE FIRST SOLDIER. I know what'll make him think twice. [*He goes over to the barn*] Two cows and an ox. Get this: If you don't help us, I'll cut them down.

THE YOUNG PEASANT. Not the animals!

THE PEASANT WOMAN. [*In tears*] Captain, spare our animals or we'll starve.

THE LIEUTENANT. If he insists on being stubborn, they're done for.

THE FIRST SOLDIER. I'll start with the ox.

THE YOUNG PEASANT. [*To the old man*] Do I have to? [*The old woman nods*] I'll do it.

THE PEASANT WOMAN. And thank you kindly for your forbearance, Captain, for ever and ever, amen.

[*The peasant stops her from giving further thanks*]

THE FIRST SOLDIER. Didn't I tell you? With them it's the animals that come first.

[*Led by the young peasant, the lieutenant and the soldiers continue on their way*]

THE PEASANT. I wish I knew what they're up to. Nothing good.

THE PEASANT WOMAN. Maybe they're only scouts.—What are you doing?

THE PEASANT. [*Putting a ladder against the roof and climbing up*] See if they're alone. [*On the roof*] Men moving in the woods. All the way to the quarry. Armor in the clearing. And a cannon. It's more than a regiment. God have mercy on the city and everybody in it.

THE PEASANT WOMAN. See any light in the city?

THE PEASANT. No. They're all asleep. [*He climbs down*] If they get in, they'll kill everybody.

THE PEASANT WOMAN. The sentry will see them in time.

THE PEASANT. They must have killed the sentry in the tower on the hill, or he'd have blown his horn.

THE PEASANT WOMAN. If there were more of us . . .

THE PEASANT. All by ourselves up here with a cripple . . .

THE PEASANT WOMAN. We can't do a thing. Do you think . . .

THE PEASANT. Not a thing.

THE PEASANT WOMAN. We couldn't get down there in the dark.

THE PEASANT. The whole hillside is full of them. We can't even give a signal.

THE PEASANT WOMAN. They'd kill us.

THE PEASANT. No, we can't do a thing.

THE PEASANT WOMAN. [*To Kattrin*] Pray, poor thing, pray! We can't stop the bloodshed. If you can't talk, at least you can pray. He'll hear you if nobody else does. I'll help you. [*All kneel, Kattrin behind the peasants*] Our Father which art in heaven, hear our prayer. Don't let the town perish with everybody in it, all asleep and unsuspecting. Wake them, make them get up and climb the walls and see the enemy coming through the night with cannon and pikes, through the fields and down the hillside. [*Back to Kattrin*] Protect our mother and don't let the watchman sleep, wake him before it's too late. And succor our brother-in-law, he's in there with his four children, let them not perish, they're innocent and don't know a thing. [*To Kattrin, who groans*] The littlest is less than two, the oldest is seven. [*Horrified, Kattrin stands up*] Our Father, hear us, for Thou alone canst help, we'll all be killed, we're weak, we haven't any pikes or anything, we are powerless and in Thine hands, we and our animals and the whole farm, and

the city too, it's in Thine hands, and the enemy is under the walls with great might.

[*Kattrin has crept unnoticed to the wagon, taken something out of it, put it under her apron and climbed up the ladder to the roof of the barn*]

THE PEASANT WOMAN. Think upon the children in peril, especially the babes in arms and the old people that can't help themselves and all God's creatures.

THE PEASANT. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us. Amen.

[*Kattrin, sitting on the roof, starts beating the drum that she has taken out from under her apron*]

THE PEASANT WOMAN. Jesus! What's she doing?

THE PEASANT. She's gone crazy.

THE PEASANT WOMAN. Get her down, quick!

[*The peasant runs toward the ladder, but Kattrin pulls it up on the roof*]

THE PEASANT WOMAN. She'll be the death of us all.

THE PEASANT. Stop that, you cripple!

THE PEASANT WOMAN. She'll have the Catholics down on us.

THE PEASANT. [*Looking around for stones*] I'll throw rocks at you.

THE PEASANT WOMAN. Have you no pity? Have you no heart? We're dead if they find out it's us! They'll run us through!

[*Kattrin stares in the direction of the city, and goes on drumming*]

THE PEASANT WOMAN. [*To the peasant*] I told you not to let those tramps stop here. What do they care if the soldiers drive our last animals away?

THE LIEUTENANT. [*Rushes in with his soldiers and the young peasant*] I'll cut you to pieces!

THE PEASANT WOMAN. We're innocent, captain. We couldn't help it. She sneaked up there. We don't know her.

THE LIEUTENANT. Where's the ladder?

THE PEASANT. Up top.

THE LIEUTENANT. [*To Kattrin*] Throw down that drum. It's an order!

[*Kattrin goes on drumming*]

THE LIEUTENANT. You're all in this together! This'll be the end of you!

THE PEASANT. They've felled some pine trees in the woods over there. We could get one and knock her down . . .

THE FIRST SOLDIER. [*To the Lieutenant*] Request permission to make a suggestion. [*He whispers something in the lieutenant's ear. He nods*] Listen. We've got a friendly proposition. Come down, we'll take you into town with us. Show us your mother and we won't touch a hair of her head.

[*Kattrin goes on drumming*]

THE LIEUTENANT. [*Pushes him roughly aside*] She doesn't trust you. No wonder with your mug. [*He calls up*] If I give you my word? I'm an officer, you can trust my word of honor.

[*She drums still louder*]

THE LIEUTENANT. Nothing is sacred to her.

THE YOUNG PEASANT. It's not just her mother, lieutenant!

THE FIRST SOLDIER. We can't let this go on. They'll hear it in the city.

THE LIEUTENANT. We'll have to make some kind of noise that's louder than the drums. What could we make noise with?

THE FIRST SOLDIER. But we're not supposed to make noise.

THE LIEUTENANT. An innocent noise, stupid. A peaceable noise.

THE PEASANT. I could chop wood.

THE LIEUTENANT. That's it, chop! [*The peasant gets an ax and chops at a log*] Harder! Harder! You're chopping for your life.

[*Listening, Kattrin has been drumming more softly. Now she looks anxiously around and goes on drumming as before*]

THE LIEUTENANT. [*To the peasant*] Not loud enough. [*To the first soldier*] You chop too.

THE PEASANT. There's only one ax. [*Stops chopping*]

THE LIEUTENANT. We'll have to set the house on fire. Smoke her out.

THE PEASANT. That won't do any good, Captain. If the city people see fire up here, they'll know what's afoot.

[*Still drumming, Kattrin has been listening again. Now she laughs*]

THE LIEUTENANT. Look, she's laughing at us. I'll shoot her down, regardless. Get the musket!

[*Two soldiers run out. Kattrin goes on drumming*]

THE PEASANT WOMAN. I've got it, captain. That's their wagon over there. If we start smashing it up, she'll stop. The wagon's all they've got.

THE LIEUTENANT. [*To the young peasant*] Smash away. [*To Kattrin*] We'll smash your wagon if you don't stop.

[*The young peasant strikes a few feeble blows at the wagon*]

THE PEASANT WOMAN. Stop it, you beast!

[*Kattrin stares despairingly at the wagon and emits pitiful sounds. But she goes on drumming*]

THE LIEUTENANT. Where are those stinkers with the musket?

THE FIRST SOLDIER. They haven't heard anything in the city yet, or we'd hear their guns.

THE LIEUTENANT. [*To Kattrin*] They don't hear you. And now we're going to shoot you down. For the last time: Drop that drum!

THE YOUNG PEASANT. [*Suddenly throws the plank away*] Keep on

drumming! Or they'll all be killed! Keep on drumming, keep on drumming . . .

[*The soldier throws him down and hits him with his pike. Kattrin starts crying, but goes on drumming*]

THE PEASANT WOMAN. Don't hit him in the back! My God, you're killing him.

[*The soldiers run in with the musket*]

THE SECOND SOLDIER. The colonel's foaming at the mouth. We'll be court-martialed.

THE LIEUTENANT. Set it up! Set it up! [*To Kattrin, while the musket is being set up on its stand*] For the last time: Stop that drumming! [*Kattrin in tears drums as loud as she can*] Fire!

[*The soldiers fire, Kattrin is hit. She beats the drum for a few times more and then slowly collapses*]

THE LIEUTENANT. Now we'll have some quiet.

[*But Kattrin's last drumbeats are answered by the city's cannon. A confused hubbub of alarm bells and cannon is heard in the distance*]

THE FIRST SOLDIER. She's done it.

12

Night, toward morning. The fifes and drums of troops marching away.

Outside the wagon Mother Courage sits huddled over her daughter. The peasant couple are standing beside them.

THE PEASANT. [*Hostile*] You'll have to be going, woman. There's only one more regiment to come. You can't go alone.[4]

MOTHER COURAGE. Maybe I can get her to sleep. [*She sings*]

Lullaby baby
What stirs in the hay?
The neighbor brats whimper
Mine are happy and gay.
They go in tatters
And you in silk down
Cut from an angel's
Best party gown.
They've nothing to munch on
And you will have pie
Just tell your mother

4. I.e., for protection and customers, Mother Courage must travel with the army.

In case it's too dry.
Lullaby baby
What stirs in the hay?
That one lies in Poland
The other—who can say?

Now she's asleep. You shouldn't have told her about your brother-in-law's children.

THE PEASANT. Maybe it wouldn't have happened if you hadn't gone to town to swindle people.

MOTHER COURAGE. I'm glad she's sleeping now.

THE PEASANT WOMAN. She's not sleeping, you'll have to face it, she's dead.

THE PEASANT. And it's time you got started. There are wolves around here, and what's worse, marauders.

MOTHER COURAGE. Yes. [*She goes to the wagon and takes out a sheet of canvas to cover the body with*]

THE PEASANT WOMAN. Haven't you anybody else? Somebody you can go to?

MOTHER COURAGE. Yes, there's one of them left. Eilif.

THE PEASANT. [*While Mother Courage covers the body*] Go find him. We'll attend to this one, give her a decent burial. Set your mind at rest.

MOTHER COURAGE. Here's money for your expenses. [*She gives the peasant money*]

[*The peasant and his son shake hands with her and carry Kattrin away*]

THE PEASANT WOMAN. [*On the way out*] Hurry up!

MOTHER COURAGE. [*Harnesses herself to the wagon*] I hope I can pull the wagon alone. I'll manage, there isn't much in it. I've got to get back in business.

[*Another regiment marches by with fifes and drums in the rear*]

MOTHER COURAGE. Hey, take me with you! [*She starts to pull*]

[*Singing is heard in the rear:*]

With all the killing and recruiting
The war will worry on a while.
In ninety years they'll still be shooting.
It's hardest on the rank-and-file.
Our food is swill, our pants all patches
The higher-ups steal half our pay
And still we dream of God-sent riches.
Tomorrow is another day!
The spring is come! Christian, revive!
The snowdrifts melt, the dead lie dead!

And if by chance you're still alive
It's time to rise and shake a leg.

FEDERICO GARCÍA LORCA
1898–1936

Although he died young, the poet and playwright Federico García Lorca is the best-known writer of modern Spain, and perhaps the most famous Spanish writer since Cervantes. A member of the brilliant "Generation of 1927" (along with Jorgé Guillen, Vicente Aleixandre, Pedro Salinas, and Rafael Alberti), known for the striking imagery and lyric musicality of his work, Lorca is both classical and modern, traditional and innovative, difficult and popular, a voice combining regional and universal themes. The poetry and plays that began as (and always were) personal statements took on larger significance first as the expression of tragic conflicts in Spanish culture, and then as poignant laments for humanity—seen especially in the plight of those who are deprived, by society or simply by death, of the fulfillment which could have been theirs. When Lorca was dragged from a friend's house and executed by a Fascist squad on August 19, 1936, his murder outraged the whole European and American literary and artistic community and seemed to symbolize in addition the mindless destruction of humane and cultural values that loomed with the approach of World War II.

Lorca (despite the Spanish practice of using both paternal and maternal last names—correctly "García Lorca"—the author is generally called "Lorca") was born on June 5, 1898, in the small village of Fuentevaqueros, near the Andalusian city of Granada. His parents were well-to-do: his father was a prosperous farmer and his mother, who had been a schoolteacher, encouraged him to read widely and develop his musical talent. The composer Manuel de Falla befriended the young musician, who became an expert pianist and guitar player. Lorca began law studies at the University of Granada where—after several years' absence—he received a degree in 1923. He published a book of *Impressions and Landscapes* (1918) after a trip through Spain, but left Granada in 1919 for Madrid where he entered the Residencia de Estudiantes, a modern college established to provide a cosmopolitan education for Spanish youth. Madrid was not only the capital of Spain but also the center of intellectual and artistic ferment and the Residencia attracted many of those who would be the most influential writers and artists of their generation (among the latter the artist Salvador Dalí and the film director Luis Buñuel). Lorca soon gained the reputation of a rising young poet from poetry readings and the publication of a few poems in magazines, even before the appearance of his first collection of verse, the *Book of Poems* of 1921. Although he lived at the Residencia almost continuously until 1928, he never seriously pursued a degree but spent his time reading, writing, improvising music and poetry in company with his friends, and producing his first plays.

In these early years, before his departure for New York in 1929, Lorca concentrated on writing poetry although he was clearly interested in the

theater as well. *The Butterfly's Evil Spell* (1920), a fantasy about a cockroach who is hopelessly enchanted by the beauty of a butterfly, was staged in Barcelona; in 1923 Lorca wrote, designed sets for, and directed a puppet play on a theme from Andalusian folklore, *The Girl Who Waters the Sweet Basil Flower and the Inquisitive Prince*, for which De Falla himself arranged the music. Yet the major achievement of this period is the composition of several books of poetry, not all of which were published right away: the *Book of Poems*, most of the *Songs* (1927), early versions of the poems in the *Poem of the Deep Song*, which was not published as a book until 1931 although several poems were recited at a 1922 Andalusian festival, and the *Gypsy Ballads* (1928) which was an immediate popular success.

The first collection, the *Book of Poems*, introduces themes that will be familiar in later works: death, an innocent or childlike point of view, a closeness to nature which takes the form of animal fables or symbolic meanings attached to images like the pomegranate ("the idea of blood enclosed / In a hard a bitter globe") and overall a certain witty or ironic distance from the situations he describes. The playful tone never quite covers Lorca's constant preoccupation with death, however: death as the common fate that shadows our most vivid experiences. Speaking to a chorus of questioning children in "The Ballad of the Little Square," the poet answers that he feels in his mouth only "the savor of the bones / of my great skull."

The poems of the *Deep Song* marked a return to the gypsy themes and ballads of Lorca's home province of Andalusia, a region known for its mixture of Arab and Spanish culture, and for a tradition of wandering gypsy singers who improvised, to guitar accompaniment, rhythmic laments on themes of love and death. The *cante jondo* ("deep song") was an ancient Andalusian ballad form that centered on repeated notes or phrases, and Lorca took full advantage (as he would in the "Lament for Ignacio Sánchez Mejías") of the haunting quality that could be obtained through this obsessive refrain. The *Songs* written next are noted for their lyricism, and for the capture of particular moments of experience; however, many reach beyond the sensuously precise description of real objects to encompass abstract concepts, psychological states, and clusters of associations—as does the symbolist poetry Lorca knew. Lorca describes how "the ear of grain keeps intact/ its hard yellow laughter," how a little mute boy looks for his voice in a drop of water, and how Narcissus (both youth and flower) is mirrored in a double image where "over your white eyes flicker / shadows and sleeping fish."

Lorca's next collection, the *Gypsy Ballads* of 1928, marks the beginning of his mature verse. Blending classical ballad form with scenes taken directly from contemporary life, the poet expresses, in a mixture of violence and eroticism, the tragic struggle in which innocence, spontaneity, creativity, and freedom are repressed by society and by the inevitable limitations of human nature. In the famous "Ballad of the Spanish Civil Guard," the militia with their "patent-leather souls" and heads filled with "a vague astronomy / of shapeless pistols" cut down the gypsies in their fantastic city with its banners and "cinnamon towers." The unsuspecting populace, caught in the midst of their festival, are helpless to prevent absolute destruction—the tile roofs become "furrows in the soil," and the burned city itself persists only in the sterile "play of moon and sand" on the poet's brow. A hostile,

violent world is pictured here, in which even the wind pursues a young girl with lustful breath and "hot sword," and St. Eulalia's martyrdom and mutilation are described with a mixture of eroticism and horror. These themes are not restricted to poetry: they recur in a contemporary play, *Mariana Pineda* (1928), where Lorca's heroine is executed for refusing to identify a group of revolutionaries (among them the lover who abandoned her).

Impelled by an emotional crisis, Lorca left Spain for New York in 1929, where he wrote a series of poems later published as *Poet in New York* (1940). The collection does not focus exclusively on the city, however, and moves from the poet's youth in Europe to scenes of rural New York and northern Vermont as Lorca tries to come to terms with his own complex personality against a background of psychological, artistic, and social tensions. Blended with the familiar theme of doomed love and death is a tentative exploration of the homosexuality which Lorca could not admit inside traditional Spanish society, and which he expressed only with hesitation and anxiety in this and later works. A large part of the ten-section *Poet in New York*, however, focuses primarily on the city which is seen as a frightening symbol of the modern industrial West. In a richly varied and densely metaphorical apocalyptic vision, Lorca juxtaposes two ways of life and creates a contrast which, he said, "puts my poetic world in contact with the poetic world of New York." Beginning with a denunciation of the dehumanized commercial city-world of sterile concrete and glass, he moves on to celebrate the only area where the natural world survives: Harlem, with its "garnet violence deaf and dumb in the shadows," and its "great king a prisoner in a janitor's uniform." In the face of this universal despair there are foreshadowings of a coming upheaval where "the Stock Market will be a pyramid of moss" and the oppressed and deprived will unite to proclaim "the reign of the ear of corn." The book's ending sections mark an escape from New York to Havana and (in spite of a continued sense of alienation) to the dancelike harmony of a more primitive life.

From 1930 to his death in 1936, Lorca was extremely active in the theater both as writer and as director (after 1931) of a traveling theatrical group ("La Barraca") subsidized by the Spanish Republic. After a series of farces that mixed romantically tragic and comic themes, he presented the tragedies for which he is best known: *Blood Wedding* (1933) and *Yerma* (1934), and he wrote in 1936 the posthumously published *The House of Bernarda Alba* (1945). All Lorca's theater, from the early fantasy of *The Butterfly's Evil Spell* to the puppet plays, farces, and last tragedies, rejects the conventionally realistic nineteenth-century drama and employs an openly poetic form that suggests musical patterns, includes choruses, songs, and stylized movement, and may even (as in the fragmentary surrealist drama, *The Audience*) attack the audience itself. The tragic themes of Lorca's poetry emerge here in dramatic form, usually centering on the suffering of individual women whose instinctual fulfillment (through love or children) is denied by fate or social circumstance. In *Blood Wedding*, the Mother's last remaining son dies in a moonlit struggle with Leonardo, who has run away with his bride (Leonardo's former betrothed) on their wedding day. Leonardo (who also dies) is a member of the family that has killed the Mother's husband and other sons, and images of approaching death and sensual, frustrated love

permeate the whole play. In *Yerma* (the title name also means desert or sterility), the heroine is caught between her own passionate, sensual nature, yearning to love and bear children, and the need—for honor's sake—to remain with a husband who cares only for a well-regulated house. When Yerma realizes the extent of Juan's spiritual as well as sexual sterility, she strangles him and (because she will not remarry) simultaneously kills her only chance to fulfill her natural instincts through bearing children. The posthumously published *House of Bernarda Alba* (subtitled "A Drama About Women in the Villages of Spain") revolves around the same themes of sterility and frustrated love, as the repressed spinster daughters of the stern matriarch Bernarda Alba (and even the mad grandmother) reveal their common desire to marry a young man. Bernarda, however, upholds the proprieties that hedge in Spanish society; she refuses to let her daughters have visitors, ignores their rivalry over young Pepe el Romano (engaged to the wealthy oldest daughter, Angustias), recommends a painful death for an unwed mother being dragged through the streets, and—when the youngest daughter Adela commits suicide over Pepe, who has become her lover—seems chiefly concerned that Adela's body be dressed "as though she were a virgin." The conflict between social custom and individual need takes on mythic proportions in *The House of Bernarda Alba*, where only women appear on a stage that is strangely quarantined and painted white, and where the disturbing male principle represented by Pepe el Romano is reiterated by the noise of a stallion's hooves banging against stable walls.

In 1936, the year of his death, Lorca was revising a series of short lyric poems based on the Arabic forms of *casida* and the *gacela*, a collection eventually published in 1940 as *The Divan at Tamarit* (a "divan" is a poetic collection, and Lorca wrote the poems at a country house called after the ancient place name of Tamarit). In the previous year, he had published a long elegiac poem on the death of his good friend, the famous bullfighter Ignacio Sánchez Mejías, who had been fatally gored by a bull on August 11, 1934, in Manzanares and died two days later in Madrid. Sánchez Mejías was a cultured man, well-known in literary circles and himself the author of a play, and Lorca's "Lament for Ignacio Sánchez Mejías" celebrates both his friend and the value of human grace and courage in a world where everything ends in death.

Lorca's "Lament" is not only cast as an elegy (a medium-length poem that mourns a death), but also recalls one of the most famous poems of Spanish literature: the "Verses on the Death of His Father" written by the medieval poet Jorge Manrique (1440–1479). Manrique's catalogue of his father's noble qualities ("What a friend to his friends!"), and his description of individual lives as flowing into the sea of death, are echoed by passages in the modern elegy. Yet there is a fundamental difference between the two: where Manrique's elegy stresses religious themes and the prospect of eternal life, Lorca—in grim contrast—rejects such consolation and insists that his friend's death is permanent.

The four parts of the "Lament" incorporate a variety of forms and perspectives, all working together to suggest a progression from the report of death in the precise first line—"At five in the afternoon"—to the end where the dead man's nobility and elegance survive in "a sad breeze through the

olive trees." The "deep song" technique of an insistent refrain coloring everything else organizes the first section, "Cogida [the bull's toss] and Death," with its throbbing return to the moment of death. The scene in the arena wavers between an objective report—the boy with the shroud, the coffin on wheels—and the shared agony of the bull's bellowing and wounds burning like suns. Lorca moves in the next, ballad section to a personal refusal of Sánchez Mejías' death ("I will not see it!"), and a request that images of whiteness cover up this spilled blood; instead, he imagines Ignacio climbing steps to seek dawn and a mystic meeting with his true self but encountering, bewildered, only his broken body. After a tribute to his princely friend, the poet finally admits what he cannot force himself to see: the finality of physical dissolution as moss and grass invade the buried bullfighter's skull.

In "The Laid Out Body," a series of somber quatrains in regular meter recognizes the inevitability of death and dissolution (Ignacio's "pure shape which had nightingales" is now "filled with depthless holes"), and the fact that the bullfighter will be entombed in unyielding, lifeless stone. In this and the final section with its rhythmic free verse, Lorca accepts physical death ("even the sea dies!") but preserves, in his poetry, a vision of his noble countryman that surpasses such obliteration. For those who exist only on the unthinking, physical level (the bull, fig tree, household ants, the black satin of his funeral suit), Ignacio has indeed "died forever." Yet human beings recognize other qualities beyond the physical and in fact shape their estimate of an individual according to these qualities. In life, Sánchez Mejías was known to his friends for "the signal maturity of your understanding . . . your appetite for death and the taste of its mouth." These qualities survive, for a while, in memory. Lorca, echoing the pride with which the Latin poet Horace claimed to perpetuate his subjects in a "monument of lasting bronze," sings of his friend "for posterity," and captures the life and death of Sánchez Mejías in his "Lament."

Carl W. Cobb, *Federico García Lorca* (1967), is a good general biography; E. Honig's *García Lorca*, rev. ed. (1980), provides a critical introduction to the poet and his work, in literary historical context. *Lorca: A Collection of Critical Essays* (1962), edited by Manuel Durán, is a valuable collection of essays on the poet and his work (mainly the poetry).

Lament for Ignacio Sánchez Mejías[1]

1. Cogida[2] *and Death*

At five in the afternoon.
It was exactly five in the afternoon.
A boy brought the white sheet
at five in the afternoon.
A frail[3] of lime ready prepared
at five in the afternoon.

1. Translated by Stephen Spender and J. L. Gili. 2. Harvesting; the toss when the bull catches the bullfighter. 3. A basket. Lime, a disinfectant, was sprinkled on the body after death.

The rest was death, and death alone
at five in the afternoon.

The wind carried away the cottonwool[4]
at five in the afternoon.
And the oxide scattered crystal and nickel
at five in the afternoon.
Now the dove and the leopard[5] wrestle
at five in the afternoon.
And a thigh with a desolate horn
at five in the afternoon.
The bass-string struck up
at five in the afternoon.
Arsenic bells[6] and smoke
at five in the afternoon.
Groups of silence in the corners
at five in the afternoon.
And the bull alone with a high heart!
At five in the afternoon.
When the sweat of snow was coming
at five in the afternoon,
when the bull ring was covered in iodine
at five in the afternoon.
death laid eggs in the wound
at five in the afternoon.
At five in the afternoon.
Exactly at five o'clock in the afternoon.

A coffin on wheels is his bed
at five in the afternoon.
Bones and flutes resound in his ears[7]
at five in the afternoon.
Now the bull was bellowing through his forehead
at five in the afternoon.
The room[8] was iridescent with agony
at five in the afternoon.
In the distance the gangrene now comes
at five in the afternoon.
Horn of the lily through green groins[9]

4. To stop the blood; the beginning of a series of medicinal, chemical, and inhuman images that emphasize the presence of death. 5. Traditional symbols for peace and violence; they wrestle with one another as the bullfighter's thigh struggles with the bull's horn. 6. Bells were rung to announce a death; the bass string of the guitar strums a lament. 7. A suggestion of the medieval Dance of Death. 8. The room adjoining the arena where wounded bullfighters were taken for treatment. 9. The shape of the bleeding wound resembles a lily; gangrene turns flesh a greenish color.

at five in the afternoon.
The wounds were burning like suns
at five in the afternoon,
and the crowd was breaking the windows[1]
at five in the afternoon.
At five in the afternoon.
Ah, that fatal five in the afternoon!
It was five by all the clocks!
It was five in the shade of the afternoon!

2. *The Spilled Blood*

I will not see it!

Tell the moon to come
for I do not want to see the blood
of Ignacio on the sand.

I will not see it!

The moon wide open.
Horse of still clouds,
and the grey bull ring of dreams
with willows in the barreras.[2]
I will not see it!

Let my memory kindle![3]
Warn the jasmines
of such minute whiteness!

I will not see it!

The cow of the ancient world
passed her sad tongue
over a snout of blood
spilled on the sand,
and the bulls of Guisando,[4]
partly death and partly stone,
bellowed like two centuries
sated with treading the earth.
No.

1. A Spanish idiom for the crowd's loud roar. 2. Willows are a symbol of mourning; the barreras are the barriers around the ring within which the fight takes place and over which a fighter may escape the bull's charge. 3. Literally, "My memory burns within me." The poet calls on ("warns" as "notify") the small white jasmine flowers to come and cover the blood.
4. Carved stone bulls from the Celtic past; a tourist attraction in the province of Madrid.

I do not want to see it!
I will not see it!

Ignacio goes up the tiers[5]
with all his death on his shoulders.
He sought for the dawn
but the dawn was no more.
He seeks for his confident profile
and the dream bewilders him.
He sought for his beautiful body
and encountered his opened blood.
Do not ask me to see it!
I do not want to hear it spurt
each time with less strength:
that spurt that illuminates
the tiers of seats, and spills
over the corduroy and the leather
of a thirsty multitude.
Who shouts that I should come near!
Do not ask me to see it!

His eyes did not close
when he saw the horns near,
but the terrible mothers[6]
lifted their heads.
And across the ranches,[7]
an air of secret voices rose,
shouting to celestial bulls,
herdsmen of pale mist.
There was no prince in Seville[8]
who could compare with him,
nor sword like his sword
nor heart so true.
Like a river of lions
was his marvellous strength,
and like a marble torso
his firm drawn moderation.
The air of Andalusian Rome
gilded his head[9]
where his smile was a spikenard
of wit and intelligence.

5. An imaginary scene in which the bullfighter mounts the stairs of the arena. 6. The three Fates, who traditionally raised their heads when the thread of life was cut. 7. Fighting bulls were raised on the ranches of Lorca's home province of Andalusia. 8. Leading city of Andalusia. 9. The image suggests a statue from Roman times, when Andalusia was part of the Roman Empire. *Spikenard*: a small, white, fragrant flower common in Andalusia; by extension, the bullfighter's white teeth.

What a great torero in the ring!
What a good peasant in the sierra![1]
How gentle with the sheaves!
How hard with the spurs!
How tender with the dew!
How dazzling in the fiesta!
How tremendous with the final
banderillas[2] of darkness!

But now he sleeps without end.
Now the moss and the grass
open with sure fingers
the flower of his skull.
And now his blood comes out singing;
singing along marshes and meadows,
sliding on frozen horns,
faltering soulless in the mist,
stumbling over a thousand hoofs
like a long, dark, sad tongue,
to form a pool of agony
close to the starry Guadalquivir.[3]
Oh, white wall of Spain!
Oh, black bull of sorrow!
Oh, hard blood of Ignacio!
Oh, nightingale of his veins!
No.
I will not see it!
No chalice can contain it,
no swallows[4] can drink it,
no frost of light can cool it,
nor song nor deluge of white lilies,
no glass can cover it with silver.
No.
I will not see it!

3. *The Laid Out Body*[5]

Stone is a forehead where dreams grieve
without curving waters and frozen cypresses.

1. Mountainous country; Sánchez Mejías is seen as a good *serrano* or "man of the hills." *Torero:* bullfighter. 2. The multicolored short spears that were thrust in the bull's shoulders to provoke him to attack. 3. A great river that passes through all the major cities of Andalusia. The singing stream of the bullfighter's blood suggests both the river and a nightingale. 4. According to a Spanish legend of the Crucifixion, swallows—a symbol of innocence—drank the blood of Christ on the Cross. The poet is seeking ways of concealing the dead man's blood. 5. Literally, "Present Body," the Spanish expression for a funeral wake, where the body is laid out for public mourning; contrast "Absent Soul."

Stone is a shoulder on which to bear Time
with trees formed of tears and ribbons and planets.[6]

I have seen grey showers move towards the waves
raising their tender riddled arms,
to avoid being caught by the lying stone
which loosens their limbs without soaking the blood.

For stone gathers seed and clouds,
skeleton larks and wolves of penumbra:
but yields not sounds nor crystals nor fire,
only bull rings and bull rings and more bull rings without walls.

Now Ignacio the well born lies on the stone.
All is finished. What is happening? Contemplate his face:
death has covered him with pale sulphur
and has placed on him the head of a dark minotaur.[7]

All is finished. The rain penetrates his mouth.
The air, as if mad, leaves his sunken chest,
and Love, soaked through with tears of snow,
warms itself on the peak of the herd.[8]

What are they saying? A stenching silence settles down.
We are here with a body laid out which fades away,
with a pure shape which had nightingales
and we see it being filled with depthless holes.

Who creases the shroud? What he says is not true![9]
Nobody sings here, nobody weeps in the corner,
nobody pricks the spurs, nor terrifies the serpent.
Here I want nothing else but the round eyes
to see this body without a chance of rest.

Here I want to see those men of hard voice.
Those that break horses and dominate rivers;
those men of sonorous skeleton who sing
with a mouth full of sun and flint.

Here I want to see them. Before the stone.
Before this body with broken reins.

6. Traditional funeral imagery carved on gravestones. 7. A monster from Greek myth: half man, half bull. 8. Of the ranch, literally. 9. Lorca criticizes the conventional pieties voiced by someone standing close to the shrouded body; the poet prefers a clear-eyed, realistic view of death.

I want to know from them the way out
for this captain strapped down by death.

I want them to show me a lament like a river
which will have sweet mists and deep shores,
to take the body of Ignacio where it loses itself
without hearing the double panting of the bulls.

Loses itself in the round bull ring of the moon
which feigns in its youth a sad quiet bull:
loses itself in the night without song of fishes
and in the white thicket of frozen smoke.

I don't want them to cover his face with handkerchiefs
that he may get used to the death he carries.
Go, Ignacio; feel not the hot bellowing.
Sleep, fly, rest: even the sea dies!

4. Absent Soul

The bull does not know you, nor the fig tree,
nor the horses, nor the ants in your own house.
The child and the afternoon do not know you
because you have died for ever.

The back of the stone does not know you,
nor the black satin in which you crumble.
Your silent memory does not know you
because you have died for ever.

The autumn will come with small white snails,[1]
misty grapes and with clustered hills,
but no one will look into your eyes
because you have died for ever.

Because you have died for ever,
like all the death of the Earth,
like all the dead who are forgotten
in a heap of lifeless dogs.[2]

Nobody knows you. No. But I sing of you.
For posterity I sing of your profile and grace.

1. Actually, conch shell–shaped horns: the shepherds' horns that sounded in the hills each fall as the sheep were driven to new pastures. 2. Dogs as a (typically Continental) image for undignified, inferior creatures.

Of the signal maturity of your understanding.
Of your appetite for death and the taste of its mouth.
Of the sadness of your once valiant gaiety.

It will be a long time, if ever, before there is born
an Andalusian so true, so rich in adventure.
I sing of his elegance with words that groan,
and I remember a sad breeze through the olive trees.

4. *Alma ausente*

No te conoce el toro ni la higuera,
ni caballos ni hormigas de tu casa.
No te conoce el niño ni la tarde
porque te has muerto para siempre.

No te conoce el lomo de la piedra,
ni el raso negro donde te destrozas.
No te conoce tu recuerdo mudo
porque te has muerto para siempre.

El otoño vendrá con caracolas,
uva de niebla y montes agrupados,
pero nadie querrá mirar tus ojos
porque te has muerto para siempre.

Porque te has muerto para siempre,
como todos los muertos de la Tierra,
como todos los muertos que se olvidan
en un montón de perros apagados.

No te conoce nadie. No. Pero yo te canto.
Yo canto para luego tu perfil y tu gracia.
La madurez insigne de tu conocimiento.
Tu apetencia de muerte y el gusto de su boca.
La tristeza que tuvo tu valiente alegría.

Tardará mucho tiempo en nacer, si es que nace,
un andaluz tan claro, tan rico de aventura.
Yo canto su elegancia con palabras que gimen
y recuerdo una brisa triste por los olivos.

ALBERT CAMUS

1913–1960

Albert Camus is often linked with the contemporary philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre as an "existentialist" writer, and indeed—as novelist, playwright, and essayist—he is widely known for his analysis of two concerns basic to existentialism: its distinctive assessment of the human condition and its search for authentic values. Yet Camus rejected doctrinaire labels, and Sartre himself suggested that the author was better placed in the tradition of French "moralist" writers like Montaigne and Pascal, who analyzed human behavior inside an implied ethical context with its own standards of good and evil. For Camus, "liberty," "justice," "brotherhood," and "happiness" were some of these standards, along with the terms "revolt" and "absurd" that described human nonacceptance of a world without meaning or value. From his childhood among the very poor in Algiers to his later roles as journalist, Resistance fighter, internationally famous literary figure, and winner of the Nobel Prize in 1957, Camus never strayed from an intense awareness of the most basic levels of human existence, or from a sympathy with those—often poor and oppressed—who lived at that level. "I can understand only in human terms. I understand the things I touch, things that offer me resistance." He describes the raw experience of life as it is shared by all human beings, and provides a bond between them. Camus's reaction to the "absurd," the human condition stripped bare, is therefore quite different from Samuel Beckett's retreat into agonized subjectivity; where Beckett is haunted by the fictionality of experience, Camus asserts human consciousness and human solidarity as the only values there are.

Camus was born on November 7, 1913, into a "world of poverty and light" in Mondavi, Algeria (then a colony of France). He was the second son in a poor family of mixed Alsatian-Spanish descent, and his father died in one of the first battles of World War I. The two boys lived together with their mother, uncle, and grandmother in a two-room apartment in the working-class section of the capital city, Algiers. Camus and his brother, Lucien, were raised by their strict grandmother while their mother worked as a cleaning woman to support the family. Images of the Mediterranean landscape, with its overwhelming, sensual closeness of sea and blazing sun, recur throughout his work, as does a profound compassion for those who—like his mother—labor unrecognized and in silence. (Camus's mother was illiterate, and left deaf and with a speech impediment by an untreated childhood illness.)

A passionate athlete as well as scholarship student, Camus completed his secondary education and enrolled as a philosophy student at the University of Algiers before contracting, at seventeen, the tuberculosis which undermined his health and shocked him with its demonstration of the human body's vulnerability to disease and death. Camus later finished his degree, but in the meantime he had gained from his illness a metaphor for everything that opposes and puts limits to human fulfillment and happiness:

something he was later to term (after Artaud) the "plague" that infects bodies, minds, cities, and society (*The Plague* is the title of his second novel).

Camus lived and worked as a journalist in Algeria until 1940. He then moved to France when his political commentary (including a famous report on administrative mismanagement during a famine of Berber tribesmen) embroiled him with the local government so that his paper was suspended and he himself refused a work permit. Now as later, however, his work extended far beyond journalism. He published two collections of essays, *The Wrong Side and the Right Side* (1937) and *Nuptials* (1939), started a novel (*A Happy Death*), and founded a collective theater, "Le Théâtre du Travail" ("The Labor Theater") for which he wrote and adapted a number of plays. The theater always fascinated Camus, possibly because it involved groups of people and live interaction between actors and audience. He not only continued to write plays after leaving Algeria (*Cross Purposes*, 1944; *The Just Assassins*, 1950) but was considering directing a new theater shortly before his death. The "Labor Theater" was a popular theater with performances on the docks in Algiers and was sponsored by the Communist Party which Camus had joined in 1934. Like many intellectuals of his day, Camus found in the Party a promising vehicle for social protest; he was unwilling to abandon either his independence or his convictions, however, and resigned in 1935 when the party line changed and he was asked to give up his support for Algerian nationalism. He left the "Labor Theater" in 1937 and, with a group of young Algerian intellectuals associated with the publishing house of Charlot, founded a similar but politically independent "Team Theater" ("Théâtre de l'Equipe"). During this decade, Camus also began work on his most famous novel, *The Stranger* (1942), the play *Caligula* (1944), and an essay defining his concept of the "absurd" hero, *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942).

These three works established Camus's reputation as a philosopher of the "absurd": the absurdly grotesque discrepancy between human beings' brief, material existence and their urge to believe in larger meanings—to "make sense" of a world which has no discernible sense. In *The Stranger*, Camus described a thirty-year-old clerk named Meursault who lives a series of "real" events: he attends his mother's funeral, makes love to his mistress, goes swimming, shoots an Arab on the beach, and is tried for murder. All these events are described through Meursault's mind and yet they appear without any connection, as if each one began a new world. They are simply a series of concrete, sensuous *facts* separated from each other and from any kind of human or social meaning. Meursault is finally condemned to death not for murder but for this alienation, and its failure to respond to society's expectations of proper behavior. Just before his execution, when he is infuriated by the prison chaplain's attempt to console him with thoughts of an afterlife, he rises to a new level of existential awareness and an ardent affirmation of life in the here-and-now, the only truly human field of action. Stylistically, much of *The Stranger*'s impact comes from the contrast between the immediacy of the physical experience described, and the objective meaninglessness of that experience. On all levels, the novel reaffirms the importance of life lived moment by moment, in a total awareness that creates whatever meaning exists: the same awareness of his own activity that brings Sisyphus happiness when eternally pushing uphill the rock that will only roll down

again or the same search for an absolute honesty free of human pretenses that characterizes the mad emperor Caligula.

During World War II, Camus worked in Paris as a reader for the publishing firm of Gallimard, a post that he kept until his death in 1960. At the same time, he was part of the French Resistance and helped edit the underground journal *Combat*. His friendship with the existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre began in 1944, and after the war he and Sartre were internationally known as uncompromising analysts of the modern conscience. Camus's second novel, *The Plague* (1947), used a description of plague in a quarantined city, the Algerian Oran, to symbolize the spread of evil during World War II ("the feeling of suffocation from which we all suffered, and the atmosphere of threat and exile") and also to show the human struggle against physical and spiritual death in all its forms. Not content merely to symbolize his views in fiction, he also spoke out in philosophical essays and political statements where his independent mind and refusal of doctrinaire positions brought him attacks from all sides. In the bitter struggle that brought independence to Algeria in 1962, Camus recognized the claims of both French and Arab Algerians to the land in which they were born. In the quest for social reform, he rejected any ideology that subordinated individual freedom and singled out Communism—the doctrine most reformist intellectuals saw as the only active hope—as a particular danger with its emphasis on the de-individualized and inevitable march of history. Camus's open anti-Communism led to a spectacular break with Sartre, whose review *Les Temps Modernes* ("Modern Times") condemned *The Rebel* (1951) in bitter personal attacks. The concept of revolt that Camus outlined in *The Rebel* was more ethical than political: he defined revolt as a basic nonacceptance of preestablished limits (whether by death or by oppression) which was shared by all human beings, and therefore required a reciprocal acceptance and balancing of each person's rights. Such "revolt" was directly opposed to revolutionary nihilism in that it made the rebellious impulse a basis for social tolerance inside the individual's self-assertion; it had no patience for master plans that prescribed patterns of thought or action.

Five years after *The Rebel* was published, Camus produced a very different book in *The Fall* (1956). This book is a rhetorical tour de force spoken by a fallen lawyer who uses all the tricks of language to confess his weaknesses and yet emerge triumphant, the omniscient judge of his fellow creatures. If Camus's *Notebooks* reveal in his early works a cycle of Sisyphus or the "absurd," and his middle ones a Promethean cycle of "revolt," *The Fall* inaugurates a third cycle, that of Nemesis, or judgment. It offers a complex, ironic picture that combines a yearning towards purity with a cynical debunking of all such attempts. The narrator, Clamence, is a composite personality including (among other things) satirized aspects of both Sartre and Camus, but it is impossible to get to the bottom of his character behind the layers of self-consciously manipulated language. The style itself challenges and disorients the reader, who is both included and excluded from a narration that presents Clamence's half of a dialogue where "you," the reader, are presumed to be present as the other half.

Camus was a consummate artist as well as moralist, well aware of the opportunities as well as the illusions of his craft. When he received the

Nobel Prize in 1957, his acceptance speech emphasized the artificial but necessary "human" order imposed by art on the chaos of immediate experience. The artist is important as *creator*, because he or she shapes a human perspective, allows understanding in human terms, and therefore provides a basis for action. By stressing the gap between art and reality, Camus in effect provides a bridge between them as two poles of human understanding. His own works illustrate this act of bridging through their juxtaposition of realistic detail and almost mythic allegorization of human destiny. The symbolism of his titles, from *The Stranger* to the last collection of stories, *Exile and the Kingdom* (1957), repeatedly interprets human destiny in terms of a thematic opposition between the individual's sense of alienation and exile in the world, and simultaneous search for the true kingdom of human happiness and action.

With "The Guest," taken from *Exile and the Kingdom*, Camus returns to the landscape of his native Algeria. The colonial context is crucial in this story, not only to explain the real threat of guerrilla reprisal at the end (Camus may be recalling the actual killing of rural schoolteachers in 1954), but to establish the dimensions of a political situation in which the government, police, educational system, and economic welfare of Algeria were all controlled by France. French colonial education reproduced French, not local concerns: the schoolteacher's geography lesson outlines the four main rivers of France. The Arab is led along like an animal behind the gendarme Balducci, who rides a horse: here too, Camus may be recalling a humiliation reported two decades before and used to inspire Algerian nationalists. Inside this political context, however, he concentrates on quite different issues: freedom, brotherhood, responsibility, and the ambiguity of actions along with the inevitability of choice.

The remote desert landscape establishes a total physical and moral isolation for events in the story. "No one, in this desert . . . mattered," and the schoolteacher and his guest must each decide on his own what to do. When Balducci invades Daru's monastic solitude and tells him that he must deliver the Arab to prison, Daru is outraged to be involved and, indeed, to have responsibility for another's fate. Cursing both the system that tries to force him into complicity, and the Arab who has not had enough sense to get away, Daru tries in every way possible to avoid taking a stand. In the morning, however, when the Arab has not in fact run away, the schoolteacher makes up a package of food and money and passes on to the Arab his own freedom of choice. We cannot underestimate the quiet heroism of this act, by which Daru alienates himself from his own people and—unexpectedly—from the Arab's compatriots too; he is, he believes, conveying to a fellow human being the freedom of action which all people require. This level of common humanity is strongly underlined throughout the whole story as a "sort of brotherhood" and "strange alliance" that comes from having shared food and drink, and slept as equals under the same roof. Such hospitality is also the nomadic "law of the desert" that establishes fellowship between guest and host (a law that Daru refers to when he points out the second road at the end). The host's humane hospitality has placed a new burden and reciprocal responsibility on his guest, one that may explain why the Arab chooses—in apparent freedom—the road to prison. Camus considered "Cain"

and "The Law" as titles for this story before settling on "The Guest" (and the title word *l'hôte*, is identical for "guest" and "host" in French). Both guest and host are obliged to shoulder the ambiguous, and potentially fatal, burden of freedom.

Germaine Brée is author of *Albert Camus*, rev. ed. (1964), an excellent general study, and editor of *Camus: A Collection of Critical Essays* (1961). Phillip Rhein's *Albert Camus* (1969) is a brief introduction and biography. Herbert Lottman's *Albert Camus: A Biography* (1979) is the fullest and most detailed biography available.

The Guest[1]

The schoolmaster was watching the two men climb toward him. One was on horseback, the other on foot. They had not yet tackled the abrupt rise leading to the schoolhouse built on the hillside. They were toiling onward, making slow progress in the snow, among the stones, on the vast expanse of the high, deserted plateau. From time to time the horse stumbled. Without hearing anything yet, he could see the breath issuing from the horse's nostrils. One of the men, at least, knew the region. They were following the trail although it had disappeared days ago under a layer of dirty white snow. The schoolmaster calculated that it would take them half an hour to get onto the hill. It was cold; he went back into the school to get a sweater.

He crossed the empty, frigid classroom. On the blackboard the four rivers of France,[2] drawn with four different colored chalks, had been flowing toward their estuaries for the past three days. Snow had suddenly fallen in mid-October after eight months of drought without the transition of rain, and the twenty pupils, more or less, who lived in the villages scattered over the plateau had stopped coming. With fair weather they would return. Daru now heated only the single room that was his lodging, adjoining the classroom and giving also onto the plateau to the east. Like the class windows, his window looked to the south too. On that side the school was a few kilometers from the point where the plateau began to slope toward the south. In clear weather could be seen the purple mass of the mountain range where the gap opened onto the desert.

Somewhat warmed, Daru returned to the window from which he had first seen the two men. They were no longer visible. Hence they must have tackled the rise. The sky was not so dark, for the snow had stopped falling during the night. The morning had opened with a dirty light which had scarcely become brighter as the ceiling of clouds lifted. At two in the afternoon it seemed as if the day were merely beginning. But still this was better than those three days when the

1. Translated by Justin O'Brien. 2. The Seine, Loire, Rhône, and Gironde rivers; French geography was taught in the French colonies.

thick snow was falling amidst unbroken darkness with little gusts of wind that rattled the double door of the classroom. Then Daru had spent long hours in his room, leaving it only to go to the shed and feed the chickens or get some coal. Fortunately the delivery truck from Tadjid, the nearest village to the north, had brought his supplies two days before the blizzard. It would return in forty-eight hours.

Besides, he had enough to resist a siege, for the little room was cluttered with bags of wheat that the administration left as a stock to distribute to those of his pupils whose families had suffered from the drought. Actually they had all been victims because they were all poor. Every day Daru would distribute a ration to the children. They had missed it, he knew, during these bad days. Possibly one of the fathers or big brothers would come this afternoon and he could supply them with grain. It was just a matter of carrying them over to the next harvest. Now shiploads of wheat were arriving from France and the worst was over. But it would be hard to forget that poverty, that army of ragged ghosts wandering in the sunlight, the plateaus burned to a cinder month after month, the earth shriveled up little by little, literally scorched, every stone bursting into dust under one's foot. The sheep had died then by thousands and even a few men, here and there, sometimes without anyone's knowing.

In contrast with such poverty, he who lived almost like a monk in his remote schoolhouse, nonetheless satisfied with the little he had and with the rough life, had felt like a lord with his whitewashed walls, his narrow couch, his unpainted shelves, his well, and his weekly provision of water and food. And suddenly this snow, without warning, without the foretaste of rain. This is the way the region was, cruel to live in, even without men—who didn't help matters either. But Daru had been born here. Everywhere else, he felt exiled.

He stepped out onto the terrace in front of the schoolhouse. The two men were now halfway up the slope. He recognized the horseman as Balducci, the old gendarme he had known for a long time. Balducci was holding on the end of a rope an Arab who was walking behind him with hands bound and head lowered. The gendarme waved a greeting to which Daru did not reply, lost as he was in contemplation of the Arab dressed in a faded blue jellaba, his feet in sandals but covered with socks of heavy raw wool, his head surmounted by a narrow, short *chèche*.[3] They were approaching. Balducci was holding back his horse in order not to hurt the Arab, and the group was advancing slowly.

Within earshot, Balducci shouted: "One hour to do the three kilometers from El Ameur!" Daru did not answer. Short and square in

3. Scarf; here, wound as a turban around the head. *Jellaba:* a long hooded robe worn by Arabs in North Africa.

his thick sweater, he watched them climb. Not once had the Arab raised his head. "Hello," said Daru when they got up onto the terrace. "Come in and warm up." Balducci painfully got down from his horse without letting go the rope. From under his bristling mustache he smiled at the schoolmaster. His little dark eyes, deep-set under a tanned forehead, and his mouth surrounded with wrinkles made him look attentive and studious. Daru took the bridle, led the horse to the shed, and came back to the two men, who were now waiting for him in the school. He led them into his room. "I am going to heat up the classroom," he said. "We'll be more comfortable there." When he entered the room again, Balducci was on the couch. He had undone the rope tying him to the Arab, who had squatted near the stove. His hands still bound, the *chèche* pushed back on his head, he was looking toward the window. At first Daru noticed only his huge lips, fat, smooth, almost Negroid; yet his nose was straight, his eyes were dark and full of fever. The *chèche* revealed an obstinate forehead and, under the weathered skin now rather discolored by the cold, the whole face had a restless and rebellious look that struck Daru when the Arab, turning his face toward him, looked him straight in the eyes. "Go into the other room," said the schoolmaster, "and I'll make you some mint tea." "Thanks," Balducci said. "What a chore! How I long for retirement." And addressing his prisoner in Arabic: "Come on, you." The Arab got up and, slowly, holding his bound wrists in front of him, went into the classroom.

With the tea, Daru brought a chair. But Balducci was already enthroned on the nearest pupil's desk and the Arab had squatted against the teacher's platform facing the stove, which stood between the desk and the window. When he held out the glass of tea to the prisoner, Daru hesitated at the sight of his bound hands. "He might perhaps be untied." "Sure," said Balducci. "That was for the trip." He started to get to his feet. But Daru, setting the glass on the floor, had knelt beside the Arab. Without saying anything, the Arab watched him with his feverish eyes. Once his hands were free, he rubbed his swollen wrists against each other, took the glass of tea, and sucked up the burning liquid in swift little sips.

"Good," said Daru. "And where are you headed?"

Balducci withdrew his mustache from the tea. "Here, son."

"Odd pupils! And you're spending the night?"

"No. I'm going back to El Ameur. And you will deliver this fellow to Tinguit. He is expected at police headquarters."

Balducci was looking at Daru with a friendly little smile.

"What's this story?" asked the schoolmaster. "Are you pulling my leg?"

"No, son. Those are the orders."

"The orders? I'm not . . ." Daru hesitated, not wanting to hurt the old Corsican.[4] "I mean, that's not my job."

"What! What's the meaning of that? In wartime people do all kinds of jobs."

"Then I'll wait for the declaration of war!"

Balducci nodded.

"O.K. But the orders exist and they concern you too. Things are brewing, it appears. There is talk of a forthcoming revolt. We are mobilized, in a way."

Daru still had his obstinate look.

"Listen, son," Balducci said. "I like you and you must understand. There's only a dozen of us at El Ameur to patrol throughout the whole territory of a small department[5] and I must get back in a hurry. I was told to hand this guy over to you and return without delay. He couldn't be kept there. His village was beginning to stir; they wanted to take him back. You must take him to Tinguit tomorrow before the day is over. Twenty kilometers shouldn't faze a husky fellow like you. After that, all will be over. You'll come back to your pupils and your comfortable life."

Behind the wall the horse could be heard snorting and pawing the earth. Daru was looking out the window. Decidedly, the weather was clearing and the light was increasing over the snowy plateau. When all the snow was melted, the sun would take over again and once more would burn the fields of stone. For days, still, the unchanging sky would shed its dry light on the solitary expanse where nothing had any connection with man.

"After all," he said, turning around toward Balducci, "what did he do?" And, before the gendarme had opened his mouth, he asked: "Does he speak French?"

"No, not a word. We had been looking for him for a month, but they were hiding him. He killed his cousin."

"Is he against us?"[6]

"I don't think so. But you can never be sure."

"Why did he kill?"

"A family squabble, I think. One owed the other grain, it seems. It's not at all clear. In short, he killed his cousin with a billhook. You know, like a sheep, *kreezk*!"

Balducci made the gesture of drawing a blade across his throat and the Arab, his attention attracted, watched him with a sort of anxiety. Daru felt a sudden wrath against the man, against all men with their rotten spite, their tireless hates, their blood lust.

But the kettle was singing on the stove. He served Balducci more tea, hesitated, then served the Arab again, who, a second time, drank

4. Balducci is a native of Corsica, a French island north of Sardinia. 5. French administrative and territorial division: like a county. 6. Against the French colonial government.

avidly. His raised arms made the jellaba fall open and the schoolmaster saw his thin, muscular chest.

"Thanks, kid," Balducci said. "And now, I'm off."

He got up and went toward the Arab, taking a small rope from his pocket.

"What are you doing?" Daru asked dryly.

Balducci, disconcerted, showed him the rope.

"Don't bother."

The old gendarme hesitated. "It's up to you. Of course, you are armed?"

"I have my shotgun."

"Where?"

"In the trunk."

"You ought to have it near your bed."

"Why? I have nothing to fear."

"You're crazy, son. If there's an uprising, no one is safe, we're all in the same boat."

"I'll defend myself. I'll have time to see them coming."

Balducci began to laugh, then suddenly the mustache covered the white teeth.

"You'll have time? O.K. That's just what I was saying. You have always been a little cracked. That's why I like you, my son was like that."

At the same time he took out his revolver and put it on the desk.

"Keep it; I don't need two weapons from here to El Ameur."

The revolver shone against the black paint of the table. When the gendarme turned toward him, the schoolmaster caught the smell of leather and horseflesh.

"Listen, Balducci," Daru said suddenly, "every bit of this disgusts me, and first of all your fellow here. But I won't hand him over. Fight, yes, if I have to. But not that."

The old gendarme stood in front of him and looked at him severely.

"You're being a fool," he said slowly. "I don't like it either. You don't get used to putting a rope on a man even after years of it, and you're even ashamed—yes, ashamed. But you can't let them have their way."

"I won't hand him over," Daru said again.

"It's an order, son, and I repeat it."

"That's right. Repeat to them what I've said to you: I won't hand him over."

Balducci made a visible effort to reflect. He looked at the Arab and at Daru. At last he decided.

"No, I won't tell them anything. If you want to drop us, go ahead; I'll not denounce you. I have an order to deliver the prisoner and I'm doing so. And now you'll just sign this paper for me."

"There's no need. I'll not deny that you left him with me."

"Don't be mean with me. I know you'll tell the truth. You're from hereabouts and you are a man. But you must sign, that's the rule."

Daru opened his drawer, took out a little square bottle of purple ink, the red wooden penholder with the "sergeant-major" pen he used for making models of penmanship, and signed. The gendarme carefully folded the paper and put it into his wallet. Then he moved toward the door.

"I'll see you off," Daru said.

"No," said Balducci. "There's no use being polite. You insulted me."

He looked at the Arab, motionless in the same spot, sniffed peevishly, and turned away toward the door. "Good-by, son," he said. The door shut behind him. Balducci appeared suddenly outside the window and then disappeared. His footsteps were muffled by the snow. The horse stirred on the other side of the wall and several chickens fluttered in fright. A moment later Balducci reappeared outside the window leading the horse by the bridle. He walked toward the little rise without turning around and disappeared from sight with the horse following him. A big stone could be heard bouncing down. Daru walked back toward the prisoner, who, without stirring, never took his eyes off him. "Wait," the schoolmaster said in Arabic and went toward the bedroom. As he was going through the door, he had a second thought, went to the desk, took the revolver, and stuck it in his pocket. Then, without looking back, he went into his room.

For some time he lay on his couch watching the sky gradually close over, listening to the silence. It was this silence that had seemed painful to him during the first days here, after the war. He had requested a post in the little town at the base of the foothills separating the upper plateaus from the desert. There, rocky walls, green and black to the north, pink and lavender to the south, marked the frontier of eternal summer. He had been named to a post farther north, on the plateau itself. In the beginning, the solitude and the silence had been hard for him on these wastelands peopled only by stones. Occasionally, furrows suggested cultivation, but they had been dug to uncover a certain kind of stone good for building. The only plowing here was to harvest rocks. Elsewhere a thin layer of soil accumulated in the hollows would be scraped out to enrich paltry village gardens. This is the way it was: bare rock covered three quarters of the region. Towns sprang up, flourished, then disappeared; men came by, loved one another or fought bitterly, then died. No one in this desert, neither he nor his guest, mattered. And yet, outside this desert neither of them, Daru knew, could have really lived.

When he got up, no noise came from the classroom. He was amazed at the unmixed joy he derived from the mere thought that

the Arab might have fled and that he would be alone with no decision to make. But the prisoner was there. He had merely stretched out between the stove and the desk. With eyes open, he was staring at the ceiling. In that position, his thick lips were particularly noticeable, giving him a pouting look. "Come," said Daru. The Arab got up and followed him. In the bedroom, the schoolmaster pointed to a chair near the table under the window. The Arab sat down without taking his eyes off Daru.

"Are you hungry?"

"Yes," the prisoner said.

Daru set the table for two. He took flour and oil, shaped a cake in a frying-pan, and lighted the little stove that functioned on bottled gas. While the cake was cooking, he went out to the shed to get cheese, eggs, dates, and condensed milk. When the cake was done he set it on the window sill to cool, heated some condensed milk diluted with water, and beat up the eggs into an omelette. In one of his motions he knocked against the revolver stuck in his right pocket. He set the bowl down, went into the classroom, and put the revolver in his desk drawer. When he came back to the room, night was falling. He put on the light and served the Arab. "Eat," he said. The Arab took a piece of the cake, lifted it eagerly to his mouth, and stopped short.

"And you?" he asked.

"After you. I'll eat too."

The thick lips opened slightly. The Arab hesitated, then bit into the cake determinedly.

The meal over, the Arab looked at the schoolmaster. "Are you the judge?"

"No, I'm simply keeping you until tomorrow."

"Why do you eat with me?"

"I'm hungry."

The Arab fell silent. Daru got up and went out. He brought back a folding bed from the shed, set it up between the table and the stove, perpendicular to his own bed. From a large suitcase which, upright in a corner, served as a shelf for papers, he took two blankets and arranged them on the camp bed. Then he stopped, felt useless, and sat down on his bed. There was nothing more to do or to get ready. He had to look at this man. He looked at him, therefore, trying to imagine his face bursting with rage. He couldn't do so. He could see nothing but the dark yet shining eyes and the animal mouth.

"Why did you kill him?" he asked in a voice whose hostile tone surprised him.

The Arab looked away.

"He ran away. I ran after him."

He raised his eyes to Daru again and they were full of a sort of

woeful interrogation. "Now what will they do to me?"

"Are you afraid?"

He stiffened, turning his eyes away.

"Are you sorry?"

The Arab stared at him openmouthed. Obviously he did not understand. Daru's annoyance was growing. At the same time he felt awkward and self-conscious with his big body wedged between the two beds.

"Lie down there," he said impatiently. "That's your bed."

The Arab didn't move. He called to Daru:

"Tell me!"

The schoolmaster looked at him.

"Is the gendarme coming back tomorrow?"

"I don't know."

"Are you coming with us?"

"I don't know. Why?"

The prisoner got up and stretched out on top of the blankets, his feet toward the window. The light from the electric bulb shone straight into his eyes and he closed them at once.

"Why?" Daru repeated, standing beside the bed.

The Arab opened his eyes under the blinding light and looked at him, trying not to blink.

"Come with us," he said.

In the middle of the night, Daru was still not asleep. He had gone to bed after undressing completely; he generally slept naked. But when he suddenly realized that he had nothing on, he hesitated. He felt vulnerable and the temptation came to him to put his clothes back on. Then he shrugged his shoulders; after all, he wasn't a child and, if need be, he could break his adversary in two. From his bed he could observe him, lying on his back, still motionless with his eyes closed under the harsh light. When Daru turned out the light, the darkness seemed to coagulate all of a sudden. Little by little, the night came back to life in the window where the starless sky was stirring gently. The schoolmaster soon made out the body lying at his feet. The Arab still did not move, but his eyes seemed open. A faint wind was prowling around the schoolhouse. Perhaps it would drive away the clouds and the sun would reappear.

During the night the wind increased. The hens fluttered a little and then were silent. The Arab turned over on his side with his back to Daru, who thought he heard him moan. Then he listened for his guest's breathing, become heavier and more regular. He listened to that breath so close to him and mused without being able to go to sleep. In this room where he had been sleeping alone for a year, this presence bothered him. But it bothered him also by imposing on

him a sort of brotherhood he knew well but refused to accept in the present circumstances. Men who share the same rooms, soldiers or prisoners, develop a strange alliance as if, having cast off their armor with their clothing, they fraternized every evening, over and above their differences, in the ancient community of dream and fatigue. But Daru shook himself; he didn't like such musings, and it was essential to sleep.

A little later, however, when the Arab stirred slightly, the schoolmaster was still not asleep. When the prisoner made a second move, he stiffened, on the alert. The Arab was lifting himself slowly on his arms with almost the motion of a sleepwalker. Seated upright in bed, he waited motionless without turning his head toward Daru, as if he were listening attentively. Daru did not stir; it had just occurred to him that the revolver was still in the drawer of his desk. It was better to act at once. Yet he continued to observe the prisoner, who, with the same slithery motion, put his feet on the ground, waited again, then began to stand up slowly. Daru was about to call out to him when the Arab began to walk, in a quite natural but extraordinarily silent way. He was heading toward the door at the end of the room that opened into the shed. He lifted the latch with precaution and went out, pushing the door behind him but without shutting it. Daru had not stirred. "He is running away," he merely thought. "Good riddance!" Yet he listened attentively. The hens were not fluttering; the guest must be on the plateau. A faint sound of water reached him, and he didn't know what it was until the Arab again stood framed in the doorway, closed the door carefully, and came back to bed without a sound. Then Daru turned his back on him and fell asleep. Still later he seemed, from the depths of his sleep, to hear furtive steps around the schoolhouse. "I'm dreaming! I'm dreaming!" he repeated to himself. And he went on sleeping.

When he awoke, the sky was clear; the loose window let in a cold, pure air. The Arab was asleep, hunched up under the blankets now, his mouth open, utterly relaxed. But when Daru shook him, he started dreadfully, staring at Daru with wild eyes as if he had never seen him and such a frightened expression that the schoolmaster stepped back. "Don't be afraid. It's me. You must eat." The Arab nodded his head and said yes. Calm had returned to his face, but his expression was vacant and listless.

The coffee was ready. They drank it seated together on the folding bed as they munched their pieces of the cake. Then Daru led the Arab under the shed and showed him the faucet where he washed. He went back into the room, folded the blankets and the bed, made his own bed and put the room in order. Then he went through the classroom and out onto the terrace. The sun was already rising in the blue sky; a soft, bright light was bathing the deserted plateau. On

the ridge the snow was melting in spots. The stones were about to reappear. Crouched on the edge of the plateau, the schoolmaster looked at the deserted expanse. He thought of Balducci. He had hurt him, for he had sent him off in a way as if he didn't want to be associated with him. He could still hear the gendarme's farewell and, without knowing why, he felt strangely empty and vulnerable. At that moment, from the other side of the schoolhouse, the prisoner coughed. Daru listened to him almost despite himself and then, furious, threw a pebble that whistled through the air before sinking into the snow. That man's stupid crime revolted him, but to hand him over was contrary to honor. Merely thinking of it made him smart with humiliation. And he cursed at one and the same time his own people who had sent him this Arab and the Arab too who had dared to kill and not managed to get away. Daru got up, walked in a circle on the terrace, waited motionless, and then went back into the schoolhouse.

The Arab, leaning over the cement floor of the shed, was washing his teeth with two fingers. Daru looked at him and said: "Come." He went back into the room ahead of the prisoner. He slipped a hunting-jacket on over his sweater and put on walking-shoes. Standing, he waited until the Arab had put on his *chèche* and sandals. They went into the classroom and the schoolmaster pointed to the exit, saying: "Go ahead." The fellow didn't budge. "I'm coming," said Daru. The Arab went out. Daru went back into the room and made a package of pieces of rusk, dates, and sugar. In the classroom, before going out, he hesitated a second in front of his desk, then crossed the threshold and locked the door. "That's the way," he said. He started toward the east, followed by the prisoner. But, a short distance from the schoolhouse, he thought he heard a slight sound behind them. He retraced his steps and examined the surroundings of the house, there was no one there. The Arab watched him without seeming to understand. "Come on," said Daru.

They walked for an hour and rested beside a sharp peak of limestone. The snow was melting faster and faster and the sun was drinking up the puddles at once, rapidly cleaning the plateau, which gradually dried and vibrated like the air itself. When they resumed walking, the ground rang under their feet. From time to time a bird rent the space in front of them with a joyful cry. Daru breathed in deeply the fresh morning light. He felt a sort of rapture before the vast familiar expanse, now almost entirely yellow under its dome of blue sky. They walked an hour more, descending toward the south. They reached a level height made up of crumbly rocks. From there on, the plateau sloped down, eastward, toward a low plain where there were a few spindly trees and, to the south, toward outcroppings of rock that gave the landscape a chaotic look.

Daru surveyed the two directions. There was nothing but the sky

on the horizon. Not a man could be seen. He turned toward the Arab, who was looking at him blankly. Daru held out the package to him. "Take it," he said. "There are dates, bread, and sugar. You can hold out for two days. Here are a thousand francs too." The Arab took the package and the money but kept his full hands at chest level as if he didn't know what to do with what was being given him. "Now look," the schoolmaster said as he pointed in the direction of the east, "there's the way to Tinguit. You have a two-hour walk. At Tinguit you'll find the administration and the police. They are expecting you." The Arab looked toward the east, still holding the package and the money against his chest. Daru took his elbow and turned him rather roughly toward the south. At the foot of the height on which they stood could be seen a faint path. "That's the trail across the plateau. In a day's walk from here you'll find pasturelands and the first nomads. They'll take you in and shelter you according to their law." The Arab had now turned toward Daru and a sort of panic was visible in his expression. "Listen," he said. Daru shook his head: "No, be quiet. Now I'm leaving you." He turned his back on him, took two long steps in the direction of the school, looked hesitantly at the motionless Arab, and started off again. For a few minutes he heard nothing but his own step resounding on the cold ground and did not turn his head. A moment later, however, he turned around. The Arab was still there on the edge of the hill, his arms hanging now, and he was looking at the schoolmaster. Daru felt something rise in his throat. But he swore with impatience, waved vaguely, and started off again. He had already gone some distance when he again stopped and looked. There was no longer anyone on the hill.

Daru hesitated. The sun was now rather high in the sky and was beginning to beat down on his head. The schoolmaster retraced his steps, at first somewhat uncertainly, then with decision. When he reached the little hill, he was bathed in sweat. He climbed it as fast as he could and stopped, out of breath, at the top. The rock-fields to the south stood out sharply against the blue sky, but on the plain to the east a steamy heat was already rising. And in that slight haze, Daru, with heavy heart, made out the Arab walking slowly on the road to prison.

A little later, standing before the window of the classroom, the schoolmaster was watching the clear light bathing the whole surface of the plateau, but he hardly saw it. Behind him on the blackboard, among the winding French rivers, sprawled the clumsily chalked-up words he had just read: "You handed over our brother. You will pay for this." Daru looked at the sky, the plateau, and, beyond, the invisible lands stretching all the way to the sea. In this vast landscape he had loved so much, he was alone.

Masterpieces of the Twentieth Century: Contemporary Explorations

The closer we come to contemporary times, the more disagreement there is over what is to be called a "masterpiece." Hundreds of works and authors claim to represent the mainstream of modern art and culture, and reviewers frequently inform their readers that they are in the presence of a "contemporary masterpiece." But what does this mean? Is there something radically different about today's literature? Or does modern literary tradition imply instead an evolution of style and content, so that our job is to read with the same care we gave to earlier works, while becoming acquainted with new subject matters, new angles of vision, and new techniques of expression? If the latter is true, as the editors of this anthology believe, we know how to proceed: our experience as readers of literature (*your* experience as a reader of this anthology) provides a basic familiarity with many of the themes, strategies, and cultural contexts that reemerge in contemporary literature.

These authors, from Borges to Soyinka, represent a great range of styles that cannot be subsumed under commonly accepted categories. Our texts move from fragmented visions of ambiguous reality to an almost documentary picture of society, from hallucinations and "magical realism" to medically accurate depictions of death, from insulated drama on an almost bare stage to a multimedia celebration of the clash of cultures. Yet just as the modernists of the first part of the century claimed to discover new modes of perception and literary expression, later writers propose their own even more "accurate" representations of reality, exploit different subject matter, reach out to new audiences, and explore different ways of relating to their readers.

A great deal of contemporary literature prolongs the modernist experiment in certain characteristic ways. Some writers, for example, push to an extreme the modernist refusal of positivist certainty, and create works that are essentially structures of ambiguity (Borges, Beckett, Robbe-Grillet); here, literary language is highly self-reflexive, constantly referring to its own constitution as an act of writing, so that it tends to bring exterior reality into competition with the self-contained play of words. Other writers, extending in their own way the modernist claim to achieve a "truer" reality, ignore modernist emphasis on aesthetic shaping and prefer a more direct representation of historical flow. They may return to the familiar forms of the realistic historical novel or, on the other hand, subvert all sense of traditional genre with works that

incorporate actual documents such as personal letters, newspaper clippings, or comments and drawings in the margin to prove their "real" status as a part of contemporary culture. Throughout, they imply that the aesthetic emphasis of earlier modernism proposes an artificially symmetrical picture of human experience which is anchored, moreover, in a single and somewhat solipsistic authorial vision; and that a reality which is basically "jagged" (Ezra Pound's term) needs to be represented with all its rough edges.

This shift of sensibility (which some have unhelpfully labeled "postmodernism") takes to its logical conclusion the modernist emphasis on fragmentation and discontinuity as ways of conveying a sense of reality. When such authors look to the scientific revolution of the early part of the century, it is recognition of randomness and shifting perceptions that is seen as crucial. The essential reference is to Werner Heisenberg's uncertainty principle (see p. 2148) which emphasizes the *approximate* nature of any description of reality, and the fact that the observer's position relative to what is observed changes from moment to moment. A similar emphasis on shifting patterns of perception as constituting identity appears in the later development of Freudian psychoanalysis. Here, attention is displaced from subconscious and instinctual drives to the concept of dialogue and exchange, where individual identity is not so much discovered and adjusted through proper therapy as constantly being defined through interaction with others. Literary predecessors evoked by postmodernist critics include the Joyce of *Finnegans Wake*, who dissolves language into a boundless network of wordplay and allusion; Kafka, who dramatizes unresolvable contradictions as metaphors for reality; or Borges, the master of the verbal labyrinth where historical fact and fiction are indistinguishable. The perfect expression of postmodern consciousness is undoubtedly semiotics, the science of signs, which analyzes networks of cultural, psychoanalytic, and linguistic evidence in its study of the "gamelike" construction of meaning.

Readers will find that there are certain easily identified strategies at work in this literature, strategies whose general aim is to avoid creating any sense of completeness, or any artificially fixed center in which to anchor our understanding. In fiction, this literature replaces the authorial personality (the coordinating core, for example, of Proust's great novel or of Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist*) with an anonymous and even self-contradictory narrative viewpoint (the "unnamable" narrator in Beckett's novel, or the impersonal and contradictory narrative perspective in Robbe-Grillet's "The Secret Room"). Just as there is no unified authorial perspective, so individual characters do not develop a consistent psychological identity. Instead, they must be read in terms of the specific situations in which they appear. Like Hamm and Clov in Beckett's *Endgame*, such characters interact in a meaningless void, reacting moment by moment inside a permanent present, located in an ambiguously allusive situation that cannot be defined in external terms. Nor does the time in which they appear have any solid chronological basis. It leads nowhere: in *Endgame*, we are not even sure whether the action concludes or is simply part of a repetitive pattern. Time in "The Secret Room" moves backward; in Robbe-Grillet's novels and his film *Last Year at Marienbad* it is made up of contradictory scenes so that any settled sense of what happened, or when, is not available. There is no plot, and the narrative line is not patterned by a beginning, middle, and end; overall, there is no

sense of action developing toward a logical conclusion. The ambiguity of appearances is heightened by putting history and fantasy on the same level (Borges), or by including impossible "magical" scenes in the midst of apparently realistic narrative (García Márquez).

All these strategies actually serve to engage the reader in a new way, by refusing to provide even the first stage of an interpretation of reality, and offering instead a collection of ambiguously related fragments, strangely emphasized silences, and merely potential themes. The burden, in fact, is placed squarely and openly on the reader to reconstruct a meaning in full awareness of the reading process itself: a tactic foreshadowed two centuries ago by *Tristram Shandy*, and more recently by Bertolt Brecht's "alienation technique" with its refusal of dramatic illusion and insistence on the audience's maintaining a critical distance. It is a form built on a calculated refusal of easy coherence, an "antiform" which requires a great deal of artistic patterning to be convincing. Some of these texts have been called "anti-literature" for their refusal to provide the aesthetic completion suggested by the term "literature." A truly random work, however, would be nothing more than a collection of unrelated words (like Tzara's Dada poem, created from newspaper clippings shaken in a paper bag). In order to impress on the reader the idea of a world which is *not* aesthetically arranged, the authors of "incomplete" literature logically devise artistic forms that continually focus our attention on the artificiality of any totalizing perspective.

Several of the authors included here do not subscribe, however, to the notion of representing contemporary reality by means of structures of incompletion. There are those who—like García Márquez, Mishima, and Soyinka—are brilliant formal experimenters but focus fairly directly on cultural and psychological issues. Although Marguerite Duras's latest work is clearly "postmodernist" in its rejection of defined characters and narrative point of view, the flashbacks and rupture of narrative line in *Hiroshima Mon Amour* are used basically to bring out psychological characterization. García Márquez comes close to the European "new wave" or radically experimental techniques with his manipulation of perspective through magical realism. His focus is clearly the political and cultural reality of Latin America, however, even when he jokes about acquiring a reputation for writing "real literature" by writing impenetrably and imitating Robbe-Grillet. Solzhenitsyn, on the other hand, is chiefly interested in conveying a recognizable picture of his society and the individual and cultural tensions within it.

Yet another aspect these writers have in common is an awareness of cultural heterogeneity, shown by the prevalence of multicultural themes and the direct presentation of social problems that are *not* seen within the framework of a single answer. Without diminishing the picture of social reality in earlier twentieth-century literature (of which Mann is a prime example), it is still possible to say that recent years have brought an unprecedented recognition of different ethnic, sexual, and cultural identities, both as political facts and as the subject matter of literature. Since women have been writing literature as long as literature has existed, it would be incorrect to say that literature by women or concerning women is new. Nonetheless, the realistic representation of issues involving women and their position in society emerges particularly strongly in literature toward the middle of this century. Cultural isolation, too, is no longer the norm among nations, and a writer like the

Japanese Yukio Mishima is fully acquainted with Western literature in addition to his own. Marguerite Duras, a French writer born and raised in Vietnam, describes the complex meshing of Asian and Western cultural perspectives in relation to issues of primary importance for both. Emerging African nations have taken visible pride in fostering their own indigenous languages and cultures, and African literature displays both a native tradition and other (European and Islamic) cultures on the same continent. Finally, the "melting pot" of American society no longer implies a bland purée where individual differences disappear, but preserves instead an understanding of separate ethnic identities, as Afro-American, Yiddish, Chicano, Canadian, and Native American literatures—as well as regional literatures—are recognized in their individual images and value.

The intricate meetings of cultures, and the difficult integration of competing ethnic, sexual, or racial identities in a single culture, have provided the theme of much current writing. Yet there is a larger continuity insofar as these contemporary explorations continue earlier themes (such as cultural and individual identity, or the existence of a meaningful universe) and hold to the notion that style must evolve to reflect current ideas of language and expressive form. The pluralism of twentieth-century society is reflected in its literary styles, and in the place accorded pluralism in the literary canon. In a broad sense, the postmodern decomposition of aesthetic wholes, and its insistent teasing out of contradictory layers of reality, has something in common with a representative pluralism which explores areas beyond the more homogeneous world view of prewar Western society—areas that were earlier seen as marginal to the positivist, European-centered image of Western culture. These contemporary explorations continue the pattern of their predecessors, however, by attempting evermore accurate representations of reality through experiments with expressive form, and through increasingly specific historical reference.

FURTHER READING

Ihab Hassan's *The Dismemberment of Orpheus: Toward a Postmodern Literature* (1971) is a good introduction to changes in literary strategy growing out of modernism; it combines theoretical discussion with analyses of Hemingway, Kafka, Genet, and Beckett. *Romanticism, Modernism, Postmodernism*, ed. Harry R. Garvin (1977), is a useful collection of theoretical essays and practical criticism that describe changing views of the artistic imagination. Essays in *Innovation/Renovation, New Perspectives on the Humanities*, ed. by Ihab and Sally Hassan (1983), explore perspectives on change in contemporary Western culture; drawing on intellectual history, theater, philosophy, psychoanalysis and literary theory, they outline an "emergent pattern" of interdisciplinary attitudes. H. H. Arnason's *History of Modern Art, Painting, Sculpture, Architecture* (1977), copiously illustrated with plates and photographs, contains many examples of contemporary explorations in the different arts. Abstract Expressionism, concrete art and lettrism, "assemblage" art, Pop Art and Happenings introduce the reader to different modes of artistic perception at mid-century.

JORGE LUIS BORGES

1899–1986

Although other modernist writers are known for their formal innovations, it is the Argentine Jorge Luis Borges who represents, above all, the gamelike or playful aspect of literary creation. Historical reality is only one of the possible realities in Borges' idealist universe, which joins the worlds of fantasy and science fiction in considering everything that can be imagined as having equal claim on our attention. His is a world of pure thought, where abstract fictional games are played out when an initial situation or concept is pushed to its elegantly logical extreme. Consequently, there is no room for the artificial constraints imposed by traditional artistic attempts to represent reality: no need for psychological consistency, for a realistic setting, or for a story that unfolds in ordinary time and space. The voice telling the story becomes lost inside the setting it creates just as, in a cartoon by Saul Steinberg or a drawing by M. C. Escher, the hand holding the pen draws the rest of the landscape in which it appears. Not unexpectedly, this thorough immersion in the play of subjective imagination appealed to writers like the French "new novelists," who were experimenting with shifting perspectives and a refusal of "objective" reality. For a long time, Borges' European reputation outstripped his prestige in his native land.

Borges was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on August 24, 1899, to a prosperous family whose ancestors were distinguished in Argentine history. The family moved early to a large house whose library and garden were to form an essential part of his literary imagination. His paternal grandmother being English, the young Borges knew English as soon as Spanish, and was educated by an English tutor until age nine. Traveling in Europe, the family was caught in Geneva at the outbreak of World War I; Borges attended secondary school in Switzerland and throughout the war, during which time he learned French and German. After the war they moved to Spain, where he associated with a group of young experimental poets called Ultraists. When Borges returned home in 1921, he founded his own group of Argentine Ultraists (their mural-review, *Prisma*, was printed on sign paper and plastered on walls); became close friends with the philosopher Macedonio Fernandez, whose dedication to pure thought and linguistic intricacies greatly influenced his own attitudes; and contributed regularly to the avant-garde review *Martin Fierro*, at that time associated with an apolitical "art for art's sake" attitude quite at odds with that of the Boedo group of politically committed writers. Although devoted to pure art, Borges consistently opposed the military dictatorship of Juan Perón and made his political views plain in speeches and nonliterary writings even if they were not included in his fiction. His attitude did not go unnoticed: in 1946, the Perón regime removed him from the librarian's post which he had held since 1938 and offered him a job as chicken inspector.

During the thirties, Borges turned to short narrative pieces and in 1935 published a collection of sketches titled *Universal History of Infamy*. His more mature stories—brief, metaphysical fictions whose density and ele-

gance at times approach poetry—came as an experiment after a head injury and operation in 1938. *The Garden of Forking Paths* (1941), his first major collection, introduced him to a wider public as an intellectual and idealist writer, whose short stories subordinated familiar techniques of character, scene, plot, and narrative voice to a central idea, which was often a philosophical concept. This concept was not used as a lesson or dogma, but as the starting point of fantastic elaborations to entertain readers inside the game of literature.

Borges' imaginative world is an immense labyrinth, a "garden of forking paths" in which images of maze and infinite mirroring, cyclical repetition and recall, illustrate the effort of an elusive narrative voice to understand its own significance and that of the world. In "Borges and I," he has commented on the parallel existence of two Borgeses: the one who exists in his work (the one his readers know), and the living, fleshly identity felt by the man who sets pen to paper. "Little by little, I am giving over everything to him . . . I do not know which one of us has written this page." Borges has written on the idea (derived from the British philosophers Hume and Berkeley) of the individual self as a cluster of different perceptions, and he further elaborates this notion in his fictional proliferation of identities and alternate realities. Disdaining the "psychological fakery" of realistic novels (the "draggy novel of characters"), he prefers writing that is openly artful, concerned with technique for its own sake, and invents its own multidimensional reality.

Stories in *The Garden of Forking Paths*, *Fictions* (1944), and *The Aleph* (1949) develop these themes in a variety of styles. Borges is fond of detective stories (and has written a number of them) in which the search for an elusive explanation, given carefully planted clues, matters more than how recognizable the characters may be. In "Death and the Compass," a mysterious murderer leaves tantalizing traces that refer to points of the compass and lead the detective into a fatal trap that closes on him at a fourth compass point symbolized by the architectural lozenges of the house where he dies. The author composes an art of puzzles and discovery, a grand code that treats our universe as a giant library where meaning is locked away in endless hexagonal galleries ("The Library of Babel"), as an enormous lottery whose chances are all the events of our lives ("The Lottery in Babylon"), as a series of dreams within dreams ("The Circular Ruins"), or as a small iridescent sphere containing all of the points in space ("The Aleph"). In "Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*," the narrator is a scholarly reviewer of a certain fictitious Menard, whose masterwork has been to rewrite *Don Quixote* as if it were created today: not revise it, nor yet transcribe it, but actually reinvent it word for word. He has succeeded; the two texts are "verbally identical" although Menard's modern version is "more ambiguous" than Cervantes' and thus "infinitely richer."

The imaginary universe of "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" exemplifies the mixture of fact and fiction with which Borges invites us to speculate on the solidity of our own world. The narrator is engaged in tracking down mysterious references to a country called Tlön, whose language, science, and literature are exactly opposite (and perhaps related to) our own. For example, the Tlönians use verbs or adjectives instead of nouns, since they have no concept of objects in space, and their science consists of an association

of ideas in which the most astounding theory becomes the truth. In a postscript, the narrator reveals that the encyclopedia has turned out to be an immense scholarly hoax, yet also mentions that strange and unearthly objects—recognizably from Tlön—have recently been found.

The intricate, riddling, mazelike ambiguity of Borges' stories has given him an international reputation and influence, so that a "style like Borges" is a recognized term. In Argentina, he was given the prestigious post of Director of the National Library after the fall of Perón in 1955 and in 1961 he shared the International Publishers' Prize with Samuel Beckett. Always nearsighted, he grew increasingly blind in the mid-fifties and he was forced to dictate his work. Nonetheless, he continued to travel, teach, and lecture in the company of his wife, Else Astete Milan, whom he married in 1967. Borges now lives in his beloved Buenos Aires, the city he celebrated in his first volume of poetry.

"The Garden of Forking Paths" begins as a simple spy story purporting to reveal the hidden truth about a German bombing raid during World War I. Borges alludes to documented facts: the geographic setting of the town of Albert and the Ancre River; a famous Chinese novel as Ts'ui Pên's proposed model; the *History of the World War (1914–1918)* published by B. H. Liddell Hart in 1934. Official history is undermined on the first page, however, both by the newly discovered confession of Dr. Yu Tsun and by his editor's suspiciously defensive footnote. Ultimately, Yu Tsun will learn from his ancestor's novel that history is a labyrinth of alternate possibilities (much like the "alternate worlds" of science fiction).

Borges executes his detective story with the traditional carefully planted clues. We know from the beginning that Yu Tsun—even though arrested—has successfully outwitted his rival Captain Richard Madden; that his problem was to convey the name of a bombing target to his chief in Berlin; that he went to the telephone book to locate someone capable of transmitting his message; and that he had one bullet in his revolver. The cut-off phone call, the chase at the railroad station, and Madden's hasty arrival at Dr. Albert's house provide the excitement and pressure expected in a straightforward detective plot. Quite different spatial and temporal horizons open up halfway through, however. Coincidences—those chance relationships that might well have happened differently—introduce the idea of forking paths or alternate possible routes for history. Both Yu Tsun and Richard Madden are aliens trying to prove their worth inside their respective bureaucracies; the road to Stephen Albert's house turns mazelike always to the left; the only suitable name in the phone book—the man Yu Tsun must kill—is a Sinologist who has reconstructed the labyrinthine text written long ago by Yu Tsun's ancestor. This text, Ts'ui Pên's *The Garden of Forking Paths*, describes the universe as an infinite series of alternate versions of experience. In different versions of the story (taking place at different times), Albert and Yu Tsun are enemies—or friends—or not even there. The war and Richard Madden appear diminished (although no less real) in such a kaleidoscopic perspective, for they exist in only one of many possible dimensions. Yet Madden hurries up the walk, and current reality returns to demand Albert's death. It may seem as though the vision of other worlds in which Albert continues to exist (or is Yu Tsun's enemy) would soften the murderer's remorse

for his deed. Instead, it makes more poignant the narrator's realization that in this dimension no other way could be found.

George R. McMurray, *Jorge Luis Borges* (1980), is a general introduction to the man and his work. Anna Maria Barrenechea, *Borges The Labyrinth Maker*, rev. ed., translated by R. Lima (1965), introduces Borges' intricate style and includes biographical information. Fernando Sorrentino, *Seven Conversations with Jorge Luis Borges*, translated by Clark M. Zlotchew (1981), is a series of informal, widely ranging interviews from 1972, with a prefaced list of the topics of each conversation and, in appendix, an interview with Borges translator Norman Thomas di Giovanni ("Borges in English") and notes identifying personalities mentioned by Borges.

The Garden of Forking Paths[1]

On page 22 of Liddell Hart's *History of World War I* you will read that an attack against the Serre-Montauban line by thirteen British divisions (supported by 1,400 artillery pieces), planned for the 24th of July, 1916, had to be postponed until the morning of the 29th. The torrential rains, Captain Liddell Hart comments, caused this delay, an insignificant one, to be sure.

The following statement, dictated, reread and signed by Dr. Yu Tsun, former professor of English at the *Hochschule* at Tsingtao,[2] throws an unsuspected light over the whole affair. The first two pages of the document are missing.

". . . and I hung up the receiver. Immediately afterwards, I recognized the voice that had answered in German. It was that of Captain Richard Madden. Madden's presence in Viktor Runeberg's apartment meant the end of our anxieties and—but this seemed, *or should have seemed*, very secondary to me—also the end of our lives. It meant that Runeberg had been arrested or murdered.[3] Before the sun set on that day, I would encounter the same fate. Madden was implacable. Or rather, he was obliged to be so. An Irishman at the service of England, a man accused of laxity and perhaps of treason, how could he fail to seize and be thankful for such a miraculous opportunity: the discovery, capture, maybe even the death of two agents of the German Reich?[4] I went up to my room; absurdly I locked the door and threw myself on my back on the narrow iron cot. Through the window I saw the familiar roofs and the cloud-shaded six o'clock sun. It seemed incredible to me that that day without premonitions or symbols should be the one of my inexorable

1. Translated by Donald A. Yates. 2. Or Ch'ing-tao: a major port in East China, part of territory leased to (and developed by) Germany in 1898. *Hochschule*: university (German).
3. An hypothesis both hateful and odd. The Prussian spy Hans Rabener, alias Viktor Runeberg, attacked with drawn automatic the bearer of the warrant for his arrest, Captain Richard Madden. The latter, in self-defense, inflicted the wound which brought about Runeberg's death. (Editor's note.) [This entire note is by Borges as "Editor."] 4. Empire (German).

death. In spite of my dead father, in spite of having been a child in a symmetrical garden of Hai Feng, was I—now—going to die? Then I reflected that everything happens to a man precisely, precisely *now*. Centuries of centuries and only in the present do things happen; countless men in the air, on the face of the earth and the sea, and all that really is happening is happening to me . . . The almost intolerable recollection of Madden's horselike face banished these wanderings. In the midst of my hatred and terror (it means nothing to me now to speak of terror, now that I have mocked Richard Madden, now that my throat yearns for the noose) it occurred to me that that tumultuous and doubtless happy warrior did not suspect that I possessed the Secret. The name of the exact location of the new British artillery park on the River Ancre. A bird streaked across the gray sky and blindly I translated it into an airplane and that airplane into many (against the French sky) annihilating the artillery station with vertical bombs. If only my mouth, before a bullet shattered it, could cry out that secret name so it could be heard in Germany . . . My human voice was very weak. How might I make it carry to the ear of the Chief? To the ear of that sick and hateful man who knew nothing of Runeberg and me save that we were in Staffordshire[5] and who was waiting in vain for our report in his arid office in Berlin, endlessly examining newspapers . . . I said out loud: *I must flee*. I sat up noiselessly, in a useless perfection of silence, as if Madden were already lying in wait for me. Something—perhaps the mere vain ostentation of proving my resources were nil—made me look through my pockets. I found what I knew I would find. The American watch, the nickel chain and the square coin, the key ring with the incriminating useless keys to Runeberg's apartment, the notebook, a letter which I resolved to destroy immediately (and which I did not destroy), a crown, two shillings and a few pence, the red and blue pencil, the handkerchief, the revolver with one bullet. Absurdly, I took it in my hand and weighed it in order to inspire courage within myself. Vaguely I thought that a pistol report can be heard at a great distance. In ten minutes my plan was perfected. The telephone book listed the name of the only person capable of transmitting the message; he lived in a suburb of Fenton,[6] less than a half hour's train ride away.

I am a cowardly man. I say it now, now that I have carried to its end a plan whose perilous nature no one can deny. I know its execution was terrible. I didn't do it for Germany, no. I care nothing for a barbarous country which imposed upon me the abjection of being a spy. Besides, I know of a man from England—a modest man—who for me is no less great than Goethe.[7] I talked with him

5. County in west central England. 6. In Lincolnshire, a county in east England. 7. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832), German poet, novelist, and dramatist, author of *Faust*; often taken as representing the peak of German cultural achievement.

for scarcely an hour, but during that hour he was Goethe . . . I did it because I sensed that the Chief somehow feared people of my race—for the innumerable ancestors who merge within me. I wanted to prove to him that a yellow man could save his armies. Besides, I had to flee from Captain Madden. His hands and his voice could call at my door at any moment. I dressed silently, bade farewell to myself in the mirror, went downstairs, scrutinized the peaceful street and went out. The station was not far from my home, but I judged it wise to take a cab. I argued that in this way I ran less risk of being recognized; the fact is that in the deserted street I felt myself visible and vulnerable, infinitely so. I remember that I told the cab driver to stop a short distance before the main entrance. I got out with voluntary, almost painful slowness; I was going to the village of Ashgrove but I bought a ticket for a more distant station. The train left within a very few minutes, at eight-fifty. I hurried; the next one would leave at nine-thirty. There was hardly a soul on the platform. I went through the coaches; I remember a few farmers, a woman dressed in mourning, a young boy who was reading with fervor the *Annals* of Tacitus,[8] a wounded and happy soldier. The coaches jerked forward at last. A man whom I recognized ran in vain to the end of the platform. It was Captain Richard Madden. Shattered, trembling, I shrank into the far corner of the seat, away from the dreaded window.

From this broken state I passed into an almost abject felicity. I told myself that the duel had already begun and that I had won the first encounter by frustrating, even if for forty minutes, even if by a stroke of fate, the attack of my adversary. I argued that this slightest of victories foreshadowed a total victory. I argued (no less fallaciously) that my cowardly felicity proved that I was a man capable of carrying out the adventure successfully. From this weakness I took strength that did not abandon me. I foresee that man will resign himself each day to more atrocious undertakings; soon there will be no one but warriors and brigands; I give them this counsel: *The author of an atrocious undertaking ought to imagine that he has already accomplished it, ought to impose upon himself a future as irrevocable as the past.* Thus I proceeded as my eyes of a man already dead registered the elapsing of that day, which was perhaps the last, and the diffusion of the night. The train ran gently along, amid ash trees. It stopped, almost in the middle of the fields. No one announced the name of the station. "Ashgrove?" I asked a few lads on the platform. "Ashgrove," they replied. I got off.

A lamp enlightened the platform but the faces of the boys were in shadow. One questioned me, "Are you going to Dr. Stephen Albert's

8. Cornelius Tacitus (A.D. 55–117), Roman historian whose *Annals* give a vivid picture of the decadence and corruption of the Roman Empire under Tiberius, Claudius, and Nero.

house?" Without waiting for my answer, another said, "The house is a long way from here, but you won't get lost if you take this road to the left and at every crossroads turn again to your left." I tossed them a coin (my last), descended a few stone steps and started down the solitary road. It went downhill, slowly. It was of elemental earth; overhead the branches were tangled; the low, full moon seemed to accompany me.

For an instant, I thought that Richard Madden in some way had penetrated my desperate plan. Very quickly, I understood that that was impossible. The instructions to turn always to the left reminded me that such was the common procedure for discovering the central point of certain labyrinths. I have some understanding of labyrinths: not for nothing am I the great grandson of that Ts'ui Pên who was governor of Yunnan and who renounced worldly power in order to write a novel that might be even more populous than the *Hung Lu Meng*[9] and to construct a labyrinth in which all men would become lost. Thirteen years he dedicated to these heterogeneous tasks, but the hand of a stranger murdered him—and his novel was incoherent and no one found the labyrinth. Beneath English trees I meditated on that lost maze: I imagined it inviolate and perfect at the secret crest of a mountain; I imagined it erased by rice fields or beneath the water; I imagined it infinite, no longer composed of octagonal kiosks and returning paths, but of rivers and provinces and kingdoms . . . I thought of a labyrinth of labyrinths, of one sinuous spreading labyrinth that would encompass the past and the future and in some way involve the stars. Absorbed in these illusory images, I forgot my destiny of one pursued. I felt myself to be, for an unknown period of time, an abstract perceiver of the world. The vague, living countryside, the moon, the remains of the day worked on me, as well as the slope of the road which eliminated any possibility of weariness. The afternoon was intimate, infinite. The road descended and forked among the now confused meadows. A high-pitched, almost syllabic music approached and receded in the shifting of the wind, dimmed by leaves and distance. I thought that a man can be an enemy of other men, of the moments of other men, but not of a country: not of fireflies, words, gardens, streams of water, sunsets. Thus I arrived before a tall, rusty gate. Between the iron bars I made out a poplar grove and a pavilion. I understood suddenly two things, the first trivial, the second almost unbelievable: the music came from the pavilion, and the music was Chinese. For precisely that reason I had openly accepted it without paying it any heed. I do not remember whether there was a bell or whether I knocked with my hand. The sparkling of the music continued.

9. *The Dream of the Red Chamber*, by Ts'ao Hsüeh-ch'in (1791): the most famous Chinese novel, a love story and panorama of Chinese family life involving over 430 separate characters.

From the rear of the house within a lantern approached: a lantern that the trees sometimes striped and sometimes eclipsed, a paper lantern that had the form of a drum and the color of the moon. A tall man bore it. I didn't see his face for the light blinded me. He opened the door and said slowly, in my own language: "I see that the pious Hsi P'êng persists in correcting my solitude. You no doubt wish to see the garden?"

I recognized the name of one of our consuls and I replied, disconcerted, "The garden?"

"The garden of forking paths."

Something stirred in my memory and I uttered with incomprehensible certainty, "The garden of my ancestor Ts'ui Pên."

"Your ancestor? Your illustrious ancestor? Come in."

The damp path zigzagged like those of my childhood. We came to a library of Eastern and Western books. I recognized bound in yellow silk several volumes of the Lost Encyclopedia,[1] edited by the Third Emperor of the Luminous Dynasty but never printed. The record on the phonograph revolved next to a bronze phoenix. I also recall a *famille rose* vase[2] and another, many centuries older, of that shade of blue which our craftsmen copied from the potters of Persia . . .

Stephen Albert observed me with a smile. He was, as I have said, very tall, sharp-featured, with gray eyes and a gray beard. He told me that he had been a missionary in Tientsin "before aspiring to become a Sinologist."

We sat down—I on a long, low divan, he with his back to the window and a tall circular clock. I calculated that my pursuer, Richard Madden, could not arrive for at least an hour. My irrevocable determination could wait.

"An astounding fate, that of Ts'ui Pên," Stephen Albert said. "Governor of his native province, learned in astronomy, in astrology and in the tireless interpretation of the canonical books, chess player, famous poet and calligrapher—he abandoned all this in order to compose a book and a maze. He renounced the pleasures of both tyranny and justice, of his populous couch, of his banquets and even of erudition—all to close himself up for thirteen years in the Pavilion of the Limpid Solitude. When he died, his heirs found nothing save chaotic manuscripts. His family, as you may be aware, wished to condemn them to the fire; but his executor—a Taoist or Buddhist monk—insisted on their publication."

1. The Yung-lo Emperor of the Ming ("bright") Dynasty commissioned a massive encyclopedia between 1403–1408. A single copy of the 11,095 manuscript volumes was made in the mid-1500s; the original was later destroyed and only 370 volumes of the copy remain today. 2. *Famille rose* ("pink family," French) refers to a Chinese decorative enamel ranging in color from an opaque pink to purplish rose; *famille rose* pottery was at its best during the reign of Yung Chên (1723–35).

"We descendants of Ts'ui Pên," I replied, "continue to curse that monk. Their publication was senseless. The book is an indeterminate heap of contradictory drafts. I examined it once: in the third chapter the hero dies, in the fourth he is alive. As for the other undertaking of Ts'ui Pên, his labyrinth . . ."

"Here is Ts'ui Pên's labyrinth," he said, indicating a tall lacquered desk.

"An ivory labyrinth!" I exclaimed. "A minimum labyrinth."

"A labyrinth of symbols," he corrected. "An invisible labyrinth of time. To me, a barbarous Englishman, has been entrusted the revelation of this diaphanous mystery. After more than a hundred years, the details are irretrievable; but it is not hard to conjecture what happened. Ts'ui Pên must have said once: *I am withdrawing to write a book.* And another time: *I am withdrawing to construct a labyrinth.* Every one imagined two works; to no one did it occur that the book and the maze were one and the same thing. The Pavilion of the Limpid Solitude stood in the center of a garden that was perhaps intricate; that circumstance could have suggested to the heirs a physical labyrinth. Ts'ui Pên died; no one in the vast territories that were his came upon the labyrinth; the confusion of the novel suggested to me that *it* was the maze. Two circumstances gave me the correct solution of the problem. One: the curious legend that Ts'ui Pên had planned to create a labyrinth which would be strictly infinite. The other: a fragment of a letter I discovered."

Albert rose. He turned his back on me for a moment; he opened a drawer of the black and gold desk. He faced me and in his hands he held a sheet of paper that had once been crimson, but was now pink and tenuous and cross-sectioned. The fame of Ts'ui Pên as a calligrapher had been justly won. I read, uncomprehendingly and with fervor, these words written with a minute brush by a man of my blood: *I leave to the various futures (not to all) my garden of forking paths.* Wordlessly, I returned the sheet. Albert continued:

"Before unearthing this letter, I had questioned myself about the ways in which a book can be infinite. I could think of nothing other than a cyclic volume, a circular one. A book whose last page was identical with the first, a book which had the possibility of continuing indefinitely. I remembered too that night which is at the middle of the Thousand and One Nights when Scheherazade[3] (through a magical oversight of the copyist) begins to relate word for word the story of the Thousand and One Nights, establishing the risk of coming once again to the night when she must repeat it, and thus on to infinity. I imagined as well a Platonic, hereditary work, transmitted

3. The narrator of the collection also known as the *Arabian Nights*, a thousand and one tales supposedly told by Scheherazade to her husband Schariar, king of Samarkand, in order to postpone her execution.

from father to son, in which each new individual adds a chapter or corrects with pious care the pages of his elders. These conjectures diverted me; but none seemed to correspond, not even remotely, to the contradictory chapters of Ts'ui Pên. In the midst of this perplexity, I received from Oxford the manuscript you have examined. I lingered, naturally, on the sentence: *I leave to the various futures (not to all) my garden of forking paths.* Almost instantly, I understood: 'The garden of forking paths' was the chaotic novel; the phrase 'the various futures (not to all)' suggested to me the forking in time, not in space. A broad rereading of the work confirmed the theory. In all fictional works, each time a man is confronted with several alternatives, he chooses one and eliminates the others; in the fiction of Ts'ui Pên, he chooses—simultaneously—all of them. *He creates*, in this way, diverse futures, diverse times which themselves also proliferate and fork. Here, then, is the explanation of the novel's contradictions. Fang, let us say, has a secret; a stranger calls at his door; Fang resolves to kill him. Naturally, there are several possible outcomes: Fang can kill the intruder, the intruder can kill Fang, they both can escape, they both can die, and so forth. In the work of Ts'ui Pên, all possible outcomes occur; each one is the point of departure for other forkings. Sometimes, the paths of this labyrinth converge: for example, you arrive at this house, but in one of the possible pasts you are my enemy, in another, my friend. If you will resign yourself to my incurable pronunciation, we shall read a few pages."

His face, within the vivid circle of the lamplight, was unquestionably that of an old man, but with something unalterable about it, even immortal. He read with slow precision two versions of the same epic chapter. In the first, an army marches to a battle across a lonely mountain; the horror of the rocks and shadows makes the men undervalue their lives and they gain an easy victory. In the second, the same army traverses a palace where a great festival is taking place; the resplendent battle seems to them a continuation of the celebration and they win the victory. I listened with proper veneration to these ancient narratives, perhaps less admirable in themselves than the fact that they had been created by my blood and were being restored to me by a man of a remote empire, in the course of a desperate adventure, on a Western isle. I remember the last words, repeated in each version like a secret commandment: *Thus fought the heroes, tranquil their admirable hearts, violent their swords, resigned to kill and to die.*

From that moment on, I felt about me and within my dark body an invisible, intangible swarming. Not the swarming of the divergent, parallel and finally coalescent armies, but a more inaccessible, more intimate agitation that they in some manner prefigured. Stephen Albert continued:

"I don't believe that your illustrious ancestor played idly with these variations. I don't consider it credible that he would sacrifice thirteen years to the infinite execution of a rhetorical experiment. In your country, the novel is a subsidiary form of literature; in Ts'ui Pên's time it was a despicable form. Ts'ui Pên was a brilliant novelist, but he was also a man of letters who doubtless did not consider himself a mere novelist. The testimony of his contemporaries proclaims—and his life fully confirms—his metaphysical and mystical interests. Philosophic controversy usurps a good part of the novel. I know that of all problems, none disturbed him so greatly nor worked upon him so much as the abysmal problem of time. Now then, the latter is the only problem that does not figure in the pages of the *Garden*. He does not even use the word that signifies *time*. How do you explain this voluntary omission?"

I proposed several solutions—all unsatisfactory. We discussed them. Finally, Stephen Albert said to me:

"In a riddle whose answer is chess, what is the only prohibited word?"

I thought a moment and replied, "The word *chess*."

"Precisely," said Albert. "*The Garden of Forking Paths* is an enormous riddle, or parable, whose theme is time; this recondite cause prohibits its mention. To omit a word always, to resort to inept metaphors and obvious periphrases, is perhaps the most emphatic way of stressing it. That is the tortuous method preferred, in each of the meanderings of his indefatigable novel, by the oblique Ts'ui Pên. I have compared hundreds of manuscripts, I have corrected the errors that the negligence of the copyists has introduced, I have guessed the plan of this chaos, I have re-established—I believe I have re-established—the primordial organization, I have translated the entire work: it is clear to me that not once does he employ the word 'time.' The explanation is obvious: *The Garden of Forking Paths* is an incomplete, but not false, image of the universe as Ts'ui Pên conceived it. In contrast to Newton and Schopenhauer,[4] your ancestor did not believe in a uniform, absolute time. He believed in an infinite series of times, in a growing, dizzying net of divergent, convergent and parallel times. This network of times which approached one another, forked, broke off, or were unaware of one another for centuries, embraces *all* possibilities of time. We do not exist in the majority of these times; in some you exist, and not I; in others I, and not you; in others, both of us. In the present one, which a favorable fate has granted me, you have arrived at my house; in another, while crossing

4. *Isaac Newton* (1642–1727), English mathematician and philosopher best known for his formulation of laws of gravitation and motion; *Arthur Schopenhauer*, German philosopher (1788–1860), whose concept of will proceeded from a concept of the self as enduring through time. In *Seven Conversations with Jorge Luis Borges*, Borges also comments on Schopenhauer's interest in the "oneiric essence of life."

the garden, you found me dead; in still another, I utter these same words, but I am a mistake, a ghost."

"In every one," I pronounced, not without a tremble to my voice, "I am grateful to you and revere you for your re-creation of the garden of Ts'ui Pên."

"Not in all," he murmured with a smile. "Time forks perpetually toward innumerable futures. In one of them I am your enemy."

Once again I felt the swarming sensation of which I have spoken. It seemed to me that the humid garden that surrounded the house was infinitely saturated with invisible persons. Those persons were Albert and I, secret, busy and multiform in other dimensions of time. I raised my eyes and the tenuous nightmare dissolved. In the yellow and black garden there was only one man; but this man was as strong as a statue . . . this man was approaching along the path and he was Captain Richard Madden.

"The future already exists," I replied, "but I am your friend. Could I see the letter again?"

Albert rose. Standing tall, he opened the drawer of the tall desk; for the moment his back was to me. I had readied the revolver. I fired with extreme caution. Albert fell uncomplainingly, immediately. I swear his death was instantaneous—a lightning stroke.

The rest is unreal, insignificant. Madden broke in, arrested me. I have been condemned to the gallows. I have won out abominably; I have communicated to Berlin the secret name of the city they must attack. They bombed it yesterday; I read it in the same papers that offered to England the mystery of the learned Sinologist Stephen Albert who was murdered by a stranger, one Yu Tsun. The Chief had deciphered this mystery. He knew my problem was to indicate (through the uproar of the war) the city called Albert, and that I had found no other means to do so than to kill a man of that name. He does not know (no one can know) my innumerable contrition and weariness.

For Victoria Ocampo

SAMUEL BECKETT

1906–

The sparest, starkest representation of the human condition in all its "absurd" emptiness fills Beckett's novels and plays. Not that other authors do not concern themselves with the problem of representing reality, but where Pirandello plays with allusions to an elusive identity, Joyce with the stream of

consciousness, and Proust with layers of the self reconstituted through a tive memory, Beckett's world is haunted—like that of Kafka—by an abs of meaning at the core. Whether expressed by the protagonist's ramblin the early novels *Murphy* (1938), *Molloy* (1951), *Malone Dies* (1951), o *Unnamable* (1953), by the stripped-down dialogue of the plays *Waitin Godot* (1952) and *Endgame* (1957), or by the telegraphic style of a late n *How It Is* (1961), Beckett's characters engage in a desperate attempt to or to create meaning for themselves. Born into a world without reason, live out their lives waiting for an explanation that never comes and w existence may be only a figment of their imagination. In the meant human relationships are reduced to the most elemental tensions of cru hope, frustration, and disillusionment around themes of birth, death, hu emotions, material obstacles, and unending consciousness. Beckett's edy of errors is a bitter one and, even in its puns and parodies, draws he on what the author has described as "the power of the text to claw."

Like Joyce and Yeats, Beckett was born in Ireland; like Joyce, he chosen to live abroad for most of his life. Born outside Dublin on Apri 1906, he was educated in Ireland and received a B.A. from Trinity Co in 1927. From 1928 to 1930, he taught English at the Ecole Nor Supérieure in Paris, where he met James Joyce and was for a while i enced by the older novelist's exuberant and punning use of language. B ett wrote an essay on the early stages of Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, and helped in the French translation of part of the book. In 1930 he ente competition for a poem about time, and won first prize with a ninety- line (and seventeen footnote) monologue, *Whoroscope*, spoken by the enteenth-century French physicist and philosopher René Descartes. Be returned to Trinity College where he took an M.A. in 1931, publishe essay on Proust, and stayed on the following year to teach French. It brief academic career, for he gave up teaching in 1932 and, after livi London, France, and Germany, made Paris his permanent home in 1 Although his early novels (*Murphy* and *Watt*, 1953) were written in Eng Beckett was already turning to French as his preferred language for ori composition; in the years after World War II, he wrote almost exclusive French and only later translated (often with substantial changes) the texts into English. He has said that he writes in French because it is e to write "without style": without the native speaker's temptation to eleg and virtuoso display. Although no generalization holds true for all c comparing the French and English versions of the same work often sug just such a contrast, with the French text closer to basic grammatical f and therefore possessing a harsher, less nuanced focus.

Whether comic or despairing (often both), Beckett's characters ring cha on the Cartesian image of the Rational Man that has been at the ba Western cultural attitudes ever since Descartes moved from specific q tions about the physical sciences to the larger question of human existe Descartes, like Beckett, went back to zero in order not to be led astra any preconceived assumptions or doctrines. He doubted everything—ex that he doubted, which in itself indicated that he was thinking and that think, therefore I am" ("Cogito, ergo sum"). Upon that certainty Desc erected a logical system for exploring the natural universe and explai

the human condition. Beckett is not so sure that logic allows us to know what we are looking at, or in fact to match up our terminology with reality at all. In *Watt*, the protagonist is caught in a peculiar hesitation inasmuch as things, "if they consented to be named, did so as it were with reluctance." He looks at a pot, but "it was not a pot, the more he looked, the more he reflected, the more he felt sure of that, that it was not a pot at all. It resembled a pot, it was almost a pot, but it was not a pot of which one could say, Pot, pot and be comforted." The gentle bewilderment that Watt feels turns bitter and more dangerous in later novels such as the famous trilogy *Molloy*, *Malone Dies*, and *The Unnamable*, or in *How It Is*, which refuses to present any image of rational control as it murmurs, free of punctuation, the monologue of an unstructured consciousness inside an accompanying "quaqua [bzzz bzzz] on all sides."

The narrative perspective in Beckett's trilogy moves from a series of related monologue stories in which narrators come more and more to resemble one another, to an "unnamable" speaker who seems to represent them all at the end. In *Molloy*, there are two interlocking points of view as first Molloy tells of setting out on a bicycle to visit his bedridden mother: a search that takes him months and leads him all over (with many echoes of Homer's *Odyssey*). The last we hear of Molloy is that he is crippled and has lost his bicycle, but is determined still to proceed if only by rolling; Moran takes over at that point, and describes a corresponding search for Molloy in the course of which he loses his bicycle, is crippled, and ends up frustrated back home. The next novel, *Malone Dies*, is similarly divided between protagonists, even if in the mind of a single narrator: a dying and bedridden Malone writes the diary of his last days, and also composes the story of Macmann, who is to die at the same moment as Malone and apparently does so as the novel ends. The last in the trilogy, *The Unnamable*, has no fixed authorial perspective or claim to responsibility. "I'm in words, made of words." Someone (unnamed and—by now—clearly unnamable) is seated in an undefined gray space and time, writing a series of stories that may be the tales of Malone, Malloy, and Moran, or of a new Mahood who also becomes Worm, who may in turn be the narrator writing stories about himself; or it may simply evoke the act of story telling as it creates fictions of life in order to establish some mode of reality. In 1949, when the trilogy was just complete, Beckett published a dialogue on modern art which described the artist's disgust with traditional art's "puny exploits . . . doing a little better the same old thing," and his preference for "the expression that there is nothing to express, nothing with which to express, nothing from which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express." The disintegration of narrative perspective in Beckett's fiction is one means of denying that there is a knowable "something to express," or an authoritative point of view from which to express "nothing."

How can one possibly make a convincing stage play out of "nothing"? The popularity of Beckett's first performed play, *Waiting for Godot* (French version presented 1953, English 1955), showed that Absurdist theater—with its empty, repetitive dialogue, its grotesquely bare yet apparently symbolic settings, and its refusal to build to a dramatic climax—had meaning even for audiences used to theatrical realism and logically developing plots. These

audiences found two clownlike tramps, Vladimir and Estragon (Didi and Gogo), talking, quarreling, falling down, contemplating suicide, and generally filling up time with conversation that ranges from vaudeville patter to metaphysical speculation as they wait under a tree for a Godot who never comes. Instead, the two are joined in the middle of each act by another grotesque pair: the rich Pozzo and his brutally abused servant Lucky, whom he leads around by a rope tied to his neck. The popular interpretation of "Godot" as a diminutive for "God," and of the play as a statement of existential anguish at the inexplicable human condition, is scarcely defused by Beckett's caution that "If by Godot I had meant God, I would have said God." Yet identifying Godot is less important than identifying the ignominious plight on stage as symbolically our own, and identifying *with* the characters as they express the anxious, often repugnant but also comic picture of human relationships in an absurd universe.

After the popular success of *Waiting for Godot*, Beckett wrote *Endgame* (French version performed 1957, English 1958) and a series of stage plays and brief pieces for the radio. The stage plays have the same bare yet striking settings: *Krapp's Last Tape* (1958) presents an old man sitting at a table with his tape recorder, recalling a love affair thirty years past, and *Happy Days* (1961) shows a married couple in which Winnie, the wife, chatters ceaselessly about her possessions although she is buried up to her waist in the first act and to her neck in the second. When Beckett received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1969, he was recognized as the purest exponent of the twentieth century's chief philosophical dilemma: the notion of the "absurd," or the grotesque contradiction between human attempts to discover meaning in life and the simultaneous conviction that there is no "meaning" available that we have not created ourselves. *Endgame*, often called Beckett's major achievement, is a prime example of this dilemma.

When the curtain rises on *Endgame*, it is as though the world is awaking from sleep. The sheets draping the furniture and central character are taken off, and Hamm sets himself in motion like an actor or chess pawn: "Me . . . to play." Yet we are also near the end for, as the title implies, nothing new will happen: an "endgame" is the final phase of a chess game, the stage at which the end is predictably in sight although the play must still be completed. Throughout, the theme of "end," "finish," "no more" is sounded, even while Hamm notes the passage of time: "Something is taking its course." But time does not lead anywhere; it is either past or present, and always barren. The past exists as Nagg's and Nell's memories, as Hamm's story which may or may not describe Clov's entry into the home, and as a period in which Clov once loved Hamm. The present shows four characters dwindling away, alone in a dead world, caught between visions of dusty hell and dreams of life reborn. In one of the Biblical echoes that permeate the play, Hamm and Clov repeatedly evoke the last words of the crucified Christ in the Gospel according to Saint John: "It is finished." But this is not a Biblical morality play, and *Endgame* describes a world not of divine but of self-creation. Hamm may be composing and directing the entire performance: a storyteller and playwright with "asides" and "last soliloquy" whose "dialogue" keeps Clov on stage against his will, a mad artist who (when looking out the window onto a flourishing world) can see only dust and ashes, or a

magician presiding over an imaginary kingdom who concludes an inner story and unavailing prayer with Prospero's line from *The Tempest* (IV,i,148): "Our revels now are ended." Or he may simply be aware of their lives *as* a performance without any other meaning: Shakespeare's passage continues later: "We are such stuff / As dreams are made on, and our little life / Is rounded with a sleep." The situation at the end of the play is little changed—only barer, as Hamm discards his stick, whistle, and dog, "reckoning closed and story ended." Yet Clov is still waiting to leave as Hamm covers his face, and it is not impossible that the play will resume in precisely the same terms tomorrow.

Endgame, like *Waiting for Godot* (and like Kafka's stories), has been given a number of symbolic interpretations. Some refer to Beckett's love of word play: Hamm as Hamm-actor, Hammlet, Hammer, and Nag and Nell as shortened forms of *Nägel* and *nello*, German and Italian words for *nail*, which are invoked as crucifixion themes suggesting the martyrdom of humanity. The setting of a boxlike room with two windows is seen as a skull, the seat of consciousness, or (emphasizing the bloody handkerchief and the reference to fontanelles—the soft spot in the skull of a newborn child) as a womb. The characters' isolation in a dead world after an unnamed catastrophe (which may be Hamm's fault) suggests the world after atomic holocaust; or, for those who recall Beckett's fascination with the apathetic figure of Belacqua waiting, in the Purgatory of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, for his punishment to begin, it evokes an image of pre-Purgatorial consciousness. The ashcans in which Hamm has "bottled" his parents, and the general cruelty between characters, are to represent the dustbin of modern Western civilized values. Hamm and Clov represent the uneasy adjustment of soul and body, the class struggle of rich and poor, or the master-slave relationship in all senses (including the slave's acceptance of his victimization). Clearly Beckett has created a structure that accommodates all these readings while authorizing none. He himself said to director Alan Schneider that he was less interested in symbolism than in describing a "local situation," an interaction of four characters in a given set of circumstances, and that the audience's interpretation was its own responsibility.

Beckett has both authorized and denied the series of interpretations. He pruned down an earlier, more anecdotal two-act play to achieve *Endgame*'s skeletal plot and almost anonymous characters, and in doing so created a structure that immediately elicits the reader's instinct to "fill in the blanks." His puns and allusions openly point to a further meaning that *may* be contained in the implied reference, but may also be part of an infinite regress of meaning—expressing the "absurd" itself. Working against too heavy an insistence on symbolic meanings is the fact that the play is also funny—especially when performed on stage. The characters popping out of ashcans, the jerky, repetitive motions with which Clov carries out his master's commands, and the often obscene vaudeville patter accompanied by appropriate gestures, all provide a comic perspective that keeps *Endgame* from sinking into tragic despair. The intellectual distance offered by comedy is entirely in keeping with the more somber side of the play, which rejects pathos and constantly drags its characters' escapist fancies down to the minimal facts of survival: food, shelter, sleep, painkiller. Thus it is possible to say that *End-*

game describes—but only among many other things—what it is like to be alive, declining toward death in a world without meaning.

Hugh Kenner, *Samuel Beckett: A Critical Study* (1974), is an excellent general introduction. Deirdre Bair, *Samuel Beckett: A Biography* (1978), provides an extensive view of Beckett. Bell Gale Chevigny, compiler, *Twentieth-Century Interpretations of Endgame* (1969), contains essays on the play.

For Roger Blin

Endgame[1]

The Characters:

NAGG
NELL
HAMM
CLOV

Bare interior.

Gray light.

Left and right back, high up, two small windows, curtains drawn.

Front right, a door. Hanging near door, its face to wall, a picture.

Front left, touching each other, covered with an old sheet, two ashbins.

Center, in an armchair on castors, covered with an old sheet, HAMM.

Motionless by the door, his eyes fixed on HAMM, CLOV. *Very red face.*

Brief tableau.

CLOV *goes and stands under window left. Stiff, staggering walk. He looks up at window left. He turns and looks at window right. He goes and stands under window right. He looks up at window right. He turns and looks at window left. He goes out, comes back immediately with a small step-ladder, carries it over and sets it down under window left, gets up on it, draws back curtain. He gets down, takes six steps (for example) towards window right, goes back for ladder, carries it over and sets it down under window right, gets up on it, draws back curtain. He gets down, takes three steps towards window left, goes back for ladder, carries it over and sets it down under window left, gets up on it, looks out of window. Brief laugh. He gets down, takes one step towards window right, goes back for ladder, carries it over and*

1. Translated by the author.

sets it down under window right, gets up on it, looks out of window. Brief laugh. He gets down, goes with ladder towards ashbins, halts, turns, carries back ladder and sets it down under window right, goes to ashbins, removes sheet covering them, folds it over his arm. He raises one lid, stoops and looks into bin. Brief laugh. He closes lid. Same with other bin. He goes to HAMM, *removes sheet covering him, folds it over his arm. In a dressing-gown, a stiff toque*[2] *on his head, a large blood-stained handkerchief over his face, a whistle hanging from his neck, a rug over his knees, thick socks on his feet,* HAMM *seems to be asleep.* CLOV *looks him over. Brief laugh. He goes to door, halts, turns towards auditorium.*

CLOV [*fixed gaze, tonelessly*]: Finished, it's finished, nearly finished, it must be nearly finished. [*Pause.*] Grain upon grain, one by one, and one day, suddenly, there's a heap, a little heap, the impossible heap. [*Pause.*] I can't be punished any more. [*Pause.*] I'll go now to my kitchen, ten feet by ten feet by ten feet, and wait for him to whistle me. [*Pause.*] Nice dimensions, nice proportions, I'll lean on the table, and look at the wall, and wait for him to whistle me.

[*He remains a moment motionless, then goes out. He comes back immediately, goes to window right, takes up the ladder and carries it out. Pause.* HAMM *stirs. He yawns under the handkerchief. He removes the handkerchief from his face. Very red face. Black glasses.*]

HAMM: Me—[*he yawns*]—to play.[3] [*He holds the handkerchief spread out before him.*] Old Stancher![4] [*He takes off his glasses, wipes his eyes, his face, the glasses, puts them on again, folds the handkerchief and puts it back neatly in the breast-pocket of his dressing-gown. He clears his throat, joins the tips of his fingers.*] Can there be misery—[*he yawns*]—loftier than mine? No doubt. Formerly. But now? [*Pause.*] My father? [*Pause.*] My mother? [*Pause.*] My . . . dog? [*Pause.*] Oh I am willing to believe they suffer as much as such creatures can suffer. But does that mean their sufferings equal mine? No doubt. [*Pause.*] No, all is a—[*he yawns*] —bsolute, [*proudly*] the bigger a man is the fuller he is. [*Pause. Gloomily.*] And the emptier. [*He sniffs.*] Clov! [*Pause.*] No, alone. [*Pause.*] What dreams! Those forests! [*Pause.*] Enough, it's time it ended, in the shelter too. [*Pause.*] And yet I hesitate, I hesitate to . . . to end. Yes, there it is, it's time it ended and yet I hesitate to—[*he yawns*]—to end. [*Yawns.*] God, I'm tired, I'd be better off in bed. [*He whistles. Enter* CLOV *immediately. He halts beside the chair.*]

2. A fitted cloth hat with little or no brim, sometimes indicating official status as with a judge's toque. 3. Hamm announces that it is his move at the beginning of *Endgame*; the comparison is with a game of chess, of which the "endgame" is the final stage. 4. The handkerchief that stanches his blood.

You pollute the air! [*Pause.*] Get me ready, I'm going to bed.

CLOV: I've just got you up.

HAMM: And what of it?

CLOV: I can't be getting you up and putting you to bed every five minutes, I have things to do. [*Pause.*]

HAMM: Did you ever see my eyes?

CLOV: No.

HAMM: Did you never have the curiosity, while I was sleeping, to take off my glasses and look at my eyes?

CLOV: Pulling back the lids? [*Pause.*] No.

HAMM: One of these days I'll show them to you. [*Pause.*] It seems they've gone all white. [*Pause.*] What time is it?

CLOV: The same as usual.

HAMM [*gesture towards window right*]: Have you looked?

CLOV: Yes.

HAMM: Well?

CLOV: Zero.

HAMM: It'd need to rain.

CLOV: It won't rain. [*Pause.*]

HAMM: Apart from that, how do you feel?

CLOV: I don't complain.

HAMM: You feel normal?

CLOV [*irritably*]: I tell you I don't complain.

HAMM: I feel a little queer. [*Pause.*] Clov!

CLOV: Yes.

HAMM: Have you not had enough?

CLOV: Yes! [*Pause.*] Of what?

HAMM: Of this . . . this . . . thing.

CLOV: I always had. [*Pause.*] Not you?

HAMM [*gloomily*]: Then there's no reason for it to change.

CLOV: It may end. [*Pause.*] All life long the same questions, the same answers.

HAMM: Get me ready. [CLOV *does not move.*] Go and get the sheet. [CLOV *does not move.*] Clov!

CLOV: Yes.

HAMM: I'll give you nothing more to eat.

CLOV: Then we'll die.

HAMM: I'll give you just enough to keep you from dying. You'll be hungry all the time.

CLOV: Then we won't die. [*Pause.*] I'll go and get the sheet. [*He goes towards the door.*]

HAMM: No! [CLOV *halts.*] I'll give you one biscuit per day. [*Pause.*] One and a half. [*Pause.*] Why do you stay with me?

CLOV: Why do you keep me?

HAMM: There's no one else.

CLOV: There's nowhere else. [*Pause.*]
HAMM: You're leaving me all the same.
CLOV: I'm trying.
HAMM: You don't love me.
CLOV: No.
HAMM: You loved me once.
CLOV: Once!
HAMM: I've made you suffer too much. [*Pause.*] Haven't I?
CLOV: It's not that.
HAMM [*shocked*]: I haven't made you suffer too much?
CLOV: Yes!
HAMM [*relieved*]: Ah you gave me a fright! [*Pause. Coldly.*] Forgive me. [*Pause. Louder.*] I said, Forgive me.
CLOV: I heard you. [*Pause.*] Have you bled?
HAMM: Less. [*Pause.*] Is it not time for my pain-killer?
CLOV: No. [*Pause.*]
HAMM: How are your eyes?
CLOV: Bad.
HAMM: How are your legs?
CLOV: BAD.
HAMM: But you can move.
CLOV: Yes.
HAMM [*violently*]: Then move! [CLOV *goes to back wall, leans against it with his forehead and hands.*] Where are you?
CLOV: Here.
HAMM: Come back! [CLOV *returns to his place beside the chair.*] Where are you?
CLOV: Here.
HAMM: Why don't you kill me?
CLOV: I don't know the combination of the cupboard. [*Pause.*]
HAMM: Go and get two bicycle-wheels.
CLOV: There are no more bicycle-wheels.
HAMM: What have you done with your bicycle?
CLOV: I never had a bicycle.
HAMM: The thing is impossible.
CLOV: When there were still bicycles I wept to have one. I crawled at your feet. You told me to go to hell. Now there are none.
HAMM: And your rounds? When you inspected my paupers. Always on foot?
CLOV: Sometimes on horse. [*The lid of one of the bins lifts and the hands of* NAGG *appear, gripping the rim. Then his head emerges. Nightcap. Very white face.* NAGG *yawns, then listens.*] I'll leave you, I have things to do.
HAMM: In your kitchen?
CLOV: Yes.

HAMM: Outside of here it's death. [*Pause.*] All right, be off. [*Exit* CLOV. *Pause.*] We're getting on.

NAGG: Me Pap![5]

HAMM: Accursed progenitor!

NAGG: Me pap!

HAMM: The old folks at home! No decency left! Guzzle, guzzle, that's all they think of. [*He whistles. Enter* CLOV. *He halts beside the chair.*] Well! I thought you were leaving me.

CLOV: Oh not just yet, not just yet.

NAGG: Me pap!

HAMM: Give him his pap.

CLOV: There's no more pap.

HAMM [*to* NAGG]: Do you hear that? There's no more pap. You'll never get any more pap.

NAGG: I want me pap!

HAMM: Give him a biscuit. [*Exit* CLOV.] Accursed fornicator! How are your stumps?

NAGG: Never mind me stumps. [*Enter* CLOV *with biscuit.*]

CLOV: I'm back again, with the biscuit. [*He gives biscuit to* NAGG *who fingers, it, sniffs it.*]

NAGG [*plaintively*]: What is it?

CLOV: Spratt's medium.[6]

NAGG [*as before*]: It's hard! I can't!

HAMM: Bottle him! [CLOV *pushes* NAGG *back into the bin, closes the lid.*]

CLOV [*returning to his place beside the chair*]: If age but knew!

HAMM: Sit on him!

CLOV: I can't sit.

HAMM: True. And I can't stand.

CLOV: So it is.

HAMM: Every man his speciality. [*Pause.*] No phone calls? [*Pause.*] Don't we laugh?

CLOV [*after reflection*]: I don't feel like it.

HAMM [*after reflection*]: Not I. [*Pause.*] Clov!

CLOV: Yes.

HAMM: Nature has forgotten us.

CLOV: There's no more nature.

HAMM: No more nature! You exaggerate.

CLOV: In the vicinity.

HAMM: But we breathe, we change! We lose our hair, our teeth! Our bloom! Our ideals!

CLOV: Then she hasn't forgotten us.

HAMM: But you say there is none.

5. Food, mush. 6. A common biscuit.

CLOV [*sadly*]: No one that ever lived ever thought so crooked as we.
HAMM: We do what we can.
CLOV: We shouldn't. [*Pause.*]
HAMM: You're a bit of all right, aren't you?[7]
CLOV: A smithereen. [*Pause.*]
HAMM: This is slow work. [*Pause.*] Is it not time for my pain-killer?
CLOV: No. [*Pause.*] I'll leave you, I have things to do.
HAMM: In your kitchen?
CLOV: Yes.
HAMM: What, I'd like to know.
CLOV: I look at the wall.
HAMM: The wall! And what do you see on your wall? Mene, mene?[8] Naked bodies?
CLOV: I see my light dying.
HAMM: Your light dying! Listen to that! Well, it can die just as well here, *your* light. Take a look at me and then come back and tell me what you think of *your* light. [*Pause.*]
CLOV: You shouldn't speak to me like that. [*Pause.*]
HAMM [*coldly*]: Forgive me. [*Pause. Louder.*] I said, Forgive me.
CLOV: I heard you. [*The lid of* NAGG*'s bin lifts. His hands appear, gripping the rim. Then his head emerges. In his mouth the biscuit. He listens.*]
HAMM: Did your seeds come up?
CLOV: No.
HAMM: Did you scratch round them to see if they had sprouted?
CLOV: They haven't sprouted.
HAMM: Perhaps it's still too early.
CLOV: If they were going to sprout they would have sprouted. [*Violently.*] They'll never sprout! [*Pause.* NAGG *takes biscuit in his hand.*]
HAMM: This is not much fun. [*Pause.*] But that's always the way at the end of the day, isn't it, Clov?
CLOV: Always.
HAMM: It's the end of the day like any other day, isn't it, Clov?
CLOV: Looks like it. [*Pause.*]
HAMM: [*anguished*]: What's happening, what's happening?
CLOV: Something is taking its course. [*Pause.*]
HAMM: All right, be off. [*He leans back in his chair, remains motionless.* CLOV *does not move, heaves a great groaning sigh.* HAMM *sits up.*] I thought I told you to be off.
CLOV: I'm trying. [*He goes to door, halts.*] Ever since I was whelped. [*Exit* CLOV.]

7. "You're pretty good, aren't you?" (British slang). *Smithereen*: A tiny bit. 8. "Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin": Words written by a divine hand on the wall during the feast of Belshazzar, King of Babylon. They predict doom and tell the king "Thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting." (Daniel 5:25–28)

HAMM: We're getting on.

[*He leans back in his chair, remains motionless.* NAGG *knocks on the lid of the other bin. Pause. He knocks harder. The lid lifts and the hands of* NELL *appear, gripping the rim. Then her head emerges. Lace cap. Very white face.*]

NELL: What is it, my pet? [*Pause.*] Time for love?

NAGG: Were you asleep?

NELL: Oh no!

NAGG: Kiss me.

NELL: We can't.

NAGG: Try. [*Their heads strain towards each other, fail to meet, fall apart again.*]

NELL: Why this farce, day after day? [*Pause.*]

NAGG: I've lost me tooth.

NELL: When?

NAGG: I had it yesterday.

NELL [*elegiac*]: Ah yesterday! [*They turn painfully towards each other.*]

NAGG: Can you see me?

NELL: Hardly. And you?

NAGG: What?

NELL: Can you see me?

NAGG: Hardly.

NELL: So much the better, so much the better.

NAGG: Don't say that. [*Pause.*] Our sight has failed.

NELL: Yes. [*Pause. They turn away from each other.*]

NAGG: Can you hear me?

NELL: Yes. And you?

NAGG: Yes. [*Pause.*] Our hearing hasn't failed.

NELL: Our what?

NAGG: Our hearing.

NELL: No. [*Pause.*] Have you anything else to say to me?

NAGG: Do you remember—

NELL: No.

NAGG: When we crashed on our tandem[9] and lost our shanks. [*They laugh heartily.*]

NELL: It was in the Ardennes.[1] [*They laugh less heartily.*]

NAGG: On the road to Sedan. [*They laugh still less heartily.*] Are you cold?

NELL: Yes, perished. And you?

NAGG: [*Pause.*] I'm freezing. [*Pause.*] Do you want to go in?

NELL: Yes.

NAGG: Then go in. [NELL *does not move*] Why don't you go in?

9. A bicycle built for two. 1. A forest in northern France, the scene of bitter fighting in both World Wars. *Sedan*: Town in northern France where the French were defeated in the Franco-Prussian War (1870).

NELL: I don't know. [*Pause.*]
NAGG: Has he changed your sawdust?
NELL: It isn't sawdust. [*Pause. Wearily.*] Can you not be a little accurate, Nagg?
NAGG: Your sand then. It's not important.
NELL: It is important. [*Pause.*]
NAGG: It was sawdust once.
NELL: Once!
NAGG: And now it's sand. [*Pause.*] From the shore. [*Pause. Impatiently.*] Now it's sand he fetches from the shore.
NELL: Now it's sand.
NAGG: Has he changed yours?
NELL: No.
NAGG: Nor mine. [*Pause.*] I won't have it! [*Pause. Holding up the biscuit.*] Do you want a bit?
NELL: No. [*Pause.*] Of what?
NAGG: Biscuit. I've kept you half. [*He looks at the biscuit. Proudly.*] Three quarters. For you. Here. [*He proffers the biscuit.*] No? [*Pause.*] Do you not feel well?
HAMM [*wearily*]: Quiet, quiet, you're keeping me awake. [*Pause.*] Talk softer. [*Pause.*] If I could sleep I might make love. I'd go into the woods. My eyes would see . . . the sky, the earth. I'd run, run, they wouldn't catch me. [*Pause.*] Nature! [*Pause.*] There's something dripping in my head. [*Pause.*] A heart, a heart in my head. [*Pause.*]
NAGG: [*soft*]: Do you hear him? A heart in his head! [*He chuckles cautiously.*]
NELL: One mustn't laugh at those things, Nagg. Why must you always laugh at them?
NAGG: Not so loud!
NELL [*Without lowering her voice*]: Nothing is funnier than unhappiness, I grant you that. But—
NAGG: [*shocked*]: Oh!
NELL: Yes, yes, it's the most comical thing in the world. And we laugh, we laugh, with a will, in the beginning. But it's always the same thing. Yes, it's like the funny story we have heard too often, we still find it funny, but we don't laugh any more. [*Pause.*] Have you anything else to say to me?
NAGG: No.
NELL: Are you quite sure? [*Pause.*] Then I'll leave you.
NAGG: Do you not want your biscuit? [*Pause.*] I'll keep it for you. [*Pause.*] I thought you were going to leave me.
NELL: I am going to leave you.
NAGG: Could you give me a scratch before you go?
NELL: No. [*Pause.*] Where?

NAGG: In the back.
NELL: No. [*Pause.*] Rub yourself against the rim.
NAGG: It's lower down. In the hollow.
NELL: What hollow?
NAGG: The hollow! [*Pause.*] Could you not? [*Pause.*] Yesterday you scratched me there.
NELL [*elegiac*]: Ah yesterday!
NAGG: Could you not? [*Pause.*] Would you like me to scratch you? [*Pause.*] Are you crying again?
NELL: I was trying. [*Pause.*]
HAMM: Perhaps it's a little vein. [*Pause.*]
NAGG: What was that he said?
NELL: Perhaps it's a little vein.
NAGG: What does that mean? [*Pause.*] That means nothing. [*Pause.*] Will I tell you the story of the tailor?
NELL: No. [*Pause.*] What for?
NAGG: To cheer you up.
NELL: It's not funny.
NAGG: It always made you laugh. [*Pause.*] The first time I thought you'd die.
NELL: It was on Lake Como.[2] [*Pause.*] One April afternoon. [*Pause.*] Can you believe it?
NAGG: What?
NELL: That we once went out rowing on Lake Como. [*Pause.*] One April afternoon.
NAGG: We had got engaged the day before.
NELL: Engaged!
NAGG: You were in such fits that we capsized. By rights we should have been drowned.
NELL: It was because I felt happy.
NAGG [*indignant*]: It was not, it was not, it was my story and nothing else. Happy! Don't you laugh at it still? Every time I tell it. Happy!
NELL: It was deep, deep. And you could see down to the bottom. So white. So clean.
NAGG: Let me tell it again. [*Raconteur's voice.*] An Englishman, needing a pair of striped trousers in a hurry for the New Year festivities, goes to his tailor who takes his measurements. [*Tailor's voice.*] "That's the lot, come back in four days, I'll have it ready." Good. Four days later. [*Tailor's voice.*] "So sorry, come back in a week, I've made a mess of the seat." Good, that's all right, a neat seat can be very ticklish. A week later. [*Tailor's voice.*] "Frightfully sorry, come back in ten days. I've made a hash of the crotch." Good, can't be helped, a snug crotch is always a teaser. Ten days

2. A large lake and tourist resort in northern Italy, near the Swiss border.

later. [*Tailor's voice.*] "Dreadfully sorry, come back in a fortnight, I've made a balls of the fly." Good, at a pinch, a smart fly is a stiff proposition. [*Pause. Normal voice.*] I never told it worse. [*Pause. Gloomy.*] I tell this story worse and worse. [*Pause. Raconteur's voice.*] Well, to make it short, the bluebells are blowing and he ballockses[3] the buttonholes. [*Customer's voice.*] "God damn you to hell, Sir, no, it's indecent, there are limits! In six days, do you hear me, six days, God made the world. Yes Sir, no less Sir, the WORLD! And you are not bloody well capable of making me a pair of trousers in three months!" [*Tailor's voice, scandalized.*] "But my dear Sir, my dear Sir, look—[*disdainful gesture, disgustedly*]—at the world—[*pause*] and look—[*loving gesture, proudly*]—at my TROUSERS!"

[*Pause. He looks at* NELL *who has remained impassive, her eyes unseeing, breaks into a high forced laugh, cuts it short, pokes his head towards* NELL, *launches his laugh again.*]

HAMM: Silence!

[NAGG *starts, cuts short his laugh.*]

NELL: You could see down to the bottom.

HAMM [*exasperated*]: Have you not finished? Will you never finish? [*With sudden fury.*] Will this never finish? [NAGG *disappears into his bin, closes the lid behind him.* NELL *does not move. Frenziedly.*] My kingdom for a nightman![4] [*He whistles. Enter* CLOV.] Clear away this muck! Chuck it in the sea! [CLOV *goes to bins, halts.*]

NELL: So white.

HAMM: What? What's she blathering about? [CLOV *stoops, takes* NELL*'s hand, feels her pulse.*]

NELL [*to* CLOV]: Desert! [CLOV *lets go her hand, pushes her back in the bin, closes the lid.*]

CLOV [*returning to his place beside the chair*]: She has no pulse.

HAMM: What was she drivelling about?

CLOV: She told me to go away, into the desert.

HAMM: Damn busybody! Is that all?

CLOV: No.

HAMM: What else?

CLOV: I didn't understand.

HAMM: Have you bottled her?

CLOV: Yes.

HAMM: Are they both bottled?

CLOV: Yes.

HAMM: Screw down the lids. [CLOV *goes towards door.*] Time enough. [CLOV *halts.*] My anger subsides, I'd like to pee.

3. "Bollixes," botches. 4. Parody of Shakespeare's *Richard III*, where the defeated king seeks a horse to escape from the battlefield: "A horse! a horse! My kingdom for a horse!" (Act V, 4, l. 7).

CLOV [*with alacrity*]: I'll go and get the catheter. [*He goes towards door.*]

HAMM: Time enough. [CLOV *halts.*] Give me my pain-killer.

CLOV: It's too soon. [*Pause.*] It's too soon on top of your tonic, it wouldn't act.

HAMM: In the morning they brace you up and in the evening they calm you down. Unless it's the other way round. [*Pause.*] That old doctor, he's dead naturally?

CLOV: He wasn't old.

HAMM: But he's dead?

CLOV: Naturally. [*Pause.*] *You* ask *me* that? [*Pause.*]

HAMM: Take me for a little turn. [CLOV *goes behind the chair and pushes it forward.*] Not too fast! [CLOV *pushes chair.*] Right round the world! [CLOV *pushes chair.*] Hug the walls, then back to the center again. [CLOV *pushes chair.*] I was right in the center, wasn't I?

CLOV [*pushing*]: Yes.

HAMM: We'd need a proper wheel-chair. With big wheels. Bicycle wheels! [*Pause.*] Are you hugging?

CLOV [*pushing*]: Yes.

HAMM [*groping for wall*]: It's a lie! Why do you lie to me?

CLOV [*bearing closer to wall*]: There! There!

HAMM: Stop! [CLOV *stops chair close to back wall.* HAMM *lays his hand against wall.*] Old wall! [*Pause.*] Beyond is the . . . other hell. [*Pause. Violently.*] Closer! Closer! Up against!

CLOV: Take away your hand. [HAMM *withdraws his hand.* CLOV *rams chair against wall.*] There! [HAMM *leans towards wall, applies his ear to it.*]

HAMM: Do you hear? [*He strikes the wall with his knuckles.*] Do you hear? Hollow bricks! [*He strikes again.*] All that's hollow! [*Pause. He straightens up. Violently.*] That's enough. Back!

CLOV: We haven't done the round.

HAMM: Back to my place! [CLOV *pushes chair back to center.*] Is that my place?

CLOV: Yes, that's your place.

HAMM: Am I right in the center?

CLOV: I'll measure it.

HAMM: More or less! More or less!

CLOV [*moving chair slightly*]: There!

HAMM: I'm more or less in the center?

CLOV: I'd say so.

HAMM: You'd say so! Put me right in the center!

CLOV: I'll go and get the tape.

HAMM: Roughly! Roughly! [CLOV *moves chair slightly.*] Bang in the center!

CLOV: There! [*Pause.*]

HAMM: I feel a little too far to the left. [CLOV *moves chair slightly.*] Now I feel a little too far to the right. [CLOV *moves chair slightly.*] I feel a little too far forward. [CLOV *moves chair slightly.*] Now I feel a little too far back. [CLOV *moves chair slightly.*] Don't stay there, [*i.e., behind the chair*] you give me the shivers. [CLOV *returns to his place beside the chair.*]

CLOV: If I could kill him I'd die happy. [*Pause.*]

HAMM: What's the weather like?

CLOV: As usual.

HAMM: Look at the earth.

CLOV: I've looked.

HAMM: With the glass?

CLOV: No need of the glass.

HAMM: Look at it with the glass.

CLOV: I'll go and get the glass. [*Exit* CLOV.]

HAMM: No need of the glass! [*Enter* CLOV *with telescope.*]

CLOV: I'm back again, with the glass. [*He goes to window right, looks up at it.*] I need the steps.

HAMM: Why? Have you shrunk? [*Exit* CLOV *with telescope.*] I don't like that, I don't like that. [*Enter* CLOV *with ladder, but without telescope.*]

CLOV: I'm back again, with the steps. [*He sets down ladder under window right, gets up on it, realizes he has not the telescope, gets down.*] I need the glass. [*He goes towards door.*]

HAMM [*violently*]: But you have the glass!

CLOV [*halting, violently*]: No, I haven't the glass! [*Exit* CLOV.]

HAMM: This is deadly. [*Enter* CLOV *with telescope. He goes towards ladder.*]

CLOV: Things are livening up. [*He gets up on ladder, raises the telescope, lets it fall.*] I did it on purpose. [*He gets down, picks up the telescope, turns it on auditorium.*] I see . . . a multitude . . . in transports . . . of joy.[5] [*Pause.*] That's what I call a magnifier. [*He lowers the telescope, turns towards* HAMM.] Well? Don't we laugh?

HAMM [*after reflection*]: I don't.

CLOV [*after reflection*]: Nor I. [*He gets up on ladder, turns the telescope on the without.*] Let's see. [*He looks, moving the telescope.*] Zero . . . [*he looks*] . . . zero . . . [*he looks*] . . . and zero.

HAMM: Nothing stirs. All is—

CLOV: Zer—

HAMM [*violently*]: Wait till you're spoke to! [*Normal voice.*] All is . . . all is . . . all is what? [*Violently.*] All is what?

CLOV: What all is? In a word? Is that what you want to know? Just a moment. [*He turns the telescope on the without, looks, lowers*

5. Echo of Revelation 7:9–12: "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which . . . cried with a loud voice . . . Salvation. . . ."

the telescope, turns towards Hamm.] Corpsed. [*Pause.*] Well? Content?

HAMM: Look at the sea.

CLOV: It's the same.

HAMM: Look at the ocean! [CLOV *gets down, takes a few steps towards window left, goes back for ladder, carries it over and sets it down under window left, gets up on it, turns the telescope on the without, looks at length. He starts, lowers the telescope, examines it, turns it again on the without.*]

CLOV: Never seen anything like that!

HAMM [*anxious*]: What? A sail? A fin? Smoke?

CLOV [*looking*]: The light is sunk.

HAMM [*relieved*]: Pah! We all knew that.

CLOV [*looking*]: There was a bit left.

HAMM: The base.

CLOV [*looking*]: Yes.

HAMM: And now?

CLOV [*looking*]: All gone.

HAMM: No gulls?

CLOV [*looking*]: Gulls!

HAMM: And the horizon? Nothing on the horizon?

CLOV [*lowering the telescope, turning towards Hamm, exasperated*]: What in God's name could there be on the horizon? [*Pause.*]

HAMM: The waves, how are the waves?

CLOV: The waves? [*He turns the telescope on the waves.*] Lead.

HAMM: And the sun?

CLOV [*looking*]: Zero.

HAMM: But it should be sinking. Look again.

CLOV [*looking*]: Damn the sun.

HAMM: Is it night already then?

CLOV [*looking*]: No.

HAMM: Then what is it?

CLOV [*looking*]: Gray. [*Lowering the telescope, turning towards* HAMM, *louder.*] Gray! [*Pause. Still louder.*] GRRAY! [*Pause. He gets down, approaches* HAMM *from behind, whispers in his ear.*]

HAMM [*starting*]: Gray! Did I hear you say gray?

CLOV: Light black. From pole to pole.

HAMM: You exaggerate. [*Pause.*] Don't stay there, you give me the shivers. [CLOV *returns to his place beside the chair.*]

CLOV: Why this farce, day after day?

HAMM: Routine. One never knows. [*Pause.*] Last night I saw inside my breast. There was a big sore.

CLOV: Pah! You saw your heart.

HAMM: No, it was living. [*Pause. Anguished.*] Clov!

CLOV: Yes.

HAMM: What's happening?
CLOV: Something is taking its course. [*Pause.*]
HAMM: Clov!
CLOV [*impatiently*]: What is it?
HAMM: We're not beginning to . . . to . . . mean something?
CLOV: Mean something! You and I, mean something! [*Brief laugh.*] Ah that's a good one!
HAMM: I wonder. [*Pause.*] Imagine if a rational being came back to earth, wouldn't he be liable to get ideas into his head if he observed us long enough. [*Voice of rational being.*] Ah, good, now I see what it is, yes, now I understand what they're at! [CLOV *starts, drops the telescope and begins to scratch his belly with both hands. Normal voice.*] And without going so far as that, we ourselves . . . [*with emotion*] . . . we ourselves . . . at certain moments . . . [*Vehemently.*] To think perhaps it won't all have been for nothing!
CLOV [*anguished, scratching himself*]: I have a flea!
HAMM: A flea! Are there still fleas?
CLOV: On me there's one. [*Scratching.*] Unless it's a crablouse.
HAMM [*very perturbed*]: But humanity might start from there all over again! Catch him, for the love of God!
CLOV: I'll go and get the powder. [*Exit* CLOV.]
HAMM: A flea! This is awful! What a day! [*Enter* CLOV *with a sprinkling-tin.*]
CLOV: I'm back again, with the insecticide.
HAMM: Let him have it! [CLOV *loosens the top of his trousers, pulls it forward and shakes powder into the aperture. He stoops, looks, waits, starts, frenziedly shakes more powder, stoops, looks, waits.*]
CLOV: The bastard!
HAMM: Did you get him?
CLOV: Looks like it. [*He drops the tin and adjusts his trousers.*] Unless he's laying doggo.
HAMM: Laying! Lying you mean. Unless he's *lying* doggo.
CLOV: Ah? One says lying? One doesn't say laying?
HAMM: Use your head, can't you. If he was laying we'd be bitched.
CLOV: Ah. [*Pause.*] What about that pee?
HAMM: I'm having it.
CLOV: Ah that's the spirit, that's the spirit! [*Pause.*]
HAMM: [*with ardour*]: Let's go from here, the two of us! South! You can make a raft and the currents will carry us away, far away, to other . . . mammals!
CLOV: God forbid!
HAMM: Alone, I'll embark alone! Get working on that raft immediately. Tomorrow I'll be gone for ever.
CLOV [*hastening towards door*]: I'll start straight away.

HAMM: Wait! [CLOV *halts.*] Will there be sharks, do you think?
CLOV: Sharks? I don't know. If there are there will be. [*He goes towards door.*]
HAMM: Wait! [CLOV *halts.*] Is it not yet time for my pain-killer?
CLOV [*violently*]: No! [*He goes towards door.*]
HAMM: Wait! [CLOV *halts.*] How are your eyes?
CLOV: Bad.
HAMM: But you can see.
CLOV: All I want.
HAMM: How are your legs?
CLOV: Bad.
HAMM: But you can walk.
CLOV: I come . . . and go.
HAMM: In my house. [*Pause. With prophetic relish.*] One day you'll be blind, like me. You'll be sitting there, a speck in the void, in the dark, for ever, like me. [*Pause.*] One day you'll say to yourself, I'm tired, I'll sit down, and you'll go and sit down. Then you'll say, I'm hungry, I'll get up and get something to eat. But you won't get up. You'll say, I shouldn't have sat down, but since I have I'll sit on a little longer, then I'll get up and get something to eat. But you won't get up and you won't get anything to eat. [*Pause.*] You'll look at the wall awhile, then you'll say, I'll close my eyes, perhaps have a little sleep, after that I'll feel better, and you'll close them. And when you open them again there'll be no wall any more. [*Pause.*] Infinite emptiness will be all around you, all the resurrected dead of all the ages wouldn't fill it, and there you'll be like a little bit of grit in the middle of the steppe. [*Pause.*] Yes, one day you'll know what it is, you'll be like me, except that you won't have anyone with you, because you won't have had pity on anyone and because there won't be anyone left to have pity on. [*Pause.*]
CLOV: It's not certain. [*Pause.*] And there's one thing you forget.
HAMM: Ah?
CLOV: I can't sit down.
HAMM [*impatiently*]: Well you'll lie down then, what the hell! Or you'll come to a standstill, simply stop and stand still, the way you are now. One day you'll say, I'm tired, I'll stop. What does the attitude matter? [*Pause.*]
CLOV: So you all want me to leave you.
HAMM: Naturally.
CLOV: Then I'll leave you.
HAMM: You can't leave us.
CLOV: Then I won't leave you. [*Pause.*]
HAMM: Why don't you finish us? [*Pause.*] I'll tell you the combination of the cupboard if you promise to finish me.
CLOV: I couldn't finish you.

HAMM: Then you won't finish me. [*Pause.*]
CLOV: I'll leave you, I have things to do.
HAMM: Do you remember when you came here?
CLOV: No. Too small, you told me.
HAMM: Do you remember your father?
CLOV [*wearily*]: Same answer. [*Pause.*] You've asked me these questions millions of times.
HAMM: I love the old questions. [*With fervor.*] Ah the old questions, the old answers, there's nothing like them! [*Pause.*] It was I was a father to you.
CLOV: Yes. [*He looks at* HAMM *fixedly.*] You were that to me.
HAMM: My house a home for you.
CLOV: Yes. [*He looks about him.*] This was that for me.
HAMM [*proudly*]: But for me, [*gesture towards himself*] no father. But for Hamm, [*gesture towards surroundings*] no home. [*Pause.*]
CLOV: I'll leave you.
HAMM: Did you ever think of one thing?
CLOV: Never.
HAMM: That here we're down in a hole. [*Pause.*] But beyond the hills? Eh? Perhaps it's still green. Eh? [*Pause.*] Flora! Pomona! [*Ecstatically.*] Ceres![6] [*Pause.*] Perhaps you won't need to go very far.
CLOV: I can't go very far. [*Pause.*] I'll leave you.
HAMM: Is my dog ready?
CLOV: He lacks a leg.
HAMM: Is he silky?
CLOV: He's a kind of Pomeranian.
HAMM: Go and get him.
CLOV: He lacks a leg.
HAMM: Go and get him! [*Exit* CLOV.] We're getting on. [*Enter* CLOV *holding by one of its three legs a black toy dog.*]
CLOV: Your dogs are here. [*He hands the dog to* HAMM *who feels it, fondles it.*]
HAMM: He's white, isn't he?
CLOV: Nearly.
HAMM: What do you mean, nearly? Is he white or isn't he?
CLOV: He isn't. [*Pause.*]
HAMM: You've forgotten the sex.
CLOV [*vexed*]: But he isn't finished. The sex goes on at the end. [*Pause.*]
HAMM: You haven't put on his ribbon.
CLOV [*angrily*]: But he isn't finished, I tell you! First you finish your dog and then you put on his ribbon! [*Pause.*]
HAMM: Can he stand?

6. In Roman mythology, the goddesses of flowers, fruits, and fertility.

CLOV: I don't know.
HAMM: Try. [*He hands the dog to* CLOV *who places it on the ground.*] Well?
CLOV: Wait! [*He squats down and tries to get the dog to stand on its three legs, fails, lets it go. The dog falls on its side.*]
HAMM [*impatiently*]: Well?
CLOV: He's standing.
HAMM [*groping for the dog*]: Where? Where is he? [CLOV *holds up the dog in a standing position.*]
CLOV: There. [*He takes* HAMM*'s hand and guides it towards the dog's head.*]
HAMM [*his hand on the dog's head*]: Is he gazing at me?
CLOV: Yes.
HAMM [*proudly*]: As if he were asking me to take him for a walk?
CLOV: If you like.
HAMM [*as before*]: Or as if he were begging me for a bone. [*He withdraws his hand.*] Leave him like that, standing there imploring me. [CLOV *straightens up. The dog falls on its side.*]
CLOV: I'll leave you.
HAMM: Have you had your visions?
CLOV: Less.
HAMM: Is Mother Pegg's light on?
CLOV: Light! How could anyone's light be on?
HAMM: Extinguished!
CLOV: Naturally it's extinguished. If it's not on it's extinguished.
HAMM: No, I mean Mother Pegg.
CLOV: But naturally she's extinguished! [*Pause.*] What's the matter with you today?
HAMM: I'm taking my course. [*Pause.*] Is she buried?
CLOV: Buried! Who would have buried her?
HAMM: You.
CLOV: Me! Haven't I enough to do without burying people?
HAMM: But you'll bury me.
CLOV: No I won't bury you. [*Pause.*]
HAMM: She was bonny once, like a flower of the field. [*With reminiscent leer.*] And a great one for the men!
CLOV: We too were bonny—once. It's a rare thing not to have been bonny—once. [*Pause.*]
HAMM: Go and get the gaff. [CLOV *goes to door, halts.*]
CLOV: Do this, do that, and I do it. I never refuse. Why?
HAMM: You're not able to.
CLOV: Soon I won't do it any more.
HAMM: You won't be able to any more. [*Exit* CLOV.] Ah the creatures, the creatures, everything has to be explained to them. [*Enter* CLOV *with gaff.*]

CLOV: Here's your gaff. Stick it up. [*He gives the gaff to* HAMM *who, wielding it like a puntpole, tries to move his chair.*]
HAMM: Did I move?
CLOV: No. [HAMM *throws down the gaff.*]
HAMM: Go and get the oilcan.
CLOV: What for?
HAMM: To oil the castors.
CLOV: I oiled them yesterday.
HAMM: Yesterday! What does that mean? Yesterday!
CLOV [*violently*]: That means that bloody awful day, long ago, before this bloody awful day. I use the words you taught me. If they don't mean anything any more, teach me others. Or let me be silent. [*Pause.*]
HAMM: I once knew a madman who thought the end of the world had come. He was a painter—and engraver. I had a great fondness for him. I used to go and see him, in the asylum. I'd take him by the hand and drag him to the window. Look! There! All that rising corn! And there! Look! The sails of the herring fleet! All that loveliness! [*Pause.*] He'd snatch away his hand and go back into his corner. Appalled. All he had seen was ashes. [*Pause.*] He alone had been spared. [*Pause.*] Forgotten. [*Pause.*] It appears the case is . . . was not so . . . so unusual.
CLOV: A madman! When was that?
HAMM: Oh way back, way back, you weren't in the land of the living.
CLOV: God be with the days! [*Pause.* HAMM *raises his toque.*]
HAMM: I had a great fondness for him. [*Pause. He puts on his toque again.*] He was a painter—and engraver.
CLOV: There are so many terrible things.
HAMM: No, no, there are not so many now. [*Pause.*] Clov!
CLOV: Yes.
HAMM: Do you not think this has gone on long enough?
CLOV: Yes! [*Pause.*] What?
HAMM: This . . . this . . . thing.
CLOV: I've always thought so. [*Pause.*] You not?
HAMM [*gloomily*]: Then it's a day like any other day.
CLOV: As long as it lasts. [*Pause.*] All life long the same inanities.
HAMM: I can't leave you.
CLOV: I know. And you can't follow me. [*Pause.*]
HAMM: If you leave me how shall I know?
CLOV [*briskly*]: Well you simply whistle me and if I don't come running it means I've left you. [*Pause.*]
HAMM: You won't come and kiss me goodbye?
CLOV: Oh I shouldn't think so. [*Pause.*]
HAMM: But you might be merely dead in your kitchen.
CLOV: The result would be the same.

HAMM: Yes, but how would I know, if you were merely dead in your kitchen?
CLOV: Well . . . sooner or later I'd start to stink.
HAMM: You stink already. The whole place stinks of corpses.
CLOV: The whole universe.
HAMM [*angrily*]: To hell with the universe. [*Pause.*] Think of something.
CLOV: What?
HAMM: An idea, have an idea. [*Angrily.*] A bright idea!
CLOV: Ah good. [*He starts pacing to and fro, his eyes fixed on the ground, his hands behind his back. He halts.*] The pains in my legs! It's unbelievable! Soon I won't be able to think any more.
HAMM: You won't be able to leave me. [CLOV *resumes his pacing.*] What are you doing?
CLOV: Having an idea. [*He paces.*] Ah! [*He halts.*]
HAMM: What a brain! [*Pause.*] Well?
CLOV: Wait! [*He meditates. Not very convinced.*] Yes . . . [*Pause. More convinced.*] Yes! [*He raises his head.*] I have it! I set the alarm. [*Pause.*]
HAMM: This is perhaps not one of my bright days, but frankly—
CLOV: You whistle me. I don't come. The alarm rings. I'm gone. It doesn't ring. I'm dead. [*Pause.*]
HAMM: Is it working? [*Pause. Impatiently.*] The alarm, is it working?
CLOV: Why wouldn't it be working?
HAMM: Because it's worked too much.
CLOV: But it's hardly worked at all.
HAMM [*angrily*]: Then because it's worked too little!
CLOV: I'll go and see. [*Exit* CLOV. *Brief ring of alarm off. Enter* CLOV *with alarm-clock. He holds it against* HAMM*'s ear and releases alarm. They listen to it ringing to the end. Pause.*] Fit to wake the dead! Did you hear it?
HAMM: Vaguely.
CLOV: The end is terrific!
HAMM: I prefer the middle. [*Pause.*] Is it not time for my pain-killer?
CLOV: No! [*He goes to door, turns.*] I'll leave you.
HAMM: It's time for my story. Do you want to listen to my story.
CLOV: No.
HAMM: Ask my father if he wants to listen to my story. [CLOV *goes to bins, raises the lid of* NAGG*'s, stoops, looks into it. Pause. He straightens up.*]
CLOV: He's asleep.
HAMM: Wake him. [CLOV *stoops, wakes* NAGG *with the alarm. Unintelligible words.* CLOV *straightens up.*]
CLOV: He doesn't want to listen to your story.
HAMM: I'll give him a bon-bon. [CLOV *stoops. As before.*]

CLOV: He wants a sugar-plum.
HAMM: He'll get a sugar-plum. [CLOV *stoops. As before.*]
CLOV: It's a deal. [*He goes towards door.* NAGG*'s hands appear, gripping the rim. Then the head emerges.* CLOV *reaches door, turns.*] Do you believe in the life to come?
HAMM: Mine was always that. [*Exit* CLOV.] Got him that time!
NAGG: I'm listening.
HAMM: Scoundrel! Why did you engender me?
NAGG: I didn't know.
HAMM: What? What didn't you know?
NAGG: That it'd be you. [*Pause.*] You'll give me a sugar-plum?
HAMM: After the audition.
NAGG: You swear?
HAMM: Yes.
NAGG: On what?
HAMM: My honor. [*Pause. They laugh heartily.*]
NAGG: Two.
HAMM: One.
NAGG: One for me and one for—
HAMM: One! Silence! [*Pause.*] Where was I? [*Pause. Gloomily.*] It's finished, we're finished. [*Pause.*] Nearly finished. [*Pause.*] There'll be no more speech. [*Pause.*] Something dripping in my head, ever since the fontanelles. [*Stifled hilarity of* NAGG.] Splash, splash, always on the same spot. [*Pause.*] Perhaps it's a little vein. [*Pause.*] A little artery. [*Pause. More animated.*] Enough of that, it's story time, where was I? [*Pause. Narrative tone.*] The man came crawling towards me, on his belly. Pale, wonderfully pale and thin, he seemed on the point of—[*Pause. Normal tone.*] No, I've done that bit. [*Pause. Narrative tone.*] I calmly filled my pipe—the meerschaum, lit it with . . . let us say a vesta, drew a few puffs. Aah! [*Pause.*] Well, what is it *you* want? [*Pause.*] It was an extra-ordinarily bitter day, I remember, zero by the thermometer. But considering it was Christmas Eve there was nothing . . . extra-ordinary about that. Seasonable weather, for once in a way. [*Pause.*] Well, what ill wind blows you my way? He raised his face to me, black with mingled dirt and tears. [*Pause. Normal tone.*] That should do it. [*Narrative tone.*] No, no, don't look at me, don't look at me. He dropped his eyes and mumbled something, apologies I presume. [*Pause.*] I'm a busy man, you know, the final touches, before the festivities, you know what it is. [*Pause. Forcibly.*] Come on now, what is the object of this invasion? [*Pause.*] It was a glorious bright day, I remember, fifty by the heliometer,[7] but already the sun was sinking down into the . . . down among the dead.

7. Literally, a "sun meter." Ordinarily, a telescope used to measure distances between celestial bodies.

[*Normal tone.*] Nicely put, that. [*Narrative tone.*] Come on now, come on, present your petition and let me resume my labors. [*Pause. Normal tone.*] There's English for you. Ah well . . . [*Narrative tone.*] It was then he took the plunge. It's my little one, he said. Tsstss, a little one, that's bad. My little boy, he said, as if the sex mattered. Where did he come from? He named the hole. A good half-day, on horse. What are you insinuating? That the place is still inhabited? No no, not a soul, except himself and the child—assuming he existed. Good. I enquired about the situation at Kov, beyond the gulf. Not a sinner. Good. And you expect me to believe you have left your little one back there, all alone, and alive into the bargain? Come now! [*Pause.*] It was a howling wild day, I remember, a hundred by the anemometer.[8] The wind was tearing up the dead pines and sweeping them . . . away. [*Pause. Normal tone.*] A bit feeble, that. [*Narrative tone.*] Come on, man, speak up, what is you want from me, I have to put up my holly. [*Pause.*] Well to make it short it finally transpired that what he wanted from me was . . . bread for his brat? Bread? But I have no bread, it doesn't agree with me. Good. Then perhaps a little corn? [*Pause. Normal tone.*] That should do it. [*Narrative tone.*] Corn, yes, I have corn, it's true, in my granaries. But use your head. I give you some corn, a pound, a pound and a half, you bring it back to your child and you make him—if he's still alive—a nice pot of porridge, [NAGG *reacts.*] a nice pot and a half of porridge, full of nourishment. Good. The colors come back into his little cheeks—perhaps. And then? [*Pause.*] I lost patience. [*Violently.*] Use your head, can't you, use your head, you're on earth, there's no cure for that! [*Pause.*] It was an exceedingly dry day, I remember, zero by the hygrometer.[9] Ideal weather, for my lumbago. [*Pause. Violently.*] But what in God's name do you imagine? That the earth will awake in spring? That the rivers and seas will run with fish again? That there's manna in heaven still for imbeciles like you? [*Pause.*] Gradually I cooled down, sufficiently at least to ask him how long he had taken on the way. Three whole days. Good. In what condition he had left the child. Deep in sleep. [*Forcibly.*] But deep in what sleep, deep in what sleep already? [*Pause.*] Well to make it short I finally offered to take him into my service. He had touched a chord. And then I imagined already that I wasn't much longer for this world. [*He laughs. Pause.*] Well? [*Pause.*] Well? Here if you were careful you might die a nice natural death, in peace and comfort. [*Pause.*] Well? [*Pause.*] In the end he asked me would I consent to take in the child as well—if he were still alive. [*Pause.*] It was the moment I was waiting for. [*Pause.*] Would

8. A wind meter. 9. A moisture meter.

I consent to take in the child . . . [*Pause.*] I can see him still, down on his knees, his hands flat on the ground, glaring at me with his mad eyes, in defiance of my wishes. [*Pause. Normal tone.*] I'll soon have finished with this story. [*Pause.*] Unless I bring in other characters. [*Pause.*] But where would I find them? [*Pause.*] Where would I look for them? [*Pause. He whistles. Enter* CLOV.] Let us pray to God.

NAGG: Me sugar-plum!

CLOV: There's a rat in the kitchen!

HAMM: A rat! Are there still rats?

CLOV: In the kitchen there's one.

HAMM: And you haven't exterminated him?

CLOV: Half. You disturbed us.

HAMM: He can't get away?

CLOV: No.

HAMM: You'll finish him later. Let us pray to God.

CLOV: Again!

NAGG: Me sugar-plum!

HAMM: God first! [*Pause.*] Are you right?

CLOV [*resigned*]: Off we go.

HAMM [*to* NAGG]: And you?

NAGG [*clasping his hands, closing his eyes, in a gabble*]: Our Father which art—

HAMM: Silence! In silence! Where are your manners? [*Pause.*] Off we go. [*Attitudes of prayer. Silence. Abandoning his attitude, discouraged.*] Well?

CLOV [*abandoning his attitude*]: What a hope! And you?

HAMM: Sweet damn all! [*To* NAGG.] And you?

NAGG: Wait! [*Pause. Abandoning his attitude.*] Nothing doing!

HAMM: The bastard! He doesn't exist!

CLOV: Not yet.

NAGG: Me sugar-plum!

HAMM: There are no more sugar-plums! [*Pause.*]

NAGG: It's natural. After all I'm your father. It's true if it hadn't been me it would have been someone else. But that's no excuse. [*Pause.*] Turkish Delight,[1] for example, which no longer exists, we all know that, there is nothing in the world I love more. And one day I'll ask you for some, in return for a kindness, and you'll promise it to me. One must live with the times. [*Pause.*] Whom did you call when you were a tiny boy, and were frightened, in the dark? Your mother? No. Me. We let you cry. Then we moved you out of earshot, so that we might sleep in peace. [*Pause.*] I was asleep, as happy as a king, and you woke me up to have me listen to you. It

1. A sticky sweet candy.

wasn't indispensable, you didn't really need to have me listen to you. [*Pause.*] I hope the day will come when you'll really need to have me listen to you, and need to hear my voice, any voice. [*Pause.*] Yes, I hope I'll live till then, to hear you calling me like when you were a tiny boy, and were frightened, in the dark, and I was your only hope. [*Pause.* NAGG *knocks on lid of* NELL*'s bin. Pause.*] Nell! [*Pause. He knocks louder. Pause. Louder.*] Nell! [*Pause.* NAGG *sinks back into his bin, closes the lid behind him. Pause.*]

HAMM: Our revels now are ended.[2] [*He gropes for the dog.*] The dog's gone.

CLOV: He's not a real dog, he can't go.

HAMM [*groping*]: He's not there.

CLOV: He's lain down.

HAMM: Give him up to me. [CLOV *picks up the dog and gives it to* HAMM. HAMM *holds it in his arms. Pause.* HAMM *throws away the dog.*] Dirty brute! [CLOV *begins to pick up the objects lying on the ground.*] What are you doing?

CLOV: Putting things in order. [*He straightens up. Fervently.*] I'm going to clear everything away! [*He starts picking up again.*]

HAMM: Order!

CLOV [*straightening up*]: I love order. It's my dream. A world where all would be silent and still and each thing in its last place, under the last dust. [*He starts picking up again.*]

HAMM [*exasperated*]: What in God's name do you think you are doing?

CLOV [*straightening up*]: I'm doing my best to create a little order.

HAMM: Drop it! [CLOV *drops the objects he has picked up.*]

CLOV: After all, there or elsewhere. [*He goes towards door.*]

HAMM [*irritably*]: What's wrong with your feet?

CLOV: My feet?

HAMM: Tramp! Tramp!

CLOV: I must have put on my boots.

HAMM: Your slippers were hurting you? [*Pause.*]

CLOV: I'll leave you.

HAMM: No!

CLOV: What is there to keep me here?

HAMM: The dialogue. [*Pause.*] I've got on with my story. [*Pause.*] I've got on with it well. [*Pause. Irritably.*] Ask me where I've got to.

CLOV: Oh, by the way, your story?

HAMM [*surprised*]: What story?

CLOV: The one you've been telling yourself all your days.

HAMM: Ah you mean my chronicle?

CLOV: That's the one. [*Pause.*]

2. Lines spoken by Prospero in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (Act IV, 1, l. 148).

HAMM [*angrily*]: Keep going, can't you, keep going!
CLOV: You've got on with it, I hope.
HAMM [*modestly*]: Oh not very far, not very far. [*He sighs.*] There are days like that, one isn't inspired. [*Pause.*] Nothing you can do about it, just wait for it to come. [*Pause.*] No forcing, no forcing, it's fatal. [*Pause.*] I've got on with it a little all the same. [*Pause.*] Technique, you know. [*Pause. Irritably.*] I say I've got on with it a little all the same.
CLOV [*admiringly*]: Well I never! In spite of everything you were able to get on with it!
HAMM [*modestly*]: Oh not very far, you know, not very far, but nevertheless, better than nothing.
CLOV: Better than nothing! Is it possible?
HAMM: I'll tell you how it goes. He comes crawling on his belly—
CLOV: Who?
HAMM: What?
CLOV: Who do you mean, he?
HAMM: Who do I mean! Yet another.
CLOV: Ah him! I wasn't sure.
HAMM: Crawling on his belly, whining for bread for his brat. He's offered a job as gardener. Before—[CLOV *bursts out laughing.*] What is there so funny about that?
CLOV: A job as gardener!
HAMM: Is that what tickles you?
CLOV: It must be that.
HAMM: It wouldn't be the bread?
CLOV: Or the brat. [*Pause.*]
HAMM: The whole thing is comical, I grant you that. What about having a good guffaw the two of us together?
CLOV [*after reflection*]: I couldn't guffaw again today.
HAMM [*after reflection*]: Nor I. [*Pause.*] I continue then. Before accepting with gratitude he asks if he may have his little boy with him.
CLOV: What age?
HAMM: Oh tiny.
CLOV: He would have climbed the trees.
HAMM: All the little odd jobs.
CLOV: And then he would have grown up.
HAMM: Very likely. [*Pause.*]
CLOV: Keep going, can't you, keep going!
HAMM: That's all. I stopped there. [*Pause.*]
CLOV: Do you see how it goes on.
HAMM: More or less.
CLOV: Will it not soon be the end?
HAMM: I'm afraid it will.

CLOV: Pah! You'll make up another.

HAMM: I don't know. [*Pause.*] I feel rather drained. [*Pause.*] The prolonged creative effort. [*Pause.*] If I could drag myself down to the sea! I'd make a pillow of sand for my head and the tide would come.

CLOV: There's no more tide. [*Pause.*]

HAMM: Go and see is she dead. [CLOV *goes to bins, raises the lid of* NELL*'s, stoops, looks into it. Pause.*]

CLOV: Looks like it. [*He closes the lid, straightens up.* HAMM *raises his toque. Pause. He puts it on again.*]

HAMM [*with his hand to his toque*]: And Nagg? [CLOV *raises lid of* NAGG*'s bin, stoops, looks into it. Pause.*]

CLOV: Doesn't look like it. [*He closes the lid, straightens up.*]

HAMM [*letting go his toque*]: What's he doing? [CLOV *raises lid of* NAGG*'s bin, stoops, looks into it. Pause.*]

CLOV: He's crying. [*He closes lid, straightens up.*]

HAMM: Then he's living. [*Pause.*] Did you ever have an instant of happiness?

CLOV: Not to my knowledge. [*Pause.*]

HAMM: Bring me under the window. [CLOV *goes towards chair.*] I want to feel the light on my face. [CLOV *pushes chair.*] Do you remember, in the beginning, when you took me for a turn? You used to hold the chair too high. At every step you nearly tipped me out. [*With senile quaver.*] Ah great fun, we had, the two of us, great fun. [*Gloomily.*] And then we got into the way of it. [CLOV *stops the chair under window right.*] There already? [*Pause. He tilts back his head.*] Is it light?

CLOV: It isn't dark.

HAMM [*angrily*]: I'm asking you is it light.

CLOV: Yes. [*Pause.*]

HAMM: The curtain isn't closed?

CLOV: No.

HAMM: What window is it?

CLOV: The earth.

HAMM: I knew it! [*Angrily.*] But there's no light there! The other! [CLOV *stops the chair under window left.* HAMM *tilts back his head.*] That's what I call light! [*Pause.*] Feels like a ray of sunshine. [*Pause.*] No?

CLOV: No.

HAMM: It isn't a ray of sunshine I feel on my face?

CLOV: No. [*Pause.*]

HAMM: Am I very white? [*Pause. Angrily.*] I'm asking you am I very white!

CLOV: Not more so than usual. [*Pause.*]

HAMM: Open the window.

CLOV: What for?
HAMM: I want to hear the sea.
CLOV: You wouldn't hear it.
HAMM: Even if you opened the window?
CLOV: No.
HAMM: Then it's not worth while opening it?
CLOV: No.
HAMM [*violently*]: Then open it! [CLOV *gets up on the ladder, opens the window. Pause.*] Have you opened it?
CLOV: Yes. [*Pause.*]
HAMM: You swear you've opened it?
CLOV: Yes. [*Pause.*]
HAMM: Well. . . ! [*Pause.*] It must be very calm. [*Pause. Violently.*] I'm asking you is it very calm!
CLOV: Yes.
HAMM: It's because there are no more navigators. [*Pause.*] You haven't much conversation all of a sudden. Do you not feel well?
CLOV: I'm cold.
HAMM: What month are we? [*Pause.*] Close the window, we're going back. [CLOV *closes the window, gets down, pushes the chair back to its place, remains standing behind it, head bowed.*] Don't stay there, you give me the shivers! [CLOV *returns to his place beside the chair.*] Father! [*Pause. Louder.*] Father! [*Pause.*] Go and see did he hear me. [CLOV *goes to* NAGG*'s bin, raises the lid, stoops. Unintelligible words.* CLOV *straightens up.*]
CLOV: Yes.
HAMM: Both times? [CLOV *stoops. As before.*]
CLOV: Once only.
HAMM: The first time or the second? [CLOV *stoops. As before.*]
CLOV: He doesn't know.
HAMM: It must have been the second.
CLOV: We'll never know. [*He closes lid.*]
HAMM: Is he still crying?
CLOV: No.
HAMM: The dead go fast. [*Pause.*] What's he doing?
CLOV: Sucking his biscuit.
HAMM: Life goes on. [CLOV *returns to his place beside the chair.*] Give me a rug. I'm freezing.
CLOV: There are no more rugs. [*Pause.*]
HAMM: Kiss me. [*Pause.*] Will you not kiss me?
CLOV: No.
HAMM: On the forehead.
CLOV: I won't kiss you anywhere. [*Pause.*]
HAMM [*holding out his hand*]: Give me your hand at least. [*Pause.*]

Will you not give me your hand?

CLOV: I won't touch you. [*Pause.*]

HAMM: Give me the dog. [CLOV *looks round for the dog.*] No!

CLOV: Do you not want your dog?

HAMM: No.

CLOV: Then I'll leave you.

HAMM [*head bowed, absently*]: That's right. [CLOV *goes to door, turns.*]

CLOV: If I don't kill that rat he'll die.

HAMM [*as before*]: That's right. [*Exit* CLOV. *Pause.*] Me to play. [*He takes out his handkerchief, unfolds it, holds it spread out before him.*] We're getting on. [*Pause.*] You weep, and weep, for nothing, so as not to laugh, and little by little . . . you begin to grieve. [*He folds the handkerchief, puts it back in his pocket, raises his head.*] All those I might have helped. [*Pause.*] Helped! [*Pause.*] Saved. [*Pause.*] Saved! [*Pause.*] The place was crawling with them! [*Pause. Violently.*] Use your head, can't you, use your head, you're on earth, there's no cure for that! [*Pause.*] Get out of here and love one another! Lick your neighbor as yourself![3] [*Pause. Calmer.*] When it wasn't bread they wanted it was crumpets. [*Pause. Violently.*] Out of my sight and back to your petting parties! [*Pause.*] All that, all that! [*Pause.*] Not even a real dog! [*Calmer.*] The end is in the beginning and yet you go on. [*Pause.*] Perhaps I could go on with my story, end it and begin another. [*Pause.*] Perhaps I could throw myself out on the floor. [*He pushes himself painfully off his seat, falls back again.*] Dig my nails into the cracks and drag myself forward with my fingers. [*Pause.*] It will be the end and there I'll be, wondering what can have brought it on and wondering what can have . . . [*he hesitates*] . . . why it was so long coming. [*Pause.*] There I'll be, in the old shelter, alone against the silence and . . . [*he hesitates*] . . . the stillness. If I can hold my peace, and sit quiet, it will be all over with sound, and motion, all over and done with. [*Pause.*] I'll have called my father and I'll have called my . . . [*he hesitates*] . . . my son. And even twice, or three times, in case they shouldn't have heard me, the first time, or the second. [*Pause.*] I'll say to myself, He'll come back. [*Pause.*] And then? [*Pause.*] And then? [*Pause.*] He couldn't, he has gone too far. [*Pause.*] And then? [*Pause. Very agitated.*] All kinds of fantasies! That I'm being watched! A rat! Steps! Breath held and then . . . [*He breathes out.*] Then babble, babble, words, like the solitary child who turns himself into children, two, three, so as to be together, and whisper together, in the dark. [*Pause.*] Moment upon moment, pattering down, like the millet grains of

3. Parody of Christ's words in the Bible: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matthew 19:19 and elsewhere).

. . . [*he hesitates*] . . . that old Greek,[4] and all life long you wait for that to mount up to a life. [*Pause. He opens his mouth to continue, renounces.*] Ah let's get it over! [*He whistles. Enter* CLOV *with alarm-clock. He halts beside the chair.*] What? Neither gone nor dead?

CLOV: In spirit only.

HAMM: Which?

CLOV: Both.

HAMM: Gone from me you'd be dead.

CLOV: And vice versa.

HAMM: Outside of here it's death! [*Pause.*] And the rat?

CLOV: He's got away.

HAMM: He can't go far. [*Pause. Anxious.*] Eh?

CLOV: He doesn't need to go far. [*Pause.*]

HAMM: Is it not time for my pain-killer?

CLOV: Yes.

HAMM: Ah! At last! Give it to me! Quick! [*Pause.*]

CLOV: There's no more pain-killer. [*Pause.*]

HAMM [*appalled*]: Good. . . ! [*Pause.*] No more pain-killer!

CLOV: No more pain-killer. You'll never get any more pain-killer. [*Pause.*]

HAMM: But the little round box. It was full!

CLOV: Yes. But now it's empty. [*Pause.* CLOV *starts to move about the room. He is looking for a place to put down the alarm-clock.*]

HAMM [*soft*]: What'll I do? [*Pause. In a scream.*] What'll I do? [CLOV *sees the picture, takes it down, stands it on the floor with its face to the wall, hangs up the alarm-clock in its place.*] What are you doing?

CLOV: Winding up.

HAMM: Look at the earth.

CLOV: Again!

HAMM: Since it's calling to you.

CLOV: Is your throat sore? [*Pause.*] Would you like a lozenge? [*Pause.*] No. [*Pause.*] Pity. [CLOV *goes, humming, towards window right, halts before it, looks up at it.*]

HAMM: Don't sing.

CLOV [*turning towards* HAMM]: One hasn't the right to sing any more?

HAMM: No.

CLOV: Then how can it end?

HAMM: You want it to end?

CLOV: I want to sing.

4. Zeno of Elea, a Greek philosopher active around 450 B.C., known for logical paradoxes that reduce to absurdity various attempts to define Being. Aristotle reports that Zeno's paradox on sound questioned: If a grain of millet falling makes no sound, how can a bushel of grains make any sound? (Aristotle, *Physics*, 5:250a,19)

HAMM: I can't prevent you. [*Pause.* CLOV *turns towards window right.*]
CLOV: What did I do with that steps? [*He looks around for ladder.*] You didn't see that steps? [*He sees it.*] Ah, about time. [*He goes towards window left.*] Sometimes I wonder if I'm in my right mind. Then it passes over and I'm as lucid as before. [*He gets up on ladder, looks out of window.*] Christ, she's under water! [*He looks.*] How can that be? [*He pokes forward his head, his hand above his eyes.*] It hasn't rained. [*He wipes the pane, looks. Pause.*] Ah what a fool I am! I'm on the wrong side! [*He gets down, takes a few steps towards window right.*] Under water! [*He goes back for ladder.*] What a fool I am! [*He carries ladder towards window right.*] Sometimes I wonder if I'm in my right senses. Then it passes off and I'm as intelligent as ever. [*He sets down ladder under window right, gets up on it, looks out of window. He turns towards* HAMM.] Any particular sector you fancy? Or merely the whole thing?
HAMM: Whole thing.
CLOV: The general effect? Just a moment. [*He looks out of window. Pause.*]
HAMM: Clov.
CLOV [*absorbed*]: Mmm.
HAMM: Do you know what it is?
CLOV [*as before*]: Mmm.
HAMM: I was never there. [*Pause.*] Clov!
CLOV [*turning towards* HAMM, *exasperated*]: What is it?
HAMM: I was never there.
CLOV: Lucky for you. [*He looks out of window.*]
HAMM: Absent, always. It all happened without me. I don't know what's happened. [*Pause.*] Do you know what's happened? [*Pause.*] Clov!
CLOV [*turning towards* HAMM, *exasperated*]: Do you want me to look at this muckheap, yes or no?
HAMM: Answer me first.
CLOV: What?
HAMM: Do you know what's happened?
CLOV: When? Where?
HAMM [*violently*]: When! What's happened? Use your head, can't you! What has happened?
CLOV: What for Christ's sake does it matter? [*He looks out of window.*]
HAMM: I don't know. [*Pause.* CLOV *turns towards* HAMM.]
CLOV [*harshly*]: When old Mother Pegg asked you for oil for her lamp and you told her to get out to hell, you knew what was happening then, no? [*Pause.*] You know what she died of, Mother Pegg? Of darkness.
HAMM [*feebly*]: I hadn't any.

CLOV [*as before*]: Yes, you had. [*Pause.*]
HAMM: Have you the glass?
CLOV: No, it's clear enough as it is.
HAMM: Go and get it. [*Pause.* CLOV *casts up his eyes, brandishes his fists. He loses balance, clutches on to the ladder. He starts to get down, halts.*]
CLOV: There's one thing I'll never understand. [*He gets down.*] Why I always obey you. Can you explain that to me?
HAMM: No. . . . Perhaps it's compassion. [*Pause.*] A kind of great compassion. [*Pause.*] Oh you won't find it easy, you won't find it easy. [*Pause.* CLOV *begins to move about the room in search of the telescope.*]
CLOV: I'm tired of our goings on, very tired. [*He searches.*] You're not sitting on it? [*He moves the chair, looks at the place where it stood, resumes his search.*]
HAMM [*anguished*]: Don't leave me there! [*Angrily* CLOV *restores the chair to its place.*] Am I right in the center?
CLOV: You'd need a microscope to find this—[*He sees the telescope.*] Ah, about time. [*He picks up the telescope, gets up on the ladder, turns the telescope on the without.*]
HAMM: Give me the dog.
CLOV [*looking*]: Quiet!
HAMM [*angrily*]: Give me the dog! [CLOV *drops the telescope, clasps his hands to his head. Pause. He gets down precipitately, looks for the dog, sees it, picks it up, hastens towards* HAMM *and strikes him violently on the head with the dog.*]
CLOV: There's your dog for you! [*The dog falls to the ground. Pause.*]
HAMM: He hit me!
CLOV: You drive me mad, I'm mad!
HAMM: If you must hit me, hit me with the axe. [*Pause.*] Or with the gaff, hit me with the gaff. Not with the dog. With the gaff. Or with the axe. [CLOV *picks up the dog and gives it to* HAMM *who takes it in his arms.*]
CLOV [*imploringly*]: Let's stop playing!
HAMM: Never! [*Pause.*] Put me in my coffin.
CLOV: There are no more coffins.
HAMM: Then let it end! [CLOV *goes towards ladder.*] With a bang! [CLOV *gets up on ladder, gets down again, looks for telescope, sees it, picks it up, gets up ladder, raises telescope.*] Of darkness! And me? Did anyone ever have pity on me?
CLOV [*lowering the telescope, turning towards* HAMM]: What? [*Pause.*] Is it me you're referring to?
HAMM [*angrily*]: An aside, ape! Did you never hear an aside before? [*Pause.*] I'm warming up for my last soliloquy.
CLOV: I warn you. I'm going to look at this filth since it's an order.

But it's the last time. [*He turns the telescope on the without.*] Let's see. [*He moves the telescope.*] Nothing . . . nothing . . . good . . . good . . . nothing . . . goo—[*He starts, lowers the telescope, examines it, turns it again on the without. Pause.*] Bad luck to it!

HAMM: More complications! [CLOV *gets down.*] Not an underplot, I trust. [CLOV *moves ladder nearer window, gets up on it, turns telescope on the without.*]

CLOV [*dismayed*]: Looks like a small boy!

HAMM [*sarcastic*]: A small . . . boy!

CLOV: I'll go and see. [*He gets down, drops the telescope, goes towards door, turns.*] I'll take the gaff. [*He looks for the gaff, sees it, picks it up, hastens towards door.*]

HAMM: No! [CLOV *halts.*]

CLOV: No? A potential procreator?

HAMM: If he exists he'll die there or he'll come here. And if he doesn't . . . [*Pause.*]

CLOV: You don't believe me? You think I'm inventing? [*Pause.*]

HAMM: It's the end, Clov, we've come to the end. I don't need you any more. [*Pause.*]

CLOV: Lucky for you. [*He goes towards door.*]

HAMM: Leave me the gaff. [CLOV *gives him the gaff, goes towards door, halts, looks at alarm-clock, takes it down, looks round for a better place to put it, goes to bins, puts it on lid of* NAGG*'s bin. Pause.*]

CLOV: I'll leave you. [*He goes towards door.*]

HAMM: Before you go . . . [CLOV *halts near door.*] . . . say something.

CLOV: There is nothing to say.

HAMM: A few words . . . to ponder . . . in my heart.

CLOV: Your heart!

HAMM: Yes. [*Pause. Forcibly.*] Yes! [*Pause.*] With the rest, in the end, the shadows, the murmurs, all the trouble, to end up with. [*Pause.*] Clov. . . . He never spoke to me. Then, in the end, before he went, without my having asked him, he spoke to me. He said . . .

CLOV [*despairingly*]: Ah. . . !

HAMM: Something . . . from your heart.

CLOV: My heart!

HAMM: A few words . . . from your heart. [*Pause.*]

CLOV [*fixed gaze, tonelessly, towards auditorium*]: They said to me, That's love, yes, yes, not a doubt, now you see how—

HAMM: Articulate!

CLOV [*as before*]: How easy it is. They said to me, That's friendship, yes, yes, no question, you've found it. They said to me, Here's the place, stop, raise your head and look at all that beauty. That

order! They said to me. Come now, you're not a brute beast, think upon these things and you'll see how all becomes clear. And simple! They said to me, What skilled attention they get, all these dying of their wounds.

HAMM: Enough!

CLOV [*as before*]: I say to myself—sometimes, Clov, you must learn to suffer better than that if you want them to weary of punishing you—one day. I say to myself—sometimes, Clov, you must be there better than that if you want them to let you go—one day. But I feel too old, and too far, to form new habits. Good, it'll never end, I'll never go. [*Pause.*] Then one day, suddenly, it ends, it changes, I don't understand, it dies, or it's me, I don't understand, that either. I ask the words that remain—sleeping, waking, morning, evening. They have nothing to say. [*Pause.*] I open the door of the cell and go. I am so bowed I only see my feet, if I open my eyes, and between my legs a little trail of black dust. I say to myself that the earth is extinguished, though I never saw it lit. [*Pause.*] It's easy going. [*Pause.*] When I fall I'll weep for happiness. [*Pause. He goes towards door.*]

HAMM: Clov! [CLOV *halts, without turning.*] Nothing. [CLOV *moves on.*] Clov! [CLOV *halts, without turning.*]

CLOV: This is what we call making an exit.

HAMM: I'm obliged to you, Clov. For your services.

CLOV [*turning, sharply*]: Ah pardon, it's I am obliged to you.

HAMM: It's we are obliged to each other. [*Pause.* CLOV *goes towards door.*] One thing more. [CLOV *halts.*] A last favor. [*Exit* CLOV.] Cover me with the sheet. [*Long pause.*] No? Good. [*Pause.*] Me to play. [*Pause. Wearily.*] Old endgame lost of old, play and lose and have done with losing. [*Pause. More animated.*] Let me see. [*Pause.*] Ah yes! [*He tries to move the chair, using the gaff as before. Enter* CLOV, *dressed for the road. Panama hat, tweed coat, raincoat over his arm, umbrella, bag. He halts by the door and stands there, impassive and motionless, his eyes fixed on* HAMM, *till the end.* HAMM *gives up.*] Good. [*Pause.*] Discard. [*He throws away the gaff, makes to throw away the dog, thinks better of it.*] Take it easy. [*Pause.*] And now? [*Pause.*] Raise hat. [*He raises his toque.*] Peace to our . . . arses. [*Pause.*] And put on again. [*He puts on his toque.*] Deuce. [*Pause. He takes off his glasses.*] Wipe. [*He takes out his handkerchief and, without unfolding it, wipes his glasses.*] And put on again. [*He puts on his glasses, puts back the handkerchief in his pocket.*] We're coming. A few more squirms like that and I'll call. [*Pause.*] A little poetry. [*Pause.*] You prayed—[*Pause. He corrects himself.*] You CRIED for night; it comes—[*Pause. He corrects himself.*] It FALLS: now cry in darkness. [*He repeats, chanting.*] You cried for night; it falls: now cry in dark-

ness.[5] [*Pause.*] Nicely put, that. [*Pause.*] And now? [*Pause.*] Moments for nothing, now as always, time was never and time is over, reckoning closed and story ended. [*Pause. Narrative tone.*] If he could have his child with him. . . . [*Pause.*] It was the moment I was waiting for. [*Pause.*] You don't want to abandon him? You want him to bloom while you are withering? Be there to solace your last million last moments? [*Pause.*] He doesn't realize, all he knows is hunger, and cold, and death to crown it all. But you! You ought to know what the earth is like, nowadays. Oh I put him before his responsibilities! [*Pause. Normal tone.*] Well, there we are, there I am, that's enough. [*He raises the whistle to his lips, hesitates, drops it. Pause.*] Yes, truly! [*He whistles. Pause. Louder. Pause.*] Good. [*Pause.*] Father! [*Pause. Louder.*] Father! [*Pause.*] Good. [*Pause.*] We're coming. [*Pause.*] And to end up with? [*Pause.*] Discard. [*He throws away the dog. He tears the whistle from his neck.*] With my compliments. [*He throws whistle towards auditorium. Pause. He sniffs. Soft.*] Clov! [*Long pause.*] No? Good. [*He takes out the handkerchief.*] Since that's the way we're playing it . . . [*he unfolds handkerchief*] . . . let's play it that way . . . [*he unfolds*] . . . and speak no more about it . . . [*he finishes unfolding*] . . . speak no more. [*He holds handkerchief spread out before him.*] Old stancher! [*Pause.*] You . . . remain. [*Pause. He covers his face with handkerchief, lowers his arms to armrests, remains motionless.*] [*Brief tableau.*]

Curtain

5. Parody of a line from the poem "Meditation," by Baudelaire: "You were calling for evening; it falls; here it is."

MARGUERITE DURAS

1914–

Dialogue between lonely and vulnerable human beings—poignant attempts to communicate to someone else their experience of love, alienation and loss of identity—pervades the work of Marguerite Duras. In novels, plays, and films, her protagonists reach toward one another in an endless conversation, trying to understand each other's feelings and also the meaning of love and death inside a society which represses whatever cannot be controlled. These characters reject traditional constraints of marriage, individual identity, patriotism, economic order, and even language in order to destroy the tyranny of socially accepted ideas, and to seek out a reborn world in which artificial boundaries of self, class, gender and culture no longer act as walls between people. Her language is simple, conversational, and "as free as possible of style" (in the sense of formal elegance), because she hopes

to evoke a level of experience that precedes language. Even when it expresses profound feelings of suffering and loss, Duras's work—like that of Virginia Woolf—explores submerged levels of interconnection, and proposes that moments of true emotional contact are indeed possible.

She was born Marguerite Donnadieu in Indochina (modern South Vietnam) on April 4, 1914, the daughter of a mathematics professor and a schoolteacher. With the exception of occasional trips to France, she spent most of her childhood in Vietnam on the banks of the Mekong River, and attended school in Saigon before moving to Paris in 1932 to study mathematics, law, and political science. Duras received degrees in law and political science in 1935, and subsequently became a secretary in the civil service (Department of Colonies); her first novel, *The Impudent Ones*, appeared eight years later. The writer's childhood experience of the suffering and poverty of colonial Asia has colored her work as a whole, in both personal and political terms. Scenes from her Vietnamese years are recalled in *The Sea Wall* (1950) and *The Lover* (1984). In works like *Moderato Cantabile* (1958), *The Vice-Consul* (1965) and *India Song* (1973), she constantly indicts the way that commercialized Western values deform personal relationships. A committed writer for whom "revolutionary demands and literary demands are one and the same," Duras worked in the French Resistance during World War II, joined the French Communist Party after the war (and was expelled in 1955), and attacked French colonial rule during the Algerian war (1954–62). Recently, however, she has ignored political organizations as already contaminated by habit, and devotes her energy to works that destroy accepted patterns of thought in order to make room for new ways of seeing.

Despite the international scope of her vision, Duras tends to write small dramatic scenes set in relatively localized settings: a house, square, garden, street, or hotel where a few characters act out pieces of a core story of love, death, and abandonment, a story which reappears in different genres and various aspects over the years. In most instances (*Hiroshima Mon Amour* is an exception), there is little specific historical context attached to a narrative whose importance lies in the relationships of two or three people. All her work is colored by a driving curiosity about love and sexual desire, the possibility of a mad passion free of social coding, and the related painful truth that even the most intense feelings fade with the passage of time. Although her characters may experience absolute love, it never lasts: Duras's vision is Romantically tragic, linking love, death and memory in a cluster of emotions that test the boundaries of human passion and identity, with a terrible uncertainty about all these relationships in which the writer describes herself as always "far away from the mystery." "I've never written, though I thought I wrote, never loved, though I thought I loved, never done anything but wait outside the closed door."

The development of Duras's work over the years shows various attempts to open this "closed door," and different ideas of the artistic form most suited to disclose the mystery. It is a quest that will carry her away from the traditional novel and its realistic conventions to experiment with fragmented sentences and silences between words, with visual images and cinematographic description, and with the wordless rhythms of music. Duras has spoken of the several stages of her work, and has repudiated the six novels and short

stories of her first period as "books I no longer recognize." These early novels are unacceptable because they are written in a "realistic" style that Duras—like Virginia Woolf—finds inadequate to represent reality. They show the influence of the American realistic novel and especially of Hemingway, whose stories in a neutral language suggesting buried violence were extremely popular in France at that time.

Stories from the middle period, like *Moderato Cantabile* and the scenario for *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, still offer a recognizable plot and differentiated characters, but it is not the plot action that is important. Instead, Duras analyzes a pattern of emotional tensions: in *Moderato Cantabile*, for example, Anne Desbaresdes and Chauvin discuss a recent café murder and come close to identifying with the personalities of victim and murderer. Similar patterning is evident in *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, with the paired stories of Hiroshima and Nevers.

Throughout the sixties and seventies, Duras gradually abandons the traditional realistic framework of a linear plot, developed character psychology, and consistent narrative perspective. At the same time that she rejects the traditional novel, she also starts to write plays and film scenarios, and becomes a film director in her own right for works that are either cinematic versions of earlier texts (*Days in the Trees*, 1976), simultaneous film and novel presentation of the same work (*Destroy, She Said*, 1969), autonomous films (*Aurélia Steiner*, 1979; *The Atlantic Man*, 1982, where much of the film presents a black screen) or mixed genres like *India Song*, called "text-theater-film" and published as prose in 1973 before being filmed in 1975. Printed words are no longer sufficient for this writer, whose imagination has often been called "cinematographic" for its presentation of spare, sharply focused scenes and its sequential manipulation of images.

Duras does not abandon the written word, however, but simply tries to give it the power of images and sensuous awareness. Her prose in this latest period experiments with different techniques to evoke the subterranean rhythms of consciousness. Moods are suggested by the tempo of a dialogue, and themes established by leitmotif repetitions of phrases and images, or by musical comparisons. Characters are presented as pieces of a relationship instead of as socially defined personalities. More startling is the diffusion of narrative point of view among several characters who cannot always be identified and are in a way "interchangeable": Duras rejects the "nineteenth-century prejudice" that there must be one recognizable perspective through which we interpret a text.

This sympathetic identification that obliterates personal boundaries is a chief theme in *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, the film whose scenario Marguerite Duras wrote for director Alain Resnais in the same year that she wrote *Moderato Cantabile*. Produced in 1959 (and published in 1960), it won the International Critics Prize at the Cannes Film Festival that year, and the New York Film Critics Award in 1960. There were a number of documentary films about Hiroshima in the fifties, but *Hiroshima Mon Amour*—although filled with information and images of the disaster—is not one of them. For Duras, "this personal story . . . always dominates Hiroshima," and thus it will "probe the lesson of Hiroshima more deeply than any made-to-order documentary."

The two levels are clearly intertwined: the film begins with bare shoulders and arms that seem to be covered with gritty ashes or glaze, moving in a way that could be writhing in pain or—as the skin clears—in love. The first words tell us that we are in Hiroshima, symbol of a nuclear destruction whose aftermath can be visited and studied (approximately a million tourists visit the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum annually) but whose reality is beyond imagining. The lovers are already talking about what it means to be in Hiroshima, and when the man tells her somberly "you saw nothing . . ." she contradicts him: "I saw *everything*." She saw what the museums and hospitals can show, the facts of nuclear ruin, but he suggests that the meaning of such loss runs so deep that it cannot be conceived by someone who has not experienced it. As their story progresses it appears that the woman has in fact known this deeper level of loss, a level on which the two of them will meet and truly fall in love. Her personal world was also destroyed by war, and ended at the same time that the bomb fell on Hiroshima.

The two stories—the destruction of Hiroshima and her love and madness in Nevers—are balanced against each other in two flashback sequences that also make a thematic counterpoint to modern Hiroshima throughout the film. Although it is chiefly the woman's story that we learn as we follow the architect's questions, his feelings are suggested by a few apparently neutral comments ("I heard it was a beautiful summer day in Paris, that day, is that right?") He is another survivor of disaster, shaped by what he has seen, repressing the unacceptable past inside a model of well-adjusted social life. Both characters have suffered grievous loss through social violence, and both are therefore able to share love on a level that absorbs this deep core of past experience. Through questions that are instinctively guided by his own need, the architect is able to bring her hidden wound to the surface—perhaps to heal it, although it is not a healing that leads to the "happy ending" of romance. She tells the story of Nevers for the first time to her Japanese lover . . . or to her German lover, for the two figures blend as she recalls the past (Part IV). He *becomes* the German soldier ("When you are in the cellar, am I dead?") in a moment of perfect sympathy, a peak of understanding that includes however the experience of loss, and after which the two move gradually and helplessly apart. In Duras's words, it is "a hopeless love, killed like the Nevers love. Therefore already relegated to oblivion. Therefore eternal."

The poetic quality of this love emerges particularly in a lyrical passage repeated at the beginning and end of the film, "I meet you / I remember you . . . You destroyed me." The woman voices an exceedingly personal and intimate vision—perhaps it is even mad, with the madness that Duras calls a source of freedom and creativity. In all its intimacy, however, the two lovers are never named: or rather, they are ultimately absorbed into the names of the places that made them what they are. "Hi-ro-shi-ma. That's your name." "Yes. Your name is Nevers. Ne-vers-in-France." The personal story that was to dominate the story of Hiroshima has come to symbolize the subterranean unity of two wounded cultures as though, in Duras's words, "through them, *all of Hiroshima was in love with all of Nevers.*"

Germaine Brée's introduction to *Four Novels by Marguerita Duras* (1965) presents the range of Duras's style as profoundly "human." Brée's chapter

on Duras and Claude Simon in *Twentieth-Century French Literature* (1983) situates Duras in contemporary French experimental literature; there is also a capsule biography. Carol J. Murphy's *Alienation and Absence in the Novels of Marguerita Duras* (1982) includes a bibliography of films, English translations, and secondary sources in French and English. Useful for understanding the psychological and sociological (as well as medical) aftermath of the bomb is *Hiroshima and Nagasaki: the Physical, Medical, and Social Effects of the Atomic Bombings* (1981), and also *Hiroshima in Memoriam and Today* (1973), which contains photographs and memoirs written by Hiroshima survivors.

Hiroshima Mon Amour[1]

Part I

[*As the film opens, two pair of bare shoulders appear, little by little. All we see are these shoulders—cut off from the body at the height of the head and hips—in an embrace, and as if drenched with ashes, rain, dew, or sweat, whichever is preferred. The main thing is that we get the feeling that this dew, this perspiration, has been deposited by the atomic "mushroom"*[2] *as it moves away and evaporates. It should produce a violent, conflicting feeling of freshness and desire. The shoulders are of different colors, one dark, one light. Fusco's music*[3] *accompanies this almost shocking embrace. The difference between the hands is also very marked. The woman's hand lies on the darker shoulder: "lies" is perhaps not the word; "grips" would be closer to it. A man's voice, flat and calm, as if reciting, says:*]

HE: You saw nothing in Hiroshima. Nothing.

[*To be used as often as desired. A woman's voice, also flat, muffled, monotonous, the voice of someone reciting, replies:*]

SHE: I saw *everything. Everything.*

[*Fusco's music, which has faded before this initial exchange, resumes just long enough to accompany the woman's hand tightening on the shoulder again, then letting go, then caressing it. The mark of fingernails on the darker flesh. As if this scratch could give the illusion of being a punishment for:* "No. You saw nothing in Hiroshima." *Then the woman's voice begins again, still calm, colorless, incantatory:*]

1. Translated by Richard Seaver. 2. The immense, mushroom-shaped cloud of radioactive hot vapor that follows a nuclear explosion. 3. Giovanni Fusco, who with George Delerue composed the music for the film. At the beginning we hear a brisk, modern music with horns.

SHE: The hospital, for instance, I saw it. I'm sure I did. There is a hospital in Hiroshima.[4] How could I help seeing it?

[*The hospital, hallways, stairs, patients, the camera coldly objective.*[5] (*We never see her seeing.*) *Then we come back to the hand gripping—and not letting go of—the darker shoulder.*]

HE: You did not see the hospital in Hiroshima. You saw nothing in Hiroshima.

[*Then the woman's voice becomes more . . . more impersonal. Shots of the museum.*[6] *The same blinding light, the same ugly light here as at the hospital. Explanatory signs, pieces of evidence from the bombardment, scale models, mutilated iron, skin, burned hair, wax models, etc.*]

SHE: Four times at the museum. . . .

HE: What museum in Hiroshima?

SHE: Four times at the museum in Hiroshima.[7] I saw the people walking around, the people walk around, lost in thought, among the photographs, the reconstructions, for want of something else, among the photographs, the photographs, the reconstructions, for want of something else, the explanations, for want of something else.

Four times at the museum in Hiroshima.

I looked at the people I myself looked thoughtfully at the iron. The burned iron. The broken iron, the iron made vulnerable as flesh. I saw the bouquet of bottle caps: who would have suspected that? Human skin floating, surviving, still in the bloom of its agony. Stones. Burned stones. Shattered stones. Anonymous heads of hair that the women of Hiroshima, when they awoke in the morning, discovered had fallen out.

I was hot at Peace Square. Ten thousand degrees at Peace Square[8] I know it. The temperature of the sun at Peace Square. How can you not know it? . . . The grass, it's quite simple . . .

HE: You saw nothing in Hiroshima. Nothing.

[*More shots of the museum. Then a shot of Peace Square taken with a burned skull in the foreground. Glass display cases with burned models inside. Newsreel shots of Hiroshima.*]

4. The camera shows pictures of patients in an "A-Bomb Hospital" set up to treat victims of the bomb. 5. With only a schematic initial text to go on, Resnais brought back a great number of documents from Japan. Thus the initial text was modified and considerably enlarged during the cutting of the film. [Author's note.] 6. With a return, at regular intervals, to the bodies. [Author's note.] 7. She describes actual exhibits in the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, established in 1949. 8. The museum, the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Hall, and the Hiroshima City Auditorium are located in Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park. The heat generated by the exploding bomb reached several million degrees centigrade (roughly 5.5 million degrees Fahrenheit); the temperature on the ground was 3,000–4,000°C (5,400–7,200°F).

SHE: The reconstructions have been made as authentically as possible.

The films have been made as authentically as possible.

The illusion, it's quite simple, the illusion is so perfect that the tourists cry.

One can always scoff, but what else can a tourist do, really, but cry?

I've always wept over the fate of Hiroshima. Always.

[*A panorama of photograph taken of Hiroshima after the bomb, a "new desert" without reference to the other deserts of the world.*]

HE: No. What would you have cried about?

[*Peace Square, empty under a blinding sun that recalls the blinding light of the bomb. Newsreels taken after August 6, 1945.*[9] *Ants, worms, emerge from the ground. Interspersed with shots of the shoulders. The woman's voice begins again, gone mad, as the sequence of pictures has also gone mad.*]

SHE: I saw the newsreels.

On the second day, History tells, I'm not making it up, on the second day certain species of animals rose again from the depths of the earth and from the ashes.

Dogs were photographed.

For all eternity.

I saw them.

I *saw* the newsreels.

I *saw* them.

On the first day.

On the second day.

On the third day.

HE [interrupting her]: You saw nothing. Nothing.

[*A dog with a leg amputated. People, children. Wounds. Burned children screaming.*]

SHE: . . . on the fifteenth day too.

Hiroshima was blanketed with flowers. There were cornflowers and gladiolas everywhere, and morning glories and day lilies that rose again from the ashes with an extraordinary vigor, quite unheard of for flowers till then.[1]

I didn't make anything up.

HE: You made it *all* up.

9. The day the bomb was dropped. 1. This sentence is taken almost verbatim from John Hersey's admirable report on Hiroshima. All I did was apply it to the martyred children. [Author's note.]

SHE: *Nothing.*

Just as in love this illusion exists, this illusion of being able never to forget, so I was under the illusion that I would never forget Hiroshima.

Just as in love.

[*Surgical forceps approach an eye to extract it. More newsreel shots.*]

I also saw the survivors and those who were in the wombs of the women of Hiroshima.

[*Shots of various survivors: a beautiful child who, upon turning around, is blind in one eye; a girl looking at her burned face in the mirror; a blind girl with twisted hands playing the zither; a woman praying near her dying children; a man, who has not slept for several years, dying. (Once a week they bring his children to see him.)*]

I saw the patience, the innocence, the apparent meekness with which the temporary survivors of Hiroshima adapted themselves to the fate so unjust that the imagination, normally so fertile, cannot conceive it.

[*And again a return to the perfect embrace of the bodies.*]

Listen . . .
I know . . .
I know *everything.*
It went on.

HE: *Nothing.* You know *nothing.*

[*A spiraling atomic cloud. People marching in the streets in the rain. Fishermen tainted with radioactivity. Unedible fish. Thousands of unedible fish buried.*]

SHE: Women risk giving birth to malformed children, to monsters, but it goes on.

Men risk becoming sterile, but it goes on.
People are afraid of the rain.
The rain of ashes on the waters of the Pacific.
The waters of the Pacific kill.
Fishermen of the Pacific are dead.
People are afraid of the food.
The food of an entire city is thrown away.
The food of entire cities is buried.
An entire city rises up in anger.
Entire cities rise up in anger.

[*Newsreels: demonstrations.*]

Against whom, the anger of entire cities?

The anger of entire cities, whether they like it or not, against the inequality set forth as a principle by certain people against other people, against the inequality set forth as a principle by certain races against other races, against the inequality set forth as a principle by certain classes against other classes.

[*Processions of demonstrators. "Mute" speeches from loudspeakers.*]

SHE [*softly*]: . . . Listen to me.

Like you, I know what it is to forget.

HE: No, you don't know what it is to forget.

SHE: Like you, I have a memory. I know what it is to forget.

HE: No, you don't have a memory.

SHE: Like you, I too have tried with all my might not to forget. Like you, I forgot. Like you, I wanted to have an inconsolable memory, a memory of shadows and stone.

[*The shot of a shadow, "photographed" on stone, of someone killed at Hiroshima.*]

For my part, I struggled with all my might, every day, against the horror of no longer understanding at all the reason for remembering. Like you, I forgot. . . .

[*Shops with hundreds of scale models of the Palace of Industry, the only monument whose twisted skeleton remained standing after the bomb—and was afterward preserved. An empty shop. A busload of Japanese tourists. Tourists on Peace Square. A cat crossing Peace Square.*]

Why deny the obvious necessity for memory? . . .

[*A second punctuated by shots of the framework of the Palace of Industry.*]

. . . Listen to me. I know something else. It will begin all over again.

Two hundred thousand dead.

Eighty thousand wounded.

In nine seconds. These figures are official. It will begin all over again.

[*Trees. Church. Merry-go-round. Hiroshima rebuilt. Banality.*]

There will be ten thousand degrees on the earth. Ten thousand suns, they will say. The asphalt will burn.

[*Church. Japanese advertising poster.*]

Chaos will prevail. A whole city will be raised from the earth and fall back in ashes. . . .

[*Sand. A package of "Peace" cigarettes. A fat plant spread out like a spider on the sand.*]

New vegetation will rise from the sands. . . .

[*Four "dead" students chat beside the river. The river. The tides. The daily piers of Hiroshima rebuilt.*]

Four students await together a fraternal and legendary death.

The seven branches of the delta estuary in the Ota River[2] drain and fill at the usual hour, exactly at the usual hours, with water that is fresh and rich with fish, gray or blue depending on the hour or the season. Along the muddy banks people no longer watch the tide rising slowly in the seven branches of the delta estuary of the river Ota.

[*The incantatory tone ceases. The streets of Hiroshima, more streets. Bridges. Covered lanes. Streets. Suburbs. Railroad tracks. Suburbs. Universal banality.*]

SHE: . . . I meet you.

I remember you.

Who are you?

You destroy me.[3]

You're so good for me.

How could I have known that this city was made to the size of love?

How could I have known that you were made to the size of my body?

You're great. How wonderful. You're great.

How slow all of a sudden.

And how sweet.

More than you can know.

You destroy me.

You're so good for me.

You destroy me.

You're so good for me.

2. The city of Hiroshima is built on a delta where the Ota River flows into the sea; the seven branches of the delta split the city into six small islands which are connected by bridges. 3. The lyrical effect of this famous monologue is heightened in French by the identical sound of "you" (intimate form) and "destroy": "*tu* me *tues*."

Plenty of time.

Please.

Take me.

Deform me, make me ugly.

Why not you?

Why not you in this city and in this night so like the others you can't tell the difference?

Please. . .

[*With exaggerated suddenness the woman's face appears, filled with tenderness, turned toward the man's.*]

SHE: It's extraordinary how beautiful your skin is.

[*He sighs.*]

You. . .

[*His face appears. He laughs ecstatically, which has nothing to do with their words. He turns.*]

HE: Yes, me. You will have seen me.

[*The two naked bodies reappear. Same voice of the woman, muted, but this time not declamatory.*]

SHE: Are you completely Japanese or aren't you completely Japanese?

HE: Completely. I am Japanese.

Your eyes are green. Correct?

SHE: I think so . . . yes . . . I think they're green.

HE [*softly, looking at her*]: You are like a thousand women in one. . . .

SHE: It's because you don't know me. That's why.

HE: Perhaps that's not the only reason.

SHE: It's a rather nice idea, being a thousand women in one for you.

[*She kisses his shoulder and snuggles into the hollow of that shoulder. Her head is facing the open window, facing Hiroshima, the night. A man passes in the street and coughs. (We don't see him, only hear him.) She raises herself.*]

SHE: Listen. . . . It's four o'clock. . . .

HE: Why?

SHE: I don't know who it is. Every day he passes at four o'clock. And he coughs.

[*Silence. They look at each other.*]

You were here, at Hiroshima. . . .

HE [*laughing, as he might at a childish question*]: No . . . Of course I wasn't.

SHE [*caressing his naked shoulder again*]: That's true. . . . How stupid of me. [*Almost smiling.*]

HE [*serious, hesitant*]: But my family was at Hiroshima. I was off fighting the war.

SHE [*timidly, smiling now*]: A stroke of luck, eh?

HE [*not looking at her, weighing the pro and con*]: Yes.

SHE: Lucky for me too.

[*Pause.*]

HE: What are you doing at Hiroshima?

SHE: A film.

HE: What, a film?

SHE: I'm playing in a film.

HE: And before coming to Hiroshima, where were you?

SHE: In Paris.

[*A longer pause.*]

HE: And before Paris? . . .

SHE: Before Paris? . . . I was at Nevers.[4] *Ne-vers.*

HE: Nevers?

SHE: It's in the province of Nièvre. You don't know it.

[*Pause. Then he asks, as though he had just discovered a link between Hiroshima and Nevers:*]

HE: And why did you want to see everything at Hiroshima?

SHE [*trying to be sincere*]: Because it interested me. I have my own ideas about it. For instance, I think looking closely at things is something that has to be learned.

Part II

[*A swarm of bicycles passes in the street, the noise growing louder, then fading. She is on the balcony of the hotel, in a dressing gown.*

4. The capital city of the Nièvre, south of Paris in the middle of France; an industrial city that was heavily bombed in the war.

She is looking at him. She holds a cup of coffee in her hand. He is still asleep, lying on his stomach, his arms crossed, bare to the waist. She looks very intently at his hands, which tremble slightly, as children's hands do sometimes when they are asleep. He has very beautiful, very virile hands.
While she is looking at them, there suddenly appears, in place of the Japanese, the body of a young man,[5] *lying in the same position, but in a posture of death, on the bank of a river, in full daylight. (The room is in semi-darkness.) The young man is near death. He too has beautiful hands, strikingly like those of the Japanese. The approach of death makes them jerk violently.*
The shot is an extremely brief one.
She remains frozen, leaning against the window. He awakes and smiles at her. She doesn't return his smile immediately. She continues to look at him attentively, without moving. Then she takes the coffee over to him.]

SHE: Do you want some coffee?

[*He assents, takes the cup. Pause.*]

SHE: What were you dreaming about?

HE: I don't remember. . . . Why?

[*She has become herself again, extremely nice.*]

SHE: I was looking at your hands. They move when you're asleep.

HE [*examining his hands, perhaps moving his fingers*]: Maybe it's when you dream without knowing it.

SHE [*calmly, pleasantly, but seeming to doubt his words*]: Hmm, hmm.

[*They're together in the shower of the hotel room. In a gay mood. He puts his hand on her forehead and arches her head back.*]

HE: You're a beautiful woman, do you know that?

SHE: Do you think so?

HE: I think so.

SHE: A trifle worn out, no?

HE [*laughingly*]: A trifle ugly.

5. The camera focuses first on the Japanese man's right hand, slightly curled, and then evokes the similarly curled hand of a young man in a German soldier's uniform, somewhere else.

SHE [*smiling at his caress*]: Don't you mind?

HE: That's what I noticed last night in that café. The way you're ugly. And also . . .

SHE [*very relaxed*]: And also? . . .

HE: And also how bored you were.

SHE [*her curiosity aroused*]: Tell me more. . . .

HE: You were bored in a way that makes men want to know a woman.

SHE [*smiling, lowering her eyes*]: You speak French very well.

HE [*gaily*]: Don't I though! I'm glad you finally noticed how well I speak French. [Pause.] I hadn't noticed that you didn't speak Japanese. . . . have you ever noticed that it's always in the same sense[6] that people notice things?

SHE: No. I noticed you, that's all.

[*Laughter.*]

[*After the bath. Her hair is wet. She is munching slowly on an apple. She is on the balcony, dressed in a bathrobe; she looks at him, stretches, and as if to "pinpoint" their situation, says slowly, as though savoring the words:*]

SHE: To-meet-in-Hiroshima. It doesn't happen every day.

[*Already dressed—his shirt collar open—he joins her on the balcony and sits down opposite her. After a moment's hesitation, he asks:*]

HE: What did Hiroshima mean for you, in France?

SHE: The end of the war, I mean, really the end. Amazement . . . at the idea that they had dared . . . amazement at the idea that they had succeeded. And then too, for us, the beginning of an unknown fear. And then, indifference. And also the fear of indifference. . . .

HE: Where were you?

SHE: I had left Nevers. I was in Paris. In the street.

HE: That's a pretty French word, Nevers.

SHE [*after a pause*]: It's a word like any other. Like the city.

6. That is, people always see things from their own perspective.

[*She moves away. They begin to talk, about ordinary things.*]

[*He's seated on the bed; he lights a cigarette, looks at her intently, then asks:*]

HE: Have you met many Japanese at Hiroshima?

SHE: I've met some, yes . . . but no one like you. . . .

HE [*smiling, gay*]: I'm the first Japanese in your life?

SHE: Yes.

[*Her laughter off-camera. She reappears while she is getting dressed.*]

SHE: Hi-ro-shi-ma.

HE [*lowering his eyes, calmly*]: The whole world was happy. You were happy with the whole world. [*Continuing, in the same tone:*] I heard it was a beautiful summer day in Paris that day, is that right?

SHE: Yes, it was a beautiful day.

HE: How old were you?

SHE: Twenty. And you?

HE: Twenty-two.

SHE: The same age, really.

HE: Yes, practically.

[*She appears completely dressed, just as she is putting on her Red Cross nurse's kerchief. She bends down beside him with a sudden gesture, or lies down beside him. She plays with his hand, kisses his bare arm. They talk about ordinary things.*]

SHE: What do you do in life?

HE: Architecture. And politics too.

SHE: Oh, so that's why you speak such good French.

HE: That's why. To read about the French Revolution.

[*They laugh. Any precise indications about his politics would be absolutely impossible, since he would be immediately tagged. And besides, it would be naive. Nor should it be forgotten that only a man of liberal opinions would have made the preceding remark.*]

HE: What's the film you're playing in?

SHE: A film about Peace. What else do you expect them to make in Hiroshima except a picture about Peace?

[*A noisy swarm of bicycles passes.*]

HE: I'd like to see you again.

SHE [*gesturing negatively*]: At this time tomorrow I'll be on my way back to France.

HE: Is that true? You didn't tell me.

SHE: It's true. [*Pause.*] There was no point in telling you.

HE [*serious, taken aback*]: Is that why you let me come up to your room last night? . . . Because it was your last day at Hiroshima?

SHE: Not at all. The thought never even crossed my mind.

HE: When you talk, I wonder whether you lie or tell the truth.

SHE: I lie. And I tell the truth. But I don't have any reason to lie to you. Why? . . .

HE: Tell me . . . do things like . . . this happen to you often?

SHE: Not very often. But it happens. I have a weakness for men. [*Pause.*] I have doubtful morals, you know. [*She laughs.*]

HE: What do you call having doubtful morals?

SHE: Being doubtful about the morals of other people.

[*He laughs heartily.*]

HE: I'd like to see you again. Even if the plane is leaving tomorrow. Even if you do have doubtful morals.

[*Pause. A feeling of love returning.*]

SHE: No.

HE: Why?

SHE [*with irritation*]: Because.

[*He doesn't pursue the conversation.*]

SHE: Don't you want to talk to me any more?

HE [*after a pause*]: I'd like to see you again.

[*They are in the hotel corridor.*]

HE: Where are you going in France? To Nevers?

SHE: No. To Paris. [*A pause.*] I don't ever go to Nevers any more.

HE: Not ever?

SHE [*grimacing as she says it*]: Not ever. [*Then, caught in her own trap, she adds:*] In Nevers I was younger than I've ever been. . . .

HE: Young-in-Nevers.

SHE: Yes. Young in Nevers. And then too, once, mad in Nevers.

[*They are pacing back and forth in front of the hotel. She is waiting for the car that is supposed to come and pick her up to take her to Peace Square. Few people, but lots of cars passing. It's a boulevard. The dialogue is almost shouted because of the noise of the cars.*]

SHE: You see, Nevers is the city in the world, and even the thing in the world, I dream about most often at the night. And at the same time it's the thing I think about the least.

HE: What was your madness like at Nevers?

SHE: Madness is like intelligence, you know. You can't explain it. Just like intelligence. It comes on you, it fills you, and then you understand it. But when it goes away you can't understand it at all any longer.

HE: Were you full of hate?

SHE: That was what my madness was. I was mad with hate. I had the impression it would be possible to make a real career of hate. All I cared about was hate. Do you understand?

HE: Yes.

SHE: It's true. I suppose you must understand that too.

HE: Did it ever happen to you again?

SHE: No. [*In a near whisper:*] It's all over.

HE: During the war?

SHE: Right after it.

[*Pause.*]

HE: Was that part of the difficulties of life in France after the war?

SHE: Yes, that's one way of putting it.

HE: When did you get over your madness?

SHE [*in a low voice, as she would talk in normal circumstances*]: It went away little by little. And then of course when I had children.

[*The noise of the cars grows and fades in inverse proportion to the seriousness of their remarks.*]

HE: What did you say?

SHE: I said it went away little by little. And then of course when I had children. . . .

HE: I'd really like to spend a few days with you somewhere, sometime.

SHE: I would too.

HE: Seeing you again today wouldn't really be seeing you again. You can't see people again in such a short time. I really would.

SHE: No.

[*She stops in front of him, obstinate, motionless, silent. He almost accepts.*]

HE: All right.

[*She laughs, but it's a little forced. She seems slightly, but actually, spiteful. The taxi arrives.*]

SHE: It's because you know I'm leaving tomorrow.

[*They laugh, but his is less hearty than hers. A pause.*]

HE: It's possible that's part of it. But that's as good a reason as any, no? The thought of not seeing you again . . . ever . . . in a few hours.

[*The taxi has arrived and stopped at the intersection. She signals to it that she's coming. She takes her time, looks at the Japanese, and says:*]

SHE: No.

[*His eyes follow her. Perhaps he smiles.*]

Part III

[*It's four* P.M. *at Peacé Square in Hiroshima. In the distance a group of film technicians is moving away carrying a camera, lights, and reflectors. Japanese workers are dismantling the official grandstand that has just been used in the last scene of the film.*
An important note: we will always see the technicians in the distance and will never know what film it is they're shooting at Hiroshima. All we'll ever see is the scenery being taken down.
Stagehands are carrying posters in various languages—Japanese

French, German, etc.—NEVER ANOTHER HIROSHIMA. *The workmen are thus busy dismantling the official grandstands and removing the bunting. On the set we see the French woman. She is asleep. Her nurse's kerchief has slipped partly off her head. She is lying in the shadow of one of the stands.*

We gather that they have just finished shooting an enlightening film on Peace at Hiroshima. It's not necessarily a ridiculous film, merely an enlightening one. A crowd passes along the square where they have just been shooting the film. The crowd is indifferent. Except for a few children, no one looks, they are used to seeing films being shot at Hiroshima.

But one man passes, stops, and looks, the man we had seen previously in her hotel room. He approaches the nurse, and watches her sleeping. His gaze is what finally wakes her up, but only after he has been looking at her for a good while.

During the scene perhaps we see a few details in the distance, such as a scale model of the Palace of Industry, a guide surrounded by tourists, a couple of war invalids in white, begging, a family chatting on a street corner. She awakes. Her fatigue vanishes. They suddenly find themselves involved again with their own story. This personal story always dominates the necessarily demonstrative Hiroshima story. She gets up and goes toward him. He laughs, a bit stiffly. Then they become serious again.]

HE: It was easy to find you in Hiroshima.

[*She laughs happily. A pause. He looks at her again. Two workers—carrying an enlarged photograph from the picture* The Children of Hiroshima[7] *showing a dead mother and a child crying in the smoking ruins of Hiroshima—pass between them. They don't look at the photograph. Another photograph, of Einstein,*[8] *follows immediately after the one of the mother and child.*]

HE: Is it a French film?

SHE: No. International. On Peace.

HE: Is it finished?

SHE: Yes, for me it's finished. They still have some crowd scenes to shoot. . . . We have lots of filmed commercials to sell soap. So . . . by stressing it . . . perhaps.

7. A semidocumentary film produced in 1952 by the Japanese director Kaneto Shindo, echoing Arata Osada's 1951 *Children of The Atomic Bomb*, a compilation of 105 memoirs written by children who had lost parents or relatives to the bomb. 8. The picture of Albert Einstein (1879–1955), whose theoretical work led to the discovery of nuclear fission and the creation of the bomb, shows him sticking out his tongue (specifically mentioned in the French text).

HE [*with very clear ideas on the subject*]: Yes, by stressing it. Here, at Hiroshima, we don't joke about films on Peace.

[*He turns back toward her. The photographs have gone completely by. Instinctively they move closer together. She readjusts her kerchief, which has slipped partly off while she was sleeping.*]

HE: Are you tired?

SHE [*looking at him in a way that is both provocative and gentle. Then, with an almost sad smile, she says*]: No more than you are.

HE [*meaningfully*]: I thought of Nevers in France.

[*She smiles.*]

HE: I've been thinking of you. Is your plane still leaving tomorrow?

SHE: Still tomorrow.

HE: Irrevocably tomorrow?

SHE: Yes. The picture is behind schedule. I'm a month overdue returning to Paris.

[*She looks squarely at him. Slowly he takes her kerchief off. Either she is very heavily made up, in which case her lips are so dark they seem black, or else she is hardly made up at all and seems pale under the sun.*
The man's gesture is extremely free, composed, producing much the same erotic shock as in the opening scenes. Her hair is as mussed as it was in bed the night before. She lets him take off her kerchief, she lets him have his way as she must have let him have his way in love the night before. (Here, give him an erotically functional role.)
She lowers her eyes. An incomprehensible pout. She toys with something on the ground, then raises her eyes again.]

HE: You give me a great desire to love.

[*She doesn't answer right away. His words upset her, and she lowers her eyes again. The cat of Peace Square rubbing against her foot?*]

SHE [*slowly*]: Always . . . chance love affairs. . . . Me too.

[*Some extraordinary object, not clearly defined, passes between them. I see a square frame, some (atomic?) very precise form, but without the least idea what it's used for. They pay no attention to it.*]

HE: No. Not always like this. You know it.

[*Shouts in the distance. Then children singing. But it doesn't distract them. She makes an incomprehensible face (licentious would be the word). She raises her eyes again, but this time to the sky, and says, again incomprehensibly, as she wipes the sweat from her forehead:*]

SHE: They say there'll be a thunderstorm before nightfall.

[*A shot of the sky she sees. Clouds scudding . . . The singing becomes more distinct. Then (the end of) the parade begins. They back away. She clings to him (like the postures in women's magazines), her hand on his shoulder. His face against her hair. When she raises her eyes she sees him. He'll try and lead her away from the parade. She'll resist. But she'll go anyway, without realizing she's leaving.*
Children parading carrying posters.]

FIRST SERIES OF POSTERS

1st Poster

If 14 A-bombs equal 100 million ordinary bombs.

2nd Poster

And if the H-bomb equals 1500 A-bombs.

3rd Poster

How much do the 40,000 A- and H-bombs actually manufactured in the world equal?

4th Poster

10 H-bombs dropped on the world mean prehistory again.

5th Poster

What do 40,000 H- and A-bombs mean?

SECOND SERIES OF POSTERS

I

This extraordinary achievement bears witness to man's scientific inteligence.[9]

II

But it's regrettable that man's political intelligence is 100 times less developed than his scientific intelligence.

III

Which keeps us from really admiring man.

[*Men, women, follow the singing children. Dogs follow the children. Cats at the windows. (The Peace Square cat is used to it, and is asleep.)*
Posters. More posters. Everyone very hot. The sky, above the parade, is threatening. Clouds cover the sun. There are lots of children, beautiful children. They are hot, and sing heartily as children will. Irresistibly, and almost without realizing it, the Japanese pushes the French woman in the same—or in the opposite—direction the parade is moving. She closes her eyes and sighs, and while she is sighing:]

9. Resnais decided to leave in the error in spelling.[Author's note.]

HE: I hate to think about your leaving. Tomorrow. I think I love you.

[*He buries his lips in her hair. Her hand tight on his shoulder. Slowly her eyes open. The parade goes on. The children's faces are made up white. Dots of sweat stand out on the white powder. Two of them argue over an orange, angrily. A man, made up as if burned in the bombing, passes. He probably had played in the film. The wax on his neck melts and falls off. Perhaps disgusting, terrifying. They look at each other.*]

HE: You're coming with me, once more.

[*She doesn't answer. A beautiful Japanese woman, sitting on a float, passes. She looses a flock of pigeons (or maybe some other allegorical float—an atomic ballet, for instance).*]

HE: Answer me.

[*She doesn't answer. He bends and whispers in her ear.*]

HE: Are you afraid?

SHE [*smiling, shaking her head*]: No.

[*The formless songs of the children continue, but fading away. A monitor scolds the two children arguing over the orange. The big one takes the orange. The big one begins to eat the orange. All this lasts longer than it should. Behind the crying child, the five hundred Japanese students arrive. It's a little terrifying, and he pulls her against him. They look upset. He looking at her, she looking at the parade. One should have the feeling that this parade is depriving them of the short time they have left. They are silent. He leads her by the hand. She let's him. They exit, moving against the current of the parade. We lose sight of them.*[1]]

[*We see them next in the middle of a large room in a Japanese house. Soft light. A feeling of freshness after the heat of the parade. A modern house, with chairs, etc. She stands there, like* a guest. *Almost intimidated. He approaches her from the far side of the room (as if he had just closed the door, or come from the garage, etc.).*]

HE: Sit down.

[*She doesn't sit down. Both remain standing. We feel that eroticism is held in check between them by love, at least for the moment. He is facing her. And in the same state, almost awkward. The opposite of what a man would do if this were an* aubaine.[2]]

1. Resnais has them get lost in the crowd.[Author's note.] 2. French for windfall, sudden stroke of luck.

SHE [*making conversation*]: You're alone at Hiroshima? . . . Where's your wife?

HE: She's at Unzen,[3] in the mountains. I'm alone.

SHE: When is she coming back?

HE: In a few days.

SHE [*softly, as if in an aside*]: What is your wife like?

HE [*purposefully*]: Beautiful. I'm a man who's happy with his wife.

[*Pause.*]

SHE: So am I. I'm a woman who's happy with her husband.

[*This exchange charged with real emotion, which the ensuing moment covers.*]

SHE: Don't you work in the afternoon?

HE: Yes. A lot. Mainly in the afternoon.

SHE: The whole thing is stupid. . . .

[*As she would say "I love you." They kiss as the telephone rings. He doesn't answer.*]

SHE: Is it because of me you're wasting your afternoon?

[*He still doesn't answer the phone.*]

SHE: Tell me. What difference does it make?

[*At Hiroshima. The light is already different. Later. After they have made love.*]

HE: Was he French, the man you loved during the war?

[*At Nevers. A German crosses a square at dusk.*[4]]

SHE: No . . . he wasn't French.

[*At Hiroshima. She is lying on the bed, pleasantly tired. Darker now.*]

SHE: Yes. It was at Nevers.

[*Nevers. A shot of love at Nevers. Bicycles racing. The forest, etc.*]

SHE: At first we met in barns. Then among the ruins. And then in rooms. Like anywhere else.

[*Hiroshima. In the room, the light faded even more. Their bodies in a peaceful embrace.*]

3. A hot springs resort on the island of Kyushu.

4. A series of flashback scenes from Nevers alternates with the current scene in Hiroshima.

SHE: And then he was dead.

[*Nevers. Shot of Nevers. Rivers. Quays. Poplar trees in the wind, etc. The quay deserted. The garden. Then at Hiroshima again.*]

SHE: I was eighteen and he was twenty-three.

[*Nevers. In a "hut" at night. The "marriage" at Nevers. During the shots of Nevers she answers the questions that he is presumed to have asked, but doesn't out loud. The sequence of shots of Nevers continues. Then:*]

SHE [*calmly*]: Why talk of him rather than the others?

HE: Why not?

SHE: No. Why?

HE: Because of Nevers. I can only begin to know you, and among the many thousands of things in your life. I'm choosing Nevers.

SHE: Like you'd choose anything else?

HE: Yes.

[*Do we know he's lying? We suspect it. She becomes almost violent, searching for something to say:*]

SHE: No, it's not by chance. [*Pause.*] You have to tell me why.

[*He can reply—a very important point for the film—either:*]

HE: It was there, I seem to have understood, that you were so young . . . so young you still don't belong to anyone in particular. I like that.

[*or:*]

SHE: No, that's not it.

HE: It was there, I seem to have understood, that I almost . . . lost you . . . and that I risked never knowing you.

[*or else:*]

HE: It was there, I seem to have understood, that you must have begun to be what you are today.

[*Choose from among the three possibilities, or use all three, either one after the other, or separately, at random with the movements of love in the bed. The last is the solution I would prefer, if it doesn't make the scene too long.*[5]
One last time we come back to them.]

5. Instead of using only one, Resnais decided to use all three. [Author's note.]

SHE [*shouting*]: I want to leave here. [*She clings to him almost savagely.*]

[*They are dressed and in the same room where they were earlier. The lights are on now. They are both standing.*]

HE [*very calmly*]: All we can do now is kill the time left before your departure. Still sixteen hours before your plane leaves.

SHE [*terribly upset, distressed*]: That's a terribly long time. . . .

HE [*gently*]: No. You mustn't be afraid.

Part IV

[*Night falls over Hiroshima, leaving long trails of light. The river drains and fills with the hours, the tides. Sometimes people along the muddy banks watch the tide rising slowly.*
Opposite this river is a café. A modern café, Americanized, with a wide bay window. Those seated at the back of the café don't see the banks of the river, but only the river itself. The mouth of the river is only vaguely outlined. There Hiroshima ends and the Pacific begins. The place is half empty. They are seated at a table in the back of the room, facing each other, either cheek-to-cheek, or forehead against forehead. In the previous scene they had been overwhelmed by the thought that their final separation was only sixteen hours away. When we see them now they are almost happy. They don't notice the time passing. A miracle has occurred. What miracle? The resurrection of Nevers. And in this posture of hopelessly happy love, he says:]

HE: Aside from that, Nevers doesn't mean anything else in French?

SHE: No. Nothing.

HE: Would you have been cold in that cellar at Nevers, if we had loved each other there?

SHE: I would have been cold. In Nevers the cellars are cold, both summer and winter. The city is built along a river called the Loire.

HE: I can't picture Nevers.

[*Shots of Nevers. The Loire.*]

SHE: Nevers. Forty thousand inhabitants. Built like a capital—(but). A child can walk around it. [*She moves away from him.*] I was born in Nevers [*she drinks*], I grew up in Nevers. I learned how to read in Nevers. And it was there I became twenty.

HE: And the Loire?

[*He takes her head in his hands. Nevers.*]

SHE: It's a completely unnavigable river, always empty, because of its irregular course and its sand bars. In France, the Loire is considered a very beautiful river, especially because of its light . . . so soft, if you only knew.

[*Ecstatic tone. He frees her head and listens closely.*]

HE: When you are in the cellar, am I dead?

SHE: You are dead . . . and . . .

[*Nevers: the German is dying very slowly on the quay.*]

SHE: . . . how is it possible to bear such pain?
The cellar is small.

[*To show with her hands how small it is, she withdraws her cheek from his. Then she goes on, still very close to him, but no longer touching him. No incantation. She speaks to him with passionate enthusiasm.*]

SHE: . . . very small. The *Marseillaise* passes above my head. It's . . . deafening. . . .

[*She blocks her ears, in this café (at Hiroshima). The café is suddenly very quiet. Shots of Nevers' cellars. Riva's bloody hands.*]

SHE: Hands become useless in cellars. They scrape. They rub the skin off . . . against the walls . . .

[*Somewhere at Nevers, bleeding hands. Hers, on the table, are intact. Riva licks her own blood.*]

SHE: . . . that's all you can find to do, to make you feel better . . . and also to remember . . . I loved blood since I had tasted yours.

[*They scarcely look at each other as she talks. They look at Nevers. Both of them act as if they were somehow possessed by Nevers. There are two glasses on the table. She drinks avidly. He more slowly. Their hands are flat on the table.*]
[*Nevers.*]

SHE: The world moves along over my head. Instead of the sky . . . of course . . . I see the world walking. Quickly during the week. Slowly on Sunday. It doesn't know I'm in the cellar. They pretend I'm dead, dead a long way from Nevers. That's what my father wants. Because I'm disgraced, that's what my father wants.

[*Nevers: a father, a Nevers druggist, behind the window of his drug store.*]

HE: Do you scream?

[*The room at Nevers.*]

SHE: Not in the beginning; no, I don't scream: I call you softly.

HE: But I'm dead.

SHE: Nevertheless I call you. Even though you're dead. Then one day, I scream, I scream as loud as I can, like a deaf person would. That's when they put me in the cellar. To punish me.

HE: What do you scream?

SHE: Your German name. Only your name. I only have one memory left, your name.

[*Room at Nevers, mute screams.*]

SHE: I promise not to scream any more. Then they take me back to my room.

[*Room at Nevers. Lying down, one leg raised, filled with desire.*]

SHE: I want you so badly I can't bear it any more.

HE: Are you afraid?

SHE: I'm afraid. Everywhere. In the cellar. In my room.

HE: Of what?

[*Spots on the ceiling of the room at Nevers, terrifying objects at Nevers.*]

SHE: Of not ever seeing you again. Ever, ever.

[*They move closer together again, as at the beginning of the scene.*]

SHE: One day, I'm twenty years old. It's in the cellar. My mother comes and tells me I'm twenty. [*A pause, as if remembering.*] My mother's crying.

HE: You spit in your mother's face?

SHE: Yes.

[*As if they were aware of these things together. He moves away from her.*]

HE: Drink something.

SHE: Yes.

[*He holds the glass for her to drink. She is worn out from remembering.*]

SHE [*suddenly*]: Afterward, I don't remember any more. I don't remember any more . . .

HE [*trying to encourage her*]: These cellars are very old, and very damp, these Nevers cellars. . . . You were saying . . .

SHE: Yes. Full of saltpeter.

[*Her mouth against the walls of the Nevers cellar, biting.*]

SHE: Sometimes a cat comes in and looks. It's not a mean cat. I don't remember any more.

[*A cat comes in the Nevers cellar and looks at this woman.*]

SHE: Afterward, I don't remember any more.

HE: How long?

SHE [*still in a trancelike state*]: Eternity.

[*Someone, a solitary man, puts a record of French bal-musette*[6] *music on the juke box. To make the miracle of the lost memories of Nevers last, to keep anything from "moving," the Japanese pours the contents of his glass into hers.*
In the Nevers cellar the cat's eyes and Riva's eyes glow.
When she hears the music of the record she (drunk or mad) smiles and screams:]

SHE: Oh, how young I was, once!

[*She comes back to Nevers, having hardly left it. She is* haunted *(the choice of adjectives is voluntarily varied).*]

SHE: At night . . . my mother takes me down into the garden. She looks at my head. Every night she looks carefully at my head. She still doesn't dare come near me. . . . It's at night that I can look at the square, so I look at it. It's enormous [*gesturing*]! It curves in the middle.

[*The air shaft at the Nevers cellar. Through it, the rainbowlike wheels of bicycles passing at dawn at Nevers.*]

SHE: Sleep comes at dawn.

HE: Does it rain sometimes?

SHE: . . . along the walls.

[*She searches, searches, searches.*]

SHE [*almost evil*]: I think of you, but I don't think about it any more.

6. Popular dancing music, often played on an accordion, for dances such as the waltz or fox trot.

[*They move closer together again.*]

HE: Mad.

SHE: Madly in love with you. [*Pause.*] My hair is growing back. I can feel it every day, with my hand. I don't care. But nevertheless my hair is growing back. . . .

[*Riva in her bed at Nevers, her hand in her hair. She runs her hands through her hair.*]

HE: Do you scream, before the cellar?

SHE: No. I'm numb.

[*They are cheek-to-cheek, their eyes half-closed, at Hiroshima.*]

SHE: They shave my head carefully till they're finished. They think it's their duty to do a good job shaving the women's heads.

HE [*very clearly*]: Are you ashamed for them, my love?

[*The hair-cutting.*]

SHE: No. You're dead. I'm much too busy suffering. [*Dusk deepens. The following said with complete immobility:*] All I hear is the sound of the scissors on my head. It makes me feel a little bit better about . . . your death . . . like . . . like, oh! I can't give you a better example, like my nails, the walls . . . for my anger.

[*She goes on, desperately against him at Hiroshima.*]

SHE: Oh! What pain. What pain in my heart. It's unbelievable. Everywhere in the city they're singing the *Marseillaise*. Night falls. My dead love is an enemy of France. Someone says she should be made to walk through the city. My father's drug store is closed because of the disgrace. I'm alone. Some of them laugh. At night I return home.

[*Scene of the square at Nevers. She screams, not words, but a formless scream understandable in any language as the cry of a child for its mother. He is still against her, holding her hands.*]

HE: And then, one day, my love, you come out of eternity.

[*The room at Nevers. Riva paces the floor. Overturns objects. Savage, conscious animality.*]

SHE: Yes, it takes a long time.

They told me it had taken a very long time.

At six in the evening, the bells of the St. Etienne Cathedral[7] ring, winter and summer. One day, it is true, I hear them. I

7. A church in Nevers: "St. Stephen's."

remember having heard them before—before—when we were in love, when we were happy.

I'm beginning to see.

I remember having already seen before—before—when we were in love, when we were happy.

I remember.

I see the ink.

I see the daylight.

I see my life. Your death.

My life that goes on. Your death that goes on

[*Room and cellar Nevers.*]

and that it took the shadows longer now to reach the corners of the room. And that it took the shadows longer now to reach the corners of the cellar walls. About half past six.

Winter is over.

[*A pause. Hiroshima. She is trembling. She moves away from his face.*]

SHE: Oh! It's horrible. I'm beginning to remember you less clearly.

[*He holds the glass and makes her drink. She's horrified by herself.*]

SHE: . . . I'm beginning to forget you. I tremble at the thought of having forgotten so much love . . .

. . . More. [*He makes her drink again.*]

[*She wanders. This time. Alone. He loses her.*]

SHE: We were supposed to meet you at noon on the quays of the Loire. I was going to leave with him. When I arrived at noon on the quay of the Loire, he wasn't quite dead yet. Someone had fired on him from a garden.

[*The garden above the quay of the Loire. She becomes delirious, no longer looking at him.*]

SHE: I stay near his body all that day and then all the next night. The next morning they came to pick him up and they put him in a truck. It was that night Nevers was liberated. The bells of St. Etienne were ringing, ringing . . . Little by little he grew cold beneath me. Oh! how long it took him to die! When? I'm not quite sure. I was lying on top of him . . . yes . . . the moment of his death actually escaped me, because . . . even at that very moment, and even afterward, yes, even afterward, I can say that I couldn't feel the slightest difference between this dead body and mine. All I could find between this body and mine were obvious similarities, do you understand? [*Shouting*] He was my first love. . . .

[*The Japanese slaps her. (Or, if you prefer, crushes her hands in his.) She acts as though she didn't know where it had come from. But she snaps out of it, and acts as though she realized it had been necessary.*]

SHE: And then one day . . . I had screamed again. So they put me back in the cellar.

[*Her voice resumes its normal rhythm. Here the entire scene of the marble that enters the cellar, the marble she picks up, the warm marble she encloses in her hand, etc., and that she gives back to the children outside, etc.*]

SHE: . . . it was warm. . . .

[*He lets her talk, without understanding. She goes on.*]

SHE [*after a pause*]: I think then is when I got over my hate. [*Pause.*] I don't scream any more. [*Pause.*] I'm becoming reasonable. They say: "She's becoming reasonable." [*Pause.*] One night, a holiday, they let me go out.

[*Dawn, at Nevers, beside a river.*]

SHE: The banks of the Loire. Dawn. People are crossing the bridge, sometimes many, sometimes few, depending on the hour. From afar, it's no one.

[*Republic Square, at Nevers, at night*]

SHE: Not long after that my mother tells me I have to leave for Paris, by night. She give me some money. I leave for Paris, on a bicycle, at night. It's summery. The nights are warm. When I reach Paris two days later the name of Hiroshima is in all the newspapers. My hair is now a decent length. I'm in the street with the people.

[*Someone puts another bal-musette record on the juke box.*]

SHE [*as if she were waking up*]: Fourteen years have passed.

[*He gives her something to drink. She drinks. She apparently becomes quite calm. They are emerging from the Nevers tunnel.*]

SHE: I don't even remember his hands very well. . . . The pain, I still remember the pain a little.

HE: Tonight?

SHE: Yes, tonight, I remember. But one day I won't remember it any more. Not at all. Nothing.

SHE [*raising her head to look at him*]: Tomorrow at this time I'll be thousands of miles away from you.

HE: Does your husband know about this?

SHE [*hesitating*]: No.

HE: Then I'm the only one who does?

SHE: Yes.

[*He gets up, takes her in his arms, forcing her to get up too, and holds her very tightly, shockingly. People look at them. They don't understand. He is overwhelmingly happy. He laughs.*]

HE: I'm the only one who knows. No one else?

SHE [*closing her eyes*]: Don't say any more.

[*She moves even closer to him. She raises her hand, and caresses his lips very lightly. Then, as if she were suddenly very happy:*]

SHE: Oh, how good it is to be with someone, sometimes.

[*They separate, very slowly, he sits back down again.*]

HE: Yes.

[*Somewhere a lamp goes out, either on the river bank or in the bar. She jumps. She withdraws her hand, which she had placed again on his lips. He hasn't forgotten the passing time.*]

HE: Tell me more.

SHE: All right.

[*Searches, can't find anything.*]

HE: Tell me more.

SHE: I want to have lived through that moment. That incomparable moment.

[*She drinks. He speaks, as though divorced from the present.*]

HE: In a few years, when I'll have forgotten you, and when other such adventures, from sheer habit, will happen to me, I'll remember you as the symbol of love's forgetfulness. I'll think of this adventure as of the horror of oblivion. I already know it.

[*People enter the café. She looks at them.*]

SHE: [*hopefully*]: Doesn't anything ever stop at night, in Hiroshima?

[*They begin a final game of mutual deception.*]

HE: Never, it never stops in Hiroshima.

[*She puts down her glass, smiles, her smiling concealing a feeling of distress.*]

SHE: I love that . . . cities where there are always people awake, day or night . . .

[*The proprietress of the bar turns out a light. The record stops playing. They're in semi-darkness. The late but ineluctable hour when the cafés close is fast approaching. They both close their eyes, as if seized by a feeling of modesty. The well-ordered world has thrown them out, for their adventure has no place in it. No use fighting. She suddenly understands this. When they raise their eyes again, they literally smile "in order not to cry." She gets up. He does nothing to restrain her. They are outside, in the night, in front of the café. She stands facing him.*]

SHE: It's sometimes necessary to keep from thinking about these difficulties the world makes. If we didn't we'd suffocate.

[*A last light goes out in the café. Both their eyes are lowered.*]

SHE: Go away, leave me.

[*He starts to leave, looks up at the sky.*]

HE: It isn't daylight yet. . . .

SHE: No. [*Pause.*] Probably we'll die without ever seeing each other again.

HE: Yes, probably. [*Pause.*] Unless, perhaps, someday, a war. . . .

[*Pause.*]

SHE [*ironically*]: Yes, a war. . . .

Part V

[*After a further time lapse. We see her in the street, walking quickly. Then we see her in the lobby of the hotel. She takes her key. Then we see her on the stairway. Then we see her open the door to her room. Enter the room and stop short as before an abyss, or as if she had discovered someone already in the room. Then she backs out and closes the door softly.*

Climbing the stairs, descending, going back up, etc. Retracing her steps. Coming and going in the hallway. Wringing her hands, searching for a solution, not finding it, returning to her room all of a sudden. And this time coming to terms with the room.

She goes to the basin, splashes water on her face. And we hear the first sentence of her interior dialogue:]

SHE: You think you know. And then, no. You don't.
In Nevers she had a German love when she was young. . . .

We'll go to Bavaria, my love, and there we'll marry.

She never went to Bavaria. [*Looking at herself in the mirror.*]

I dare those who have never gone to Bavaria to speak to her of love.

You were not yet quite dead.

I told our story.

I was unfaithful to you tonight with this stranger.

I told our story.

It was, you see, a story that could be told.

For fourteen years I hadn't found . . . the taste of an impossible love again.

Since Nevers.

Look how I'm forgetting you . . .

Look how I've forgotten you.

Look at me.

[Through the open window we see the new Hiroshima, peacefully asleep. She suddenly raises her head, sees her wet face in the mirror—like tears—grown old, haggard. And this time, disgusted, she closes her eyes. She dries her face and quickly leaves, crossing the lobby.]

[When we see her again she is sitting on a bench, or on a pile of gravel, about fifty feet from the same bar where they had spent the evening together. The restaurant's light is in her eyes. Banal, almost empty: he is no longer there. She (lies down, sits down) on the gravel and continues to look at the café. (Now only one light is left on in the bar. The room where they had been a short while before is closed. The door into that room is slightly ajar, and by the dim light it is just possible to make out the arrangement of chairs and tables, which are no more than vauge, vain shadows.)

She closes her eyes. Then opens them again. She seems to be asleep. But she is not. When she opens her eyes, she opens them suddenly. Like a cat. Then we hear her voice, an interior monologue:]

SHE: I'm going to stay in Hiroshima. With him, every night. In Hiroshima. [*Opening her eyes.*] I'm going to stay here. Here.

[She looks away from the café and gazes around her. Then suddenly she curls up as tightly as she can, a childlike movement, her head cuddled in her arms, her feet pulled up under her. The Japanese approaches her. She sees him, doesn't move, doesn't react. Their absence "from each other" has begun. No astonishment. He is smoking a cigarette.]

HE: Stay in Hiroshima.

SHE: [*glancing at him*]: Of course I'm going to stay in Hiroshima, with you. [*She buries her head again and says, in a childish tone*]: Oh, how miserable I am. . . .

[*He moves nearer to her.*]

SHE: I never expected this would happen, really. . . . Go away.

HE [*moving away*]: Impossible to leave you.

[*We see them now on a boulevard. In the background, the lighted signs of nightclubs. The boulevard is perfectly straight. She is walking, he following. We see first one, then the other. Distress on both their faces. He catches up with her.*]

HE [*softly*]: Stay in Hiroshima with me.

[*She doesn't reply. Then we hear her voice in an interior monologue, loud and uncontrolled:*]

SHE: He's going to come toward me, he's going to take me by the shoulders, he's-going-to-kiss-me. . . .

He'll kiss me . . . and I'll be lost. [*The word "lost" is said almost ecstatically.*]

[*A shot of him. And we notice he's walking more slowly to let the distance between them grow. That instead of coming toward her he's moving farther away. She doesn't turn back.*]

[*A succession of streets in Hiroshima and Nevers. Riva's interior monologue.*]

SHE: I meet you.

I remember you.

This city was made to the size of love.

You were made to the size of my body.

Who are you?

You destroy me.

I was hungry. Hungry for infidelity, for adultery, for lies, hungry to die.

I have always been.

I always expected that one day you would descend on me.

I waited for you calmly, with infinite patience.

Take me. Deform me to your likeness so that no one, after you, can understand the reason for so much desire.

We're going to remain alone, my love.

The night will never end.

The sun will never rise again on anyone.

Never. Never more. At last.

You destroy me.

You're so good for me.

In good conscience, with good will, we'll mourn the departed day.

We'll have nothing else to do, nothing but to mourn the departed day.

And a time is going to come.

A time will come. When we'll no more know what thing it is that binds us. By slow degrees the word will fade from our memory.

Then it will disappear altogether.

[*This time he accosts her face to face—for the last time—but from a distance. Henceforth she is inviolable. It is raining. They are under a store awning.*]

HE: Maybe it's possible for you to stay.

SHE: You know it's not. Still more impossible than to leave.

HE: A week.

SHE: No.

HE: Three days.

SHE: Time enough for what? To live from it? To die from it?

HE: Time enough to know which.

SHE: That doesn't exist. Neither time enough to live from it. Nor time enough to die from it. So I don't give a damn.

HE: I would have preferred that you had died at Nevers.

SHE: So would I. But I didn't die at Nevers.

[*She is seated on a bench in the waiting room of the Hiroshima railroad station. Still more time has elapsed. An elderly Japanese woman is seated beside her. Another interior monologue.*]

SHE: Nevers, that I'd forgotten, I'd like to see you again tonight. Every night for months on end I set you on fire, while my body was aflame with his memory.

[*Like a shadow the Japanese enters and sits on the same bench, on the opposite side of the old woman. He doesn't look at the French woman. His face is soaked from the rain. His lips are trembling slightly.*]

SHE: While my body is still on fire with your memory, I would like to see Nevers again . . . the Loire.

[*Shot of Nevers.*]

Lovely poplar trees of Nièvre, I offer you to oblivion. [*The word "lovely" should be spoken like a word of love.*]

Three-penny story, I bequeath you to oblivion.

[*The ruins at Nevers.*]

One night without you and I waited for daylight to free me.

[*The "marriage" at Nevers.*]

One day without his eyes was enough to kill her.
Little girl of Nevers.
Shameless child of Nevers.
One day without his hands and she thinks how sad it is to love.
Silly little girl.
Who dies of love at Nevers.
Little girl with shaven head, I bequeath you to oblivion.
Three-penny story.
As it was for him, oblivion will begin with your eyes.
Just the same.
Then, as it was for him, it will encompass your voice.
Just the same.
Then, as it was for him, it will encompass you completely, little by little.
You will become a song.

[*They are separated by the old Japanese woman. He takes a cigarette, rises slightly, and offers the French woman the package. "That's all I can do for you, offer you a cigarette, as I would offer one to anybody, to this old woman." She doesn't smoke. He offers the package to the old woman, lights her cigarette. The Nevers forest moves past in the twilight. And Nevers. While the loudspeaker at the Hiroshima station blares: "Hiroshima, Hiroshima!" during the shots of Nevers.*
The French woman seems to be asleep. The two Japanese beside her speak softly to keep from waking her up.]

THE OLD WOMAN: Who is she?

HE: A French woman.

THE OLD WOMAN: What's the matter?

HE: She's leaving Japan in a little while. We're sad at having to leave each other.[8]

8. This exchange takes place in Japanese. Not translated in the film. [Author's note.]

[*She is gone. We see her again just outside the station. She gets into a taxi. Stops before a night club. "The Casablanca." Then he arrives after her.*
She is alone at a table. He sits down at another table facing hers. It's the end. The end of the night which marks the beginning of their eternal separation. A Japanese who was in the room goes over to her and engages her in conversation.]

THE JAPANESE: Are you alone?[9]

[*She replies only by signs.*]

THE JAPANESE: Do you mind talking with me a little?

[*The place is almost empty. People are bored.*]

THE JAPANESE: It is very late to be lonely.

[*She lets herself be accosted by another man in order to "lose" the one we know. But not only is that not possible, it's useless. For the other one is already lost.*]

THE JAPANESE: May I sit down? Are you just visiting Hiroshima?
Do you like Japan?
Do you live in Paris?

[*We can see day beginning to break (through the windows). The interior monologue has stopped. This unknown Japanese is talking to her. She looks at the other. The unknown Japanese stops talking to her. And then, terrifying, "the dawn of the damned" can be seen breaking through the windows of the night club.*]

[*She is next seen leaning against the door inside her hotel room. Her hand is on her heart. A knock. She opens*]

HE: Impossible not to come.

[*They are standing in the room, facing each other, their arms at their sides, their bodies not touching. The room is in order. The ash trays are empty. It is now full daylight. The sun is up. They don't even smoke. The bed is still made. They say nothing. They look at each other. The silence of dawn weighs on the whole city. He enters her room. In the distance, Hiroshima is still sleeping. All of a sudden, she sits down. She buries her head in her hands, clenches her fist, closes her eyes, and moans. A moan of utter sadness. The light of the city in her eyes.*]

9. This passage in English in the film.[Author's note.]

SHE: I'll forget you! I'm forgetting you already! Look how I'm forgetting you! Look at me!

[*He takes her arms (wrists), she faces him, her head thrown back. She suddenly breaks away from him. He helps her by an effort of self-abstraction. As if she were in danger. He looks at her, she at him, as she would look at the city, and suddenly, very softly, she calls him. She calls him from afar, lost in wonder. She has succeeded in drowning him in universal oblivion. And it is a source of amazement to her.*]

SHE: Hi-ro-shi-ma.
Hi-ro-shi-ma. That's your name.

[*They look at each other without seeing each other. Forever.*]

HE: That's my name. Yes. Your name is Nevers. Ne-vers-in-France.

ALEXANDER SOLZHENITSYN

1918–

The reputation of Russian novelist Alexander Solzhenitsyn is divided almost equally between two complementary aspects: he continues the tradition of the realistic nineteenth-century novel (following the example of his compatriots Tolstoy and Dostoevsky), and he has assumed the role of moral conscience in a modern society where both East and West are fatally flawed. Expelled from the Soviet Union in 1974 and stripped of his citizenship, Solzhenitsyn—who now lives on a farm in Vermont—proclaims the virtues of an older, religious way of life as the only salvation for a civilization that has been dehumanized by political oppression and materialist greed. Art and literature, he feels, are "endowed with the miraculous power to communicate," and thus make it possible for people to experience situations which they have not lived. This basis of common communication erases divisions and allows us to have "a single system of evaluation for evil deeds and for good ones." Solzhenitsyn tries to encompass both the historian's and the moralist's aims when he writes about the history of his own country in the twentieth century and paints a picture of human suffering and moral endurance under oppression. Like Thomas Mann, he includes a range of characters and diverse social types in novels that allude to larger social issues; unlike Mann, his tone is overtly moral and even didactic, especially in his later works. Solzhenitsyn is impelled to testify for all those who cannot speak: for the woman in *Cancer Ward* (1968) who says "Where can I read about us? Will that be only in a hundred years?" His testimony ranges from the more personal account of a day in concentration camp (*One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, 1963) to broad historical panoramas like *August 1914* (1971), which focuses on the defeat of the Russian Second Army in East

Prussia during World War I, and *Gulag Archipelago* (1973–75), a description of the Soviet concentration camp system. Clearly he finds the form of the realistic novel—expanded, in *August 1914*, with documents and imitation film scripts—the most appropriate method for representing the truth of history. Solzhenitsyn has little patience with avant-garde literature which, he says, "has been thought up by empty-headed people"; instead, he tries to render the essence of history by blending documented fact and narrative fiction in his creative works and, in recent years, by editing and publishing (in Russian) historical documents from pre-Revolutionary Russia.

He was born Alexander Isayevich Solzhenitsyn on December 11, 1918, in Kislovodsk, in the northern Caucasus. His father had died six months earlier, and his mother supported them in Rostov-on-Don by working as a typist. The family was extremely poor, and—although Solzhenitsyn would have preferred studying literature in Moscow—he was obliged upon graduation from high school to enroll in the local Department of Mathematics at Rostov University. The choice, he says, was a lucky one, for his double degree in mathematics and physics allowed him to spend four years of his prison camp sentence in a relatively privileged *sharashka*, or research institute, instead of at hard manual labor. During 1939–41 he also took correspondence courses from the Institute of History, Philosophy, and Literature in Moscow. When Solzhenitsyn graduated in 1941 he was immediately inducted into the army, where he drove horse-drawn transport vehicles until he was sent to artillery school in 1942. That November, he was put in charge of an artillery reconnaissance battery at the front, a position he held until his sudden arrest in February 1945.

The military censor had found passages in his letters to a friend that were—even under a pseudonym—visibly disrespectful of Stalin, and Solzhenitsyn was sentenced in July to eight years in the prison camps. During 1946–50 he worked as a mathematician in research institutes staffed by prisoners (such as that described in *The First Circle*) but in 1950 was taken to a new kind of camp for political prisoners only, where he worked as manual laborer. After his sentence was ostensibly over, an administrative order sent him into perpetual exile in southern Kazakhstan. Solzhenitsyn spent the years of exile teaching physics and mathematics in a rural school and wrote prose in secret. The tumor that had developed in his first labor camp grew worse, and in 1954 the author received treatment in a clinic in Tashkent (recalled in the novel *Cancer Ward*). He returned to exile in 1955 (the year he wrote *The First Circle*) and was not released until June 1956. Official rehabilitation came in 1957, and the author moved to Ryazan in European Russia where he continued to teach physics and mathematics, while secretly writing fiction, until 1962. "Matryona's Home" and *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* were written during this period.

At the age of forty-two, Solzhenitsyn had written a great deal but published nothing. In 1961, however, it looked as though the climate of political censorship might change. Nikita Khrushchev had just publicly attacked the "cult of personality" and hero worship that had surrounded Stalin, and the poet and editor Alexander Tvardovsky called on writers to portray "truth," not the artificial picture of perfect Soviet society that Stalin preferred. Solzhenitsyn was encouraged to submit *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*,

which appeared (with Khrushchev's approval) in the November 1962 issue of Tvardovsky's journal *Novy Mir*. In January 1963 Tvardovsky published the stories "Matryona's Home" and "Incident at Krechetovka Station" but—with the exception of two short stories and an article on style—Solzhenitsyn would not be allowed to publish anything more in his native land. Even the highly praised *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* was removed from candidacy for the Lenin Prize in 1963. Khrushchev himself was forced into retirement in October 1964, and the temporary loosening of censorship came to an end. The novel *The First Circle* (already accepted by *Novy Mir*) and two plays (*The Lovegirl and the Innocent*, written 1954; *Candle in the Wind*, written 1960) were prohibited during 1964–65, and *Cancer Ward*, after the type was already partially set, was refused publication permission by the Writers' Union in 1966. Solzhenitsyn protested both the censorship and the fact that the Writers' Union did not defend its members before official attacks, but instead he himself was expelled from the Writers' Union in 1969, after *The First Circle* and *Cancer Ward* had appeared in the West. The only means of publishing officially unacceptable works was to convey them abroad to a Western publishing house, or to circulate them in *samizdat* ("self-publishing") form by circulating copies of typewritten manuscripts. Solzhenitsyn made arrangements to have his works published in the West, and continued work on the larger historical novels: the *Gulag Archipelago*, which he had begun earlier, and *August 1914*, which he wrote in 1969–70. In 1970 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature, which he accepted in absentia because he was afraid that he would not be permitted to re-enter the Soviet Union once he left. After the publication abroad of the first volume of the *Gulag Archipelago*, however, he was arrested in February 1974 and expelled from the country. During 1974–76 he lived in Zurich, and since 1976 he has lived on a farm in Vermont.

Solzhenitsyn's first three novels have in common the themes of imprisonment, of personal suffering, and of the moral purity to be gained by those who endure and learn from their suffering. *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* is the story, told at a very basic level of hunger, cold, and brutally demanding work, of one fairly good day in the life of a prison camp inmate, the peasant Ivan Denisovich Shukhov. When the book appeared, it was the first public recognition of Stalin's prison camp system, and Solzhenitsyn's matter-of-fact narration of the prisoners' day-to-day struggle to survive and retain their humanity shocked readers in Russia and in the West. Shukhov is not a heroic figure, or even portrayed as particularly intelligent, but in his deprivation he has found a core of inner spiritual strength that might well be envied, Solzhenitsyn suggests, by those outside prison who compromise their principles, and accede to injustices, for fear of losing what they have.

The worlds of *Cancer Ward* and *The First Circle* are more privileged than that of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, but each retains the atmosphere of imprisonment and imminent death, and each composes a picture of society by juxtaposing characters with different backgrounds and different points of view. Solzhenitsyn calls this technique of juxtaposition "polyphonic" or many-voiced: he writes a "polyphonic novel with concrete details specifying the time and place of action. A novel without a central hero. . . . Each character becomes central when the action reverts to him." In *Cancer*

Ward, thirteen patients representing different social and political classes are brought together in a ward at the cancer clinic in Tashkent; this microcosm of Soviet society is faced with sickness, suffering, and death, and with an authoritarian medical system that administers treatment without explaining it (or its side effects) to the patient. The ward becomes a metaphor for Soviet society, a metaphor given further dimensions when the inmates articulate their different values in response to a story by Tolstoy: "What Men Live By." The ultimate question is not collective but individual, says Kostoglotov: a man may be a member of a collective, "but only while he's alive . . . he has to die alone."

The same emphasis on the testing of individual values occurs in *The First Circle*, a novel whose title refers to the least painful circle of Hell in Dante's *Inferno*, and indicates here the *sharashka* or prisoner-staffed reasearch section of the Mavrino Institute. The prisoners working in the *sharashka* are under pressure from their superiors (who are under pressure from Stalin) to produce spying devices, including a method for identifying voices on taped telephone calls, and an impregnable telephone coding system for Stalin. If they do not produce satisfactory work, they are sent back to almost-certain death in the labor camps (the lower circles of this Hell); if they do, they become part of the police state. No one is free, not even the dictator who is imprisoned by his own suspicions. The whole society of *The First Circle* is an Inferno, and only by sacrificing everything can one hope to retain spiritual freedom.

Solzhenitsyn turned next to a larger panoramic scope, where the authorial voice would dominate and interpret a mass of historical information. *August 1914*, written in 1969–70, is the first volume of a planned trilogy inquiring into the course of modern Russian history: later volumes (of which a few chapters have appeared in journals and in the fictional portrait, *Lenin in Zurich*) are titled after revolutionary dates, *October 1916* and *March 1917*. *August 1914* describes the defeat of the Second Russian Army in East Prussia during World War I, and—in a consciously fragmented style that moves from scene to scene, includes extracts of documents, newspapers, proverbs, and songs, and provides sections marked "Screen" that imitate film scripts—attempts to depict a broad social panorama with characters from all classes, thus recording a moment in history from an epic point of view.

The second broad panorama is the *Gulag Archipelago*, a three-volume, seven-section account of Stalin's widespread prison camp system. (*Gulag* stands for "Chief Administration of Corrective Labor Camps," camps which were scattered across the Soviet Union like islands in a sea [the archipelago]). Solzhenitsyn describes the horror of these camps in quasi-anecdotal form, using personal experience, oral testimony, excerpts of documents, written eyewitness reports, and altogether a massive collection of evidence accumulated inside "An Attempt at Artistic Investigation" (the subtitle). In this book, perhaps even more than in *August 1914*, there is a tension between the bare facts which Solzhenitsyn transmits and the spiritual interpretation of history into which they fit. The author is overtly present, commenting, guessing intuititively from context when particular facts are missing, and stressing in his own voice the theme that has pervaded all his work: the purification of the soul through suffering. The title of the fourth section,

"The Soul and Barbed Wire," symbolizes the recurrent opposition of soul and imprisoning society that has become familiar to his readers.

Since Solzhenitsyn is such a dedicated anti-Communist and anti-Marxist, many Westerners have jumped to the conclusion that he is in favor of the Western democratic system. Such is not the case. He looks back to an earlier, more nationalist and spiritual authoritarianism represented for him by the image of Holy Russia: "For a thousand years Russia lived with an authoritarian order . . . that authoritarian order possessed a strong moral foundation . . . Christian Orthodoxy." In a speech given at Harvard in 1978, "A World Split Apart," he criticized Western democracy's "herd instinct" and "need to accommodate mass standards," its emphasis on "well-being" and "constant desire to have still more things," its "spiritual exhaustion" in which "mediocrity triumphs under the guise of democratic restraints." Once again, he returns to the theme of purification by suffering which permeates his fiction: "We have been through a spiritual training far in advance of Western experience. The complex and deadly crush of life has produced stronger, deeper, and more interesting personalities than those generated by standardized Western well-being."

One of those strong and deep personalities is surely Matryona in "Matryona's Home." Solzhenistyn's story, which is probably modeled on the old Russian literary form of the saint's life, is a testimony to Matryona's absolute simplicity, her refusal to possess anything more than the basic necessities (and she will not raise a pig to kill for food), her willingness to help others unrewarded, and finally to let her greedy in-laws tear down part of her own home and cart it off. The narrator of the story, like Solzhenitsyn an ex-convict and mathematics teacher, has buried himself deep in the country to avoid signs of modern Soviet society and to find—if it still exists—an image of the Old Russia. The town of Talnovo itself is tainted, not just by the kolkhoz (collective farm) system, which ceases to consider Matryona part of the collective as soon as she becomes ill, but also by the laziness, selfishness, and predatory greed of its inhabitants. Yet there remains Matryona. Her life has been filled with disappointment and deprivation, and she remains an outsider in a materialist society that despises her lack of acquisitive instinct, but she seems to live in a dimension of spiritual contentment and love which is unknown to those around her. Only the narrator, who has learned to value essential qualities from his own experience in the concentration camps, is able finally to recognize her as "the righteous one," one of those whose spiritual merit seems alien to modern society, yet is needed to save society from divine retribution (Genesis 18:23–33).

Andrej Kodjak, *Alexander Solzhenitsyn* (1978), provides a biographical and critical introduction to Solzhenitsyn up to his deportation from the Soviet Union in 1974; includes discussion of Russian terms. Kathryn B. Feuer, ed., *Solzhenitsyn: A Collection of Critical Essays* (1976), contains a range of essays on aspects and particular works, including "Matryona's Home." John Dunlop, Richard Haugh, Alexis Klimoff, eds. *Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn: Critical Essays and Documentary Materials* (1973), is a useful collection with a wide range of essays and reprinted texts, including a short autobiography by Solzhenitsyn and his Nobel Prize lecture.

Matryona's Home[1]

A hundred and fifteen miles from Moscow trains were still slowing down to a crawl a good six months after it happened. Passengers stood glued to the windows or went out to stand by the doors. Was the line under repair, or what? Would the train be late?

It was all right. Past the crossing the train picked up speed again and the passengers went back to their seats.

Only the engine drivers knew what it was all about.

The engine drivers and I.

In the summer of 1953 I was coming back from the hot and dusty desert, just following my nose—so long as it led me back to European Russia. Nobody waited or wanted me at my particular place, because I was a little matter of ten years overdue. I just wanted to get to the central belt, away from the great heats, close to the leafy muttering of forests. I wanted to efface myself, to lose myself in deepest Russia . . . if it was still anywhere to be found.

A year earlier I should have been lucky to get a job carrying a hod this side of the Urals.[2] They wouldn't have taken me as an electrician on a decent construction job. And I had an itch to teach. Those who knew told me that it was a waste of money buying a ticket, that I should have a journey for nothing.

But things were beginning to move. When I went up the stairs of the N—— Regional Education Department and asked for the Personnel Section, I was surprised to find Personnel sitting behind a glass partition, like in a chemist's shop, instead of the usual black leather-padded door. I went timidly up to the window, bowed, and asked, "Please, do you need any mathematicians somewhere where the trains don't run? I should like to settle there for good."

They passed every dot and comma in my documents through a fine comb, went from one room to another, made telephone calls. It was something out of the ordinary for them too—people always wanted the towns, the bigger the better. And lo and behold, they found just the place for me—Vysokoe Polye. The very sound of it gladdened my heart.

Vysokoe Polye[3] did not belie its name. It stood on rising ground, with gentle hollows and other little hills around it. It was enclosed by an unbroken ring of forest. There was a pool behind a weir. Just the place where I wouldn't mind living and dying. I spent a long time sitting on a stump in a coppice and wishing with all my heart that I didn't need breakfast and dinner every day but could just stay

1. Translated by H. T. Willetts. 2. Mountain chain separating European Russia from (Asiatic) Siberia. 3. "High Meadow."

here and listen to the branches brushing against the roof in the night, with not a wireless anywhere to be heard and the whole world silent.

Alas, nobody baked bread in Vysokoe Polye. There was nothing edible on sale. The whole village lugged its victuals in sacks from the big town.

I went back to the Personnel Section and raised my voice in prayer at the little window. At first they wouldn't even talk to me. But then they started going from one room to another, made a telephone call, scratched with their pens, and stamped on my orders the word "Torfoprodukt."

Torfoprodukt?[4] Turgenev never knew that you can put words like that together in Russian.

On the station building at Torfoprodukt, an antiquated temporary hut of gray wood, hung a stern notice, BOARD TRAINS ONLY FROM THE PASSENGERS' HALL. A further message had been scratched on the boards with a nail, *And Without Tickets*. And by the booking office, with the same melancholy wit, somebody had carved for all time the words, *No Tickets*. It was only later that I fully appreciated the meaning of these addenda. Getting to Torfoprodukt was easy. But not getting away.

Here too, deep and trackless forests had once stood and were still standing after the Revolution. Then they were chopped down by the peat cutters and the neighboring kolkhoz.[5] Its chairman, Shashkov, had razed quite a few hectares of timber and sold it at a good profit down in the Odessa region.

The workers' settlement sprawled untidily among the peat bogs—monotonous shacks from the thirties, and little houses with carved façades and glass verandas, put up in the fifties. But inside these houses I could see no partitions reaching up to the ceilings, so there was no hope of renting a room with four real walls.

Over the settlement hung smoke from the factory chimney. Little locomotives ran this way and that along narrow-gauge railway lines, giving out more thick smoke and piercing whistles, pulling loads of dirty brown peat in slabs and briquettes. I could safely assume that in the evening a loudspeaker would be crying its heart out over the door of the club and there would be drunks roaming the streets and, sooner or later, sticking knives in each other.

This was what my dream about a quiet corner of Russia had brought me to—when I could have stayed where I was and lived in an adobe hut looking out on the desert, with a fresh breeze at night and only the starry dome of the sky overhead.

4. "Peat product." A new word made by combining two words of Germanic origin: "torf" (peat) and "produkt." *Ivan Sergeyevich Turgenev* (1818–83) was a master of Russian prose style best known for the novel *Fathers and Sons* (1861) and for a series of sympathetic sketches of peasant life published as *A Sportsman's Sketches* (1882). 5. Collective farm.

I couldn't sleep on the station bench, and as soon as it started getting light I went for another stroll round the settlement. This time I saw a tiny marketplace. Only one woman stood there at that early hour, selling milk, and I took a bottle and started drinking it on the spot.

I was struck by the way she talked. Instead of a normal speaking voice, she used an ingratiating singsong, and her words were the ones I was longing to hear when I left Asia for this place.

"Drink, and God bless you. You must be a stranger round here?"

"And where are you from?" I asked, feeling more cheerful.

I learnt that the peat workings weren't the only thing, that over the railway lines there was a hill, and over the hill a village, that this village was Talnovo, and it had been there ages ago, when the "gipsy woman" lived in the big house and the wild woods stood all round. And farther on there was a whole countryside full of villages—Chaslitsy, Ovintsy, Spudni, Shevertni, Shestimirovo, deeper and deeper into the woods, farther and farther from the railway, up towards the lakes.

The names were like a soothing breeze to me. They held a promise of backwoods Russia. I asked my new acquaintance to take me to Talnovo after the market was over and find a house for me to lodge in.

It appeared that I was a lodger worth having: in addition to my rent, the school offered a truckload of peat for the winter to whoever took me. The woman's ingratiating smile gave way to a thoughtful frown. She had no room herself, because she and her husband were "keeping" her aged mother, so she took me first to one lot of relatives then to another. But there wasn't a separate room to be had and both places were crowded and noisy.

We had come to a dammed-up stream that was short of water and had a little bridge over it. No other place in all the village took my fancy as this did: there were two or three willows, a lopsided house, ducks swimming on the pond, geese shaking themselves as they stepped out of the water.

"Well, perhaps we might just call on Matryona," said my guide, who was getting tired of me by now. "Only it isn't so neat and cozy-like in her house, neglects things she does. She's unwell."

Matryona's house stood quite near by. Its row of four windows looked out on the cold backs, the two slopes of the roof were covered with shingles, and a little attic window was decorated in the old Russian style. But the shingles were rotting, the beam ends of the house and the once mighty gates had turned gray with age, and there were gaps in the little shelter over the gate.

The small gate was fastened, but instead of knocking my companion just put her hand under and turned the catch, a simple device to

prevent animals from straying. The yard was not covered, but there was a lot under the roof of the house. As you went through the outer door a short flight of steps rose to a roomy landing, which was open, to the roof high overhead. To the left, other steps led up to the top room, which was a separate structure with no stove, and yet another flight led down to the basement. To the right lay the house proper, with its attic and its cellar.

It had been built a long time ago, built sturdily, to house a big family, and now one lonely woman of nearly sixty lived in it.

When I went into the cottage she was lying on the Russian stove[6] under a heap of those indeterminate dingy rags which are so precious to a working man or woman.

The spacious room, and especially the big part near the windows, was full of rubber plants in pots and tubs standing on stools and benches. They peopled the householder's loneliness like a speechless but living crowd. They had been allowed to run wild, and they took up all the scanty light on the north side. In what was left of the light, and half-hidden by the stovepipe, the mistress of the house looked yellow and weak. You could see from her clouded eyes that illness had drained all the strength out of her.

While we talked she lay on the stove face downward, without a pillow, her head toward the door, and I stood looking up at her. She showed no pleasure at getting a lodger, just complained about the wicked disease she had. She was just getting over an attack; it didn't come upon her every month, but when it did, "It hangs on two or three days so as I shan't manage to get up and wait on you. I've room and to spare, you can live here if you like."

Then she went over the list of other housewives with whom I should be quieter and cozier and wanted me to make the round of them. But I had already seen that I was destined to settle in this dimly lit house with the tarnished mirror, in which you couldn't see yourself, and the two garish posters (one advertising books, the other about the harvest), bought for a ruble each to brighten up the walls.

Matryona Vasilyevna made me go off round the village again, and when I called on her the second time she kept trying to put me off, "We're not clever, we can't cook, I don't know how we shall suit. . . ." But this time she was on her feet when I got there, and I thought I saw a glimmer of pleasure in her eyes to see me back. We reached an agreement about the rent and the load of peat which the school would deliver.

Later on I found out that, year in year out, it was a long time since Matryona Vasilyevna had earned a single ruble. She didn't get a pension. Her relatives gave her very little help. In the kolkhoz she

6. A large stove built of masonry, used both for heating and cooking.

had worked not for money but for credits; the marks recording her labor days in her well-thumbed workbook.

So I moved in with Matryona Vasilyevna. We didn't divide the room. Her bed was in the corner between the door and the stove, and I unfolded my camp bed by one window and pushed Matryona's beloved rubber plants out of the light to make room for a little table by another. The village had electric light, laid on back in the twenties, from Shatury. The newspapers were writing about "Ilyich's little lamps," but the peasants talked wide-eyed about "Tsar Light."[7]

Some of the better-off people in the village might not have thought Matryona's house much of a home, but it kept us snug enough that autumn and winter. The roof still held the rain out, and the freezing winds could not blow the warmth of the stove away all at once, though it was cold by morning, especially when the wind blew on the shabby side.

In addition to Matryona and myself, a cat, some mice, and some cockroaches lived in the house.

The cat was no longer young, and was gammy-legged as well. Matryona had taken her in out of pity, and she had stayed. She walked on all four feet but with a heavy limp: one of her feet was sore and she favored it. When she jumped from the stove she didn't land with the soft sound a cat usually makes, but with a heavy thud as three of her feet struck the floor at once—such a heavy thud that until I got used to it, it gave me a start. This was because she stuck three feet out together to save the fourth.

It wasn't because the cat couldn't deal with them that there were mice in the cottage: she would pounce into the corner like lightning and come back with a mouse between her teeth. But the mice were usually out of reach because somebody, back in the good old days, had stuck embossed wallpaper of a greenish color on Matryona's walls, and not just one layer of it but five. The layers held together all right, but in many places the whole lot had come away from the wall, giving the room a sort of inner skin. Between the timber of the walls and the skin of wallpaper the mice had made themselves runs where they impudently scampered about, running at times right up to the ceiling. The cat followed their scamperings with angry eyes, but couldn't get at them.

Sometimes the cat ate cockroaches as well, but they made her sick. The only thing the cockroaches respected was the partition which screened the mouth of the Russian stove and the kitchen from the best part of the room.

They did not creep into the best room. But the kitchen at night

7. The newspapers reflect the new order, "Ilyich" standing for Vladimir Ilyich Lenin (1870–1924), leader of the 1917 Russian Revolution and first head of the new state; the peasants still think in terms of the emperor (Tsar).

swarmed with them, and if I went in late in the evening for a drink of water and switched on the light the whole floor, the big bench, and even the wall would be one rustling brown mass. From time to time I brought home some borax from the school laboratory and we mixed it with dough to poison them. There would be fewer cockroaches for a while, but Matryona was afraid that we might poison the cat as well. We stopped putting down poison and the cockroaches multiplied anew.

At night, when Matryona was already asleep and I was working at my table, the occasional rapid scamper of mice behind the wallpaper would be drowned in the sustained and ceaseless rustling of cockroaches behind the screen, like the sound of the sea in the distance. But I got used to it because there was nothing evil in it, nothing dishonest. Rustling was life to them.

I even got used to the crude beauty on the poster, forever reaching out from the wall to offer me Belinsky, Panferov,[8] and a pile of other books—but never saying a word. I got used to everything in Matryona's cottage.

Matryona got up at four or five o'clock in the morning. Her wall clock was twenty-seven years old and had been bought in the village shop. It was always fast, but Matryona didn't worry about that—just as long as it didn't lose and make her late in the morning. She switched on the light behind the kitchen screen and moving quietly, considerately, doing her best not to make a noise, she lit the stove, went to milk the goat (all the livestock she had was this one dirty-white goat with twisted horns), fetched water and boiled it in three iron pots: one for me, one for herself, and one for the goat. She fetched potatoes from the cellar, picking out the littlest for the goat, little ones for herself and egg-sized ones for me. There were no big ones, because her garden was sandy, had not been manured since the war, and she always planted with potatoes, potatoes, and potatoes again, so that it wouldn't grow big ones.

I scarcely heard her about her morning tasks. I slept late, woke up in the wintry daylight, stretched a bit, and stuck my head out from under my blanket and my sheepskin. These, together with the prisoner's jerkin round my legs and a sack stuffed with straw underneath me, kept me warm in bed even on nights when the cold wind rattled our wobbly windows from the north. When I heard the discreet noises on the other side of the screen I spoke to her, slowly and deliberately:

"Good morning, Matryona Vasilyevna!"

And every time the same good-natured words came to me from

8. Vissarion Grigoryevich Belinsky (1811–48), Russian literary critic who emphasized social and political ideas; Fedor Ivanovich Panferov (1896–1960), socialist-realist writer popular in the 1920s, best known for his novel *The Iron Flood*.

behind the screen. They began with a warm, throaty gurgle, the sort of sound grandmothers make in fairy tales.

"M-m-m . . . same to you too!"

And after a little while, "Your breakfast's ready for you now."

She didn't announce what was for breakfast, but it was easy to guess: taters in their jackets or tatty soup (as everybody in the village called it), or barley gruel (no other grain could be bought in Torfoprodukt that year, and even the barley you had to fight for, because it was the cheapest and people bought it up by the sack to fatten their pigs on it). It wasn't always salted as it should be, it was often slightly burnt, it furred the palate and the gums, and it gave me heartburn.

But Matryona wasn't to blame: there was no butter in Torfoprodukt either, margarine was desperately short, and only mixed cooking fat was plentiful, and when I got to know it, I saw that the Russian stove was not convenient for cooking: the cook cannot see the pots and they are not heated evenly all round. I suppose the stove came down to our ancestors from the Stone Age, because you can stoke it up once before daylight, and food and water, mash and swill will keep warm in it all day long. And it keeps you warm while you sleep.

I ate everything that was cooked for me without demur, patiently putting aside anything uncalled-for that I came across: a hair, a bit of peat, a cockroach's leg. I hadn't the heart to find fault with Matryona. After all, she had warned me herself.

"We aren't clever, we can't cook—I don't know how we shall suit. . . ."

"Thank you," I said quite sincerely.

"What for? For what is your own?" she answered, disarming me with a radiant smile. And, with a guileless look of her faded blue eyes, she would ask, "And what shall I cook you for just now?"

For just now meant for supper. I ate twice a day, like at the front. What could I order for just now? It would have to be one of the same old things, taters or tater soup.

I resigned myself to it, because I had learned by now not to look for the meaning of life in food. More important to me was the smile on her roundish face, which I tried in vain to catch when at last I had earned enough to buy a camera. As soon as she saw the cold eye of the lens upon her, Matryona assumed a strained or else an exaggeratedly severe expression.

Just once I did manage to get a snap of her looking through the window into the street and smiling at something.

Matryona had a lot of worries that winter. Her neighbors put it into her head to try and get a pension. She was all alone in the world, and when she began to be seriously ill she had been dismissed from the kolkhoz as well. Injustices had piled up, one on top of

another. She was ill, but was not regarded as a disabled person. She had worked for a quarter of a century in the kolkhoz, but it was a kolkhoz and not a factory, so she was not entitled to a pension for herself. She could only try and get one for her husband, for the loss of her breadwinner. But she had had no husband for twelve years now, not since the beginning of the war, and it wasn't easy to obtain all the particulars from different places about his length of service and how much he had earned. What a bother it was getting those forms through! Getting somebody to certify that he'd earned, say, three hundred rubles a month; that she lived alone and nobody helped her; what year she was born in. Then all this had to be taken to the Pension Office. And taken somewhere else to get all the mistakes corrected. And taken back again. Then you had to find out whether they would give you a pension.

To make it all more difficult the Pension Office was twelve miles east of Talnovo, the Rural Council Offices six miles to the west, the Factory District Council an hour's walk to the north. They made her run around from office to office for two months on end, to get an *i* dotted or a *t* crossed. Every trip took a day. She goes down to the Rural District Council—and the secretary isn't there today. Secretaries of rural councils often aren't here today. So come again tomorrow. Tomorrow the secretary is in, but he hasn't got his rubber stamp. So come again the next day. And the day after that back she goes yet again, because all her papers are pinned together and some cockeyed clerk has signed the wrong one.

"They shove me around, Ignatich," she used to complain to me after these fruitless excursions. "Worn out with it I am."

But she soon brightened up. I found that she had a sure means of putting herself in a good humor. She worked. She would grab a shovel and go off to pull potatoes. Or she would tuck a sack under her arm and go after peat. Or take a wicker basket and look for berries deep in the woods. When she'd been bending her back to bushes instead of office desks for a while, and her shoulders were aching from a heavy load, Matryona would come back cheerful, at peace with the world and smiling her nice smile.

"I'm on to a good thing now, Ignatich. I know where to go for it (peat she meant), a lovely place it is."

"But surely my peat is enough, Matryona Vasilyevna? There's a whole truckload of it."

"Pooh! Your peat! As much again, and then as much again, that might be enough. When the winter gets really stiff and the wind's battling at the windows, it blows the heat out of the house faster than you can make the stove up. Last year we got heaps and heaps of it. I'd have had three loads in by now. But they're out to catch us. They've summoned one woman from our village already."

That's how it was. The frightening breath of winter was already in the air. There were forests all round, and no fuel to be had anywhere. Excavators roared away in the bogs, but there was no peat on sale to the villagers. It was delivered, free, to the bosses and to the people round the bosses, and teachers, doctors, and workers got a load each. The people of Talnovo were not supposed to get any peat, and they weren't supposed to ask about it. The chairman of the kolkhoz walked about the village looking people in the eye while he gave his orders or stood chatting and talked about anything you liked except fuel. He was stocked up. Who said anything about winter coming?

So just as in the old days they used to steal the squire's wood, now they pinched peat from the trust. The women went in parties of five or ten so that they would be less frightened. They went in the daytime. The peat cut during the summer had been stacked up all over the place to dry. That's the good thing about peat, it can't be carted off as soon as it's cut. It lies around drying till autumn, or, if the roads are bad, till the snow starts falling. This was when the women used to come and take it. They could get six peats in a sack if it was damp, or ten if it was dry. A sackful weighed about half a hundredweight and it sometimes had to be carried over two miles. This was enough to make the stove up once. There were two hundred days in the winter. The Russian stove had to be lit in the mornings, and the "Dutch"[9] stove in the evenings.

"Why beat about the bush?" said Matryona angrily to someone invisible. "Since there've been no more horses, what you can't have around yourself you haven't got. My back never heals up. Winter you're pulling sledges, summer it's bundles on your back, it's God's truth I'm telling you."

The women went more than once in a day. On good days Matryona brought six sacks home. She piled my peat up where it could be seen and hid her own under the passageway, boarding up the hole every night.

"If they don't just happen to think of it, the devils will never find it in their born days," said Matryona smiling and wiping the sweat from her brow.

What could the peat trust do? Its establishment didn't run to a watchman for every bog. I suppose they had to show a rich haul in their returns, and then write off so much for crumbling, so much washed away by the rain. Sometimes they would take it into their heads to put out patrols and try to catch the women as they came into the village. The women would drop their sacks and scatter. Or somebody would inform and there would be a house-to-house search. They would draw up a report on the stolen peat and threaten a court

9. Not the real tiled Dutch stove, but a cheap small stove (probably made from an oil barrel) that provided heat with less fuel than the big Russian stove.

action. The women would stop fetching it for a while, but the approach of winter drove them out with sledges in the middle of the night.

When I had seen a little more of Matryona I noticed that, apart from cooking and looking after the house, she had quite a lot of other jobs to do every day. She kept all her jobs, and the proper times for them, in her head and always knew when she woke up in the morning how her day would be occupied. Apart from fetching peat and stumps which the tractors unearthed in the bogs, apart from the cranberries which she put to soak in big jars for the winter ("Give your teeth an edge, Ignatich," she used to say when she offered me some), apart from digging potatoes and all the coming and going to do with her pension, she had to get hay from somewhere for her one and only dirty-white goat.

"Why don't you keep a cow, Matryona?"

Matryona stood there in her grubby apron, by the opening in the kitchen screen, facing my table, and explained to me.

"Oh, Ignatich, there's enough milk from the goat for me. And if I started keeping a cow she'd eat me out of house and home in no time. You can't cut the grass by the railway track, because it belongs to the railway, and you can't cut any in the woods, because it belongs to the foresters, and they won't let me have any at the kolkhoz because I'm not a member any more, they reckon. And those who are members have to work there every day till the white flies swarm and make their own hay when there's snow on the ground—what's the good of grass like that? In the old days they used to be sweating to get the hay in at midsummer, between the end of June and the end of July, while the grass was sweet and juicy."

So it meant a lot of work for Matryona to gather enough hay for one skinny little goat. She took her sickle and a sack and went off early in the morning to places where she knew there was grass growing—round the edges of fields, on the roadside, on hummocks in the bog. When she had stuffed her sack with heavy fresh grass she dragged it home and spread it out in her yard to dry. From a sackfull of grass she got one forkload of dry hay.

The farm had a new chairman, sent down from the town not long ago, and the first thing he did was to cut down the garden plots for those who were not fit to work. He left Matryona a third of an acre of sand—when there was over a thousand square yards just lying idle on the other side of the fence. Yet when they were short of working hands, when the women dug in their heels and wouldn't budge, the chairman's wife would come to see Matryona. She was from the town as well, a determined woman whose short gray coat and intimidating glare gave her a somewhat military appearance. She walked into the house without so much as a good morning and looked sternly

at Matryona. Matryona was uneasy.

"Well now, Comrade Vasilyevna," said the chairman's wife, drawing out her words. "You will have to help the kolkhoz! You will have to go and help cart manure out tomorrow!"

A little smile of forgiveness wrinkled Matryona's face—as though she understood the embarrassment which the chairman's wife must feel at not being able to pay her for her work.

"Well—er," she droned. "I'm not well, of course, and I'm not attached to you any more . . . ," then she hurried to correct herself, "What time should I come then?"

"And bring your own fork!" the chairman's wife instructed her. Her stiff skirt crackled as she walked away.

"Think of that!" grumbled Matryona as the door closed. "Bring your own fork! They've got neither forks nor shovels at the kolkhoz. And I don't have a man who'll put a handle on for me!"

She went on thinking about it out loud all evening.

"What's the good of talking, Ignatich. I must help, of course. Only the way they work it's all a waste of time—don't know whether they're coming or going. The women stand propped up on their shovels and waiting for the factory whistle to blow twelve o'clock. Or else they get on to adding up who's earned what and who's turned up for work and who hasn't. Now what I call work, there isn't a sound out of anybody, only—oh dear, dear—dinner time's soon rolled round—what, getting dark already."

In the morning she went off with her fork.

But it wasn't just the kolkhoz—any distant relative, or just a neighbor, could come to Matryona of an evening and say, "Come and give me a hand tomorrow, Matryona. We'll finish pulling the potatoes."

Matryona couldn't say no. She gave up what she should be doing next and went to help her neighbor, and when she came back she would say without a trace of envy, "Ah, you should see the size of her potatoes, Ignatich! It was a joy to dig them up. I didn't want to leave the allotment, God's truth I didn't."

Needless to say, not a garden could be plowed without Matryona's help. The women of Talnovo had got it neatly worked out that it was a longer and harder job for one woman to dig her garden with a spade than for six of them to put themselves in harness and plow six gardens. So they sent for Matryona to help them.

"Well—did you pay her?" I asked sometimes.

"She won't take money. You have to try and hide it on her when she's not looking."

Matryona had yet another troublesome chore when her turn came to feed the herdsmen. One of them was a hefty deaf mute, the other

a boy who was never without a cigaret in his drooling mouth. Matryona's turn came round only every six weeks, but it put her to great expense. She went to the shop to buy canned fish and was lavish with sugar and butter, things she never ate herself. It seems that the housewives showed off in this way, trying to outdo one another in feeding the herdsmen.

"You've got to be careful with tailors and herdsmen," Matryona explained. "They'll spread your name all round the village if something doesn't suit them."

And every now and then attacks of serious illness broke in on this life that was already crammed with troubles. Matryona would be off her feet for a day or two, lying flat out on the stove. She didn't complain and didn't groan, but she hardly stirred either. On these days Masha, Matryona's closest friend from her earliest years, would come to look after the goat and light the stove. Matryona herself ate nothing, drank nothing, asked for nothing. To call in the doctor from the clinic at the settlement would have seemed strange in Talnovo and would have given the neighbors something to talk about—what does she think she is, a lady? They did call her in once, and she arrived in a real temper and told Matryona to come down to the clinic when she was on her feet again. Matryona went, although she didn't really want to; they took specimens and sent them off to the district hospital—and that's the last anybody heard about it. Matryona was partly to blame herself.

But there was work waiting to be done, and Matryona soon started getting up again, moving slowly at first and then as briskly as ever.

"You never saw me in the old days, Ignatich. I'd lift any sack you liked, I didn't think a hundredweight was too heavy. My father-in-law used to say, 'Matryona, you'll break your back.' And my brother-in-law didn't have to come and help me lift on the cart. Our horse was a warhorse, a big strong one."

"What do you mean, a warhorse?"

"They took ours for the war and gave us this one instead—he'd been wounded. But he turned out a bit spirited. Once he bolted with the sledge right into the lake, the men folk hopped out of the way, but I grabbed the bridle, as true as I'm here, and stopped him. Full of oats that horse was. They liked to feed their horses well in our village. If a horse feels his oats he doesn't know what heavy means."

But Matryona was a long way from being fearless. She was afraid of fire, afraid of "the lightning," and most of all she was for some reason afraid of trains.

"When I had to go to Cherusti,[1] the train came up from Nechaevka way with its great big eyes popping out and the rails humming away—

1. About 100 miles east of Moscow and some 250 miles northwest of Nechaevka.

put me in a regular fever. My knees started knocking. God's truth I'm telling you!" Matryona raised her shoulders as though she surprised herself.

"Maybe it's because they won't give people tickets, Matryona Vasilyevna?"

"At the window? They try to shove only first-class tickets on to you. And the train was starting to move. We dashed about all over the place, 'Give us tickets for pity's sake.' "

"The men folk had climbed on top of the carriages. Then we found a door that wasn't locked and shoved straight in without tickets—and all the carriages were empty, they were all empty, you could stretch out on the seat if you wanted to. Why they wouldn't give us tickets, the hardhearted parasites, I don't know. . . ."

Still, before winter came, Matryona's affairs were in a better state than ever before. They started paying her at last a pension of eighty rubles. Besides this she got just over one hundred from the school and me.

Some of her neighbors began to be envious.

"Hm! Matryona can live forever now! If she had any more money, she wouldn't know what to do with it at her age."

Matryona had some new felt boots made. She bought a new jerkin. And she had an overcoat made out of the worn-out railwayman's greatcoat given to her by the engine driver from Cherusti who had married Kira, her foster daughter. The hump-backed village tailor put a padded lining under the cloth and it made a marvelous coat, such as Matryona had never worn before in all her sixty years.

In the middle of winter Matryona sewed two hundred rubles into the lining of this coat for her funeral. This made her quite cheerful.

"Now my mind's a bit easier, Ignatich."

December went by, January went by—and in those two months Matryona's illness held off. She started going over to Masha's house more often in the evening, to sit chewing sunflower seeds with her. She herself didn't invite guests in the evening out of consideration for my work. Once, on the feast of the Epiphany, I came back from school and found a party going on and was introduced to Matryona's three sisters, who called her "nan-nan" or "nanny" because she was the oldest. Until then not much had been heard of the sisters in our cottage—perhaps they were afraid that Matryona might ask them for help.

But one ominous event cast a shadow on the holiday for Matryona. She went to the church three miles away for the blessing of the water and put her pot down among the others. When the blessing was over, the women went rushing and jostling to get their pots back

again. There were a lot of women in front of Matryona and when she got there her pot was missing, and no other vessel had been left behind. The pot had vanished as though the devil had run off with it.

Matryona went round the worshipers asking them, "Have any of you girls accidentally mistook somebody else's holy water? In a pot?"

Nobody owned up. There had been some boys there, and boys got up to mischief sometimes. Matryona came home sad.

No one could say that Matryona was a devout believer. If anything, she was a heathen, and her strongest beliefs were superstitious: you mustn't go into the garden on the fast of St. John or there would be no harvest next year. A blizzard meant that somebody had hanged himself. If you pinched your foot in the door, you could expect a guest. All the time I lived with her I didn't once see her say her prayers or even cross herself. But, whatever job she was doing, she began with a "God bless us," and she never failed to say "God bless you," when I set out for school. Perhaps she did say her prayers, but on the quiet, either because she was shy or because she didn't want to embarrass me. There were icons[2] on the walls. Ordinary days they were left in darkness, but for the vigil of a great feast, or on the morning of a holiday, Matryona would light the little lamp.

She had fewer sins on her conscience than her gammy-legged cat. The cat did kill mice.

Now that her life was running more smoothly, Matryona started listening more carefully to my radio. (I had, of course, installed a speaker, or as Matryona called it, a peeker.)[3]

When they announced on the radio that some new machine had been invented, I heard Matryona grumbling out in the kitchen, "New ones all the time, nothing but new ones. People don't want to work with the old ones any more, where are we going to store them all?"

There was a program about the seeding of clouds from airplanes. Matryona, listening up on the stove, shook her head, "Oh, dear, dear, dear, they'll do away with one of the two—summer or winter."

Once Shalyapin[4] was singing Russian folk songs. Matryona stood listening for a long time before she gave her emphatic verdict, "Queer singing, not our sort of singing."

"You can't mean that, Matryona Vasilyevna—just listen to him."

She listened a bit longer and pursed her lips, "No, it's wrong. It isn't our sort of tune, and he's tricky with his voice."

2. Religious images or portraits, usually painted on wood; a small lamp was set in front to illuminate them. 3. The translator is imitating Solzhenitsyn's wordplay. In the original, the narrator calls the speaker *razvedka* (a military term, literally "scout"); Matryona calls it *rozetka* (an electric plug). 4. Feodor Ivanovich Shalyapin (or Chaliapin, 1873–1938), was a Russian operatic bass with an international reputation as a great singer and actor; he included popular Russian music in his song recitals.

She made up for this another time. They were broadcasting some of Glinka's[5] songs. After half a dozen of these drawing-room ballads, Matryona suddenly came from behind the screen clutching her apron, with a flush on her face and a film of tears over her dim eyes.

"That's our sort of singing," she said in a whisper.

2

So Matryona and I got used to each other and took each other for granted. She never pestered me with questions about myself. I don't know whether she was lacking in normal female curiosity or just tactful, but she never once asked if I had been married. All the Talnovo women kept at her to find out about me. Her answer was, "You want to know—you ask him. All I know is he's from distant parts."

And when I got round to telling her that I had spent a lot of time in prison, she said nothing but just nodded, as though she had already suspected it.

And I thought of Matryona only as the helpless old woman she was now and didn't try to rake up her past, didn't even suspect that there was anything to be found there.

I knew that Matryona had got married before the Revolution and had come to live in the house I now shared with her, and she had gone "to the stove" immediately. (She had no mother-in-law and no older sister-in-law, so it was her job to put the pots in the oven on the very first morning of her married life.) I knew that she had had six children and that they had all died very young, so that there were never two of them alive at once. Then there was a sort of foster daughter, Kira. Matryona's husband had not come back from the last war. She received no notification of his death. Men from the village who had served in the same company said that he might have been taken prisoner, or he might have been killed and his body not found. In the eight years that had gone by since the war Matryona had decided that he was not alive. It was a good thing that she thought so. If he was still alive he was probably in Brazil or Australia and married again. The village of Talnovo and the Russian language would be fading from his memory.

One day when I got back from school, I found a guest in the house. A tall, dark man, with his hat on his lap, was sitting on a chair which Matryona had moved up to the Dutch stove in the middle of the room. His face was completely surrounded by bushy black hair with hardly a trace of gray in it. His thick black moustache ran into his full black beard, so that his mouth could hardly be seen. Black side-

5. Mikhail Ivanovich Glinka (1804–57), a Russian composer who developed a "Russian" style of music, including the two operas *A Life for the Czar* and *Ruslan and Ludmila*.

whiskers merged with the black locks which hung down from his crown, leaving only the tips of his ears visible; his broad black eyebrows met in a wide double span. But the front of his head as far as the crown was a spacious bald dome. His whole appearance made an impression of wisdom and dignity. He sat squarely on his chair, with his hands folded on his stick, and his stick resting vertically on the floor, in an attitude of patient expectation, and he obviously hadn't much to say to Matryona, who was busy behind the screen.

When I came in, he eased his majestic head round toward me and suddenly addressed me, "Schoolmaster, I can't see you very well. My son goes to your school. Grigoryev, Antoshka."

There was no need for him to say any more. However strongly inclined I felt to help this worthy old man, I knew and dismissed in advance all the pointless things he was going to say. Antoshka Grigoryev was a plump, red-faced lad in 8-D who looked like a cat that's swallowed the cream. He seemed to think that he came to school for a rest and sat at his desk with a lazy smile on his face. Needless to say, he never did his homework. But the worst of it was that he had been put up into the next class from year to year because our district, and indeed the whole region and the neighboring region were famous for the high percentage of passes they obtained; the school had to make an effort to keep its record up. So Antoshka had got it clear in his mind that however much the teachers threatened him they would promote him in the end, and there was no need for him to learn anything. He just laughed at us. There he sat in the eighth class, and he hadn't even mastered his decimals and didn't know one triangle from another. In the first two terms of the school year I had kept him firmly below the passing line and the same treatment awaited him in the third.

But now this half-blind old man, who should have been Antoshka's grandfather rather than his father, had come to humble himself before me—how could I tell him that the school had been deceiving him for years, and that I couldn't go on deceiving him, because I didn't want to ruin the whole class, to become a liar and a fake, to start despising my work and my profession.

For the time being I patiently explained that his son had been very slack, that he told lies at school and at home, that his record book must be checked frequently, and that we must both take him severely in hand.

"Severe as you like, Schoolmaster," he assured me, "I beat him every week now. And I've got a heavy hand."

While we were talking I remembered that Matryona had once interceded for Antoshka Grigoryev, but I hadn't asked what relation of hers he was and I had refused to do what she wanted. Matryona was standing in the kitchen doorway like a mute suppliant on this

occasion too. When Faddey Mironovich left, saying that he would call on me to see how things were going, I asked her, "I can't make out what relation this Antoshka is to you, Matryona Vasilyevna."

"My brother-in-law's son," said Matryona shortly, and went out to milk the goat.

When I'd worked it out, I realized that this determined old man with the black hair was the brother of the missing husband.

The long evening went by, and Matryona didn't bring up the subject again. But late at night, when I had stopped thinking about the old man and was working in a silence broken only by the rustling of the cockroaches and the heavy tick of the wall-clock, Matryona suddenly spoke from her dark corner, "You know, Ignatich, I nearly married him once."

I had forgotten that Matryona was in the room. I hadn't heard a sound from her—and suddenly her voice came out of the darkness, as agitated as if the old man were still trying to win her.

I could see that Matryona had been thinking about nothing else all evening.

She got up from her wretched rag bed and walked slowly toward me, as though she were following her own words. I sat back in my chair and caught my first glimpse of a quite different Matryona.

There was no overhead light in our big room with its forest of rubber plants. The table lamp cast a ring of light round my exercise books, and when I tore my eyes from it the rest of the room seemed to be half-dark and faintly tinged with pink. I thought I could see the same pinkish glow in her usually sallow cheeks.

"He was the first one who came courting me, before Efim did—he was his brother—the older one—I was nineteen and Faddey was twenty-three. They lived in this very same house. Their house it was. Their father built it."

I looked round the room automatically. Instead of the old gray house rotting under the faded green skin of wallpaper where the mice had their playground, I suddenly saw new timbers, freshly trimmed, not yet discolored, and caught the cheerful smell of pine tar.

"Well, and what happened then?"

"That summer we went to sit in the woods together," she whispered. "There used to be a woods where the stable yard is now. They chopped it down. I was just going to marry him, Ignatich. Then the German war started. They took Faddey into the army."

She let fall these few words—and suddenly the blue and white and yellow July of the year 1914 burst into flower before my eyes: the sky still peaceful, the floating clouds, the people sweating to get the ripe corn in. I imagined them side by side, the black-haired Hercules with a scythe over his shoulder, and the red-faced girl clasping a sheaf. And there was singing out under the open sky, such songs as

nobody can sing nowadays, with all the machines in the fields.

"He went to the war—and vanished. For three years I kept to myself and waited. Never a sign of life did he give."

Matryona's round face looked out at me from an elderly threadbare headscarf. As she stood there in the gentle reflected light from my lamp, her face seemed to lose its slovenly workday wrinkles, and she was a scared young girl again with a frightening decision to make.

Yes . . . I could see it. The trees shed their leaves, the snow fell and melted. They plowed and sowed and reaped again. Again the trees shed their leaves, and the snow fell. There was a revolution. Then another revolution. And the whole world was turned upside down.

"Their mother died and Efim came to court me. 'You wanted to come to our house,' he says, 'so come.' He was a year younger than me, Efim was. It's a saying with us—sensible girls get married after Michaelmas,[6] and silly ones at midsummer. They were shorthanded. I got married. . . . The wedding was on St. Peter's day, and then about St. Nicholas' day in the winter he came back—Faddey, I mean, from being a prisoner in Hungary."

Matryona covered her eyes.

I said nothing.

She turned toward the door as though somebody were standing there. "He stood there at the door. What a scream I let out! I wanted to throw myself at his feet! . . . but I couldn't. 'If it wasn't my own brother,' he says, 'I'd take my ax to the both of you.' "

I shuddered. Matryona's despair, or her terror, conjured up a vivid picture of him standing in the dark doorway and raising his ax to her.

But she quieted down and went on with her story in a sing-song voice, leaning on a chairback, "Oh dear, dear me, the poor dear man! There were so many girls in the village—but he wouldn't marry. I'll look for one with the same name as you, a second Matryona, he said. And that's what he did—fetched himself a Matryona from Lipovka. They built themselves a house of their own and they're still living in it. You pass their place every day on your way to school."

So that was it. I realized that I had seen the other Matryona quite often. I didn't like her. She was always coming to my Matryona to complain about her husband—he beat her, he was stingy, he was working her to death. She would weep and weep, and her voice always had a tearful note in it. As it turned out, my Matryona had nothing to regret, with Faddey beating his Matryona every day of his life and being so tightfisted.

"Mine never beat me once," said Matryona of Efim. "He'd pitch into another man in the street, but me he never hit once. Well,

6. October 12 (September 29, old style). *St. Peter's Day*: Probably July 12 (June 29, old style), Sts. Peter and Paul's Day. *St. Nicholas's Day*: December 19 (December 6, old style).

there was one time—I quarreled with my sister-in-law and he cracked me on the forehead with a spoon. I jumped up from the table and shouted at them, 'Hope it sticks in your gullets, you idle lot of beggars, hope you choke!' I said. And off I went into the woods. He never touched me any more."

Faddey didn't seem to have any cause for regret either. The other Matryona had borne him six children (my Antoshka was one of them, the littlest, the runt) and they had all lived, whereas the children of Matryona and Efim had died, every one of them, before they reached the age of three months, without any illness.

"One daughter, Elena, was born and was alive when they washed her, and then she died right after. . . . My wedding was on St. Peter's day, and it was St. Peter's day I buried my sixth, Alexander."

The whole village decided that there was a curse on Matryona.

Matryona still nodded emphatic belief when she talked about it. "There was a *course*[7] on me. They took me to a woman who used to be a nun to get cured, she set me off coughing and waited for the *course* to jump out of me like a frog. Only nothing jumped out."

And the years had run by like running water. In 1941 they didn't take Faddey into the army because of his poor sight, but they took Efim. And what had happened to the elder brother in the First World War happened to the younger in the Second—he vanished without a trace. Only he never came back at all. The once noisy cottage was deserted, it grew old and rotten, and Matryona, all alone in the world, grew old in it.

So she begged from the other Matryona, the cruelly beaten Matryona, a child of her womb (or was it a drop of Faddey's blood?), the youngest daughter, Kira.

For ten years she brought the girl up in her own house, in place of the children who had not lived. Then, not long before I arrived, she had married her off to a young engine driver from Cherusti. The only help she got from anywhere came in dribs and drabs from Cherusti: a bit of sugar from time to time, or some of the fat when they killed a pig.

Sick and suffering, and feeling that death was not far off, Matryona had made known her will: the top room, which was a separate frame joined by tie beams to the rest of the house, should go to Kira when she died.[8] She said nothing about the house itself. Her three sisters had their eyes on it too.

That evening Matryona opened her heart to me. And, as often happens, no sooner were the hidden springs of her life revealed to me than I saw them in motion.

7. *Curse/course* reflects word play in the Russian original, where a similar misuse of language indicates Matryona's lack of formal education. 8. Lumber was scarce and valuable, and old houses well built; moving houses or sections of houses is still common in the country.

Kira arrived from Cherusti. Old Faddey was very worried. To get and keep a plot of land in Cherusti the young couple had to put up some sort of building. Matryona's top room would do very well. There was nothing else they could put up, because there was no timber to be had anywhere. It wasn't Kira herself so much, and it wasn't her husband, but old Faddey who was consumed with eagerness for them to get their hands on the plot at Cherusti.

He became a frequent visitor, laying down the law to Matryona and insisting that she should hand over the top room right away, before she died. On these occasions I saw a different Faddey. He was no longer an old man propped up by a stick, whom a push or a harsh word would bowl over. Although he was slightly bent by backache, he was still a fine figure; in his sixties he had kept the vigorous black hair of a young man; he was hot and urgent.

Matryona had not slept for two nights. It wasn't easy for her to make up her mind. She didn't grudge them the top room, which was standing there idle, any more than she ever grudged her labor or her belongings. And the top room was willed to Kira in any case. But the thought of breaking up the roof she had lived under for forty years was torture to her. Even I, a mere lodger, found it painful to think of them stripping away boards and wrenching out beams. For Matryona it was the end of everything.

But the people who were so insistent knew that she would let them break up her house before she died.

So Faddey and his sons and sons-in-law came along one February morning, the blows of five axes were heard and boards creaked and cracked as they were wrenched out. Faddey's eyes twinkled busily. Although his back wasn't quite straight yet, he scrambled nimbly up under the rafters and bustled about down below, shouting at his assistants. He and his father had built this house when he was a lad, a long time ago. The top room had been put up for him, the oldest son, to move into with his bride. And now he was furiously taking it apart, board by board, to carry it out of somebody else's yard.

After numbering the beam ends and the ceiling boards, they dismantled the top room and the storeroom underneath it. The living room and what was left of the landing they boarded up with a thin wall of deal. They did nothing about the cracks in the wall. It was plain to see that they were wreckers, not builders, and that they did not expect Matryona to be living there very long.

While the men were busy wrecking, the women were getting the drink ready for moving day—vodka would cost too much. Kira brought forty pounds of sugar from the Moscow region, and Matryona carried the sugar and some bottles to the distiller under cover of night.

The timbers were carried out and stacked in front of the gates, and the engine-driver son-in-law went off to Cherusti for the tractor.

But the very same day a blizzard, or "a blower," as Matryona once called it, began. It howled and whirled for two days and nights and buried the road under enormous drifts. Then, no sooner had they made the road passable and a couple of trucks had gone by, than it got suddenly warmer. Within a day everything was thawing out, damp mist hung in the air and rivulets gurgled as they burrowed into the snow, and you could get stuck up to the top of your jackboots.

Two weeks passed before the tractor could get at the dismantled top room. All this time Matryona went around like someone lost. What particularly upset her was that her three sisters came, with one voice called her a fool for giving the top room away, said they didn't want to see her any more, and went off. At about the same time the lame cat strayed and was seen no more. It was just one thing after another. This was another blow to Matryona.

At last the frost got a grip on the slushy road. A sunny day came along, and everybody felt more cheerful. Matryona had had a lucky dream the night before. In the morning she heard that I wanted to take a photograph of somebody at an old-fashioned handloom. (There were looms still standing in two cottages in the village; they wove coarse rugs on them.) She smiled shyly and said, "You just wait a day or two, Ignatich, I'll just send off the top room there and I'll put my loom up, I've still got it, you know, and then you can snap me. Honest to God!"

She was obviously attracted by the idea of posing in an old-fashioned setting. The red frosty sun tinged the window of the curtailed passageway with a faint pink, and this reflected light warmed Matryona's face. People who are at ease with their consciences always have nice faces.

Coming back from school before dusk I saw some movement near our house. A big new tractor-drawn sledge was already fully loaded, and there was no room for a lot of the timbers, so old Faddey's family and the helpers they had called in had nearly finished knocking together another homemade sledge. They were all working like madmen, in the frenzy that comes upon people when there is a smell of good money in the air or when they are looking forward to some treat. They were shouting at one another and arguing.

They could not agree on whether the sledges should be hauled separately or both together. One of Faddey's sons (the lame one) and the engine-driver son-in-law reasoned that the sledges couldn't both be taken at once because the tractor wouldn't be able to pull them. The man in charge of the tractor, a hefty fat-faced fellow who was very sure of himself, said hoarsely that he knew best, he was the driver, and he would take both at once. His motives were obvious: according to the agreement, the engine driver was paying him for

the removal of the upper room, not for the number of trips he had to make. He could never have made two trips in a night—twenty-five kilometers each way, and one return journey. And by morning he had to get the tractor back in the garage from which he had sneaked it out for this job on the side.

Old Faddey was impatient to get the top room moved that day, and at a nod from him his lads gave in. To the stout sledge in front they hitched the one they had knocked together in such a hurry.

Matryona was running about among the men, fussing and helping them to heave the beams on the sledge. Suddenly I noticed that she was wearing my jacket and had dirtied the sleeves on the frozen mud round the beams. I was annoyed and told her so. That jacket held memories for me: it had kept me warm in the bad years.

This was the first time that I was ever angry with Matryona Vasilyevna.

Matryona was taken aback. "Oh dear, dear me," she said. "My poor head. I picked it up in a rush, you see, and never thought about it being yours. I'm sorry, Ignatich."

And she took it off and hung it up to dry.

The loading was finished, and all the men who had been working, about ten of them, clattered past my table and dived under the curtain into the kitchen. I could hear the muffled rattle of glasses and, from time to time, the clink of a bottle, the voices got louder and louder, the boasting more reckless. The biggest braggart was the tractor driver. The stink of hooch floated in to me. But they didn't go on drinking long. It was getting dark and they had to hurry. They began to leave. The tractor driver came out first, looking pleased with himself and fierce. The engine-driver son-in-law, Faddey's lame son, and one of his nephews were going to Cherusti. The others went off home. Faddey was flourishing his stick, trying to overtake somebody and put him right about something. The lame son paused at my table to light up and suddenly started telling me how he loved Aunt Matryona, and that he had got married not long ago, and his wife had just had a son. Then they shouted for him and he went out. The tractor set up a roar outside.

After all the others had gone, Matryona dashed out from behind the screen. She looked after them, anxiously shaking her head. She had put on her jacket and her headscarf. As she was going through the door, she said to me, "Why ever couldn't they hire two? If one tractor had cracked up, the other would have pulled them. What'll happen now, God only knows!"

She ran out after the others.

After the boozing and the arguments and all the coming and going, it was quieter than ever in the deserted cottage, and very chilly because

the door had been opened so many times. I got into my jacket and sat down to mark exercise books. The noise of the tractor died away in the distance.

An hour went by. And another. And a third. Matryona still hadn't come back, but I wasn't surprised. When she had seen the sledge off, she must have gone round to her friend Masha.

Another hour went by. And yet another. Darkness, and with it a deep silence had descended on the village. I couldn't understand at the time why it was so quiet. Later, I found out that it was because all evening not a single train had gone along the line five hundred yards from the house. No sound was coming from my radio, and I noticed that the mice were wilder than ever. Their scampering and scratching and squeaking behind the wallpaper was getting noisier and more defiant all the time.

I woke up. It was one o'clock in the morning, and Matryona still hadn't come home.

Suddenly I heard several people talking loudly. They were still a long way off, but something told me that they were coming to our house. And sure enough, I heard soon afterward a heavy knock at the gate. A commanding voice, strange to me, yelled out an order to open up. I went out into the pitch darkness with a torch. The whole village was asleep, there was no light in the windows, and the snow had started melting in the last week so that it gave no reflected light. I turned the catch and let them in. Four men in greatcoats went on toward the house. It's a very unpleasant thing to be visited at night by noisy people in greatcoats.

When we got into the light though, I saw that two of them were wearing railway uniforms. The older of the two, a fat man with the same sort of face as the tractor driver, asked, "Where's the woman of the house?"

"I don't know."

"This is the place the tractor with a sledge came from?"

"This is it."

"Had they been drinking before they left?"

All four of them were looking around, screwing up their eyes in the dim light from the table lamp. I realized that they had either made an arrest or wanted to make one.

"What's happened then?"

"Answer the question!"

"But . . ."

"Were they drunk when they went?"

"Were they drinking here?"

Had there been a murder? Or hadn't they been able to move the top room? The men in greatcoats had me off balance. But one thing was certain: Matryona could do time for making hooch.

I stepped back to stand between them and the kitchen door. "I honestly didn't notice. I didn't see anything." (I really hadn't seen anything—only heard.) I made what was supposed to be a helpless gesture, drawing attention to the state of the cottage: a table lamp shining peacefully on books and exercises, a crowd of frightened rubber plants, the austere couch of a recluse, not a sign of debauchery.

They had already seen for themselves, to their annoyance, that there had been no drinking in that room. They turned to leave, telling each other this wasn't where the drinking had been then, but it would be a good thing to put in that it was. I saw them out and tried to discover what had happened. It was only at the gate that one of them growled. "They've all been cut to bits. Can't find all the pieces."

"That's a detail. The nine o'clock express nearly went off the rails. That would have been something." And they walked briskly away.

I went back to the hut in a daze. Who were "they"? What did "all of them" mean? And where was Matryona?

I moved the curtain aside and went into the kitchen. The stink of hooch rose and hit me. It was a deserted battlefield: a huddle of stools and benches, empty bottles lying around, one bottle half-full, glasses, the remains of pickled herring, onion, and sliced fat pork.

Everything was deathly still. Just cockroaches creeping unperturbed about the field of battle.

They had said something about the nine o'clock express. Why? Perhaps I should have shown them all this? I began to wonder whether I had done right. But what a damnable way to behave—keeping their explanations for official persons only.

Suddenly the small gate creaked. I hurried out on to the landing. "Matryona Vasilyevna?"

The yard door opened, and Matryona's friend Masha came in, swaying and wringing her hands. "Matryona—our Matryona, Ignatich—"

I sat her down, and through her tears she told me the story.

The approach to the crossing was a steep rise. There was no barrier. The tractor and the first sledge went over, but the towrope broke and the second sledge, the homemade one, got stuck on the crossing and started falling apart—the wood Faddey had given them to make the second sledge was no good. They towed the first sledge out of the way and went back for the second. They were fixing the towrope—the tractor driver and Faddey's lame son, and Matryona (heaven knows what brought her there) were with them, between the tractor and the sledge. What help did she think she could be to the men? She was forever meddling in men's work. Hadn't a bolting horse nearly tipped her into the lake once, through a hole in the ice? Why did she have to go to the damned crossing? She had handed over the top room

and owed nothing to anybody. The engine driver kept a lookout in case the train from Cherusti rushed up on them. Its headlamps would be visible a long way off. But two engines coupled together came from the other direction, from our station, backing without lights. Why they were without lights nobody knows. When an engine is backing, coal dust blows into the driver's eyes from the tender and he can't see very well. The two engines flew into them and crushed the three people between the tractor and the sledge to pulp. The tractor was wrecked, the sledge was matchwood, the rails were buckled, and both engines turned over.

"But how was it they didn't hear the engines coming?"

"The tractor engine was making such a din."

"What about the bodies?"

"They won't let anybody in. They've roped them off."

"What was that somebody was telling me about the express?"

"The nine o'clock express goes through our station at a good clip and on to the crossing. But the two drivers weren't hurt when their engines crashed, they jumped out and ran back along the line waving their hands, and they managed to stop the train. The nephew was hurt by a beam as well. He's hiding at Klavka's now so that they won't know he was at the crossing. If they find out they'll drag him in as a witness. . . . 'Don't know lies up, and do know gets tied up.' Kira's husband didn't get a scratch. He tried to hang himself, they had to cut him down. It's all because of me, he says, my aunty's killed and my brother. Now he's gone and given himself up. But the madhouse is where he'll be going, not prison. Oh, Matryona, my dearest Matryona. . . ."

Matryona was gone. Someone close to me had been killed. And on her last day I had scolded her for wearing my jacket.

The lovingly drawn red and yellow woman in the book advertisement smiled happily on.

Old Masha sat there weeping a little longer. Then she got up to go. And suddenly she asked me, "Ignatich, you remember, Matryona had a gray shawl. She meant it to go to my Tanya when she died, didn't she?"

She looked at me hopefully in the half-darkness—surely I hadn't forgotten?

No, I remembered. "She said so, yes."

"Well, listen, maybe you could let me take it with me now. The family will be swarming in tomorrow and I'll never get it then." And she gave me another hopeful, imploring look. She had been Matryona's friend for half a century, the only one in the village who truly loved her.

No doubt she was right.

"Of course—take it."

She opened the chest, took out the shawl, tucked it under her coat, and went out.

The mice had gone mad. They were running furiously up and down the walls, and you could almost see the green wallpaper rippling and rolling over their backs.

In the morning I had to go to school. The time was three o'clock. The only thing to do was to lock up and go to bed.

Lock up, because Matryona would not be coming.

I lay down, leaving the light on. The mice were squeaking, almost moaning, racing and running. My mind was weary and wandering, and I couldn't rid myself of an uneasy feeling that an invisible Matryona was flitting about and saying good-bye to her home.

And suddenly I imagined Faddey standing there, young and black-haired, in the dark patch by the door, with his ax uplifted. "If it wasn't my own brother, I'd chop the both of you to bits."

The threat had lain around for forty years, like an old broad sword in a corner, and in the end it had struck its blow.

3

When it was light the women went to the crossing and brought back all that was left of Matryona on a hand sledge with a dirty sack over it. They threw off the sack to wash her. There was just a mess . . . no feet, only half a body, no left hand. One woman said, "The Lord has left her her right hand. She'll be able to say her prayers where she's going."

Then the whole crowd of rubber plants were carried out of the cottage—these plants that Matryona had loved so much that once when smoke woke her up in the night she didn't rush to save her house but to tip the plants onto the floor in case they were suffocated. The women swept the floor clean. They hung a wide towel of old homespun over Matryona's dim mirror. They took down the jolly posters. They moved my table out of the way. Under the icons, near the windows, they stood a rough unadorned coffin on a row of stools.

In the coffin lay Matryona. Her body, mangled and lifeless, was covered with a clean sheet. Her head was swathed in a white kerchief. Her face was almost undamaged, peaceful, more alive than dead.

The villagers came to pay their last respects. The women even brought their small children to take a look at the dead. And if anyone raised a lament, all the women, even those who had looked in out of idle curiosity, always joined in, wailing where they stood by the door or the wall, as though they were providing a choral accompa-

niment. The men stood stiff and silent with their caps off.

The formal lamentation had to be performed by the women of Matryona's family. I observed that the lament followed a coldly calculated, age-old ritual. The more distant relatives went up to the coffin for a short while and made low wailing noises over it. Those who considered themselves closer kin to the dead woman began their lament in the doorway and when they got as far as the coffin, bowed down and roared out their grief right in the face of the departed. Every lamenter made up her own melody. And expressed her own thoughts and feelings.

I realized that a lament for the dead is not just a lament, but a kind of politics. Matryona's three sisters swooped, took possession of the cottage, the goat, and the stove, locked up the chest, ripped the two hundred rubles for the funeral out of the coat lining, and drummed it into everybody who came that only they were near relatives. Their lament over the coffin went like this, *"Oh, nanny, nanny! Oh nan-nan!* All we had in the world was you! You could have lived in peace and quiet, you could. And we should always have been kind and loving to you. Now your top room's been the death of you. Finished you off, it has, the cursed thing! Oh, why did you have to take it down? Why didn't you listen to us?"

Thus the sisters' laments were indictments of Matryona's husband's family: they shouldn't have made her take the top room down. (There was an underlying meaning, too: you've taken the top room, all right, but we won't let you have the house itself!)

Matryona's husband's family, her sisters-in-law, Efim and Faddey's sisters, and the various nieces lamented like this, *"Oh poor auntie, poor auntie!* Why didn't you take better care of yourself! Now they're angry with us for sure. Our own dear Matryona you were, and it's your own fault! The top room is nothing to do with it. Oh why did you go where death was waiting for you? Nobody asked you to go there. And what a way to die! Oh why didn't you listen to us?" (Their answer to the others showed through these laments: we are not to blame for her death, and the house we'll talk about later.)

But the "second" Matryona, a coarse, broad-faced woman, the substitute Matryona whom Faddey had married so long ago for the sake of her name, got out of step with family policy, wailing and sobbing over the coffin in her simplicity, *"Oh my poor dear sister!* You won't be angry with me, will you now? Oh-oh-oh! How we used to talk and talk, you and me! Forgive a poor miserable woman! You've gone to be with your dear mother, and you'll come for me some day, for sure! Oh-oh-oh-oh! . . ."

At every "oh-oh-oh" it was as though she were giving up the ghost. She writhed and gasped, with her breast against the side of the coffin. When her lament went beyond the ritual prescription, the women,

as though acknowledging its success, all started saying, "Come away now, come away."

Matryona came away, but back she went again, sobbing with even greater abandon. Then an ancient woman came out of a corner, put her hand on Matryona's shoulder, and said, "There are two riddles in this world: how I was born, I don't remember, how I shall die, I don't know."

And Matryona fell silent at once, and all the others were silent, so that there was an unbroken hush.

But the old woman herself, who was much older than all the other old women there and didn't seem to belong to Matryona at all, after a while started wailing, "Oh, my poor sick Matryona! Oh my poor Vasilyevna! Oh what a weary thing it is to be seeing you into your grave!"

There was one who didn't follow the ritual, but wept straightforwardly, in the fashion of our age, which has had plenty of practice at it. This was Matryona's unfortunate foster daughter, Kira, from Cherusti, for whom the top room had been taken down and moved. Her ringlets were pitifully out of curl. Her eyes looked red and bloodshot. She didn't notice that her headscarf was slipping off out in the frosty air and that her arm hadn't found the sleeve of her coat. She walked in a stupor from her foster mother's coffin in one house to her brother's in another. They were afraid she would lose her mind, because her husband had to go on trial as well.

It looked as if her husband was doubly at fault: not only had he been moving the top room, but as an engine driver, he knew the regulations about unprotected crossings and should have gone down to the station to warn them about the tractor. There were a thousand people on the Urals express that night, peacefully sleeping in the upper and lower berths of their dimly lit carriages, and all those lives were nearly cut short. All because of a few greedy people, wanting to get their hands on a plot of land, or not wanting to make a second trip with a tractor.

All because of the top room, which had been under a curse ever since Faddey's hands had started itching to take it down.

The tractor driver was already beyond human justice. And the railway authorities were also at fault, both because a busy crossing was unguarded and because the coupled engines were traveling without lights. That was why they had tried at first to blame it all on the drink, and then to keep the case out of court.

The rails and the track were so twisted and torn that for three days, while the coffins were still in the house, no trains ran—they were diverted onto another line. All Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, from the end of the investigation until the funeral, the work of repairing the line went on day and night. The repair gang was frozen, and

they made fires to warm themselves and to light their work at night, using the boards and beams from the second sledge, which were there for the taking, scattered around the crossing.

The first sledge just stood there, undamaged and still loaded, a little way beyond the crossing.

One sledge, tantalizingly ready to be towed away, and the other perhaps still to be plucked from the flames—that was what harrowed the soul of black-bearded Faddey all day Friday and all day Saturday. His daughter was going out of her mind, his son-in-law had a criminal charge hanging over him, in his own house lay the son he had killed, and along the street the woman he had killed and whom he had once loved. But Faddey stood by the coffins, clutching his beard, only for a short time, and went away again. His high forehead was clouded by painful thoughts, but what he was thinking about was how to save the timbers of the top room from the flames and from Matryona's scheming sisters.

Going over the people of Talnovo in my mind, I realized that Faddey was not the only one like that.

Property, the people's property, or my property, is strangely called our "goods." If you lose your goods, people think you disgrace yourself and make yourself look foolish.

Faddey dashed about, never stopping to sit down, from the settlement to the station, from one official to another, there he stood with his bent back, leaning heavily on his stick, and begged them all to take pity on an old man and give him permission to recover the top room.

Somebody gave permission. And Faddey gathered together his surviving sons, sons-in-law, and nephews, got horses from the kolkhoz and from the other side of the wrecked crossing, by a roundabout way that led through three villages, brought the remnants of the top room home to his yard. He finished the job in the early hours of Sunday morning.

On Sunday afternoon they were buried. The two coffins met in the middle of the village, and the relatives argued about which of them should go first. Then they put them side by side on an open sledge, the aunt and the nephew, and carried the dead over the damp snow, with a gloomy February sky above, to the churchyard two villages away. There was an unkind wind, so the priest and the deacon waited inside the church and didn't come out to Talnovo to meet them.

A crowd of people walked slowly behind the coffins, singing in chorus. Outside the village they fell back.

When Sunday came the women were still fussing around the house. An old woman mumbled psalms by the coffin, Matryona's sisters flitted about, popping things into the oven, and the air round the

mouth of the stove trembled with the heat of red-hot peats, those Matryona had carried in a sack from a distant bog. They were making unappetizing pies with poor flour.

When the funeral was over and it was already getting on toward evening, they gathered for the wake. Tables were put together to make a long one, which hid the place where the coffin had stood in the morning. To start with, they all stood round the table, and an old man, the husband of a sister-in-law, said the Lord's Prayer. Then they poured everybody a little honey and warm water,[9] just enough to cover the bottom of the bowl. We spooned it up without bread or anything, in memory of the dead. Then we ate something and drank vodka and the conversation became more animated. Before the jelly they all stood up and sang "Eternal remembrance"[1] (they explained to me that it had to be sung before the jelly). There was more drinking. By now they were talking louder than ever, and not about Matryona at all. The sister-in-law's husband started boasting, "Did you notice, brother Christians, that they took the funeral service slowly today? That's because Father Mikhail noticed me. He knows I know the service. Other times, it's saints defend us, homeward wend us, and that's all."

At last the supper was over. They all rose again. They sang "Worthy Is She." Then again, with a triple repetition of "Eternal Remembrance." But the voices were hoarse and out of tune, their faces drunken, and nobody put any feeling into this "eternal memory."

Then most of the guests went away, and only the near relatives were left. They pulled out their cigarets and lit up, there were jokes and laughter. There was some mention of Matryona's husband and his disappearance. The sister-in-law's husband, striking himself on the chest, assured me and the cobbler who was married to one of Matryona's sisters, "He was dead, Efim was dead! What could stop him coming back if he wasn't? If I knew they were going to hang me when I got to the old place, I'd come back just the same!"

The cobbler nodded in agreement. He was a deserter and had never left the old place. All through the war he was hiding in his mother's cellar.

The stern and silent old woman who was more ancient than all the ancients was staying the night and sat high up on the stove. She looked down in mute disapproval on the indecently animated youngsters of fifty and sixty.

But the unhappy foster daughter, who had grown up within these walls, went away behind the kitchen screen to cry.

9. Traditionally Russians have *kutiia*, a wheat pudding with honey and almonds, at funerals and memorial gatherings; the villagers are too poor to have the main ingredients and their honey and water are symbolic of the *kutiia*. 1. "Eternal remembrance" and "Worthy Is She" are dirges, religious hymns sung to honor the dead; the village still follows religious rituals in time of crisis and does not use the civil ceremony proposed by the Soviet government.

Faddey didn't come to Matryona's wake—perhaps because he was holding a wake for his son. But twice in the next few days he walked angrily into the house for discussions with Matryona's sisters and the deserting cobbler.

The argument was about the house. Should it go to one of the sisters or to the foster daughter? They were on the verge of taking it to court, but they made peace because they realized that the court would hand over the house to neither side, but to the Rural District Council. A bargain was struck. One sister took the goat, the cobbler and his wife got the house, and to make up Faddey's share, since he had "nursed every bit of timber here in his arms," in addition to the top room which had already been carried away, they let him have the shed which had housed the goat and the whole of the inner fence between the yard and the garden.

Once again the insatiable old man got the better of sickness and pain and became young and active. Once again he gathered together his surviving sons and sons-in-law, they dismantled the shed and the fence, he hauled the timbers himself, sledge by sledge, and only toward the end did he have Antoshka of 8-D, who didn't slack this time, to help him.

They boarded Matryona's house up till the spring, and I moved in with one of her sisters-in-law, not far away. This sister-in-law on several occasions came out with some recollection of Matryona and made me see the dead woman in a new light. "Efim didn't love her. He used to say, 'I like to dress in an educated way, but she dresses any old way, like they do in the country.' Well then, he thinks, if she doesn't want anything, he might as well drink whatever's to spare. One time I went with him to the town to work, and he got himself a madam there and never wanted to come back to Matryona."

Everything she said about Matryona was disapproving. She was slovenly, she made no effort to get a few things about her. She wasn't the saving kind. She didn't even keep a pig, because she didn't like fattening them up for some reason. And the silly woman helped other people without pay. (What brought Matryona to mind this time was that the garden needed plowing, and she couldn't find enough helpers to pull the plow.)

Matryona's sister-in-law admitted that she was warmhearted and straightforward, but pitied and despised her for it.

It was only then, after these disapproving comments from her sister-in-law, that a true likeness of Matryona formed before my eyes, and I understood her as I never had when I lived side by side with her.

Of course! Every house in the village kept a pig. But she didn't. What can be easier than fattening a greedy piglet that cares for noth-

ing in the world but food! You warm his swill three times a day, you live for him—then you cut his throat and you have some fat.

But she had none.

She made no effort to get things round her. She didn't struggle and strain to buy things and then care for them more than life itself.

She didn't go all out after fine clothes. Clothes, that beautify what is ugly and evil.

She was misunderstood and abandoned even by her husband. She had lost six children, but not her sociable ways. She was a stranger to her sisters and sisters-in-law, a ridiculous creature who stupidly worked for others without pay. She didn't accumulate property against the day she died. A dirty-white goat, a gammy-legged cat, some rubber plants. . . .

We had all lived side by side with her and had never understood that she was the righteous one without whom, as the proverb says,[2] no village can stand.

Nor any city.

Nor our whole land.

2. Genesis 18: 23–33, the story of Sodom.

ALAIN ROBBE-GRILLET

1922–

More than anyone else, Alain Robbe-Grillet represents in his novels, *cinéromans* (film-novels), and theoretical statements the rejection of the nineteenth-century realistic tradition and the exploration of a new "mental realism." Terms like "antinovel" and "new novel," early applied to his works, reflect both the turning away from older models (like Balzac and Flaubert), and the notion that a new experiment with form is under way. Not that it is completely new: clearly there are links to other twentieth-century works in the modernist tradition (and experiments with novel form as early as *Tristram Shandy*, 1760–1767). Robbe-Grillet himself mentions the influence of Kafka, Camus, and Faulkner (as well as *Alice in Wonderland*), and other readers will note parallel experimentation in Pirandello, Woolf, Beckett, and Joyce. Moreover, Robbe-Grillet calls on some of the same sources of fascination as his nineteenth-century predecessors. He may not use a linear plot, but he writes ambiguous, circular detective stories where erotic and violent crimes seem to have been committed; he may refuse to portray a consistently developing character, but his minutely detailed descriptions of objects and gestures lead the reader to guess at the psychology of the observer, and to speculate on the meaning of repetition and distortion in details.

Nonetheless, with Robbe-Grillet, we move to a particular phenomenon of mid-twentieth-century literature and a prime example of the "postmod-

ernist" tradition. To the breakdown of conventional storytelling models familiar from literary modernism, he adds an insistence on the artificiality of all writing and representation until the reader is finally faced with total uncertainty: a self-contained "text" where a single voice and authorized meaning are impossible to ascertain. This literature has become a "game"—not because it is foolish or insignificant, but because it expresses the notion that human beings, with their capacity to adapt and to look at things in different ways, are essentially game-playing animals. The game-playing element is a strong part of Robbe-Grillet's fascination for his readers. At the same time that he reminds us that reality is opaque, and that we share the world with a host of objects different from ourselves, he entices the reader to try to figure out meanings and then reestablishes, at every turn, the absolute subjectivity of our most "objective" perceptions. Throughout his career, Robbe-Grillet is constantly exploring the limits of a collagelike technique of assembly and juxtaposition that he finds more true to life than the artistic coherence of the conventionally "realistic" novel.

Robbe-Grillet was born in Brittany, in northwestern France, to a family of scientists and engineers. His early training was not at all literary: in 1939 and 1941 the future writer took baccalaureate degrees in mathematics and natural science, and in 1946 (his career interrupted by forced labor in a German factory) a further degree from the National Agronomy Institute. He began work with the National Institute of Statistics and published an article on "Livestock Possibilities" before deciding to work part-time in his sister's biology laboratory and write a novel. This novel, *A Regicide*, was completed in 1949 but not published until 1978, well after Robbe-Grillet had become a successful novelist. In the meantime he took a position with an agricultural institute that sent him to Martinique, in the West Indies, to supervise banana plantations. Falling ill in 1951, Robbe-Grillet took advantage of the leisure time in the hospital and on the voyage home to write his second novel, *The Erasers*, which was immediately accepted and appeared in 1953.

The Erasers is a puzzling detective story involving confused identities, an abortive assassination carried out exactly twenty-four hours later by the muddled detective sent to investigate the original attempt, repeated allusions to the Oedipus myth, changing perspectives, and an overwhelming copiousness of detail about the most mundane natural objects. The novel became famous for its meticulous description of a tomato wedge catalogued with such scientific precision that it took on an objective existence of its own, and implicitly challenged the human-centered orientation of a perspective that would see it only as part of a salad. "The flesh on the periphery, compact and uniform, of a fine chemical red, is evenly thick between a strip of shiny skin and the compartment where the seeds are lined up, yellow, well sized, held in place by a thin layer of greenish jelly alongside a swelling of the heart. This latter, of a faded and slightly grainy pink, begins, on the side of the depression below, in a cluster of white veins, one of which extends up to the seeds—in, perhaps, a somewhat uncertain manner." While minutely detailed descriptions are not new in literature, this catalogue of physical properties had additional significance for its readers because it correlated so well with the notion, in contemporary phenomenological or existential philosophy, that we should recognize that things have their own existence

separate from ourselves, their own "being-in-the-world."

The Erasers received the Fénéon Prize in 1954, but was not widely known; it was not until the scandal caused by *The Voyeur* (1955) that Robbe-Grillet reached a wide audience. Although *The Voyeur* was awarded the Critics' Prize in 1955, the jury was split between those who felt that it was not a "novel" at all (and was immoral and insane to boot), and those who admired its formal innovations. Mathias, the "voyeur" of the title, is a traveling watch salesman who may or may not have murdered a young girl during a sales trip on an island. The reader must piece together a version of what happened from a fragmented time span during which Mathias neglects to describe certain crucial hours, from actions and anxieties that suggest a guilty conscience, from a schizophrenic crisis when the crime is described in a café, and from obsessive erotic imaginings which may be just that—imaginings—or may be traces of the crime. Whether or not Mathias committed the crime (and he departs with his mind at rest), the scenes recorded as real or imaginary show him sexually obsessed and surely psychotic. Although the weight of evidence suggests that he is the murderer, there is no authorized conclusion and the text leaves its readers with a peculiar combination of objectivity and subjectivity: a world of objects described in great detail, and a series of events whose objective "truth" remains hidden inside the unreliability of its deranged observer.

With the controversy over *The Voyeur*, Robbe-Grillet and his new mode of writing became the focus of critical debate in France. In "Objective Literature," the influential critic Roland Barthes proposed that Robbe-Grillet had discovered a truer "neutral" writing by focusing on objects instead of repeating traditional socially inspired interpretations of reality. In 1955, the author began a series of articles on modern literature which he collected in 1963 as *For a New Novel*. The term "new novel" became popular, and although not all those described as "new novelists" wrote in the same way, they all rejected the traditional novel's assumption of a core of meaning—with a logically developing plot and psychologically consistent characters—that claimed to reflect a similar core of meaning in society. In their assertion that the traditional novel upheld unity and profundity only because these values presupposed the coherence and validity of contemporary society, the "new novelists" put forth a metaphysical and social argument as well as a revolutionary aesthetic strategy. They would prepare the citizen of the future (Robbe-Grillet titled a 1961 essay "New Novel, New Man") by clarifying that most basic level of social relationships: literally, how we "look at things."

Robbe-Grillet's next two novels, *Jealousy* (1957) and *In the Labyrinth* (1959), as well as the separate short pieces collected in *Snapshots* (1962), exploit the same patterns of potential meaning behind extended, "objective" description. In 1959, Robbe-Grillet temporarily abandoned novels to experiment with films, writing the script for *Last Year at Marienbad* (1961, filmed by Alain Resnais), and writing and directing *The Immortal One* (1963), in collaboration with producer Samy Halfon and composer Michel Fano. Films, like novels, allowed Robbe-Grillet to manipulate visions of reality as he insistently focused on surfaces and shapes, presented different versions of the same scene, composed a sound track that contradicted or commented on photographed action and—in recent works—challenged his own imagina-

tion by including unexpected incidents that occurred on location. Robbe-Grillet published the scenarios of *Last Year at Marienbad* and *The Immortal One*, and a more documentary account of *The Progressing Slippages of Pleasure* (1974) as *ciné-romans*, or film-novels that represent his pluralistic, decentered view of reality in audiovisual as well as verbal form.

Novels up to and including *In the Labyrinth* could still be interpreted as the subterranean story of a single protagonist. Later novels eliminated that anchoring center to display the presence of many centers—each a competing version of reality. Here emphasis is on the writer's freedom to create different and even mutually contradictory worlds, and on the readers' freedom to choose and arrange their own version of events. Some passages do not really fit into any of the story lines; the action progresses according to the suggestions of word-play or verbal echoes; the same narrative persona may appear grammatically as "he" or "she"; or books are composed in collage fashion. Robbe-Grillet has been taught in the classroom for many years as a master of formal experimentation, and only recently challenged on the quarantined atmosphere and obsessive sadism of his work. Uncomfortable, perhaps, at this change in critical perspective, he has justified sadistic fantasies in his work partly as reflecting popular themes in a correspondingly sadistic and dehumanized world, and partly as the therapeutic expression of his own obsessions (therapeutic because they are brought to a conscious level and thereby subject to change).

Therapeutic or not, there is no mistaking the basic images of Robbe-Grillet's world, or the familiar angles from which they are presented. "The Secret Room," reprinted here from *Snapshots*, arranges in an artistic homage to the Symbolist painter Gustave Moreau many of Robbe-Grillet's most obsessive images: the spreading bloodstain; the young woman stretched out erotically in chains and stabbed under the left breast; the ascending staircase; the different points of view directed down upon the victim; the mysterious, anonymous criminal; and even the figure eight of smoke coiling upward from the incense burner. Taken "realistically," the scene is bound to shock for its artistic savoring of human sacrifice, and the erotic pleasure it suggests in female victimization. It is at the same time a technical triumph in which verbal art emulates a painterly style. Robbe-Grillet imitates the Oriental luxury and morbid eroticism of a famous painter so convincingly that one could almost name the artist even without the dedication. Yet this verbal art goes beyond its painterly model when the author's manipulation of "surface" impressions brings a strange life to his subject, seen paradoxically both as a finished canvas and as recreated stages of the same murderous event.

"The Secret Room" begins as a painterly description from which human characteristics are absent; the stain is a "rosette" and not blood, and it stands out against a "smooth pale surface," not a body. It is a theatrical setting, and "space is filled" with colonnades, ascending staircase, and a mysterious silhouette fleeing in the distance. The body itself—when finally recognized—is described with excessive surface detail as if the painter's eye registered only the shapes and textures of flesh, hair, velvet, and stone. If there is any psychological involvement in the narration, it too exists as a compositional element: the opposition of murderer and victim, with her mouth open "as if screaming," and his face revealing a "violent exaltation." Thus far, the scene

is an exotic tableau remarkable only for its precise description, but Robbe-Grillet also invests it with puzzling movement and life when he describes the caped figure in four different, incompatible poses. First seen near the top of the stair and facing away, he has next moved several steps back and appears on the first steps, turning to look at the body. Later he appears standing a yard away from her, looking down, and finally he is kneeling close to the woman as she breathes convulsively and dies. It is as though time has moved backwards, reviewing the stages of the murder and flight before they become fixed on the artist's canvas. Beginning and ending as a painted scene, "The Secret Room" extends the reality it describes by attributing movement and difference to figures on the canvas. One of Robbe-Grillet's earlier works, it already demonstrates the artist's ability to create separate, fictional realities inside the given frames of art or literature.

Ilona Leki, *Alain Robbe-Grillet* (1983), is a good biography and survey of Robbe-Grillet's work in historical context. It includes the most recent work and proceeds work by work, with a last chapter on the films. Bruce Morrissette, *The Novels of Robbe-Grillet* (1975; rev. ed.), provides a valuable critical study that takes the works and films in chronological order; preface by Roland Barthes. Ben Stoltzfus, *Alain Robbe-Grillet and the New French Novel* (1964), is an earlier introduction to Robbe-Grillet in the context of the emerging "new novel" form.

The Secret Room[1]

To Gustave Moreau[2]

The first thing to be seen is a red stain, of a deep, dark, shiny red, with almost black shadows. It is in the form of an irregular rosette, sharply outlined, extending in several directions in wide outflows of unequal length, dividing and dwindling afterward into single sinuous streaks. The whole stands out against a smooth, pale surface, round in shape, at once dull and pearly, a hemisphere joined by gentle curves to an expanse of the same pale color—white darkened by the shadowy quality of the place: a dungeon, a sunken room, or a cathedral—glowing with a diffused brilliance in the semidarkness.

Farther back, the space is filled with the cylindrical trunks of columns, repeated with progressive vagueness in their retreat toward the beginning of a vast stone stairway, turning slightly as it rises, growing narrower and narrower as it approaches the high vaults where it disappears.

The whole setting is empty, stairway and colonnades. Alone, in the foreground, the stretched-out body gleams feebly, marked with the red stain—a white body whose full, supple flesh can be sensed,

1. Translated by Bruce Morrissette. 2. French Symbolist painter (1826–98) known for exotic, luminous scenes with subtly erotic and morbid overtones, such as *The Death of Darius* and *Dance of Salome*.

fragile, no doubt, and vulnerable. Alongside the bloody hemisphere another identical round form, this one intact, is seen at almost the same angle of view; but the haloed point at its summit, of darker tint, is in this case quite recognizable, whereas the other one is entirely destroyed, or at least covered by the wound.

In the background, near the top of the stairway, a black silhouette is seen fleeing, a man wrapped in a long, floating cape, ascending the last steps without turning around, his deed accomplished. A thin smoke rises in twisting scrolls from a sort of incense burner placed on a high stand of ironwork with a silvery glint. Nearby lies the milkwhite body, with wide streaks of blood running from the left breast, along the flank and on the hip.

It is a fully rounded woman's body, but not heavy, completely nude, lying on its back, the bust raised up somewhat by thick cushions thrown down on the floor, which is covered with Oriental rugs. The waist is very narrow, the neck long and thin, curved to one side, the head thrown back into a darker area where, even so, the facial features may be discerned, the partly opened mouth, the wide-staring eyes, shining with a fixed brilliance, and the mass of long, black hair spread out in a complicated wavy disorder over a heavily folded cloth, of velvet perhaps, on which also rest the arm and shoulder.

It is a uniformly colored velvet of dark purple, or which seems so in this lighting. But purple, brown, blue also seem to dominate in the colors of the cushions—only a small portion of which is hidden beneath the velvet cloth, and which protrude noticeably, lower down, beneath the bust and waist—as well as in the Oriental patterns of the rugs on the floor. Farther on, these same colors are picked up again in the stone of the paving and the columns, and vaulted archways, the stairs, and the less discernible surfaces that disappear into the farthest reaches of the room.

The dimensions of this room are difficult to determine exactly; the body of the young sacrificial victim seems at first glance to occupy a substantial portion of it, but the vast size of the stairway leading down to it would imply rather that this is not the whole room, whose considerable space must in reality extend all around, right and left, as it does toward the faraway browns and blues among the columns standing in line, in every direction, perhaps toward other sofas, thick carpets, piles of cushions and fabrics, other tortured bodies, other incense burners.

It is also difficult to say where the light comes from. No clue, on the columns or on the floor, suggests the direction of the rays. Nor is any window or torch visible. The milkwhite body itself seems to light the scene, with its full breasts, the curve of its thighs, the rounded belly, the full buttocks, the stretched-out legs, widely spread, and

the black tuft of the exposed sex, provocative, proffered, useless now.

The man has already moved several steps back. He is now on the first steps of the stairs, ready to go up. The bottom steps are wide and deep, like the steps leading up to some great building, a temple or theater; they grow smaller as they ascend, and at the same time describe a wide, helical curve, so gradually that the stairway has not yet made a half-turn by the time it disappears near the top of the vaults, reduced then to a steep, narrow flight of steps without handrail, vaguely outlined, moreover, in the thickening darkness beyond.

But the man does not look in this direction, where his movement nonetheless carries him; his left foot on the second step and his right foot already touching the third, with his knee bent, he has turned around to look at the spectacle for one last time. The long, floating cape thrown hastily over his shoulders, clasped in one hand at his waist, has been whirled around by the rapid circular motion that has just caused his head and chest to turn in the opposite direction, and a corner of the cloth remains suspended in the air as if blown by a gust of wind; this corner, twisting around upon itself in the form of a loose S, reveals the red silk lining with its gold embroidery.

The man's features are impassive, but tense, as if in expectation—or perhaps fear—of some sudden event, or surveying with one last glance the total immobility of the scene. Though he is looking backward, his whole body is turned slightly forward, as if he were continuing up the stairs. His right arm—not the one holding the edge of the cape—is bent sharply toward the left, toward a point in space where the balustrade should be, if this stairway had one, an interrupted gesture, almost incomprehensible, unless it arose from an instinctive movement to grasp the absent support.

As to the direction of his glance, it is certainly aimed at the body of the victim lying on the cushions, its extended members stretched out in the form of a cross, its bust raised up, its head thrown back. But the face is perhaps hidden from the man's eyes by one of the columns, standing at the foot of the stairs. The young woman's right hand touches the floor just at the foot of this column. The fragile wrist is encircled by an iron bracelet. The arm is almost in darkness, only the hand receiving enough light to make the thin, outspread fingers clearly visible against the circular protrusion at the base of the stone column. A black metal chain running around the column passes through a ring affixed to the bracelet, binding the wrist tightly to the column.

At the top of the arm a rounded shoulder, raised up by the cushions, also stands out well lighted, as well as the neck, the throat, and the other shoulder, the armpit with its soft hair, the left arm likewise pulled back with its wrist bound in the same manner to the base of

another column, in the extreme foreground; here the iron bracelet and the chain are fully displayed, represented with perfect clarity down to the slightest details.

The same is true, still in the foreground but at the other side, for a similar chain, but not quite as thick, wound directly around the ankle, running twice around the column and terminating in a heavy iron embedded in the floor. About a yard farther back, or perhaps slightly farther, the right foot is identically chained. But it is the left foot, and its chain, that are the most minutely depicted.

The foot is small, delicate, finely modeled. In several places the chain has broken the skin, causing noticeable if not extensive depressions in the flesh. The chain links are oval, thick, the size of an eye. The ring in the floor resembles those used to attach horses; it lies almost touching the stone pavement to which it is riveted by a massive iron peg. A few inches away is the edge of a rug; it is grossly wrinkled at this point, doubtless as a result of the convulsive, but necessarily very restricted, movements of the victim attempting to struggle.

The man is still standing about a yard away, half leaning over her. He looks at her face, seen upside down, her dark eyes made larger by their surrounding eyeshadow, her mouth wide open as if screaming. The man's posture allows his face to be seen only in a vague profile, but one senses in it a violent exaltation, despite the rigid attitude, the silence, the immobility. His back is slightly arched. His left hand, the only one visible, holds up at some distance from the body a piece of cloth, some dark-colored piece of clothing, which drags on the carpet, and which must be the long cape with its gold-embroidered lining.

This immense silhouette hides most of the bare flesh over which the red stain, spreading from the globe of the breast, runs in long rivulets that branch out, growing narrower, upon the pale background of the bust and the flank. One thread has reached the armpit and runs in an almost straight, thin line along the arm; others have run down toward the waist and traced out, along one side of the belly, the hip, the top of the thigh, a more random network already starting to congeal. Three or four tiny veins have reached the hollow between the legs, meeting in a sinuous line, touching the point of the V formed by the outspread legs, and disappearing into the black tuft.

Look, now the flesh is still intact: the black tuft and the white belly, the soft curve of the hips, the narrow waist, and, higher up, the pearly breasts rising and falling in time with the rapid breathing, whose rhythm grows more accelerated. The man, close to her, one knee on the floor, leans farther over. The head, with its long, curly hair, which alone is free to move somewhat, turns from side to side,

struggling; finally the woman's mouth twists open, while the flesh is torn open, the blood spurts out over the tender skin, stretched tight, the carefully shadowed eyes grow abnormally large, the mouth opens wider, the head twists violently, one last time, from right to left, then more gently, to fall back finally and become still, amid the mass of black hair spread out on the velvet.

Afterward, the whole setting is empty, the enormous room with its purple shadows and its stone columns proliferating in all directions, the monumental staircase with no handrail that twists upward, growing narrower and vaguer as it rises into the darkness, toward the top of the vaults where it disappears.

Near the body, whose wound has stiffened, whose brilliance is already growing dim, the thin smoke from the incense burner traces complicated scrolls in the still air: first a coil turned horizontally to the left, which then straightens out and rises slightly, then returns to the axis of its point of origin, which it crosses as it moves to the right, then turns back in the first direction, only to wind back again, thus forming an irregular sinusoidal[3] curve, more and more flattened out, and rising, vertically, toward the top of the canvas.

3. S-shaped.

GABRIEL GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ

1928–

A Colombian whom the whole continent claims as a "Latin American writer," one of the great novelists and prose stylists of the twentieth century, Gabriel García Márquez possesses both the technical virtuosity of the French "new novelists" and the breadth and historical scope of the traditional realistic writer. His most famous work, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967), is the best-known novel from the amazing literary explosion of the sixties and seventies called the Latin American "Boom," and embodies the mixture of fantasy and realism called "magical realism." In this novel and related stories, he follows the rise and fall of the Buendía family fortunes in a mythical town called Macondo, and sketches at the same time an echoing, intricate pattern of social, cultural, and psychological themes that become a symbolic picture of Latin American society. Not all of García Márquez's works are about Macondo, but the same themes and images reappear throughout: the contrast of dreamlike and everyday reality and the "magical" aspect of fictional creation, mythic overtones often rooted in local folklore, the representation of broader social and psychological conflicts through regional tales, the essential solitude of individuals facing love and death in a society of which they never quite seem a part. García Márquez is a political novelist in that many of his fictional situations are openly drawn from conditions in

Latin American history, so that local readers will recognize current history in the change from prosperity to misery in Macondo that accompanies the presence and withdrawal of the banana company, the massacre of striking banana workers by government forces in 1928, the general extreme separation of rich and poor, and the grotesquely oppressive power of political dictators pictured most recently in *The Autumn of the Patriarch* (1975). Yet his fiction achieves its impact not because of its base in real events but because these events are transformed and interpreted inside an artistic vision and language which—experimenting with many forms—creates a fictional universe all its own.

García Márquez was born in the small town of Aracataca in the "banana zone" of Colombia on March 6, 1928, to Gabriel Eligio García and Maria Márquez Iguarán. The first of twelve children, he was raised by his maternal grandparents until his grandfather died in 1936. He attributes his love of fantasy to his grandmother, who would tell him fantastic tales whenever she did not want to answer his questions. The recurring image of an old military man battered by circumstances (the grandfather of *Leaf Storm*, 1955; the protagonist of *No One Writes to the Colonel*, 1958; and in his younger days, Colonel Aureliano Buendía of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*) likewise recalls his grandfather, a retired colonel who had served on the Liberal side of a civil war at the beginning of the century. A scholarship student at the National Colegio in Zipaquirá, he received his bachelor's degree in 1946 and studied law at universities in Bogotá and Cartagena from 1947 to 1950. In 1947 he published his first story, "The Third Resignation," a Kafkaesque tale of a dead man who continued to grow and retain consciousness in his coffin for seventeen years after his death. García Márquez had worked as a journalist while studying law, and in 1950 he abandoned his legal studies for journalism in order to have more time as a writer. His first novel, *Leaf Storm*, was published in 1955, and—in its use of interior monologue and juxtaposition of different perspectives—shows the strong influence of Faulkner. He would soon abandon the more subjective Faulknerian style for an objective manner derived both from journalism and from Hemingway. In *Leaf Storm*, we may perceive reality through the mind of a ten-year-old boy: "The heat won't let you breathe in the closed room. You can hear the sun buzzing in the streets, but that's all. The air is stagnant, like concrete; you get the feeling that it could get all twisted like a sheet of steel." In his next novel, *No One Writes to the Colonel*, an impersonal narrator catalogues the actions of the colonel about to make coffee: "He removed the pot from the fire, poured half the water onto the earthen floor, and scraped the inside of the can with a knife until the last scrapings of the ground coffee, mixed with bits of rust, fell into the pot."

In 1954 García Márquez had joined *El Espectador* (The Spectator) in Bogotá; a report he wrote in 1955 that indirectly revealed corruption in the navy irritated the Rojas Pinilla dictatorship and his newspaper was shut down. Working in Paris as *El Espectador*'s foreign correspondent when he learned that his job had been abolished, he lived in extreme poverty for the next year while beginning *The Evil Hour* (1962) and *No One Writes to the Colonel*. In 1957, after traveling in Eastern Europe, he came back to Latin America. Here he worked for several different newspapers in Venezuela, and

later for the international press agency, Prensa Latina, in Cuba and New York, and for the Mexican periodicals *La Familia* and *Sucesos* (a sensationalist magazine) before beginning to write film scripts in 1963. A collection of short stories, *Big Mama's Funeral*, was published in 1962, along with the first edition of *The Evil Hour* which, printed in Spain, was later repudiated by the author because of tampering by proofreaders. In 1965 the various themes and characters he had been developing throughout his earlier novels and short stories came together as the fully developed concept of a new book, and García Márquez shut himself up in his study for a year and a half to write *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Published in 1967, the novel was a best seller immediately translated into numerous (now twenty-five) languages; it received prizes in Italy and France in 1969, and—when published in English in 1970—was chosen by American critics as one of the twelve best books of the year.

Layers of meaning accumulate around a core story in *One Hundred Years*, as the history of the doomed Buendía family takes on different and intertwined shades of significance. The family is cursed from the moment that its founder, José Arcadio Buendía, kills a friend who had insulted him and consummates an incestuous marriage; he then sets out in search of the sea and stops to settle in Macondo. Throughout a hundred years of family history in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Buendías are soldiers, scholars, merchants, explorers, revolutionaries, inventors, lovers, ascetics, labor organizers, and above all stubborn individuals. Yet these individuals are caught up in, and defined by, a larger family history of which they sometimes appear only interrelated, component parts: names echo one another, and parallel situations evoke a feeling of half-recognition inside a mirrorlike pattern of structural oppositions. The Buendía story is set in history but also exists on a mythic level: Remedios the Beauty is lifted up into heaven clutching her sheets when she dies, and when José Arcadio is killed, blood runs from his ear down the street all the way to his mother in her kitchen. The last Buendía, the son of Aureliano Babilonia and Amaranta Ursula, is born with the sign of the curse—a pig's tail—and dies eaten by ants at the end. Yet this is not really the end, for in the very last pages, after his son's death and as the whirlwind gathers to destroy Macondo, Aureliano Babilonia reads the manuscript left by the dead magician Melquíades. At last able to decipher a text that could not be read until one hundred years had passed, Aureliano Babilonia finds that this text is the story of his own family; thus he is learning about his own existence, predicted and described a century ago. "It was the history of the family, written by Melquíades, down to the most trivial details, one hundred years ahead of time. He had written it in Sanskrit, which was his mother tongue, and he had encoded the even lines in the private cipher of the Emperor Augustus and the odd ones in a Lacedemonian military code." Behind García Márquez there is yet another author—Melquíades—who has written *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, a novel whose complexity and self-contained referentiality recall the circular fictions of Borges.

The "magical realism" of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* reposes on the juxtaposition of real and fantastic worlds, and it elicits a series of interpretations whose variety can be only emulated by interpretations of Kafka. For

some readers, the novel is an allegory of the human condition and its fall from innocence; for others, it recounts the destructive, alienating influence on Latin American society of the aggressive individualism in Western culture; for others, it depicts essential human loneliness and the failure to communicate—even in love; for still others, it is a "total fiction" peculiarly valid for intricate repetitive patterns that refer to folklore and real life but finally create only a fictional universe. Each interpretation draws on the novel's blurring of real and unreal worlds, so that historical facts become the basis for fiction and fictional manipulation liberates our perspective on reality—a typically modernist method of using the imagination to encourage historical change.

After *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, García Márquez found new ways to combine magical-realist techniques and social commentary. In 1972, he published a collection of seven stories: *The Incredible and Sad Story of Innocent Eréndira and Her Heartless Grandmother*, which contains the story printed here, "Death Constant Beyond Love." From the title story, in which Eréndira's monstrously fat, tattooed, green-blooded grandmother is finally murdered after prostituting her grandchild to the entire countryside to repay a debt, to symbolic fantasies like "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings" (where a castaway angel is exhibited in a chicken coop until his feathers grow back and he can fly away, and a woman has been turned into a gigantic spider for disobeying her parents), the author presents tales in which the substance is incredible but the details themselves are highly realistic. The winged man smells bad and his wings are infested with parasites; the farm truck in which Eréndira tries to escape with her lover Ulises has an old motor and can't outrun the military patrol summoned by her grandmother. The mixture of fantasy and realism is not easily interpretable in a single symbolic sense: Eréndira's prostitution may be political and cultural as well as personal, and larger social relationships may be symbolized in the town's attitude towards the angel and the spider woman. Throughout, the narrative line can easily be followed but also interpreted in several ways.

Increasingly preoccupied with contemporary political events, he next published *The Autumn of the Patriarch*, an intricate study of the idea of dictatorship embodied in reactions to a first, false death of the patriarch (his double was assassinated instead), and a second, apparently real death upon which new authorities are already gathering to divide up the power. García Márquez is aiming at more than a specific political situation: he points to a habit of mind, a social lethargy in which there is no apparent connection between the passive acceptance of life as it always has been and the manipulation of society by a succession of dictators. In his next novel, *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* (1981), he describes the same inertia in a small town where everyday life continues its ordinary gossipy routine around two life-shattering events: the rejection of Angela Vicario by her new husband when he finds she is not a virgin, and her brothers' murder of the local dandy whom she names (probably falsely) as her seducer. Against the background of a whole society's passive complicity in a murder that everyone knows will happen, it is death and love that are the two overriding realities: the often foretold death of Santiago Nasar, and the strange passion of the abandoned bride, who writes letter after letter to her husband until he finally returns to

her years later, the unopened letters in his hand.

In recent years—questioning the effectiveness of literature to remedy the social ills he so often describes—García Márquez has been more and more active politically, speaking out for revolutionary governments in Latin America and organizing assistance for political prisoners. Living in Mexico City, he nonetheless continues to write, including a number of stories that are still unpublished and an account of Cuba under the US blockade. He received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1982.

The story printed here, "Death Constant Beyond Love" (1970), also has a political background although its protagonist, Senator Onésimo Sánchez, is seen chiefly as he struggles with his elemental problem of death. He is no hero: in "Innocent Eréndira" he writes a letter vouching for the grandmother's morality, and in this story he is clearly a corrupt politician who accepts bribes and stays in power by helping the local property owners avoid reform. His electoral train is a traveling circus with carnival wagons, fireworks, a ready made audience of hired Indians, and a cardboard village with imitation brick houses and a painted ocean liner to offer the illusion of future prosperity; he uses carefully placed gifts to encourage support and a feeling of dependence; he is, as one onlooker says, a real political huckster.

Yet the background of poverty and corruption, the entertaining spectacle of the senator's "fictional world," and the political campaign itself fade into insignificance before broader themes of life and death: the senator has exactly six months and eleven days to live. Forty-two, happily married, in full control of his own and others' lives as a successful politician in midcareer, he is made to feel suddenly helpless, vulnerable, and alone when told that all this will stop and he will be dead "forever" by next Christmas. Theoretically, he knows that death is inevitable and nature cannot be defeated. He has read the Stoic philosopher Marcus Aurelius (A.D. 121–180) and even refers to the fourth book of the *Meditations*, which recommends the cheerful acceptance of natural order (including death and oblivion), criticizes the delusions of those "who have tenaciously stuck to life," and stresses both the tranquil "ordering of the mind" and the idea that human beings are all "fellow-citizens" of a shared "political community." The example of the philosopher is not mere chance: Marcus Aurelius was also a political figure, a Roman emperor who wrote his *Meditations* as personal guidelines in a time of plague and political unrest, so that the figure of the philosopher-king becomes a shadowy contrast to the modern politician and potential dictator.

The senator does gain some Stoic insight into the illusions of his career: he notices how similar are the dusty village and the worn cardboard façade that represents its hopes, and he is fed up with what he recognizes to be background maneuverings that keep him in power by prolonging the exploitation of the poor. But he also loses sympathy for the barefoot Indians standing in the square, and his newly alienated perspective is not accompanied by the Stoic injunction to maintain a just and ordered mind, and to accept everything that happens as necessary and good. In this crisis, the senator is reduced to a basic and instinctual existence, expressed in García Márquez's recurrent themes of solitude, love, and death. "No one loves us," he sighs while caressing Nelson Farina's beautiful "woods-animal" daughter. Laura provides an opportunity for him to sublimate his fear of death in erotic

passion (inextricably intertwined, according to Freud). His choice means scandal and the destruction of his political career, but by now Onésimo Sánchez has felt the emptiness of his earlier activities and is engaged in a struggle to cheat death.

He does not succeed, of course, and dies weeping with rage that death separates him from Laura Farina. "Death Constant Beyond Love" has reversed the ambitious claim of a famous sonnet by the Spanish Golden Age writer Quevedo (1580–1645), according to which there is "Love Constant Beyond Death." Such love is an illusion, for it is death that awaits us beyond everything else. García Márquez repeatedly plays on these oppositions and inversions when he describes the real village and the cardboard version created by false political promises, the paper birds that magically take on life and fly out to sea, the paper butterfly that seems to fly and lands on the wall, the bribery money that flaps around like butterflies, the grotesquely padlocked chastity belt that Laura Farina wears, and even the initial opposition between the senator's living rose (symbol of womanhood and love) and the roseless town (named "The Viceroy's Rosebush") where he encounters his destiny. His destiny is to be liberated from some illusions but not all: his final delusion is to try to hide from death in erotic love. The senator's defeat at the end, which is clearly emphasized as a defeat, suggests that his response was a futile retreat, and—at the same time that it evokes pity for his loneliness, terror, and rage—puts in question what that response should be.

Regina Janes, *Gabriel García Márquez, Revolutions in Wonderland* (1981), is an excellent general study on García Márquez in a Latin American context. An introduction to the writer and his work is found in George P. McMurray, *Gabriel García Márquez* (1977). The Summer 1972 issue of *Books Abroad* is dedicated to García Márquez.

Death Constant Beyond Love[1]

Senator Onésimo Sánchez had six months and eleven days to go before his death when he found the woman of his life. He met her in Rosal del Virrey,[2] an illusory village which by night was the furtive wharf for smugglers' ships, and on the other hand, in broad daylight looked like the most useless inlet on the desert, facing a sea that was arid and without direction and so far from everything no one would have suspected that someone capable of changing the destiny of anyone lived there. Even its name was a kind of joke, because the only rose in that village was being worn by Senator Onésimo Sánchez himself on the same afternoon when he met Laura Farina.

It was an unavoidable stop in the electoral campaign he made every four years. The carnival wagons had arrived in the morning. Then came the trucks with the rented Indians[3] who were carried into

1. Translated by Gregory Rabassa. 2. "The rosebush of the Viceroy (governor)." 3. People descended from the original inhabitants of the continent; generally poorer and less privileged than those descended from Spanish or Portuguese colonists.

the towns in order to enlarge the crowds at public ceremonies. A short time before eleven o'clock, along with the music and rockets and jeeps of the retinue, the ministerial automobile, the color of strawberry soda, arrived. Senator Onésimo Sánchez was placid and weatherless inside the air-conditioned car, but as soon as he opened the door he was shaken by a gust of fire and his shirt of pure silk was soaked in a kind of light-colored soup and he felt many years older and more alone than ever. In real life he had just turned forty-two, had been graduated from Göttingen[4] with honors as a metallurgical engineer, and was an avid reader, although without much reward, of badly translated Latin classics. He was married to a radiant German woman who had given him five children and they were all happy in their home, he the happiest of all until they told him, three months before, that he would be dead forever by next Christmas.

While the preparations for the public rally were being completed, the senator managed to have an hour alone in the house they had set aside for him to rest in. Before he lay down he put in a glass of drinking water the rose he had kept alive all across the desert, lunched on the diet cereals that he took with him so as to avoid the repeated portions of fried goat that were waiting for him during the rest of the day, and he took several analgesic pills before the time prescribed so that he would have the remedy ahead of the pain. Then he put the electric fan close to the hammock and stretched out naked for fifteen minutes in the shadow of the rose, making a great effort at mental distraction so as not to think about death while he dozed. Except for the doctors, no one knew that he had been sentenced to a fixed term, for he had decided to endure his secret all alone, with no change in his life, not because of pride but out of shame.[5]

He felt in full control of his will when he appeared in public again at three in the afternoon, rested and clean, wearing a pair of coarse linen slacks and a floral shirt, and with his soul sustained by the anti-pain pills. Nevertheless, the erosion of death was much more pernicious than he had supposed, for as he went up onto the platform he felt a strange disdain for those who were fighting for the good luck to shake his hand, and he didn't feel sorry as he had at other times for the groups of barefoot Indians who could scarcely bear the hot saltpeter coals of the sterile little square. He silenced the applause with a wave of his hand, almost with rage, and he began to speak without gestures, his eyes fixed on the sea, which was sighing with heat. His measured, deep voice had the quality of calm water, but the speech that had been memorized and ground out so many times had not occurred to him in the nature of telling the truth, but, rather,

4. A well-known German university. 5. "Death is such as generation is, a mystery of nature . . . altogether not a thing of which any man should be ashamed." [Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, IV, 5.]

as the opposite of a fatalistic pronouncement by Marcus Aurelius in the fourth book of his *Meditations*.

"We are here for the purpose of defeating nature," he began, against all his convictions. "We will no longer be foundlings in our own country, orphans of God in a realm of thirst and bad climate, exiles in our own land. We will be different people, ladies and gentlemen, we will be a great and happy people."

There was a pattern to his circus. As he spoke his aides threw clusters of paper birds into the air and the artificial creatures took on life, flew about the platform of planks, and went out to sea. At the same time, other men took some prop trees with felt leaves out of the wagons and planted them in the saltpeter soil behind the crowd. They finished by setting up a cardboard façade with make-believe houses of red brick that had glass windows, and with it they covered the miserable real-life shacks.

The senator prolonged his speech with two quotations in Latin in order to give the farce more time. He promised rainmaking machines, portable breeders for table animals, the oils of happiness which would make vegetables grow in the saltpeter and clumps of pansies in the window boxes. When he saw that his fictional world was all set up, he pointed to it. "That's the way it will be for us, ladies and gentlemen," he shouted. "Look! That's the way it will be for us."

The audience turned around. An ocean liner made of painted paper was passing behind the houses and it was taller than the tallest houses in the artificial city. Only the senator himself noticed that since it had been set up and taken down and carried from one place to another the superimposed cardboard town had been eaten away by the terrible climate and that it was almost as poor and dusty as Rosal del Virrey.

For the first time in twelve years, Nelson Farina didn't go to greet the senator. He listened to the speech from his hammock amidst the remains of his siesta, under the cool bower of a house of unplaned boards which he had built with the same pharmacist's hands with which he had drawn and quartered his first wife. He had escaped from Devil's Island[6] and appeared in Rosal del Virrey on a ship loaded with innocent macaws, with a beautiful and blasphemous black woman he had found in Paramaribo[7] and by whom he had a daughter. The woman died of natural causes a short while later and she didn't suffer the fate of the other, whose pieces had fertilized her own cauliflower patch, but was buried whole and with her Dutch name in the local cemetery. The daughter had inherited her color and her figure along with her father's yellow and astonished eyes, and he had good reason

6. A former French penal colony off the coast of French Guiana in northern South America.
7. Capital of Surinam (formerly Dutch Guiana) and a large port.

to imagine that he was rearing the most beautiful woman in the world.

Ever since he had met Senator Onésimo Sánchez during his first electoral campaign, Nelson Farina had begged for his help in getting a false identity card which would place him beyond the reach of the law. The senator, in a friendly but firm way, had refused. Nelson Farina never gave up, and for several years, every time he found the chance, he would repeat his request with a different recourse. But this time he stayed in his hammock, condemned to rot alive in that burning den of buccaneers. When he heard the final applause, he lifted his head, and looking over the boards of the fence, he saw the back side of the farce: the props for the buildings, the framework of the trees, the hidden illusionists who were pushing the ocean liner along. He spat without rancor.

"*Merde*," he said. "*C'est le Blacamán de la politique.*"[8]

After the speech, as was customary, the senator took a walk through the streets of the town in the midst of the music and the rockets and was besieged by the townspeople, who told him their troubles. The senator listened to them good-naturedly and he always found some way to console everybody without having to do them any difficult favors. A woman up on the roof of a house with her six youngest children managed to make herself heard over the uproar and the fireworks.

"I'm not asking for much, Senator," she said. "Just a donkey to haul water from Hanged Man's Well."

The senator noticed the six thin children. "What became of your husband?" he asked.

"He went to find his fortune on the island of Aruba,"[9] the woman answered good-humoredly, "and what he found was a foreign woman, the kind that put diamonds on their teeth."

The answer brought on a roar of laughter.

"All right," the senator decided, "you'll get your donkey."

A short while later an aide of his brought a good pack donkey to the woman's house and on the rump it had a campaign slogan written in indelible paint so that no one would ever forget that it was a gift from the senator.

Along the short stretch of street he made other, smaller gestures, and he even gave a spoonful of medicine to a sick man who had had his bed brought to the door of his house so he could see him pass. At the last corner, through the boards of the fence, he saw Nelson Farina in his hammock, looking ashen and gloomy, but nonetheless

8. "Shit. He's the Blacamán of politics." (French Blacamán is a charlatan and huckster who appears in several stories, including "Blacamán the Good, Vendor of Miracles.") 9. An island off the coast of Venezuela, famous as a tourist resort.

the senator greeted him, with no show of affection.

"Hello, how are you?"

Nelson Farina turned in his hammock and soaked him in the sad amber of his look.

"*Moi, vous savez*,"[1] he said.

His daughter came out into the yard when she heard the greeting. She was wearing a cheap, faded Guajiro Indian[2] robe, her head was decorated with colored bows, and her face was painted as protection against the sun, but even in that state of disrepair it was possible to imagine that there had never been another so beautiful in the whole world. The senator was left breathless. "I'll be damned!" he breathed in surprise. "The Lord does the craziest things!"

That night Nelson Farina dressed his daughter up in her best clothes and sent her to the senator. Two guards armed with rifles who were nodding from the heat in the borrowed house ordered her to wait on the only chair in the vestibule.

The senator was in the next room meeting with the important people of Rosal del Virrey, whom he had gathered together in order to sing for them the truths he had left out of his speeches. They looked so much like all the ones he always met in all the towns in the desert that even the senator himself was sick and tired of that perpetual nightly session. His shirt was soaked with sweat and he was trying to dry it on his body with the hot breeze from an electric fan that was buzzing like a horse fly in the heavy heat of the room.

"We, of course, can't eat paper birds," he said. "You and I know that the day there are trees and flowers in this heap of goat dung, the day there are shad instead of worms in the water holes, that day neither you nor I will have anything to do here, do I make myself clear?"

No one answered. While he was speaking, the senator had torn a sheet off the calendar and fashioned a paper butterfly out of it with his hands. He tossed it with no particular aim into the air current coming from the fan and the butterfly flew about the room and then went out through the half-open door. The senator went on speaking with a control aided by the complicity of death.

"Therefore," he said, "I don't have to repeat to you what you already know too well: that my reelection is a better piece of business for you than it is for me, because I'm fed up with stagnant water and Indian sweat, while you people, on the other hand, make your living from it."

Laura Farina saw the paper butterfly come out. Only she saw it

1. "Oh well, as for me, you know . . ." 2. Inhabitants of the rural Guajira Peninsula of northern Colombia; the figure of Laura Farina is thus connected with the rustic poor, with earthy reality (*farina* means flour), and with erotic inspiration (*Laura* was the beloved celebrated by the Italian poet Petrarch, 1304–74).

because the guards in the vestibule had fallen asleep on the steps, hugging their rifles. After a few turns, the large lithographed butterfly unfolded completely, flattened against the wall, and remained stuck there. Laura Farina tried to pull it off with her nails. One of the guards, who woke up with the applause from the next room, noticed her vain attempt.

"It won't come off," he said sleepily. "It's painted on the wall."

Laura Farina sat down again when the men began to come out of the meeting. The senator stood in the doorway of the room with his hand on the latch, and he only noticed Laura Farina when the vestibule was empty.

"What are you doing here?"

"*C'est de la part de mon père,*"[3] she said.

The senator understood. He scrutinized the sleeping guards, then he scrutinized Laura Farina, whose unusual beauty was even more demanding than his pain, and he resolved then that death had made his decision for him.

"Come in," he told her.

Laura Farina was struck dumb standing in the doorway to the room: thousands of bank notes were floating in the air, flapping like the butterfly. But the senator turned off the fan and the bills were left without air and alighted on the objects in the room.

"You see," he said, smiling, "even shit can fly."

Laura Farina sat down on a schoolboy's stool. Her skin was smooth and firm, with the same color and the same solar density as crude oil, her hair was the mane of a young mare, and her huge eyes were brighter than the light. The senator followed the thread of her look and finally found the rose, which had been tarnished by the saltpeter.

"It's a rose," he said.

"Yes," she said with a trace of perplexity. "I learned what they were in Riohacha."[4]

The senator sat down on an army cot, talking about roses as he unbuttoned his shirt. On the side where he imagined his heart to be inside his chest he had a corsair's tattoo of a heart pierced by an arrow. He threw the soaked shirt to the floor and asked Laura Farina to help him off with his boots.

She knelt down facing the cot. The senator continued to scrutinize her, thoughtfully, and while he was untying the laces he wondered which one of them would end up with the bad luck of that encounter.

"You're just a child," he said.

"Don't you believe it," she said. "I'll be nineteen in April."

3. "My father sent me." 4. A port on the Guajira Peninsula.

The senator became interested.

"What day?"

"The eleventh," she said.

The senator felt better. "We're both Aries,"[5] he said. And smiling, he added:

"It's the sign of solitude."

Laura Farina wasn't paying attention because she didn't know what to do with the boots. The senator, for his part, didn't know what to do with Laura Farina, because he wasn't used to sudden love affairs and, besides, he knew that the one at hand had its origins in indignity. Just to have some time to think, he held Laura Farina tightly between his knees, embraced her about the waist, and lay down on his back on the cot. Then he realized that she was naked under her dress, for her body gave off the dark fragrance of an animal of the woods, but her heart was frightened and her skin disturbed by a glacial sweat.

"No one loves us," he sighed.

Laura Farina tried to say something, but there was only enough air for her to breathe. He laid her down beside him to help her, he put out the light and the room was in the shadow of the rose. She abandoned herself to the mercies of her fate. The senator caressed her slowly, seeking her with his hand, barely touching her, but where he expected to find her, he came across something iron that was in the way.

"What have you got there?"

"A padlock,"[6] she said.

"What in hell!" the senator said furiously and asked what he knew only too well. "Where's the key?"

Laura Farina gave a breath of relief.

"My papa has it," she answered. "He told me to tell you to send one of your people to get it and to send along with him a written promise that you'll straighten out his situation."

The senator grew tense. "Frog[7] bastard," he murmured indignantly. Then he closed his eyes in order to relax and he met himself in the darkness. *Remember*, he remembered, *that whether it's you or someone else, it won't be long before you'll be dead and it won't be long before your name won't even be left.*[8]

He waited for the shudder to pass.

"Tell me one thing," he asked then. "What have you heard about me?"

"Do you want the honest-to-God truth?"

5. The first sign in the zodiac; people born from March 21 to April 19 are said to be under the sign of Aries. 6. She is wearing a chastity belt, a medieval device worn by women to prevent intercourse. 7. Epithet for "French." 8. A direct translation of a sentence from Marcus Aurelius in the fourth book of the *Meditations* (IV,6).

"The honest-to-God truth."

"Well," Laura Farina ventured, "they say you're worse than the rest because you're different."

The senator didn't get upset. He remained silent for a long time with his eyes closed, and when he opened them again he seemed to have returned from his most hidden instincts.

"Oh, what the hell," he decided. "Tell your son of a bitch of a father that I'll straighten out his situation."

"If you want, I can go get the key myself," Laura Farina said.

The senator held her back.

"Forget about the key," he said, "and sleep awhile with me. It's good to be with someone when you're so alone."

Then she laid his head on her shoulder with her eyes fixed on the rose. The senator held her about the waist, sank his face into woods-animal armpit, and gave in to terror. Six months and eleven days later he would die in that same position, debased and repudiated because of the public scandal with Laura Farina and weeping with rage at dying without her.

WOLE SOYINKA

1934—

Realism and fantasy, mythology and politics, verbal brilliance with mime and spectacle characterize the drama of Africa's best-known modern playwright. A Nigerian whose works have been translated into French and Japanese, a novelist, poet, essayist, and translator, Wole Soyinka is a complex figure who draws consciously upon both African and European traditions. Like many modern African intellectuals, he received his college education in Europe and is thus steeped in classical European literature as well as in the traditions of his native land. When these European-educated intellectuals returned home, they became part of a new political climate in which the emerging African nations sought to develop (or recapture) an indigenous culture separate from the colonial example, and to assert—in different ways—their African roots. Some espoused the movement known as Negritude, a militant assertion of exclusively black identity; Soyinka, in contrast, proposed what became known as the "Nigerian view" with its dry assurance that "a tiger does not need to proclaim his tigritude." Soyinka's plays are full of themes and dramatic strategies derived from the culture of his own Yoruba people (Western Nigeria), and he has translated Yoruba texts into English to enable them to find a wider audience. However, he proclaims "selective eclecticism as the right of every productive being, scientist or artist" and refuses to limit his own work to any one ideological model.

Non-African readers need some acquaintance with Yoruba culture to grasp several aspects of Soyinka's work. The seasonal rhythm of farming life pat-

terns everyday existence, and the major Yoruba festivals (themselves dramatic spectacles) come at harvest time. Images of fertility or destruction underlie many of Soyinka's plays, and in *The Swamp Dwellers* (staged 1958) and *Kongi's Harvest* (1965) both moral and political well-being are suggested by the success or failure of the harvest. (In the latter play, the symbolic first yam which the dictator Kongi expects to be offered to him is replaced by the political "harvest" of a bloody head upon a platter.) Yoruba religion is dominated by a pantheon of major and minor gods representing absolute concepts, specific powers, and regional spirits (like ancient Greece), and even the ghosts of ancestors. The supreme creator is Olodumare; there is also Sango, the god of electricity, Esu, the spirit of disorder, and Soyinka's favorite figure, Ogun—patron of craftsmen, god of creation and destruction, the god so pained by the separation between gods and humans that he launched himself into the dividing abyss to create a path toward humanity. Menacing as well as protective, Ogun is the deity most closely involved with humanity because he combines the creative and destructive impulses found in human nature. He is also a daring god, "the god that ventures first" into the realm of nothingness to seek completion, and represents for Soyinka the very essence of Yoruba tragic consciousness ("The Fourth Stage: Through the Mysteries of Ogun to the Origin of Yoruba Tragedy"). All these figures are seen as interacting with human beings in everyday life, thus establishing a broad continuum of existence in a natural order that includes but transcends mortal experience.

It is this longer perspective, beginning before birth and reaching beyond the grave, that is so important in Yoruba religious ritual and also—as a cultural ethic—in Soyinka's plays, which often describe a tragic clash of values. When the colonial authorities prevent a ritual suicide in *Death and the King's Horseman* (1976; based on an actual event in 1946), they are asserting the exclusive value of earthly existence and contradicting a different cultural ethic in which loyalty to the departed king mandates following him into the next stage of his life. Worse, the colonial district officer and his wife wear *egungun* masks (improved with modern gadgets for convenient manipulation of parts) to a costume ball, hoping to receive a prize. Although they are impatient with the superstitious disapproval of the local inhabitants (the masks are used as part of a ritual death ceremony and are inhabited by the spirits of ancestors welcoming the recently dead into their midst), the couple paradoxically do represent death not just for the protagonist but for his son; they also mean death for an older way of life that cannot be comprehended by their mechanical, "commonsense" priorities. In Soyinka's work, the hero—whether he embodies or falls short of community values—is directly connected to them. Although some critics have referred to Beckett and Absurdist theater in connection with grotesque and apparently meaningless images in later plays (e.g., *Madmen and Specialists*, 1970), the comparison falls short because Soyinka keeps an implied reference point in communal values, and because his heroes—even if isolated—fill a significant role that represents the core and perhaps salvation of their society.

He was born Oluwole Akinwande Soyinka (pronounced Shoy-ING-ka) on July 13, 1934, at Abeokuta, a city on the Ogun River in Western Nigeria, the son of a school inspector. Soyinka went to primary school in Abeokuta

and secondary school at Government College in Ibadan, then the capital of Western Nigeria. His Nigerian education already reflected English academic tradition, including the Christian and classical heritage which—linked to Yoruba mythology—permeates his imagery. Nigeria is one of the Anglophone (English-speaking) countries of Africa; most of the early colonists of Africa spoke either English or French, and the two languages have become the major languages of the continent. (There are so many different tribal languages that no single "African" language has been accepted, although Swahili has been proposed.) In 1952 Soyinka entered the new University College in Ibadan, but after two years moved to Leeds University in England where he took an honors degree in English in 1957.

While at Leeds, Soyinka wrote poetry and short stories, studied with the influential dramatic critic G. Wilson Knight, and had an opportunity to attend a wide variety of classical and modern plays performed in the extremely active university theater. Upon graduating, he taught in various schools and worked as a script reader for the Royal Court Theatre in London. Here he not only observed the actual mechanics of direction and stage production, but also saw the early work of gifted dramatists like Samuel Beckett, John Osborne, Arnold Wesker, and John Arden, and himself joined the writers' group and participated in dramatic improvisations. His first play, *The Swamp Dwellers*, a somber story whose protagonist is caught between the poisonous old order of the rotten swamp and the soulless new order of the cities, was produced as part of the annual University of London Drama Festival in 1958. Another play, *The Invention*, a satire in which an accidental missile explosion eliminates dark pigment (and thus racial barriers) in Africa, was put on as part of a Sunday night production at the Royal Court Theatre in November 1959.

Soyinka's reputation was not limited to London, however; in February 1959 *The Swamp Dwellers* and *The Lion and the Jewel* were both produced at the Arts Theatre in Ibadan to enthusiastic audiences. He received a research grant from the Rockefeller Foundation to study African traditional drama in 1960–62, during which time he was attached to the English Department of the University of Ibadan. Traveling around the country, Soyinka was able to study the extended dramatic structure of the religious rituals and festival performances that embody so much of Nigerian folklore. Harvest festivals, initiation ceremonies, rites for the dead: all involved community participation in highly structured rituals that extended over days or weeks at a time, and used music, dance, masquerade, and symbolic acts to link the living with unseen forces. Not only the themes but also the dramatic structure of these ceremonial spectacles reappears in Soyinka's plays: his use of masquerade, of the symbolic ceremonial gesture, of the play within a play, of song and dance conveying mood and meaning in addition to words. Even more than usual, these plays require performance: in Soyinka's term, they represent a "total artwork" employing many media and ultimately involve the whole community as they act out issues important to all.

In Ibadan, a student group performed a one-act farce which would become one of Soyinka's most popular plays: *The Trials of Brother Jero*, a satire on the Bar Beach sects at Lagos and the story of a religious charlatan whose survival instincts and ingenious imagination enable him to outwit inconve-

nient disciples and creditors at the same time. The playwright also formed an acting company, "The 1960 Masks," which presented *A Dance of the Forests* in 1960 with the author taking the role of the Forest Father. *A Dance of the Forests*, a complex spectacle interweaving singing, dancing, and masquerade, was staged during the celebration of Nigerian independence, and in some ways may be seen as a lesson to the country in the confrontation of past with present. Answering the bidding of the contemporary Gathering of the Tribes, which wishes to establish links with its glorious past, a dead soldier and his wife come forward to meet four mortals who—in a previous life—were tied to the dead couple in violence and blood. The action takes place in the depths of the forest (recalling Shakespeare's *As You Like It* or *Midsummer Night's Dream*), presided over by the deities Osanyin, Ogun, and Eshuoro, and it ends with two of the mortals shaken and recognizing their crimes.

Soyinka became Lecturer in English at the University of Ife in 1962, but he resigned with other faculty in 1963 in protest against a proclaimed State of Emergency that imprisoned the Western Nigerian Chief Awolowo. Until taking up a position as Senior Lecturer at the University of Lagos in 1965, he devoted himself to social protest and to developing a Nigerian theater. He wrote for and acted in a highly popular satirical revue, *The Republican*, had part of a new play, *The Strong Breed*, performed on the radio, and founded the Orisun Theatre (a professional acting company, as opposed to the largely-amateur "1960 Masks") in 1964. In 1965, after a disputed election, Soyinka was briefly arrested for having substituted a satirical tape for the broadcast of Chief Akintola's victory speech; he was acquitted for lack of evidence. The same year brought his first novel *(The Interpreters)*, the production of two major plays *(Kongi's Harvest* and *The Road)*, and a new position as Senior Lecturer at the University of Lagos. Two years later, shortly before he was to take up the position of Chairman of the Drama Department at the University of Ibadan, he was arrested and imprisoned on suspicion of aiding Biafran rebels. From August 1967 to October 1969 (with fifteen months in solitary confinement), Soyinka was kept incommunicado by a government that hoped to repress his rebellious voice; the record of this imprisonment appears in the autobiographical *The Man Died* (1972).

Both before and after his imprisonment, Soyinka's work portrays the efforts of individuals to find their way inside an often-corrupt society caught by the clash of old and new values. Death (and the hope of rebirth) is a central reference point throughout, whether the death of a visionary, sacrificial figure (like Eman the scapegoat in *The Strong Breed*), death in political upheaval (the victims of the dictator Kongi in *Kongi's Harvest*), or the many versions of death in *The Road*.

Death accompanies thinly veiled references to corrupt power struggles on the contemporary political scene. In *Kongi's Harvest*, the old order of king Oba Danlola and his heir Daodu struggle against the new order of dictator Kongi. In *Madmen and Specialists* (1970), society is governed by Dr. Bero, a cannibal specialist in blood and destruction who worships the incomprehensible god As. Soyinka adapted Euripides' *Bacchae* (1973) to include a society of chained slaves who are ritual scapegoats until the ruler Pentheus accepts that role for himself. In *Death and the King's Horseman*, the lonely

protagonist Elesin fails to achieve the ritual death that would guarantee traditional values. *Opera Wonyosi* (1977), a murderous comedy modeled on Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill's *Three-Penny Opera*, attacks the "oil-booming society of the seventies" with its institutionalized corruption and public executions, and ends with a satire of the gaudy coronation of Jean-Bedel Bokassa as Emperor of the Central African Empire.

Yet all is not death and seriousness. A recent autobiography of his childhood, *Ake* (1981), is filled with humor, and there is a rich vein of fantastic comedy stretching from the earliest farces to the absurdist scenes of social folly in later, more bitter plays. Soyinka's early comedy, *The Lion and the Jewel*, prefigures in a lighthearted manner the cultural themes developed more somberly later on, and employs at the same time the whole range of verbal play, dramatic tension, spectacle and masquerade that typifies the author's dramatic art.

A farcical tone is set from the beginning, as the schoolteacher Lakunle whacks the schoolboys admiring Sidi and spills water on himself when he tries to carry her bucket. Lakunle's imitation of European manners does not fit him any better than his too-small suit, and he is a figure of fun for Sidi and the others as he tries to persuade this "race of savages" to renounce barbarism for a "civilized" life with ballroom dancing, cocktail parties, "breakable plates," and above all no bride-price for the groom to pay. It is impossible to take the schoolteacher seriously, for the snobbery and self-interest of his zeal for "European" culture are perennially evident, and only emphasized by the incongruous examples and flowery rhetoric that he employs when trying to impress Sidi.

Opposed to Lakunle's mania for European progress are the old customs and values represented by Sidi, the village beauty, and the Bale (Chief) Baroka. Within this framework of old and new values, traditional comic themes are set in motion: the competition of two tricksters as to who will outsmart the other, the battle of the sexes, and the competition of two suitors, two generations, and two rivals for power. In this sense, *The Lion and the Jewel* recalls medieval European farce with its joyful manipulation of trickery, seduction, and a combative opposition of the sexes. It is the game that is important, rather than psychological depth or individual characters, and the Old Fox Baroka—the Lion of Ilujinle—wins in the end because he is more clever and foresighted than his opponents. Baroka is the master trickster, able not only to set traps and predict the reaction of his opponents, but also to use his opponent's weapons better than anyone else. The chief wins, in fact, because he can handle language much better than Lakunle. In contrast to the schoolteacher's mixed metaphors and choppy logic, he overwhelms Sidi with a gradually developing argument and sequence of poetic images calculated to appeal on many levels: to Sidi's vanity and her fascination with modernity (the stamp machine), and to her respect for the traditional values of the village. When Baroka innocently pictures a meeting of souls, and then an abstract union of youth and experience, or beauty and wisdom, Sidi's own project of tricking and tantalizing him is forgotten and the Bale's seductive rhetoric accomplishes its aim.

Stage play and "body language" play an important part in *The Lion and the Jewel*. Dialogue pauses for song and dance on several occasions, or for a

mime such as the one reconstructing the photographer's arrival in the village. These are not artificial interruptions; the photographer's mime, for example, is part of an ebullient celebration of Sidi's joy at her newfound fame. It also displays Lakunle's two sides (his initial civilized scorn and subsequent enthusiasm, pinching the girls), and is fused again with the "real" plot when the Bale arrives coincidentally to play his own part in the play-within-a-play. The wrestling match enacts a preliminary seduction through body language as the Bale displays his physical strength while simultaneously sparring verbally with Sidi. Staging *The Lion and the Jewel* requires visual, musical, and choreographic imagination; like all Soyinka's theater, it is spectacle as well as drama, and here an expression of true carnival spirit.

Eldred D. Jones's *The Writing of Wole Soyinka* (1973) is a good study of Soyinka's work through *Madmen and Specialists*, with a brief section on cultural background. James Gibbs's *Critical Perspectives on Wole Soyinka* (1980) is a valuable collection of essays on work through *Death and the King's Horseman*; included are discussions of Yoruba traditions, of Soyinka's early writings, contemporary reviews, and a brief general introduction offering biographical information. Gerald Moore's *Wole Soyinka* (1971) is an early biography covering the time up to Soyinka's arrest.

The Lion and the Jewel

Characters

SIDI, *the Village Belle*
LAKUNLE, *Schoolteacher*
BAROKA, *the "Bale" of Ilujinle*
SADIKU, *his head wife*
THE FAVOURITE
VILLAGE GIRLS
A WRESTLER
A SURVEYOR
SCHOOLBOYS
ATTENDANTS ON THE "BALE"
Musicians, Dancers, Mummers,
Prisoners, Traders, the VILLAGE.

Morning

A clearing on the edge of the market, dominated by an immense "odan"[1] *tree. It is the village centre. The wall of the bush school flanks the stage on the right, and a rude window opens on to the stage from the wall. There is a chant of the "Arithmetic Times" issuing from this window. It begins a short while before the action begins. Sidi enters from left, carrying a small pail of water on her head. She is a slim girl with plaited hair. A true village belle. She balances the pail on her head with accus-*

1. A variety of fig planted as a shade tree.

tomed ease. Around her is wrapped the familiar broad cloth which is folded just above her breasts, leaving the shoulders bare.

Almost as soon as she appears on the stage, the schoolmaster's face also appears at the window. (The chanting continues—"Three times two are six," "Three times three are nine," etc.) The teacher Lakunle disappears. He is replaced by two of his pupils, aged roughly eleven, who make a buzzing noise at Sidi, repeatedly clapping their hands across the mouth. Lakunle now reappears below the window and makes for Sidi, stopping only to give the boys admonitory whacks on the head before they can duck. They vanish with a howl and he shuts the window on them. The chanting dies away. The schoolmaster is nearly twenty-three. He is dressed in an old-style English suit, threadbare but not ragged, clean but not ironed, obviously a size or two too small. His tie is done in a very small knot, disappearing beneath a shiny black waistcoat. He wears twenty-three-inch-bottom trousers, and blanco-white tennis shoes.

LAKUNLE: Let me take it.

SIDI: No.

LAKUNLE: Let me. [*Seizes the pail. Some water spills on him.*]

SIDI: [*delighted.*]
There. Wet for your pains.
Have you no shame?

LAKUNLE: That is what the stewpot said to the fire.
Have you no shame—at your age
Licking my bottom? But she was tickled
Just the same.

SIDI: The school teacher is full of stories
This morning. And now, if the lesson
Is over, may I have the pail?

LAKUNLE: No. I have told you not to carry loads
On your head. But you are as stubborn
As an illiterate goat. It is bad for the spine.
And it shortens your neck, so that very soon
You will have no neck at all. Do you wish to look
Squashed like my pupils' drawings?

SIDI: Why should that worry me? Haven't you sworn
That my looks do not affect your love?
Yesterday, dragging your knees in the dust
You said, Sidi, if you were crooked or fat,
And your skin was scaly like a . . .

LAKUNLE: Stop!

SIDI: I only repeat what you said.

LAKUNLE: Yes, and I will stand by every word I spoke.

But must you throw away your neck on that account?
Sidi, it is so unwomanly. Only spiders
Carry loads the way you do.

SIDI: [*huffily, exposing the neck to advantage.*]
Well, it is my neck, not your spider.

LAKUNLE: [*looks, and gets suddenly agitated.*]
And look at that! Look, look at that!
[*Makes a general sweep in the direction of her breasts.*]
Who was it talked of shame just now?
How often must I tell you, Sidi, that
A grown-up girl must cover up her . . .
Her . . . shoulders? I can see quite . . . quite
A good portion of—that! And so I imagine
Can every man in the village. Idlers
All of them, good-for-nothing shameless men
Casting their lustful eyes where
They have no business . . .

SIDI: Are you at that again? Why, I've done the fold
So high and so tight, I can hardly breathe.
And all because you keep at me so much.
I have to leave my arms so I can use them . . .
Or don't you know that?

LAKUNLE: You could wear something.
Most modest women do. But you, no.
You must run about naked in the streets.
Does it not worry you . . . the bad names,
The lewd jokes, the tongue-licking noises
Which girls, uncovered like you,
Draw after them?

SIDI: This is too much. Is it you, Lakunle,
Telling me that I make myself common talk?
When the whole world knows of the madman
Of Ilujinle, who calls himself a teacher!
Is it Sidi who makes the men choke
In their cups, or you, with your big loud words
And no meaning? You and your ragged books
Dragging your feet to every threshold
And rushing them out again as curses
Greet you instead of welcome. Is it Sidi
They call a fool—even the children—
Or you with your fine airs and little sense!

LAKUNLE: [*first indignant, then recovers composure.*]
For that, what is a jewel to pigs?
If now I am misunderstood by you

And your race of savages, I rise above taunts
And remain unruffled.

SIDI: [*furious, shakes both fists at him.*]
O . . . oh, you make me want to pulp your brain.

LAKUNLE: [*retreats a little, but puts her aside with a very lofty gesture.*]
A natural feeling, arising out of envy;
For, as a woman, you have a smaller brain
Than mine.

SIDI: [*madder still.*]
Again! I'd like to know
Just what gives you these thoughts
Of manly conceit.

LAKUNLE: [*very, very patronizing.*]
No, no. I have fallen for that trick before.
You can no longer draw me into arguments
Which go above your head.

SIDI: [*can't find the right words, chokes back.*]
Give me the pail now. And if you ever dare
To stop me in the streets again . . .

LAKUNLE: Now, now, Sidi . . .

SIDI: Give it or I'll . . .

LAKUNLE: [*holds on to her.*]
Please, don't be angry with me.
I didn't mean you in particular.
And anyway, it isn't what I say.
The scientists have proved it. It's in my books.
Women have a smaller brain than men
That's why they are called the weaker sex.

SIDI: [*throws him off.*]
The weaker sex, is it?
Is it a weaker breed who pounds the yam
Or bends all day to plant the millet
With a child strapped to her back?

LAKUNLE: That is all part of what I say.
But don't you worry. In a year or two
You will have machines which will do
Your pounding, which will grind your pepper
Without it getting in your eyes.

SIDI: O-oh. You really mean to turn
The whole world upside down.

LAKUNLE: The world? Oh, that. Well, maybe later.
Charity, they say, begins at home.
For now, it is this village I shall turn

Inside out. Beginning with that crafty rogue,
Your past master of self-indulgence—Baroka.
SIDI: Are you still on about the Bale?[2]
What has he done to you?
LAKUNLE: He'll find out. Soon enough, I'll let him know.
SIDI: These thoughts of future wonders—do you buy them
Or merely go mad and dream of them?
LAKUNLE: A prophet has honour except
In his own home. Wise men have been called mad
Before me and after, many more shall be
So abused. But to answer you, the measure
Is not entirely of my own coinage.
What I boast is known in Lagos,[3] that city
Of magic, in Badagry where Saro women bathe
In gold, even in smaller towns less than
Twelve miles from here . . .
SIDI: Well go there. Go to these places where
Women would understand you
If you told them of your plans with which
You oppress me daily. Do you not know
What name they give you here?
Have you lost shame completely that jeers
Pass you over.
LAKUNLE: No. I have told you no. Shame belongs
Only to the ignorant.
SIDI: Well, I am going.
Shall I take the pail or not?
LAKUNLE: Not till you swear to marry me.
[*Takes her hand, instantly soulful.*]
Sidi, a man must prepare to fight alone.
But it helps if he has a woman
To stand by him, a woman who . . .
Can understand . . . like you.
SIDI: I do?
LAKUNLE: Sidi, my love will open your mind
Like the chaste leaf in the morning, when
The sun first touches it.
SIDI: If you start that I will run away.
I had enough of that nonsense yesterday.
LAKUNLE: Nonsense? Nonsense? Do you hear?
Does anybody listen? Can the stones
Bear to listen to this? Do you call it

2. Chief of a town. 3. Capital city of Nigeria. *Badagry* is a large town in southwest Nigeria. The *Saro* are a population group (originally emancipated slaves returned from Sierra Leone) close to Europeans in education and life-style.

Nonsense that I poured the waters of my soul
To wash your feet?
SIDI: You did what!
LAKUNLE: Wasted! Wasted! Sidi, my heart
Bursts into flowers with my love.
But you, you and the dead of this village
Trample it with feet of ignorance.
SIDI: [*shakes her head in bafflement.*]
If the snail finds splinters in his shell
He changes house. Why do you stay?
LAKUNLE: Faith. Because I have faith.
Oh Sidi, vow to me your own undying love
And I will scorn the jibes of these bush minds
Who know no better. Swear, Sidi,
Swear you will be my wife and I will
Stand against earth, heaven, and the nine
Hells . . .
SIDI: Now there you go again.
One little thing
And you must chirrup like a cockatoo.
You talk and talk and deafen me
With words which always sound the same
And make no meaning.
I've told you, and I say it again
I shall marry you today, next week
Or any day you name.
But my bride-price[4] must first be paid.
Aha, now you turn away.
But I tell you, Lakunle, I must have
The full bride-price. Will you make me
A laughing-stock? Well, do as you please.
But Sidi will not make herself
A cheap bowl for the village spit.
LAKUNLE: On my head let fall their scorn.
SIDI: They will say I was no virgin
That I was forced to sell my shame
And marry you without a price.
LAKUNLE: A savage custom, barbaric, out-dated,
Rejected, denounced, accursed,
Excommunicated, archaic, degrading,
Humiliating, unspeakable, redundant.
Retrogressive, remarkable. unpalatable.
SIDI: Is the bag empty? Why did you stop?

4. The amount paid to her family for the bride; a large bride-price is a symbol of status.

LAKUNLE: I own only the Shorter Companion
Dictionary, but I have ordered
The Longer One—you wait!
SIDI: Just pay the price.
LAKUNLE: [*with a sudden shout.*]
An ignoble custom, infamous, ignominious
Shaming our heritage before the world.
Sidi, I do not seek a wife
To fetch and carry,
To cook and scrub,
To bring forth children by the gross . . .
SIDI: Heaven forgive you! Do you now scorn
Child-bearing in a wife?
LAKUNLE: Of course I do not. I only mean . . .
Oh Sidi, I want to wed
Because I love,
I seek a life-companion . . .
[*pulpit-declamatory.*]
"And the man shall take the woman
And the two shall be together
As one flesh."[5]
Sidi, I seek a friend in need.
An equal partner in my race of life.
SIDI: [*attentive no more. Deeply engrossed in counting the beads on her neck.*]
Then pay the price.
LAKUNLE: Ignorant girl, can you not understand?
To pay the price would be
To buy a heifer off the market stall.
You'd be my chattel, my mere property.
No, Sidi! [*very tenderly.*]
When we are wed, you shall not walk or sit
Tethered, as it were, to my dirtied heels.
Together we shall sit at table
—Not on the floor—and eat,
Not with fingers, but with knives
And forks, and breakable plates
Like civilized beings,
I will not have you wait on me
Till I have dined my fill.
No wife of mine, no lawful wedded wife
Shall eat the leavings off my plate—
That is for the children.

5. Genesis 2:24.

I want to walk beside you in the street,
Side by side and arm in arm
Just like the Lagos couples I have seen
High-heeled shoes for the lady, red paint
On her lips. And her hair is stretched
Like a magazine photo. I will teach you
The waltz and we'll both learn the foxtrot
And we'll spend the week-end in night-clubs at Ibadan.[6]
Oh I must show you the grandeur of towns
We'll live there if you like or merely pay visits.
So choose. Be a modern wife, look me in the eye
And give me a little kiss—like this.
[*Kisses her.*]

SIDI: [*backs away.*]
No, don't! I tell you I dislike
This strange unhealthy mouthing you perform.
Every time, your action deceives me
Making me think that you merely wish
To whisper something in my ear.
Then comes this licking of my lips with yours.
It's so unclean. And then,
The sound you make—'Pyout!'
Are you being rude to me?

LAKUNLE: [*wearily.*] It's never any use.
Bush-girl you are, bush-girl you'll always be;
Uncivilized and primitive—bush-girl!
I kissed you as all educated men—
And Christians—kiss their wives.
It is the way of civilized romance.

SIDI: [*lightly.*] A way you mean, to avoid
Payment of lawful bride-price
A cheating way, mean and miserly.

LAKUNLE: [*violently.*] It is not.
[SIDI *bursts out laughing.* LAKUNLE *changes his tone to a soulful one, both eyes dreamily shut.*]
Romance is the sweetening of the soul
With fragrance offered by the stricken heart.

SIDI: [*looks at him in wonder for a while.*]
Away with you. The village says you're mad,
And I begin to understand.
I wonder that they let you run the school.
You and your talk. You'll ruin your pupils too
And then they'll utter madness just like you.

6. A cosmopolitan city, the second largest in Nigeria and a major trade center.

[*Noise off-stage.*]
There are people coming
Give me the bucket or they'll jeer.
[*Enter a crowd of youths and drummers, the girls being in various stages of excitement.*]

FIRST GIRL: Sidi, he has returned. He came back just as he said he would.

SIDI: Who has?

FIRST GIRL: The stranger. The man from the outside world. The clown who fell in the river for you.
[*They all burst out laughing.*]

SIDI: The one who rode on the devil's own horse?

SECOND GIRL: Yes, the same. The stranger with the one-eyed box.
[*She demonstrates the action of a camera amidst admiring titters.*]

THIRD GIRL: And he brought his new horse right into the village square this time. This one has only two feet. You should have seen him. B-r-r-r-r.
[*Runs around the platform driving an imaginary motor-bike.*]

SIDI: And has he brought . . . ?

FIRST GIRL: The images? He brought them all. There was hardly any part of the village which does not show in the book.
[*Clicks the imaginary shutter.*]

SIDI: The book? Did you see the book?
Had he the precious book
That would bestow upon me
Beauty beyond the dreams of a goddess?
For so he said.
The book which would announce
This beauty to the world—
Have you seen it?

THIRD GIRL: Yes, yes, he did. But the Bale is still feasting his eyes on the images. Oh, Sidi, he was right. You *are* beautiful. On the cover of the book is an image of you from here [*touches the top of her head*] to here [*her stomach*]. And in the middle leaves, from the beginning of one leaf right across to the end of another, is one of you from head to toe. Do you remember it? It was the one for which he made you stretch your arms towards the sun. [*Rapturously.*] Oh, Sidi, you looked as if, at that moment, the sun himself had been your lover. [*They all gasp with pretended shock at this blasphemy and one slaps her playfully on the buttocks.*]

FIRST GIRL: The Bale is jealous, but he pretends to be proud of you. And when this man tells him how famous you are in the capital, he pretends to be pleased, saying how much honour and fame you have brought to the village.

SIDI: [*with amazement.*] Is not Baroka's image in the book at all?
SECOND GIRL: [*contemptuous.*] Oh yes, it is. But it would have been much better for the Bale if the stranger had omitted him altogether. His image is in a little corner somewhere in the book, and even that corner he shares with one of the village latrines.
SIDI: Is that the truth? Swear! Ask Ogun[7] to
Strike you dead.
GIRL: Ogun strike me dead if I lie.
SIDI: If that is true, then I am more esteemed
Than Bale Baroka,
The Lion of Ilujinle.
This means that I am greater than
The Fox of the Undergrowth,
The living god among men . . .
LAKUNLE: [*peevishly.*] And devil among women.
SIDI: Be silent, you.
You are merely filled with spite.
LAKUNLE: I know him what he is. This is
Divine justice that a mere woman
Should outstrip him in the end.
SIDI: Be quiet;
Or I swear I'll never speak to you again.
[*Affects sudden coyness.*]
In fact, I am not so sure I'll want to wed you now.
LAKUNLE: Sidi!
SIDI: Well, why should I?
Known as I am to the whole wide world,
I would demean my worth to wed
A mere village school teacher.
LAKUNLE: [*in agony.*] Sidi!
SIDI: And one who is too mean
To pay the bride-price like a man.
LAKUNLE: Oh, Sidi, don't!
SIDI: [*plunging into an enjoyment of* LAKUNLE*'s misery.*]
Well, don't you know?
Sidi is more important even than the Bale.
More famous than that panther of the trees.
He is beneath me now—
Your fearless rake, the scourge of womanhood!
But now,
He shares the corner of the leaf
With the lowest of the low—
With the dug-out village latrine!

7. God of iron, war, and craftsmanship.

While I—How many leaves did my own image take?
FIRST GIRL: Two in the middle and . . .
SIDI: No, no. Let the school teacher count!
How many were there, teacher-man?
LAKUNLE: Three leaves.
SIDI: [*threateningly.*] One leaf for every heart that I shall break.
Beware!
[*Leaps suddenly into the air.*]
Hurray! I'm beautiful!
Hurray for the wandering stranger!
CROWD: Hurray for the Lagos man!
SIDI: [*wildly excited.*] I know. Let us dance the dance of the lost
Traveller.
SHOUTS: Yes, let's.
SIDI: Who will dance the devil-horse?
You, you, you and you.
[*The four girls fall out.*]
A python. Who will dance the snake?
Ha ha! Your eyes are shifty and your ways are sly.
[*The selected youth is pushed out amidst jeers.*]
The stranger. We've got to have the being
From the mad outer world . . . You there,
No, you have never felt the surge
Of burning liquor in your milky veins.
Who can we pick that knows the walk of drunks?
You? . . . No, the thought itself
Would knock you out as sure as wine . . . Ah!
[*Turns round slowly to where* LAKUNLE *is standing with a kindly, fatherly smile for the children at play.*]
Come on book-worm, you'll play his part.
LAKUNLE: No, no. I've never been drunk in all my life.
SIDI: We know. But your father drank so much,
He must have drunk your share, and that
Of his great grandsons.
LAKUNLE: [*tries to escape.*] I won't take part.
SIDI: You must.
LAKUNLE: I cannot stay. It's nearly time to take
Primary four in Geography.
SIDI: [*goes over to the window and throws it open.*]
Did you think your pupils would remain in school
Now that the stranger has returned?
The village is on holiday, you fool.
LAKUNLE: [*as they drag him towards the platform.*]
No, no. I won't. This foolery bores me.

It is a game of idiots. I have work of more importance.

SIDI: [*bending down over* LAKUNLE *who has been seated forcibly on the platform.*]
You are dressed like him
You look like him
You speak his tongue
You think like him
You're just as clumsy
In your Lagos ways—
You'll do for him!

[*This chant is taken up by all and they begin to dance round* LAKUNLE, *speaking the words in a fast rhythm. The drummers join in after the first time, keeping up a steady beat as the others whirl round their victim. They go faster and faster and chant faster and faster with each round. By the sixth or seventh,* LAKUNLE *has obviously had enough.*]

LAKUNLE: [*raising his voice above the din.*] All right! I'll do it.
Come now, let's get it over with.

[*A terrific shout and a clap of drums.* LAKUNLE *enters into the spirit of the dance with enthusiasm. He takes over from* SIDI, *stations his cast all over the stage as the jungle, leaves the right top-stage clear for the four girls who are to dance the motor-car. A mime follows of the visitor's entry into Ilujinle, and his short stay among the villagers. The four girls crouch on the floor, as four wheels of a car.* LAKUNLE *directs their spacing, then takes his place in the middle, and sits on air. He alone does not dance. He does realistic miming. Soft throbbing drums, gradually swelling in volume, and the four "wheels" begin to rotate the upper halves of their bodies in perpendicular circles.* LAKUNLE *clowning the driving motions, obviously enjoying this fully. The drums gain tempo, faster, faster, faster. A sudden crash of drums and the girls quiver and dance the stall. Another effort at rhythm fails, and the "stalling wheels" give a corresponding shudder, finally, and let their faces fall on to their laps.* LAKUNLE *tampers with a number of controls, climbs out of the car and looks underneath it. His lips indicate that he is swearing violently. Examines the wheels, pressing them to test the pressure, betrays the devil in him by seizing his chance to pinch the girls' bottoms. One yells and bites him on the ankle. He climbs hurriedly back into the car, makes a final attempt to re-start it, gives it up and decides to abandon it. Picks up his camera and his helmet, pockets a flask of whisky from which he takes a swig, before beginning the trek. The drums resume beating, a different, darker tone and rhythm, varying with the journey. Full use*

of "gangan" and "iya ilu."[8] *The "trees" perform a subdued and unobtrusive dance on the same spot. Details as a snake slithering out of the branches and poising over* LAKUNLE*'s head when he leans against a tree for a rest. He flees, restoring his nerves shortly after by a swig. A monkey drops suddenly in his path and gibbers at him before scampering off. A roar comes from somewhere, etc. His nerves go rapidly and he recuperates himself by copious draughts. He is soon tipsy, battles violently with the undergrowth and curses silently as he swats the flies off his tortured body.*

Suddenly, from somewhere in the bush comes the sound of a girl singing. The Traveller shakes his head but the sound persists. Convinced he is suffering from sun-stroke, he drinks again. His last drop, so he tosses the bottle in the direction of the sound, only to be rewarded by a splash, a scream and a torrent of abuse, and finally, silence again. He tip-toes, clears away the obstructing growth, blinks hard and rubs his eyes. Whatever he has seen still remains. He whistles softly, unhitches his camera and begins to jockey himself into a good position for a take. Backwards and forwards, and his eyes are so closely glued to the lens that he puts forward a careless foot and disappears completely. There is a loud splash and the invisible singer alters her next tone to a sustained scream. Quickened rhythm and shortly afterwards, amidst sounds of splashes, SIDI *appears on the stage, with a piece of cloth only partially covering her.* LAKUNLE *follows a little later, more slowly, trying to wring out the water from his clothes. He has lost all his appendages except the camera.* SIDI *has run right across the stage, and returns a short while later, accompanied by the Villagers. The same cast has disappeared and re-forms behind* SIDI *as the Villagers. They are in an ugly mood, and in spite of his protests, haul him off to the town centre, in front of the "Odan" tree.*

Everything comes to a sudden stop as BAROKA *the Bale, wiry, goateed, tougher than his sixty-two years, himself emerges at this point from behind the tree. All go down, prostrate or kneeling with the greetings of "Kabiyesi" "Baba,"*[9] *etc. All except* LAKUNLE *who begins to sneak off.*]

BAROKA: Akowe.[1] Teacher wa. Misita Lakunle.

[*As the others take up the cry "Misita Lakunle" he is forced to stop. He returns and bows deeply from the waist.*]

LAKUNLE: A good morning to you sir.

8. Different types of drum. 9. "Kabiyesi," "Your highness," is used in addressing the ruler; "Baba" is a term of respect for an older man. Both are customary greetings to the Bale, who responds by calling his people "my children." 1. "Akowe," contraction of "Alakowe," teacher or (literally) "person who can write." Baroka comments that the teacher replaces the customary offer of a drink with "Good morning," which won't wet anyone's throat.

BAROKA: Guru morin guru morin, ngh-hn! That is
All we get from "alakowe." You call at his house
Hoping he sends for beer, but all you get is
Guru morin. Will guru morin wet my throat?
Well, well our man of knowledge, I hope you have no
Query for an old man today.

LAKUNLE: No complaints.

BAROKA: And we are not feuding in something
I have forgotten.

LAKUNLE: Feuding sir? I see no cause at all.

BAROKA: Well, the play was much alive until I came.
And now everything stops, and you were leaving
Us. After all, I knew the story and I came in
Right on cue. It makes me feel as if I was
Chief Baseje.[2]

LAKUNLE: One hardly thinks the Bale would have the time
For such childish nonsense.

BAROKA: A-ah Mister Lakunle. Without these things you call
Nonsense, a Bale's life would be pretty dull.
Well, now that you say I am welcome, shall we
Resume your play?
[*Turns suddenly to his attendants.*]
Seize him!

LAKUNLE: [*momentarily baffled.*] What for? What have I done?

BAROKA: You tried to steal our village maidenhead
Have you forgotten: If he has, serve him a slap
To wake his brain.

[An uplifted arm being proffered, LAKUNLE *quickly recollects and nods his head vigorously. So the play is back in performance. The Villagers gather round threatening, clamouring for his blood.* LAKUNLE *tries bluff, indignation, appeasement in turn. At a sudden signal from the Bale, they throw him down prostrate on his face. Only then does the Chief begin to show him sympathy, appear to understand the Stranger's plight, and pacify the villagers on his behalf. He orders dry clothes for him, seats him on his right and orders a feast in his honour. The Stranger springs up every second to take photographs of the party, but most of the time his attention is fixed on* SIDI *dancing with abandon. Eventually he whispers to the Chief, who nods in consent, and* SIDI *is sent for. The Stranger arranges* SIDI *in all sorts of magazine postures and takes innumerable photographs of her. Drinks are pressed upon him; he refuses at first, eventually tries the local brew with skepticism, appears to relish it,*

2. *Baseje* means someone who upsets a party or feast; a chief is expected to be a good organizer of feasts but "Chief Baseje" spoils the party.

and drinks profusely. Before long, however, he leaves the party to be sick. They clap him on the back as he goes out, and two drummers who insist on dancing round him nearly cause the calamity to happen on the spot. However, he rushes out with his hand held to the mouth. LAKUNLE*'s exit seems to signify the end of the mime. He returns almost at once and the others discard their roles.*]

SIDI: [*delightedly.*] What did I say? You played him to the bone,
A court jester would have been the life for you,
Instead of school.
[*Points contemptuously to the school.*]

BAROKA: And where would the village be, robbed of
Such wisdom as Mister Lakunle dispenses
Daily? Who would tell us where we go wrong?
Eh, Mister Lakunle?

SIDI: [*hardly listening, still in the full grip of her excitement.*]
Who comes with me to find the man?
But Lakunle, you'll have to come and find sense
In his clipping tongue. You see book-man
We cannot really do
Without your head.

[LAKUNLE *begins to protest, but they crowd him and try to bear him down. Suddenly he breaks free and takes to his heels with all the women in full pursuit.* BAROKA *is left sitting by himself—his wrestler, who accompanied him on his entry, stands a respectful distance away—staring at the flock of women in flight. From the folds of his agbada*[3] *he brings out his copy of the magazine and admires the heroine of the publication. Nods slowly to himself.*]

BAROKA: Yes, yes . . . it is five full months since last
I took a wife . . . five full months . . .

Noon

A road by the market. Enter SIDI, *happily engrossed in the pictures of herself in the magazine.* LAKUNLE *follows one or two paces behind carrying a bundle of firewood which* SIDI *has set out to obtain. They are met in the centre by* SADIKU, *who has entered from the opposite side.* SADIKU *is an old woman, with a shawl over her head.*

SADIKU: Fortune is with me. I was going to your house to see you.

SIDI: [*startled out of her occupation.*] What! Oh, it is you, Sadiku.

SADIKU: The Lion sent me. He wishes you well.

3. A long robe.

SIDI: Thank him for me.
[*Then excitedly.*]
Have you seen these?
Have you seen these images of me
Wrought by the man from the capital city?
Have you felt the gloss? [*Caresses the page.*]
Smoother by far than the parrot's breast.
SADIKU: I have. I have. I saw them as soon as the city man came . . .
Sidi, I bring a message from my lord. [*Jerks her head at* LAKUNLE.]
Shall we draw aside a little?
SIDI: Him? Pay no more heed to that
Than you would a eunuch.
SADIKU: Then, in as few words as it takes to tell, Baroka wants you for a wife.
LAKUNLE: [*bounds forward, dropping the wood.*]
What! The greedy dog!
Insatiate camel of a foolish, doting race;
Is he at his tricks again?
SIDI: Be quiet, 'Kunle. You get so tiresome.
The message is for me, not you.
LAKUNLE: [*down on his knees at once. Covers* SIDI*'s hands with kisses.*]
My Ruth, my Rachel, Esther, Bathsheba[4]
Thou sum of fabled perfections
From Genesis to the Revelations
Listen not to the voice of this infidel . . .
SIDI: [*snatches her head away.*]
Now that's your other game;
Giving me funny names you pick up
In your wretched books.
My name is Sidi. And now, let me be.
My name is Sidi, and I am beautiful.
The stranger took my beauty
And placed it in my hands.
Here, here it is. I need no funny names
To tell me of my fame.
Loveliness beyond the jewels of a throne—
That is what he said.
SADIKU: [*gleefully.*] Well, will you be Baroka's own jewel? Will you be his sweetest princess, soothing him on weary nights? What answer shall I give my lord?
SIDI: [*wags her finger playfully at the woman.*]
Ha ha. Sadiku of the honey tongue.
Sadiku, head of the Lion's wives.

4. Fabled wives from the Old Testament.

You'll make no prey of Sidi with your wooing tongue
Not this Sidi whose fame has spread to Lagos
And beyond the seas.

[LAKUNLE *beams with satisfaction and rises.*]

SADIKU: Sidi, have you considered what a life of bliss awaits you? Baroka swears to take no other wife after you. Do you know what it is to be the Bale's last wife? I'll tell you. When he dies—and that should not be long; even the Lion has to die sometime—well, when he does, it means that you will have the honour of being the senior wife of the new Bale. And just think, until Baroka dies, you shall be his favourite. No living in the outhouses for you, my girl. Your place will always be in the palace; first as the latest bride, and afterwards, as the head of the new harem . . . It is a rich life, Sidi. I know. I have been in that position for forty-one years.

SIDI: You waste your breath.
Why did Baroka not request my hand
Before the stranger
Brought his book of images?
Why did the Lion not bestow his gift
Before my face was lauded to the world?
Can you not see? Because he sees my worth
Increased and multiplied above his own;
Because he can already hear
The ballad-makers and their songs
In praise of Sidi, the incomparable,
While the Lion is forgotten.
He seeks to have me as his property
Where I must fade beneath his jealous hold.
Ah, Sadiku,
The school-man here has taught me certain things
And my images have taught me all the rest.
Baroka merely seeks to raise his manhood
Above my beauty
He seeks new fame
As the one man who has possessed
The jewel of Ilujinle!

SADIKU: [*shocked, bewildered, incapable of making any sense of* SIDI*'s words.*] But Sidi, are you well? Such nonsense never passed your lips before. Did you not sound strange, even in your own hearing? [*Rushes suddenly at* LAKUNLE.] Is this your doing, you popinjay? Have you driven the poor girl mad at last? Such rubbish . . . I will beat your head for this!

LAKUNLE: [*retreating in panic.*] Keep away from me, old hag.

SIDI: Sadiku, let him be.

Tell your lord that I can read his mind,
That I will none of him.
Look—judge for yourself.
[*Opens the magazine and points out the pictures.*]
He's old. I never knew till now,
He was that old . . .
[*During the rest of her speech,* SIDI *runs her hand over the surface of the relevant part of the photographs, tracing the contours with her fingers.*
. . . To think I took
No notice of my velvet skin.
How smooth it is!
And no man ever thought
To praise the fullness of my breasts . . .
LAKUNLE: [*laden with guilt and full of apology.*]
Well, Sidi, I did think . . .
But somehow it was not the proper thing.
SIDI: [*ignores the interruption.*]
See I hold them to the warm caress
[*unconsciously pushes out her chest.*]
Of a desire-filled sun.
[*Smiles mischievously.*]
There's a deceitful message in my eyes
Beckoning insatiate men to certain doom.
And teeth that flash the sign of happiness,
Strong and evenly, beaming full of life.
Be just, Sadiku,
Compare my image and your lord's—
An age of difference!
See how the water glistens on my face
Like the dew-moistened leaves on a Harmattan[5] morning
But he—his face is like a leather piece
Torn rudely from the saddle of his horse,
[SADIKU *gasps.*]
Sprinkled with the musty ashes
From a pipe that is long over-smoked.
And this goat-like tuft
Which I once thought was manly;
It is like scattered twists of grass—
Not even green—
But charred and lifeless, as after a forest fire!
Sadiku, I am young and brimming; he is spent.
I am the twinkle of a jewel

5. A dry, dusty wind that blows seasonally in Africa.

But he is the hind-quarters of a lion!

SADIKU: [*recovering at last from helpless amazement.*] May Sango[6] restore your wits. For most surely some angry god has taken possession of you. [*Turns around and walks away. Stops again as she remembers something else.*] Your ranting put this clean out of my head. My lord says that if you would not be his wife, would you at least come to supper at his house tonight. There is a small feast in your honour. He wishes to tell you how happy he is that the great capital city has done so much honour to a daughter of Ilujinle. You have brought great fame to your people.

SIDI: Ho ho! Do you think that I was only born
Yesterday?
The tales of Baroka's little suppers,
I know all.
Tell your lord that Sidi does not sup with
Married men.

SADIKU: They are lies, lies. You must not believe everything you hear, Sidi, would I deceive you? I swear to you . . .

SIDI: Can you deny that
Every woman who has supped with him one night,
Becomes his wife or concubine the next.

LAKUNLE: Is it for nothing he is called the Fox?

SADIKU: [*advancing on him.*] You keep out of this, or so Sango be my witness . . .

LAKUNLE: [*retreats just a little, but continues to talk.*]
His wiliness is known even in the larger towns.
Did you never hear
Of how he foiled the Public Works attempt
To build the railway through Ilujinle.

SADIKU: Nobody knows the truth of that. It is all hearsay.

SIDI: I love hearsays. Lakunle, tell me all.

LAKUNLE: Did you not know it? Well sit down and listen.
My father told me, before he died. And few men
Know of this trick—oh he's a die-hard rogue
Sworn against our progress . . . yes . . . it was . . . somewhere here
The track should have been laid just along
The outskirts. Well, the workers came, in fact
It was prisoners who were brought to do
The harder part . . . to break the jungle's back . . .

[*Enter the prisoners, guarded by two warders. A white surveyor examines his map (khaki helmet, spats, etc.). The foreman runs up with his camp stool, table etc., erects the umbrella over him*

6. God of thunder and lightning.

and unpacks the usual box of bush comforts—soda siphon, whisky bottle and geometric sandwiches. His map consulted, he directs the sweat team where to work. They begin felling, hatchet swinging, log dragging, all to the rhythm of the work gang's metal percussion (rod on gong or rude triangle, etc.). The two performers are also the song leaders and the others fill the chorus. "N'ijo itoro," "Amunda el'ebe l'aiya," "Gbe je on'ipa," etc.][7]

LAKUNLE: They marked the route with stakes, ate
Through the jungle and began the tracks. Trade,
Progress, adventure, success, civilization,
Fame, international conspicuousity . . . it was
All within the grasp of Ilujinle . . .

[*The wrestler enters, stands horrified at the sight and flees. Returns later with the Bale himself who soon assesses the situation. They disappear. The work continues, the surveyor occupies himself with the fly-whisk and whisky. Shortly after, a bull-roarer*[8] *is heard. The prisoners falter a little, pick up again. The bull-roarer continues on its way, nearer and farther, moving in circles, so that it appears to come from all round them. The foreman is the first to break and then the rest is chaos. Sole survivor of the rout is the surveyor who is too surprised to move.*

BAROKA *enters a few minutes later accompanied by some attendants and preceded by a young girl bearing a calabash*[9] *bowl. The surveyor, angry and threatening, is prevailed upon to open his gift. From it he reveals a wad of pound notes and kola nuts. Mutual understanding is established. The surveyor frowns heavily, rubs his chin and consults his map. Re-examines the contents of the bowl, shakes his head.* BAROKA *adds more money, and a coop of hens. A goat follows, and more money. This time "truth" dawns on him at last, he has made a mistake. The track really should go the other way. What an unfortunate error, discovered just in time! No, no, no possibility of a mistake this time, the track should be much further away. In fact (scooping up the soil) the earth is most unsuitable, couldn't possibly support the weight of a railway engine. A gourd of palm wine is brought to seal the agreement and a kola nut is broken. Baroka's men help the surveyor pack and they leave with their arms round each other followed by the surveyor's booty.*]

LAKUNLE: [*as the last of the procession disappears, shakes his fist at them, stamping on the ground.*]

7. Fragments of a prisoners' song; such songs were usually sung during hard labor to ease the work—"In the dance of itoro" (*itoro* is the name of a neighborhood); "*Amuda* [name] is a big man"; "Keep the strong one cool." 8. A noisemaker made of a small wooden slat whirled on a string. 9. A hard-shelled gourd dried, often carved, and used as a utensil. *Kola nuts* are the seeds of the kola (cola) tree, containing caffeine oil and chewed as a stimulant; they are offered in sign of hospitality.

Voluptuous beast! He loves this life too well
To bear to part from it. And motor roads
And railways would do just that, forcing
Civilization at his door. He foresaw it
And he barred the gates, securing fast
His dogs and horses, his wives and all his
Concubines . . . ah, yes . . . all those concubines
Baroka has such a selective eye, none suits him
But the best . . .

[*His eyes truly light up.* SIDI *and* SADIKU *snigger, tip-toe off stage.*]

. . . Yes, one must grant him that.
Ah, I sometimes wish I led his kind of life.
Such luscious bosoms make his nightly pillow.
I am sure he keeps a time-table just as
I do at school. Only way to ensure fair play.
He must be healthy to keep going as he does.
I don't know what the women see in him. His eyes
Are small and always red with wine. He must
Possess some secret . . . No! I do not envy him!
Just the one woman for me. Alone I stand
For progress, with Sidi my chosen soul-mate, the one
Woman of my life . . . Sidi! Sidi where are you?

[*Rushes out after them, returns to fetch the discarded firewood and runs out again.*]

*

[BAROKA *in bed, naked except for baggy trousers, calf-length. It is a rich bedroom covered in animal skins and rugs. Weapons round the wall. Also a strange machine, a most peculiar contraption with a long lever. Kneeling beside the bed is Baroka's current Favourite, engaged in plucking the hairs from his armpit. She does this by first massaging the spot around the selected hair very gently with her forefinger. Then, with hardly a break, she pulls out the hair between her finger and the thumb with a sudden sharp movement.* BAROKA *twitches slightly with each pull. Then an aspirated "A-ah," and a look of complete beatitude spreads all over his face.*]

FAVOURITE: Do I improve my lord?

BAROKA: You are still somewhat over-gentle with the pull
As if you feared to hurt the panther of the trees.
Be sharp and sweet
Like the swift sting of a vicious wasp
For there the pleasure lies—the cooling aftermath.

FAVOURITE: I'll learn, my lord.

BAROKA: You have not time, my dear.
Tonight I hope to take another wife.
And the honour of this task, you know,
Belongs by right to my latest choice.
But—A-ah—Now that was sharp.
It had in it the scorpion's sudden sting
Without its poison.
It was an angry pull; you tried to hurt
For I had made you wrathful with my boast.
But now your anger flows in my blood-stream.
How sweet it is! A-ah! That was sweeter still.
I think perhaps that I shall let you stay,
The sole out-puller of my sweat-bathed hairs.
Ach!
[*Sits up suddenly and rubs the sore point angrily.*]
Now that had far more pain than pleasure
Vengeful creature, you did not caress
The area of extraction long enough!
[*Enter* SADIKU. *She goes down on her knees at once and bows her head into her lap.*]
Aha! Here comes Sadiku.
Do you bring some balm,
To soothe the smart of my misused armpit?
Away, you enemy!
[*Exit the Favourite.*]

SADIKU: My lord . . .

BAROKA: You have my leave to speak.
What did she say?

SADIKU: She will not, my lord. I did my best, but she will have none of you.

BAROKA: It follows the pattern—a firm refusal
At the start. Why will she not?

SADIKU: That is the strange part of it. She says you're much too old. If you ask me, I think that she is really off her head. All this excitement of the books has been too much for her.

BAROKA: [*springs to his feet.*]
She says . . . That I am old
That I am much too old? Did a slight
Unripened girl say this of me?

SADIKU: My lord, I heard the incredible words with my ears, and I thought the world was mad.

BAROKA: But is it possible, Sadiku? Is this right?
Did I not, at the festival of Rain,
Defeat the men in the log-tossing match?
Do I not still with the most fearless ones,

Hunt the leopard and the boa at night
And save the farmers' goats from further harm?
And does she say I'm old?
Did I not, to announce the Harmattan,
Climb to the top of the silk-cotton tree,
Break the first pod, and scatter tasselled seeds
To the four winds—and this but yesterday?
Do any of my wives report
A failing in my manliness?
The strongest of them all
Still wearies long before the Lion does!
And so would she, had I the briefest chance
To teach this unfledged birdling
That lacks the wisdom to embrace
The rich mustiness of age . . . if I could once . . .
Come hither, soothe me, Sadiku
For I am wroth at heart.

[*Lies back on the bed, staring up as before.* SADIKU *takes her place at the foot of the bed and begins to tickle the soles of his feet.* BAROKA *turns to the left suddenly, reaches down the side, and comes up with a copy of the magazine. Opens it and begins to study the pictures. He heaves a long sigh.*]

That is good, Sadiku, very good.

[*He begins to compare some pictures in the book, obviously his own and Sidi's. Flings the book away suddenly and stares at the ceiling for a second or two. Then, unsmiling.*]

Perhaps it is as well, Sadiku.

SADIKU: My lord, what did you say?

BAROKA: Yes, faithful one, I say it is as well.
The scorn, the laughter and the jeers
Would have been bitter.
Had she consented and my purpose failed,
I would have sunk with shame.

SADIKU: My lord, I do not understand.

BAROKA: The time has come when I can fool myself
No more. I am no man, Sadiku. My manhood
Ended near a week ago.

SADIKU: The gods forbid.

BAROKA: I wanted Sidi because I still hoped—
A foolish thought I know, but still—I hoped
That, with a virgin young and hot within,
My failing strength would rise and save my pride.

[SADIKU *begins to moan.*]

A waste of hope. I knew it even then.
But it's a human failing never to accept

The worst; and so I pandered to my vanity.
When manhood must, it ends.
The well of living, tapped beyond its depth,
Dries up, and mocks the wastrel in the end.
I am withered and unsapped, the joy
Of ballad-mongers, the aged butt
Of youth's ribaldry.

SADIKU: [*tearfully.*] The Gods must have mercy yet.

BAROKA: [*as if suddenly aware of her presence, starts up.*]
I have told this to no one but you,
Who are my eldest, my most faithful wife.
But if you dare parade my shame before the world . . .
[SADIKU *shakes her head in protest and begins to stroke the soles of his feet with renewed tenderness.* BAROKA *sighs and falls back slowly.*]
How irritable I have grown of late
Such doubts to harbour of your loyalty . . .
But this disaster is too much for one
Checked thus as I upon the prime of youth.
That rains that blessed me from my birth
Number a meagre sixty-two;
While my grandfather, that man of teak,
Fathered two sons, late on sixty-five.
But Okiki, my father beat them all
Producing female twins at sixty-seven.
Why then must I, descendant of these lions
Forswear my wives at a youthful sixty-two
My veins of life run dry, my manhood gone!
[*His voice goes drowsy;* SADIKU *sighs and moans and caresses his feet. His face lights up suddenly with rapture.*]
Sango bear witness! These weary feet
Have felt the loving hands of much design
In women.
My soles have felt the scratch of harsh,
Gravelled hands.
They have borne the heaviness of clumsy,
Gorilla paws.
And I have known the tease of tiny,
Dainty hands,
Toy-like hands that tantalized
My eager senses,
Promised of thrills to come
Remaining
Unfulfilled because the fingers
Were too frail

The touch too light and faint to pierce
The incredible thickness of my soles.
But thou Sadiku, thy plain unadorned hands
Encase a sweet sensuality which age
Will not destroy. A-ah,
Oyayi! Beyond a doubt Sadiku,
Thou art the queen of them all.
[*Falls asleep.*]

Night

The village centre. SIDI *stands by the Schoolroom window, admiring her photos as before. Enter* SADIKU *with a longish bundle. She is very furtive. Unveils the object which turns out to be a carved figure of the Bale, naked and in full detail. She takes a good look at it, bursts suddenly into derisive laughter, sets the figure standing in front of the tree.* SIDI *stares in utter amazement.*

SADIKU: So we did for you too did we? We did for you in the end. Oh high and mighty lion, have we really scotched you? A—ya-ya-ya . . . we women undid you in the end. I was there when it happened to your father, the great Okiki. I did for him, I, the youngest and freshest of the wives. I killed him with my strength. I called him and he came at me, but no, for him, this was not like other times. I, Sadiku, was I not flame itself and he the flax on old women's spindles? I ate him up! Race of mighty lions, we always consume you, at our pleasure we spin you, at our whim we make you dance; like the foolish top you think the world revolves around you . . . fools! fools! . . . it is you who run giddy while we stand still and watch, and draw your frail thread from you, slowly, till nothing is left but a runty old stick. I scotched Okiki, Sadiku's unopened treasure-house demanded sacrifice, and Okiki came with his rusted key. Like a snake he came at me, like a rag he went back, a limp rag, smeared in shame. . . . [*Her ghoulish laugh re-possesses her.*] Ah, take warning my masters, we'll scotch you in the end . . . [*With a yell she leaps up, begins to dance round the tree, chanting.*]

Take warning, my masters
We'll scotch you in the end.

[SIDI *shuts the window gently, comes out,* SADIKU *as she comes round again, gasps and is checked in mid-song.*]

SADIKU: Oh it is you my daughter. You should have chosen a better time to scare me to death. The hour of victory is no time for any woman to die.

SIDI: Why? What battle have you won?
SADIKU: Not me alone girl. You too. Every woman. Oh my daughter, that I have lived to see this day . . . To see him fizzle with the drabbest puff of a mis-primed "sakabula."[1]
[*Resumes her dance.*]
Take warning, my masters
We'll scotch you in the end.
SIDI: Wait Sadiku. I cannot understand.
SADIKU: You will my girl. You will.
Take warning my masters . . .
SIDI: Sadiku, are you well?
SADIKU: Ask no questions my girl. Just join my victory dance. Oh Sango my lord, who of us possessed your lightning and ran like fire through that lion's tail . . .
SIDI: [*holds her firmly as she is about to go off again.*]
Stop your loose ranting. You will not
Move from here until you make some sense.
SADIKU: Oh you are troublesome. Do you promise to tell no one?
SIDI: I swear it. Now tell me quickly.
[*As* SADIKU *whispers, her eyes widen.*]
O-ho-o-o-o-!
But Sadiku, if he knew the truth, why
Did he ask me to . . .
[*Again* SADIKU *whispers.*]
Ha ha! Some hope indeed. Oh Sadiku
I suddenly am glad to be a woman.
[*Leaps in the air.*]
We won! We won! Hurray for womankind!
[*Falls in behind* SADIKU.]
Take warning, my masters
We'll scotch you in the end. [LAKUNLE *enters unobserved.*]
LAKUNLE: The full moon is not yet, but
The women cannot wait.
They must go mad without it.
[*The dancing stops.* SADIKU *frowns.*]
SADIKU: The scarecrow is here. Begone fop! This is the world of women. At this moment our star sits in the centre of the sky. We are supreme. What is more, we are about to perform a ritual. If you remain, we will chop you up, we will make you the sacrifice.
LAKUNLE: What is the hag gibbering?
SADIKU: [*advances menacingly.*] You less than man, you less than the littlest woman, I say begone!
LAKUNLE: [*nettled.*] I will have you know that I am a man

1. A gun locally made by a blacksmith, not very effective.

As you will find out if you dare
To lay a hand on me.

SADIKU: [*throws back her head in laughter.*] You a man? Is Baroka not more of a man than you? And if he is no longer a man, then what are you? [LAKUNLE, *understanding the meaning, stands rooted, shocked.*] Come on, dear girl, let him look on if he will. After all, only *men* are barred from watching this ceremony.
Take warning, my masters
We'll . . .

SIDI: Stop. Sadiku stop. Oh such an idea
Is running in my head. Let me to the palace for
This supper he promised me. Sadiku, what a way
To mock the devil. I shall ask forgiveness
For my hasty words . . . No need to change
My answer and consent to be his bride—he might
Suspect you've told me. But I shall ask a month
To think on it.

SADIKU: [*somewhat doubtful.*] Baroka is no child you know, he will know I have betrayed him.

SIDI: No, he will not. Oh Sadiku let me go.
I long to see him thwarted, to watch his longing
His twitching hands which this time cannot
Rush to loosen his trouser cords.

SADIKU: You will have to match the Fox's cunning. Use your bashful looks and be truly repentant. Goad him my child, torment him until he weeps for shame.

SIDI: Leave it to me. He will never suspect you of deceit.

SADIKU: [*with another of her energetic leaps.*] Yo-roooo o! Yo-rororo o!
Shall I come with you?

SIDI: Will that be wise? You forget
We have not seen each other.

SADIKU: Away then. Away woman. I shall bide here.
Haste back and tell Sadiku how the no-man is.
Away, my lovely child.

LAKUNLE: [*he has listened with increasing horror.*]
No, Sidi, don't. If you care
One little bit for what I feel,
Do not go to torment the man.
Suppose he knows that you have come to jeer—
And he will know, if he is not a fool—
He is a savage thing, degenerate
He would beat a helpless woman if he could . . .

SIDI: [*running off gleefully.*] Ta-raa school teacher. Wait here for me.

LAKUNLE: [*stamps his foot helplessly.*]
Foolish girl! . . . And this is all your work.
Could you not keep a secret?
Must every word leak out of you
As surely as the final drops
Of mother's milk
Oozed from your flattened breast
Generations ago?

SADIKU: Watch your wagging tongue, unformed creature!

LAKUNLE: If any harm befalls her . . .

SADIKU: Woman though she is, she can take better care of herself than you can of her. Fancy a thing like you actually wanting a girl like that, all to your little self. [*Walks round him and looks him up and down.*] Ah! Oba Ala[2] is an accommodating god. What a poor figure you cut!

LAKUNLE: I wouldn't demean myself to bandy words
With a woman of the bush.

SADIKU: At this moment, your betrothed is supping with the Lion.

LAKUNLE: [*pleased at the use of the word "Betrothed."*]
Well, we are not really betrothed as yet,
I mean, she is not promised yet.
But it will come in time, I'm sure.

SADIKU: [*bursts into her cackling laughter,*] The bride-price, is that paid?

LAKUNLE: Mind your own business.

SADIKU: Why don't you do what other men have done. Take a farm for a season. One harvest will be enough to pay the price, even for a girl like Sidi. Or will the smell of the wet soil be too much for your delicate nostrils?

LAKUNLE: I said mind your own business.

SADIKU: A—a—ah. It is true what they say then. You are going to convert the whole village so that no one will ever pay the bride-price again. Ah, you're a clever man. I must admit that it is a good way for getting out of it, but don't you think you'd use more time and energy that way than you would if . . .

LAKUNLE: [*with conviction.*] Within a year or two, I swear,
This town shall see a transformation
Bride-price will be a thing forgotten
And wives shall take their place by men.
A motor road will pass this spot.
And bring the city ways to us.
We'll buy saucepans for all the women
Clay pots are crude and unhygienic.

2. Contraction of Obatala, the god who fashioned the human body.

No man shall take more wives than one
That's why they're impotent too soon.
The ruler shall ride cars, not horses
Or a bicycle at the very least.
We'll burn the forest, cut the trees
Then plant a modern park for lovers
We'll print newspapers every day
With pictures of seductive girls.
The world will judge our progress by
The girls that win beauty contests.
While Lagos builds new factories daily
We only play "ayo"[3] and gossip.
Where is our school of Ballroom dancing?
Who here can throw a cocktail party?
We must be modern with the rest
Or live forgotten by the world.
We must reject the palm wine habit
And take to tea, with milk and sugar.

[*Turns on* SADIKU *who has been staring at him in terror. She retreats, and he continues to talk down at her as they go round, then down and off-stage,* LAKUNLE*'s hectoring voice trailing away in the distance.*]

This is my plan, you withered face
And I shall start by teaching you.
From now you shall attend my school
And take your place with twelve-year olds.
For though you're nearly seventy,
Your mind is simple and unformed.
Have you no shame that at your age,
You neither read nor write nor think?
You spend your days as senior wife,
Collecting brides for Baroka.
And now because you've sucked him dry,
You send my Sidi to his shame. . . .

[*The scene changes to Baroka's bedroom. On the left in a one-knee-on-floor posture, two men are engaged in a kind of wrestling, their arms clasped round each other's waist, testing the right moment to leave. One is* BAROKA, *the other a short squat figure of apparent muscular power. The contest is still in the balanced stage. In some distant part of the house,* SIDI*'s voice is heard lifted in the familiar general greeting, addressed to no one in particular.*]

3. A widely played board game.

SIDI: A good day to the head and people
Of this house.

[BAROKA *lifts his head, frowns as if he is trying to place the voice.*]

A good day to the head and people
Of this house.

[BAROKA *now decides to ignore it and to concentrate on the contest.* SIDI*'s voice draws progressively nearer. She enters nearly backwards, as she is still busy admiring the room through which she has just passed. Gasps on turning round to see the two men.*]

BAROKA: [*without looking up.*] Is Sadiku not at home then?
SIDI: [*absent-mindedly.*] Hm?
BAROKA: I asked, is Sadiku not at home?
SIDI: [*recollecting herself, she curtsys quickly.*] I saw no one, Baroka.
BAROKA: No one? Do you mean there was no one
To bar unwanted strangers from my privacy?
SIDI: [*retreating.*] The house . . . seemed . . . empty.
BAROKA: Ah, I forget. This is the price I pay
Once every week, for being progressive.
Prompted by the school teacher, my servants
Were prevailed upon to form something they call
The Palace Workers' Union. And in keeping
With the habits—I am told—of modern towns,
This is their day off.
SIDI: [*seeing that* BAROKA *seems to be in a better mood, she becomes somewhat bolder. Moves forward—saucily.*]
Is this also a day off
For Baroka's wives?
BAROKA: [*looks up sharply, relaxes and speaks with a casual voice.*]
No, the madness had not gripped them—yet.
Did you not meet with one of them?
SIDI: No, Baroka. There was no one about.
BAROKA: Not even Ailatu, my favourite?
Was she not at her usual place,
Beside my door?
SIDI: [*absently. She is deeply engrossed in watching the contest.*]
Her stool is there. And I saw
The slippers she was embroidering.
BAROKA: Hm. Hm. I think I know
Where she'll be found. In a dark corner
Sulking like a slighted cockroach.
By the way, look and tell me
If she left her shawl behind.

[*So as not to miss any part of the tussle, she moves backwards,*

darts a quick look round the door and back again.]

SIDI: There is a black shawl on the stool.

BAROKA: [*a regretful sigh.*]
Then she'll be back tonight. I had hoped
My words were harsh enough
To free me from her spite for a week or more.

SIDI: Did Ailatu offend her husband?

BAROKA: Offend? My armpit still weeps blood
For the gross abuse I suffered from one
I called my favourite.

SIDI: [*in a disappointed voice.*]
Oh. Is that all?

BAROKA: Is that not enough? Why child?
What more could the woman do?

SIDI: Nothing. Nothing, Baroka. I thought perhaps—
Well—young wives are known to be—
Forward—sometimes—to their husbands.

BAROKA: In an ill-kept household perhaps. But not
Under Baroka's roof. And yet,
Such are the sudden spites of women
That even I cannot foresee them all.
And child—if I lose this little match
Remember that my armpit
Burns and itches turn by turn.

[SIDI *continues watching for some time, then clasps her hand over her mouth as she remembers what she should have done to begin with. Doubtful how to proceed, she hesitates for some moments, then comes to a decision and kneels.*]

SIDI: I have come, Bale, as a repentant child.

BAROKA: What?

SIDI: [*very hesitantly, eyes to the floor, but she darts a quick look up when she thinks the Bale isn't looking.*]
The answer which I sent to the Bale
Was given in a thoughtless moment . . .

BAROKA: Answer, child? To what?

SIDI: A message brought by . . .

BAROKA: [*groans and strains in a muscular effort.*] Will you say that again? It is true that for supper
I did require your company. But up till now
Sadiku has brought no reply.

SIDI: [*amazed.*] But the other matter! Did not the Bale
Send . . . did Baroka not send . . . ?

BAROKA: [*with sinister encouragement.*]
What did Baroka not, my child?

SIDI: [*cowed, but angry, rises.*]

It is nothing, Bale. I only hope
That I am here at the Bale's invitation.

BAROKA: [*as if trying to understand, he frowns as he looks at her.*]
A-ah, at last I understand. You think
I took offence because you entered
Unannounced?

SIDI: I remember that the Bale called me
An unwanted stranger.

BAROKA: That could be expected. Is a man's bedroom
To be made naked to any flea
That chances to wander through?
[SIDI *turns away, very hurt.*]
Come, come, my child. You are too quick
To feel aggrieved. Of course you are
More than welcome. But I expected Ailatu
To tell me you were here.
[SIDI *curtsys briefly with her back to* BAROKA. *After a while, she turns round. The mischief returns to her face. Baroka's attitude of denial has been a setback but she is now ready to pursue her mission.*]

SIDI: I hope the Bale will not think me
Forward. But, like everyone, I had thought
The Favourite was a gentle woman.

BAROKA: And so had I.

SIDI: [*slyly.*] One would hardly think that *she*
Would give offence without a cause
Was the Favourite . . . in some way . . .
Dissatisfied . . . with her lord and husband?
[*With a mock curtsy, quickly executed as* BAROKA *begins to look up.*]

BAROKA: [*slowly turns towards her.*]
Now that
Is a question which I never thought to hear
Except from a school teacher. Do you think
The Lion has such leisure that he asks
The whys and wherefores of a woman's
Squint?
[SIDI *steps back and curtsys. As before, and throughout this scene, she is easily cowed by Baroka's change of mood, all the more easily as she is, in any case, frightened by her own boldness.*]

SIDI: I meant no disrespect . . .

BAROKA: [*gently.*] I know. [*Breaks off.*] Christians on my
Father's shrines, child!
Do you think I took offence? A—aw
Come in and seat yourself. Since you broke in

Unawares, and appear resolved to stay,
Try, if you can, not to make me feel
A humourless old ram. I allow no one
To watch my daily exercise, but as we say,
The woman gets lost in the woods one day
And every wood deity dies the next.
[SIDI *curtsys, watches and moves forward warily, as if expecting the two men to spring apart too suddenly.*]

SIDI: I think he will win.

BAROKA: Is that a wish, my daughter?

SIDI: No, but—[*Hesitates, but boldness wins.*]
If the tortoise cannot tumble
It does not mean that he can stand.
[BAROKA *looks at her, seemingly puzzled.* SIDI *turns away, humming.*]

BAROKA: When the child is full of riddles, the mother
Has one water-pot the less.
[SIDI *tiptoes to Baroka's back and pulls asses' ears at him.*]

SIDI: I think he will win.

BAROKA: He knows he must. Would it profit me
To pit my strength against a weakling?
Only yesterday, this son of—I suspect—
A python for a mother, and fathered beyond doubt
By a blubber-bottomed baboon,
[*The complimented man grins.*]
Only yesterday, he nearly
Ploughed my tongue with my front teeth
In a friendly wrestling bout.

WRESTLER: [*encouraged, makes an effort.*] Ugh. Ugh.

SIDI: [*bent almost over them. Genuinely worried.*]
Oh! Does it hurt?

BAROKA: Not yet . . . but, as I was saying
I change my wrestlers when I have learnt
To throw them. I also change my wives
When I have learnt to tire them.

SIDI: And is this another . . . changing time
For the Bale?

BAROKA: Who knows? Until the finger nails
Have scraped the dust, no one can tell
Which insect released his bowels.
[SIDI *grimaces in disgust and walks away. Returns as she thinks up a new idea.*]

SIDI: A woman spoke to me this afternoon.

BAROKA: Indeed. And does Sidi find this unusual—
That a woman speak with her in the afternoon?

SIDI: [*stamping.*] No. She had the message of a go-between.
BAROKA: Did she? Then I rejoice with you.
[SIDI *stands biting her lips.* BAROKA *looks at her, this time with deliberate appreciation.*]
And now I think of it, why not?
There must be many men who
Build their loft to fit your height.
SIDI: [*unmoving, pointedly.*] Her message came from one
With many lofts.
BAROKA: Ah! Such is the greed of men.
SIDI: If Baroka were my father
[*aside*]—which many would take him to be—
[*Makes a rude sign.*]
Would he pay my dowry to this man
And give his blessings?
BAROKA: Well, I must know his character.
For instance, is the man rich?
SIDI: Rumour has it so.
BAROKA: Is he repulsive?
SIDI: He is old. [BAROKA *winces.*]
BAROKA: Is he mean and miserly?
SIDI: To strangers—no. There are tales
Of his open-handedness, which are never
Quite without a motive. But his wives report
—to take one little story—
How he grew the taste for ground corn
And pepper—because he would not pay
The price of snuff!
[*With a sudden burst of angry energy,* BAROKA *lifts his opponent and throws him over his shoulder.*]
BAROKA: A lie! The price of snuff
Had nothing to do with it.
SIDI: [*too excited to listen.*] You won!
BAROKA: By the years on my beard, I swear
They slander me!
SIDI: [*excitedly.*] You won. You won!
[*She breaks into a kind of shoulder dance and sings.*]
Yokolu Yokolu. Ko ha tan bi
Iyawo gb'oko san'le
Oko yo 'ke . . .[4]
[*She repeats this throughout Baroka's protests.* BAROKA *is pacing*

4. Not completely translatable: sung or drummed as a message to announce a huge disgrace, or to provoke an opponent after a defeat. *Ko ha tan bi* means "it is finished," and the implied reference is to a wife's throwing her husband so heavily that he develops a hunchback. *Ako* bench: a strong bench.

angrily up and down. The defeated man, nursing a hip, goes to the corner of the room and lifts out a low "ako" bench. He sits on the floor, and soon, BAROKA *joins him; using only their arms now, they place their elbows on the bench and grip hands.* BAROKA *takes his off again, replaces it, takes it off again and so on during the rest of his outburst.*]

BAROKA: This means nothing to me of course. Nothing!
But I know the ways of women, and I know
Their ruinous tongues.
Suppose that, as a child—only suppose—
Suppose then, that as a child, I—
And remember, I only use myself
To illustrate the plight of many men . . .
So, once again, suppose that as a child
I grew to love "tanfiri"[5]—with a good dose of pepper
And growing old, I found that—
Sooner than die away, my passion only
Bred itself upon each mouthful of
Ground corn and pepper I consumed.
Now, think child, would it be seemly
At my age, and the father of children,
To be discovered, in public
Thrusting fistfuls of corn and pepper
In my mouth? Is it not wise to indulge
In the little masquerade of a dignified
Snuff-box?—But remember, I only make
A pleading for this prey of women's
Malice. I feel his own injustice,
Being myself, a daily fellow-sufferer!

[BAROKA *seems to realize for the first time that* SIDI *has paid no attention to his explanation. She is, in fact, still humming and shaking her shoulders. He stares questioningly at her.* SIDI *stops, somewhat confused and embarrassed, points sheepishly to the wrestler.*]

SIDI: I think this time he will win.

[BAROKA*'s grumbling subsides slowly. He is now attentive to the present bout.*]

BAROKA: Now let us once again take up
The questioning. [*Almost timidly.*] Is this man
Good and kindly.

SIDI: They say he uses well
His dogs and horses.

BAROKA: [*desperately.*]

5. A local food.

Well is he fierce then? Reckless!
Does the bush cow run to hole
When he hears his beaters' Hei-ei-wo-rah!

SIDI: There are heads and skins of leopards
Hung around his council room.
But the market is also
Full of them.

BAROKA: Is he not wise? Is he not sagely?
Do the young and old not seek
His counsel?

SIDI: The Fox is said to be wise
So cunning that he stalks and dines on
New-hatched chickens.

BAROKA: [*more and more desperate.*]
Does he not beget strength on wombs?
Are his children not tall and stout-limbed?

SIDI: Once upon a time.

BAROKA: Once upon a time?
What do you mean, girl?

SIDI: Just once upon a time
Perhaps his children have of late
Been plagued with shyness and refuse
To come into the world. Or else
He is so tired with the day's affairs
That at night, he turns his buttocks
To his wives. But there have been
No new reeds cut by his servants,
No new cots woven.
And his household gods are starved
For want of child-naming festivities
Since the last two rains went by.

BAROKA: Perhaps he is a frugal man.
Mindful of years to come,
Planning for a final burst of life, he
Husbands his strength.

SIDI: [*giggling. She is actually stopped, half-way, by giggling at the cleverness of her remark.*]
To husband his wives surely ought to be
A man's first duties—at all times.

BAROKA: My beard tells me you've been a pupil,
A most diligent pupil of Sadiku.
Among all shameless women,
The sharpest tongues grow from that one
Peeling bark—Sadiku, my faithful lizard!

[*Growing steadily warmer during this speech, he again slaps*

down his opponent's arm as he shouts "Sadiku."]

SIDI: [*backing away, aware that she has perhaps gone too far and betrayed knowledge of the "secret."*]
I have learnt nothing of anyone.

BAROKA: No more. No more.
Already I have lost a wrestler
On your account. This town-bred daring
Of little girls, awakes in me
A seven-horned devil of strength.
Let one woman speak a careless word
And I can pin a wriggling—Bah!
[*Lets go the man's arm. He has risen during the last speech but held on to the man's arm, who is forced to rise with him.*]
The tappers should have called by now.
See if we have a fresh gourd by the door.
[*The wrestler goes out.* BAROKA *goes to sit on the bed,* SIDI *eyeing him, doubtfully.*]
What an ill-tempered man I daily grow
Towards. Soon my voice will be
The sand between two grinding stones.
But I have my scattered kindliness
Though few occasions serve to herald it.
And Sidi, my daughter, you do not know
The thoughts which prompted me
To ask the pleasure that I be your host
This evening, I would not tell Sadiku,
Meaning to give delight
With the surprise of it. Now, tell me, child
Can you guess a little at this thing?

SIDI: Sadiku told me nothing.

BAROKA: You are hasty with denial. For how indeed
Could Sadiku, since I told her
Nothing of my mind. But, my daughter,
Did she not, perhaps . . . invent some tale?
For I know Sadiku loves to be
All-knowing.

SIDI: She said no more, except the Bale
Begged my presence.

BAROKA: [*rises quickly to the bait.*]
Begged? Bale Baroka begged?
[*Wrestler enters with gourd and calabash-cups.* BAROKA *relapses.*]
Ah! I see you love to bait your elders.
One way the world remains the same,
The child still thinks she is wiser than

The cotton head of age.
Do you think Baroka deaf or blind
To little signs? But let that pass.
Only, lest you fall victim to the schemes
Of busy women, I will tell you this—
I know Sadiku plays the match-maker
Without the prompting. If I look
On any maid, or call her name
Even in the course of harmless, neighbourly
Well-wishing—How fares your daughter?
—Is your sister now recovered from her
Whooping cough?—How fast your ward
Approaches womanhood! Have the village lads
Begun to gather at your door?—
Or any word at all which shows I am
The thoughtful guardian of the village health,
If it concerns a woman, Sadiku straightway
Flings herself into the role of go-between
And before I even don a cap, I find
Yet another stranger in my bed!

SIDI: It seems a Bale's life
Is full of great unhappiness.

BAROKA: I do not complain. No, my child
I accept the sweet and sour with
A ruler's grace. I lose my patience
Only when I meet with
The new immodesty with women.
Now, my Sidi, you have not caught
This new and strange disease, I hope.

SIDI: [*curtsying.*] The threading of my smock—
Does Baroka not know the marking
Of the village loom?

BAROKA: But will Sidi, the pride of mothers,
Will she always wear it?

SIDI: Will Sidi, the proud daughter of Baroka,
Will she step out naked?

[*A pause.* BAROKA *surveys* SIDI *in an almost fatherly manner and she bashfully drops her eyes.*]

BAROKA: To think that once I thought,
Sidi is the eye's delight, but
She is vain, and her head
Is feather-light, and always giddy
With a trivial thought. And now
I find her deep and wise beyond her years.

[*Reaches under his pillow, brings out the now familiar magazine, and also an addressed envelope. Retains the former and gives her the envelope.*]

Do you know what this means?
The trim red piece of paper
In the corner?

SIDI: I know it. A stamp. Lakunle receives
Letters from Lagos marked with it.

BAROKA: [*obviously disappointed.*]
Hm. Lakunle. But more about him
Later. Do you know what it means—
This little frippery?

SIDI: [*very proudly.*]
Yes. I know that too. Is it not a tax on
The habit of talking with paper?

BAROKA: Oh. Oh. I see you dip your hand
Into the pockets of the school teacher
And retrieve it bulging with knowledge.

[*Goes to the strange machine, and pulls the lever up and down.*]

Now this, not even the school teacher can tell
What magic this performs. Come nearer,
It will not bite.

SIDI: I have never seen the like.

BAROKA: The work dear child, of the palace blacksmiths
Built in full secrecy. All is not well with it—
But I will find the cause and then Ilujinle
Will boast its own tax on paper, made with
Stamps like this. For long I dreamt it
And here it stands, child of my thoughts.

SIDI: [*wonder-struck.*] You mean . . . this will work some day?

BAROKA: Ogun has said the word. And now my girl
What think you of that image on the stamp
This spiderwork of iron, wood and mortar?

SIDI: Is it not a bridge?

BAROKA: It is a bridge. The longest—so they say—
In the whole country. When not a bridge,
You'll find a print of groundnuts
Stacked like pyramids,
Or palm trees, or cocoa-trees, and farmers
Hacking pods, and workmen
Felling trees and tying skinned logs
Into rafts. A thousand thousand letters
By road, by rail, by air,
From one end of the world to another,
And not one human head among them;

Not one head of beauty on the stamp?
SIDI: But I once saw Lakunle's letter
With a head of bronze.
BAROKA: A figurehead, my child, a lifeless work
Of craft, with holes for eyes, and coldness
For the warmth of life and love
In youthful cheeks like yours,
My daughter . . .
[*Pauses to watch the effect on* SIDI.]
. . . Can you see it, Sidi?
Tens of thousands of these dainty prints
And each one with this legend of Sidi.
[*Flourishes the magazine, open in the middle.*]
The village goddess, reaching out
Towards the sun, her lover.
Can you see it, my daughter!
[SIDI *drowns herself totally in the contemplation, takes the magazine but does not even look at it. Sits on the bed.*]
BAROKA: [*very gently.*]
I hope you will not think it too great
A burden, to carry the country's mail
All on your comeliness.
[*Walks away, an almost business-like tone.*]
Our beginnings will
Of course be modest. We shall begin
By cutting stamps for our own village alone.
As the schoolmaster himself would say—
Charity begins at home.
[*Pause. Faces* SIDI *from nearly the distance of the room.*]
For a long time now,
The town-dwellers have made up tales
Of the backwardness of Ilujinle
Until it hurts Baroka, who holds
The welfare of his people deep at heart.
Now, if we do this thing, it will prove more
Than any single town has done!
[*The wrestler, who has been listening open-mouthed, drops his cup in admiration.* BAROKA, *annoyed, realizing only now in fact that he is still in the room, waves him impatiently out.*]
I do not hate progress, only its nature
Which makes all roofs and faces look the same.
And the wish of one old man is
That here and there,
[*Goes progressively towards* SIDI, *until he bends over her, then sits beside her on the bed.*]

Among the bridges and the murderous roads,
Below the humming birds which
Smoke the face of Sango, dispenser of
The snake-tongue lightning; between this moment
And the reckless broom that will be wielded
In these years to come, we must leave
Virgin plots of lives, rich decay
And the tang of vapour rising from
Forgotten heaps of compost, lying
Undisturbed . . . But the skin of progress
Masks, unknown, the spotted wolf of sameness . . .
Does sameness not revolt your being,
My daughter?

[SIDI *is capable only of a bewildered nod, slowly.*]

BAROKA: [*sighs, hands folded piously on his lap.*]
I find my soul is sensitive, like yours,
Indeed, although there is one—no more think I—
One generation between yours and mine,
Our thoughts fly crisply through the air
And meet, purified, as one.
And our first union
Is the making of this stamp.
The one redeeming grace on any paper-tax
Shall be your face. And mine,
The soul behind it all, worshipful
Of Nature for her gift of youth
And beauty to our earth. Does this
Please you, my daughter?

SIDI: I can no longer see the meaning, Baroka.
Now that you speak
Almost like the school teacher, except
Your words fly on a different path,
I find . . .

BAROKA: It is a bad thing, then, to sound
Like your school teacher?

SIDI: No Bale, but words are like beetles
Boring at my ears, and my head
Becomes a jumping bean. Perhaps after all,
As the school teacher tells me often,

[*Very miserably.*]

I have a simple mind.

BAROKA: [*pats her kindly on the head.*]
No, Sidi, not simple, only straight and truthful
Like a fresh-water reed. But I do find
Your school teacher and I are much alike.

The proof of wisdom is the wish to learn
Even from children. And the haste of youth
Must learn its temper from the gloss
Of ancient leather, from a strength
Knit close along the grain. The school teacher
And I, must learn one from the other.
Is this not right?
[*A tearful nod.*]

BAROKA: The old must flow into the new, Sidi,
Not blind itself or stand foolishly
Apart. A girl like you must inherit
Miracles which age alone reveals
Is this not so?

SIDI: Everything you say, Bale,
Seems wise to me.

BAROKA: Yesterday's wine alone is strong and blooded, child,
And though the Christians' holy book denies
The truth of this, old wine thrives best
Within a new bottle. The coarseness
Is mellowed down, and the rugged wine
Acquires a full and rounded body . . .
Is this not so—my child?
[*Quite overcome,* SIDI *nods.*]

BAROKA: Those who know little of Baroka think
His life one pleasure-living course.
But the monkey sweats, my child,
The monkey sweats,
It is only the hair upon his back
Which still deceives the world . . .

[SIDI*'s head falls slowly on the Bale's shoulder. The Bale remains in his final body-weighed-down-by-burdens-of-State attitude. Even before the scene is completely shut off a crowd of dancers burst in at the front and dance off at the opposite side without slackening pace. In their brief appearance it should be apparent that they comprise a group of female dancers pursuing a masked male. Drumming and shouts continue quite audibly and shortly afterwards. They enter and re-cross the stage in the same manner.*

The shouts fade away and they next appear at the market clearing. It is now full evening. LAKUNLE *and* SADIKU *are still waiting for Sidi's return. The traders are beginning to assemble one by one, ready for the evening market. Hawkers pass through with oil-lamps beside their ware. Food sellers enter with cooking-pots and foodstuffs, set up their "adogan," or stone hearth and build a fire.*

All this while, LAKUNLE *is pacing wretchedly,* SADIKU *looks on placidly.*]

LAKUNLE: [*he is pacing furiously.*]
He's killed her.
I warned you. You know him,
And I warned you.
[*Goes up all the approaches to look.*]
She's been gone half the day. It will soon
Be daylight. And still no news.
Women have disappeared before.
No trace. Vanished. Now we know how.
[*Checks, turns round.*]
And why!
Mock an old man, will you? So?
You can laugh? Ha ha! You wait.
I'll come and see you
Whipped like a dog. Baroka's head wife
Driven out of the house for plotting
With a girl.
[*Each approaching footstep brings* LAKUNLE *to attention, but it is only a hawker or a passer-by. The wrestler passes.* SADIKU *greets him familiarly. Then, after he has passed, some significance of this breaks on* SADIKU *and she begins to look a little puzzled.*]

LAKUNLE: I know he has dungeons. Secret holes
Where a helpless girl will lie
And rot for ever. But not for nothing
Was I born a man. I'll find my way
To rescue her. She little deserves it, but
I shall risk my life for her.
[*The mummers can now be heard again, distantly.* SADIKU *and* LAKUNLE *become attentive as the noise approaches,* LAKUNLE *increasingly uneasy. A little, but not too much notice is paid by the market people.*]
What is that?

SADIKU: If my guess is right, it will be mummers. [*Adds slyly.*] Somebody must have told them the news.

LAKUNLE: What news?
[SADIKU *chuckles darkly and comprehension breaks on the School teacher.*]
Baroka! You dared . . . ?
Woman, is there no mercy in your veins?
He gave you children, and he stood
Faithfully by you and them.
He risked his life that you may boast

A warrior-hunter for your lord . . . But you—
You sell him to the rhyming rabble
Gloating in your disloyalty . . .

SADIKU: [*calmly dips her hand in his pocket.*]
Have you any money?

LAKUNLE: [*snatching out her hand.*]
Why? What? . . . Keep away, witch! Have you
Turned pickpocket in your dotage?

SADIKU: Don't be a miser. Will you let them go without giving you a special performance?

LAKUNLE: If you think I care for their obscenity . . .

SADIKU: [*wheedling.*] Come on, school teacher. They'll expect it of you . . . The man of learning . . . the young sprig of foreign wisdom . . . You must not demean yourself in their eyes . . . you must give them money to perform for your lordship . . .

[Re-enter the mummers, dancing straight through (more centrally this time) as before. Male dancer enters first, pursued by a number of young women and other choral idlers. The man dances in tortured movements. He and about half of his pursuers have already danced off-stage on the opposite side when SADIKU *dips her hand briskly in Lakunle's pocket, this time with greater success. Before* LAKUNLE *can stop her, she has darted to the drummers and pressed a coin apiece on their foreheads, waving them to possession of the floor. Tilting their heads backwards, they drum her praises.* SADIKU *denies the credit, points to* LAKUNLE *as the generous benefactor. They transfer their attention to him where he stands biting his lips at the trick. The other dancers have now been brought back and the drummers resume the beat of the interrupted dance. The treasurer removes the coins from their foreheads and places them in a pouch. Now begins the dance of virility which is of course none other than the Baroka story. Very athletic movements. Even in his prime, "Baroka" is made a comic figure, held in a kind of tolerant respect by his women. At his decline and final downfall, they are most unsparing in their taunts and tantalizing motions.* SADIKU *has never stopped bouncing on her toes through the dance, now she is done the honour of being invited to join at the kill. A dumb show of bashful refusals, then she joins them, reveals surprising agility for her age, to the wild enthusiasm of the rest who surround and spur her on.*

With "Baroka" finally scotched, the crowd dances away to their incoming movement, leaving SADIKU *to dance on oblivious of their departure. The drumming becomes more distant and she unwraps her eyelids. Sighs, looks around her and walks contentedly towards* LAKUNLE. *As usual he has enjoyed the specta-*

cle in spite of himself, showing especial relish where "Baroka" gets the worst of it from his women. SADIKU *looks at him for a moment while he tries to replace his obvious enjoyment with disdain. She shouts "Boo" at him, and breaks into a dance movement, shakes a sudden leg at* LAKUNLE.]

SADIKU: Sadiku of the duiker's feet . . . that's what the men used to call me. I could twist and untwist my waist with the smoothness of a water snake . . .

LAKUNLE: No doubt. And you are still just as slippery.
I hope Baroka kills you for this.
When he finds out what your wagging tongue
Has done to him, I hope he beats you
Till you choke on your own breath . . .

[SIDI *bursts in, she has been running all the way. She throws herself on the ground against the tree and sobs violently, beating herself on the ground.*]

SADIKU: [*on her knees beside her.*] Why, child. What is the matter?

SIDI: [*pushes her off.*]
Get away from me. Do not touch me.

LAKUNLE: [*with a triumphant smile, he pulls* SADIKU *away and takes her place.*]
Oh, Sidi, let me kiss your tears . . .

SIDI: [*pushes him so hard that he sits down abruptly.*]
Don't touch me.

LAKUNLE: [*dusting himself.*]
He must have beaten her.
Did I not warn you both?
Baroka is a creature of the wilds,
Untutored, mannerless, devoid of grace.

[SIDI *only cries all the more, beats on the ground with clenched fists and stubs her toes in the ground.*]

Chief though he is,
I shall kill him for this . . .
No. Better still, I shall demand
Redress from the central courts.
I shall make him spend
The remainder of his wretched life
In prison—with hard labour.
I'll teach him
To beat defenceless women . . .

SIDI: [*lifting her head.*]
Fool! You little fools! It was a lie.
The frog. The cunning frog!
He lied to you, Sadiku.

SADIKU: Sango forbid!

SIDI: He told me . . . afterwards, crowing.
It was a trick.
He knew Sadiku would not keep it to herself,
That I, or maybe other maids would hear of it
And go to mock his plight.
And how he laughed!
How his frog-face croaked and croaked
And called me little fool!
Oh how I hate him! How I loathe
And long to kill the man!
LAKUNLE: [*retreating.*] But Sidi, did he . . . ? I mean . . .
Did you escape?
[*Louder sobs from* SIDI.]
Speak, Sidi, this is agony.
Tell me the worst; I'll take it like a man.
Is it the fright which affects you so,
Or did he . . . ? Sidi, I cannot bear the thought.
The words refuse to form.
Do not unman me, Sidi. Speak
Before I burst in tears.
SADIKU: [*raises* SIDI*'s chin in her hand.*]
Sidi, are you a maid or not?
[SIDI *shakes her head violently and bursts afresh in tears.*]
LAKUNLE: The Lord forbid!
SADIKU: Too late for prayers. Cheer up. It happens to the best of us.
LAKUNLE: Oh heavens, strike me dead!
Earth, open up and swallow Lakunle.
For he no longer has the wish to live.
Let the lightning fall and shrivel me
To dust and ashes . . .
[*Recoils.*]
No, that wish is cowardly. This trial is my own.
Let Sango and his lightning keep out of this. It
Is my cross, and let it not be spoken that
In the hour of need, Lakunle stood
Upon the scales and was proved wanting.
My love is selfless—the love of spirit
Not of flesh.
[*Stands over* SIDI.]
Dear Sidi, we shall forget the past.
This great misfortune touches not
The treasury of my love.
But you will agree, it is only fair
That we forget the bride-price totally
Since you no longer can be called a maid.

Here is my hand; if on these terms,
You'll be my cherished wife.
We'll take an oath, between us three
That this shall stay
A secret to our dying days . . .
[*Takes a look at* SADIKU *and adds quickly.*]
Oh no, a secret even after we're dead and gone.
And if Baroka dares to boast of it,
I'll swear he is a liar—and swear by Sango too!
[SIDI *raises herself slowly, staring at* LAKUNLE *with unbelieving eyes. She is unsmiling, her face a puzzle.*]

SIDI: You would? You would marry me?

LAKUNLE: [*puffs out his chest.*] Yes.
[*Without a change of expression,* SIDI *dashes suddenly off the stage.*]

SADIKU: What on earth has got into her?

LAKUNLE: I wish I knew
She took off suddenly
Like a hunted buck.
[*Looks off-stage.*]
I think—yes, she is,
She is going home.
Sadiku, will you go?
Find out if you can
What she plans to do.
[SADIKU *nods and goes.* LAKUNLE *walks up and down.*]
And now I know I am the biggest fool
That ever walked this earth.
There are women to be found
In every town or village in these parts,
And every one a virgin.
But I obey my books.
[*Distant music. Light drums, flutes, box-guitars, "sekere."*[6]]
"Man takes the fallen woman by the hand"
And ever after they live happily.
Moreover, I will admit,
It solves the problem of her bride-price too.
A man must live or fall by his true
Principles. That, I had sworn,
Never to pay.
[*Enter* SADIKU.]

SADIKU: She is packing her things. She is gathering her clothes and

6. A musical instrument made of a calabash netted with strings of cowrie shells, and shaken.

trinkets together, and oiling herself as a bride does before her wedding.

LAKUNLE: Heaven help us! I am not impatient.
Surely she can wait a day or two at least.
There is the asking to be done,
And then I have to hire a praise-singer,
And such a number of ceremonies
Must firstly be performed.

SADIKU: Just what I said but she only laughed at me and called me a . . . a . . . what was it now . . . a bra . . . braba . . . brabararian. It serves you right. It all comes of your teaching. I said what about the asking and the other ceremonies. And she looked at me and said, leave all that nonsense to savages and brabararians.

LAKUNLE: But I must prepare myself.
I cannot be
A single man one day and a married one the next.
It must come gradually.
I will not wed in haste.
A man must have time to prepare,
To learn to like the thought.
I must think of my pupils too:
Would they be pleased if I were married
Not asking their consent . . . ?
[*The singing group is now audible even to him.*]
What is that? The musicians?
Could they have learnt so soon?

SADIKU: The news of a festivity travels fast. You ought to know that.

LAKUNLE: The goddess of malicious gossip
Herself must have a hand in my undoing.
The very spirits of the partial air
Have all conspired to blow me, willy-nilly
Down the slippery slope of grim matrimony.
What evil have I done . . . ? Ah, here they come!
[*Enter crowd and musicians.*]
Go back. You are not needed yet. Nor ever.
Hence parasites, you've made a big mistake.
There is no one getting wedded; get you home.

[SIDI *now enters. In one hand she holds a bundle, done up in a richly embroidered cloth: in the other the magazine. She is radiant, jewelled, lightly clothed, and wears light leather-thong sandals. They all go suddenly silent except for the long-drawn O-Ohs of admiration. She goes up to* LAKUNLE *and hands him the book.*]

SIDI: A present from Sidi.

I tried to tear it up
But my fingers were too frail.
[*To the crowd.*]
Let us go.
[*To* LAKUNLE.]
You may come too if you wish,
You are invited.

LAKUNLE: [*lost in the miracle of transformation.*]
Well I should hope so indeed
Since I am to marry you.

SIDI: [*turns round in surprise.*]
Marry who . . . ? You thought . . .
Did you really think that you, and I . . .
Why, did you think that after him,
I could endure the touch of another man?
I who have felt the strength,
The perpetual youthful zest
Of the panther of the trees?
And would I choose a watered-down,
A beardless version of unripened man?

LAKUNLE: [*bars her way.*]
I shall not let you.
I shall protect you from yourself.

SIDI: [*gives him a shove that sits him down again, hard against the tree base.*]
Out of my way, book-nourished shrimp.
Do you see what strength he has given me?
That was not bad. For a man of sixty,
It was the secret of God's own draught
A deed for drums and ballads.
But you, at sixty, you'll be ten years dead!
In fact, you'll not survive your honeymoon . . .
Come to my wedding if you will. If not . . .
[*She shrugs her shoulders. Kneels down at Sadiku's feet.*]
Mother of brides, your blessing . . .

SADIKU: [*lays her hand on Sidi's head.*] I invoke the fertile gods. They will stay with you. May the time come soon when you shall be as round-bellied as a full moon in a low sky.

SIDI: [*hands her the bundle.*]
Now bless my wordly goods.
[*Turns to the musicians.*]
Come, sing to me of seeds
Of children, sired of the lion stock.
[*The Musicians resume their tune.* SIDI *sings and dances.*]
Mo te'ni. Mo te'ni.

Mo te'ni. Mo te'ni.
Sun mo mi, we mo mi
Sun mo mi, fa mo mi
Yarabi lo m'eyi t'o le d'omo . . .

[*Festive air, fully pervasive. Oil lamps from the market multiply as traders desert their stalls to join them. A young girl flaunts her dancing buttocks at* LAKUNLE *and he rises to the bait.* SADIKU *gets in his way as he gives chase. Tries to make him dance with her.* LAKUNLE *last seen, having freed himself of* SADIKU, *clearing a space in the crowd for the young girl.*

The crowd repeat the song after SIDI.]

Tolani Tolani
T'emi ni T'emi ni
Sun mo mi, we mo mi
Sun mo mi, fa mo mi
Yarabi lo m'eyi t'o le d'omo.[7]

7. "My net is spread, my net is spread
Come close to me, wrap yourself around me
Only God knows which moment makes the child . . .

Tolani Tolani
She belongs to me, belongs to me
Come close to me, wrap yourself around me
Only god knows which moment makes the child."

A Note on Translation

Reading literature in translation is a pleasure on which it is fruitless to frown. The purist may insist that we ought always read in the original languages, and we know ideally that this is true. But it is a counsel of perfection, quite impractical even for the purist, since no one in a lifetime can master all the languages whose literatures it would be a joy to explore. Master languages as fast as we may, we shall always have to read to some extent in translation, and this means we must be alert to what we are about: if in reading a work of literature in translation we are not reading the "original," what precisely are we reading? This is a question of great complexity, to which justice cannot be done in a brief note, but the following sketch of some of the considerations may be helpful.

One of the memorable scenes of ancient literature is the meeting of Hector and Andromache in Book VI of Homer's *Iliad*. Hector, leader and mainstay of the armies defending Troy, is implored by his wife Andromache to withdraw within the city walls and carry on the defense from there, where his life will not be constantly at hazard. In Homer's text her opening words to him are these: *δαιμόνιε, φθίσει σε τὸ σὸν μένος* (daimonie, phthisei se to son menos). How should they be translated into English?

Here is how they have actually been translated into English by capable translators, at various periods, in verse and prose.

1. George Chapman, 1598

> O noblest in desire,
> Thy mind, inflamed with others' good, will set thy self on fire.

2. John Dryden, 1693

> Thy dauntless heart (which I foresee too late),
> Too daring man, will urge thee to thy fate.

3. Alexander Pope, 1715

> Too daring Prince! . . .
> For sure such courage length of life denies,
> And thou must fall, thy virtue's sacrifice.

4. William Cowper, 1791

> Thy own great courage will cut short thy days,
> My noble Hector. . .

5. Lang, Leaf, and Myers, 1883 (prose)

> Dear my lord, this thy hardihood will undo thee. . . .

6. A. T. Murray, 1924 (prose, Loeb Library)

Ah, my husband, this prowess of thine will be thy doom. . . .

7. E. V. Rieu, 1950 (prose)

"Hector," she said, "you are possessed. This bravery of yours will be your end."

8. I. A. Richards, 1950 (prose)

"Strange man," she said, "your courage will be your destruction."

9. Richmond Lattimore, 1951

Dearest,
Your own great strength will be your death. . . .

From these strikingly different renderings of the same six words, certain facts about the nature of translation begin to emerge. We notice, for one thing, that Homer's word *μένος* (menos) is diversified by the translators into "mind," "dauntless heart," "such courage," "great courage," "hardihood," "prowess," "bravery," "courage," and "great strength." The word has in fact all these possibilities. Used of things, it normally means "force"; of animals, "fierceness" or "brute strength" or (in the case of horses) "mettle"; of men, "passion" or "spirit" or even "purpose." Homer's application of it in the present case points our attention equally—whatever particular sense we may imagine Andromache to have uppermost—to Hector's force, strength, fierceness in battle, spirited heart and mind. But since English has no matching term of like inclusiveness, the passage as the translators give it to us reflects this lack and we find one attribute singled out to the exclusion of the rest.

Here then is the first and most crucial fact about any work of literature read in translation. It cannot escape the linguistic characteristics of the language into which it is turned: the grammatical, syntactical, lexical, and phonetic boundaries which constitute collectively the individuality or "genius" of that language. A Greek play or a Russian novel in English will be governed first of all by the resources of the English language, resources which are certain to be in every instance very different, as the efforts with *μένος* show, from those of the original.

Turning from *μένος* to *δαιμόνιε* (daimonie) in Homer's clause, we encounter a second crucial fact about translations. Nobody knows exactly what shade of meaning *δαιμόνιε* had for Homer. In later writers the word normally suggests divinity, something miraculous, wondrous; but in Homer it appears as a vocative of address for both chieftain and commoner, man and wife. The coloring one gives it must therefore be determined either by the way one thinks a Greek wife of Homer's era might actually address her husband (a subject on which we have no information whatever), or in the way one thinks it suitable for a hero's wife to address her husband in an epic poem, that is to say, a highly stylized and formal work. In general, the translators of our century will be seen to have abandoned formality in order to stress the intimacy, the wifeliness, and, especially in Lattimore's case, a certain chiding tenderness, in Andromache's appeal: (6) "Ah, my husband," (7) "Hector" (with perhaps a hint, in "you are possessed," of the alarmed distaste with which wives have so often viewed their husbands' bellicose

moods), (8) "Strange man," (9) "Dearest." On the other hand, the older translators have obviously removed Andromache to an epic or heroic distance from her beloved, whence she sees and kindles to his selfless courage, acknowledging, even in the moment of pleading with him to be otherwise, his moral grandeur and the tragic destiny this too certainly implies: (1) "O noblest in desire, . . . inflamed by others' good"; (2) "Thy dauntless heart (which I foresee too late), / Too daring man"; (3) "Too daring Prince! . . . / And thou must fall, thy virtue's sacrifice"; (4) "My noble Hector." Even the less specific "Dear my lord" of Lang, Leaf, and Myers looks in the same direction because of its echo of the speech of countless Shakespearean men and women who have shared this powerful moral sense: "Dear my lord, make me acquainted with your cause of grief"; "Perseverance, dear my lord, keeps honor bright"; etc.

The fact about translation which emerges from all this is that just as the translated work reflects the individuality of the language it is turned into, so it reflects the individuality of the age in which it is made, and the age will permeate it everywhere like yeast in dough. We think of one kind of permeation when we think of the governing verse forms and attitudes toward verse at a given epoch. In Chapman's time, experiments seeking an "heroic" verse form for English were widespread, and accordingly he tries a "fourteener" couplet (two rhymed lines of seven stresses each) in his *Iliad* and a pentameter couplet in his *Odyssey*. When Dryden and Pope wrote, a closed pentameter couplet had become established as the heroic form *par excellence*. By Cowper's day, thanks largely to the prestige of *Paradise Lost*, the couplet had gone out of fashion for narrative poetry in favor of blank verse. Our age, inclining to prose and in verse to proselike informalities and relaxations, has, predictably, produced half a dozen excellent prose translations of the *Iliad*, but only two in verse (Lattimore's and that of Robert Fitzgerald), both relying on rhythms that are much of the time close to the verse of William Carlos Williams and some of the prose of novelists like Faulkner than to the swift firm tread of Homer's Greek. For if it is true that what we translate from a given work is what, wearing the spectacles of our time, we see in it, it is also true that we see in it what we have the power to translate.

Of course there are other effects of the translator's epoch on his translation besides those exercised by contemporary taste in verse and verse forms. Chapman writes in a great age of poetic metaphor and therefore almost instinctively translates his understanding of Homer's verb φθίσει (phthisei, "to cause to wane, consume, waste, pine") into metaphorical terms of flame, presenting his Hector to us as a man of burning generosity who will be consumed by his very ardor. This is a conception rooted in large part in the psychology of the Elizabethans, who had the habit of speaking of the soul as "fire," of one of the four temperaments as "fiery," of even the more material bodily processes, like digestion, as if they were carried on by the heat of fire ("concoction," "decoction"). It is rooted too in that characteristic Renaissance élan so unforgettably expressed in characters like Tamburlaine and Dr. Faustus, the former of whom exclaims to the stars above:

> . . . I, the chiefest lamp of all the earth,
> First rising in the East with mild aspect,
> But fixed now in the meridian line,

Will send up fire to your turning spheres,
And cause the sun to borrow light of you. . . .

Pope and Dryden, by contrast, write to audiences for whom strong metaphor has become suspect. They therefore reject the fire image (which we must recall is not present in the Greek) in favor of a form of speech more congenial to their age, the *sententia* or aphorism, and give it extra vitality by making it the scene of a miniature drama: in Dryden's case, the hero's dauntless heart "urges" him (in the double sense of physical as well as moral pressure) to his fate; in Pope's, the hero's courage, like a judge, "denies" continuance of life, with the consequence that he "falls"—and here Pope's second line suggests analogy to the sacrificial animal—the victim of his own essential nature, of what he is.

To pose even more graphically the pressures that a translator's period brings, consider the following lines from Hector's reply to Andromache's appeal that he withdraw, first in Chapman's Elizabethan version, then in Lattimore's twentieth-century one:

Chapman, 1598:

The spirit I did first breathe
Did never teach me that—much less since the contempt of death
Was settled in me, and my mind knew what a Worthy was,
Whose office is to lead in fight and give no danger pass
Without improvement. In this fire must Hector's trial shine.
Here must his country, father, friends be in him made divine.

Lattimore, 1951:

and the spirit will not let me, since I have learned to be valiant and to fight always among the foremost ranks of the Trojans, winning for my own self great glory, and for my father.

If one may exaggerate to make a necessary point, the world of Henry V and Othello suddenly gives way here to our own, a world whose discomfort with any form of heroic self-assertion is remarkably mirrored in the burial of Homer's key terms (*spirit*, *valiant*, *fight*, *foremost*, *glory*)—five out of twenty-two words in the original, five out of thirty-six in the translation—in a cushioning huddle of harmless sounds.

Besides the two factors so far mentioned, language and period, as affecting the character of a translation, there is inevitably a third—the translator, with a particular degree of talent, a personal way of regarding the work to be translated, a special hierarchy of values, moral, esthetic, metaphysical (which may or may not be summed up in a "world view"), and a unique style or lack of it. But this influence all readers are likely to bear in mind, and it needs no laboring here. That, for example, two translators of Hamlet, one a Freudian, the other a Jungian, will produce impressively different translations is obvious from the fact that when Freudian and Jungian argue about the play in English they often seem to have different plays in mind.

We can now return to the question from which we started. After all allowances have been made for language, age, and individual translator, is any-

thing of the original left? What, in short, does the reader of translations read? Let it be said at once that in utility prose—prose whose function is mainly referential—the reader who reads a translation reads everything that matters. "*Nicht Rauchen*," "*Défense de Fumer*," and "*No Smoking*," posted in a railway car, make their point, and the differences between them in sound and form have no significance for us in that context. Since the prose of a treatise and of most fiction is preponderantly referential, we rightly feel, when we have paid close attention to Cervantes or Montaigne or Machiavelli or Tolstoy in a good English translation, that we have had roughly the same experience as a native Spaniard, Frenchman, Italian, or Russian. But "roughly" is the correct word; for good prose points iconically *to* itself as well as referentially beyond itself, and everything that it points to in itself in the original (rhythms, sounds, idioms, word play, etc.) must alter radically in being translated. The best analogy is to imagine a Van Gogh painting reproduced in the medium of tempera, etching, or engraving: the "picture" remains, but the intricate interanimation of volumes with colorings with brushstrokes has disappeared.

When we move on to poetry, even in its longer narrative and dramatic forms—plays like *Oedipus*, poems like the *Iliad* or the *Divine Comedy*—our situation as English readers worsens appreciably, as the many unlike versions of Andromache's appeal to Hector make very clear. But, again, only appreciably. True, this is the point at which the fact that a translation is *always* an interpretation explodes irresistibly on our attention; but if it is the best translation of its time, like John Ciardi's translation of the *Divine Comedy* for our time, the result will be not only a sensitive interpretation but also a work with intrinsic interest in its own right—at very best, a true work of art, a new poem. It is only when the shorter, primarily lyrical forms of poetry are presented that the reader of translations faces insuperable disadvantage. In these forms, the referential aspect of language has a tendency to disappear into, or, more often, draw its real meaning and accreditation from, the iconic aspect. Let us look for just a moment at a brief poem by Federico García Lorca and its English translation (by Stephen Spender and J. L. Gili):

¡Alto pinar!
Cuatro palomas por el aire van.

Cuatro palomas
vuelan y tornan.
Llevan heridas
sus cuatro sombras.

¡Bajo pinar!
Cuatro palomas en la tierra están.

Above the pine trees:
Four pigeons go through the air.

Four pigeons
fly and turn round.
They carry wounded
their four shadows.

Below the pine trees:
Four pigeons lie on the earth.

In this translation the referential sense of the English words follows with remarkable exactness the referential sense of the Spanish words they replace. But the life of Lorca's poem does not lie in that sense. It lies in such matters as the abruptness, like an intake of breath at a sudden revelation, of the two exclamatory lines (1 and 7), which then exhale musically in images of flight and death; or as the echoings of *palomas* in *heridas* and *sombras*, bringing together (as in fact the hunter's gun has done) these unrelated nouns and the unrelated experiences they stand for in a sequence that seems, momentarily, to have all the logic of a tragic action, in which *doves* become *wounds* become *shadows*; or as the external and internal rhyming among the five verbs, as though all motion must (as in fact it must) end with *están*.

Since none of this can be brought over into another tongue (least of all Lorca's rhythms), the translator must decide between leaving a reader to wonder why Lorca is a poet to be bothered about at all, and making a new but true poem, whose merit will almost certainly be in inverse ratio to its likeness to the original. Samuel Johnson made such a poem in translating Horace's famous *Diffugere nives*, and so did A. E. Housman. If we juxtapose the last two stanzas of each translation, and the corresponding Latin, we can see at a glance that each has the consistency and inner life of a genuine poem, and that neither of them (even if we consider only what is obvious to the eye, the line-lengths) is very close to Horace.

Cum semel occideris, et de te splendida Minos
fecerit arbitria,
non, Torquate, genus, non te facundia, non te
restituet pietas.

Infernis neque enim tenebris Diana pudicum
liberat Hippolytum
nec Lethaea valet Theseus abrumpere caro
vincula Pirithoo.

Johnson:

Not you, Torquatus, boast of Rome,
When Minos once has fixed your doom,
Or eloquence, or splendid birth,
Or virtue, shall restore to earth.
Hippolytus, unjustly slain,
Diana calls to life in vain;
Nor can the might of Theseus rend
The chains of hell that hold his friend.

Housman:

When thou descendest once the shades among,
The stern assize and equal judgment o'er,

Not thy long lineage nor thy golden tongue,
No, nor thy righteousness, shall friend thee more.

Night holds Hippolytus the pure of stain,
Diana steads him nothing, he must stay;
And Theseus leaves Pirithous in the chain
The love of comrades cannot take away.

The truth of the matter is that when the translator of short poems chooses to be literal, most or all of the poetry is lost; and when the translator succeeds in forging a new poetry, most or all of the original author is lost. Since there is no way out of this dilemma, we have always been sparing, in this anthology, in our use of short poems in translation, the sole exceptions at the present time being a modest selection from one lyric poet of each of the four major European languages: Petrarch, Baudelaire, Rilke, and Lorca.

We may assure ourselves, then, that the reading of literature in translation is not the disaster it has sometimes been represented. It is true that, however good the translation, we remain at a remove from the original, the remove becoming closest to impassable in the genre of the lyric poem. But with this exception, it is obvious that translation brings us closer by far to the work than we could be if we did not read it at all, or read it with a defective knowledge of the language. "To a thousand cavils," said Samuel Johnson, "one answer is sufficient; the purpose of a writer is to be read, and the criticism which would destroy the power of pleasing must be blown aside." Johnson was defending Pope's Homer for those marks of its own time and place that make it the great interpretation it is; but Johnson's exhilarating common sense applies equally to the problem we are considering here. Literature is to be read, and the criticism that would destroy the reader's power to make some form of contact with much of the world's great writing must indeed be blown aside.

Maynard Mack

But you, Torquatus, boast of Rome,
When Mars once has tried your doom,
Or eloquence, or splendid birth,
Or virtue, shall restore to earth
Hippolytus, unjustly slain,
Diana calls to life in vain;
Not you the might of Theseus rend
The chains of hell that hold his friend.

When Dian descendest once the shades among,
The stern assize and equal judgment o'er,

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ISBN 0-393-95486-2

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