Villette of Emily Brontë

Quotations and Notes

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Preface

A novel unfolds through time like music. How can it be present at once like a painting?

If only for the pleasure of contemplating them, I quote passages of Charlotte Brontë's *Villette,* usually passages that I have marked while reading. I add comments as I see fit, with references to, and quotations from, other works. Some of the comments might be considered as essays in themselves, especially those of my Chapter 5, "Miracles."

I do not exactly summarize *Villette,* though something of the plot may at least be inferred. However, the quotations and discussion stop before the resolution of the novel.

The novel is of interest to me as the story of somebody who finds herself teaching in a foreign country where the language is not her native tongue.

Contents

1 Reading

I am sampling Brontë's novel, and I don't know where to stop. I recall a short satirical article, "New Rap Song Samples 'Billie Jean' In Its Entirety, Adds Nothing," from "News in Brief" in *The Onion,* September 23, 1997 [2]:

> NEW YORK—On Thursday, rapper and producer Sean "Puffy" Combs released "Tha Kidd (Is Not My Son)," a hotly anticipated new single that samples Michael Jackson's 1983 smash "Billie Jean" in its entirety and adds nothing. "When I was in the studio mixing and recording, I decided 'Tha Kidd' would work best if I kept all the music and vocals from the original version and then didn't rap over it," Combs said. "So what I did is put in a tape with 'Billie Jean' on it, and then I hit record. The thing turned out great."

In the Preface of *A Reader on Reading* [16, p. ix], Alberto Manguel describes reading as

> that most human of creative activities. I believe we are, at the core, reading animals and that the art of reading, in its broadest sense, defines our species. We come into the world intent on finding narrative in everything: in the landscape, in the skies, in the faces of others, and, of course, in the images and words that our species creates . . .

Manguel goes on to refer to "this art I love so much, the craft of reading." Thus Manguel blurs the distinction between art and craft. There *is* a distinction, and Collingwood makes it in *The Principles of Art* [9]. He also shows why Manguel can describe reading as a creative activity. A work of art is not a canvas on the wall, or vibrations in the air of a concert hall, or spots of ink on a page. Those are just traces that an artist has left behind in their work, and we can use them to *recreate* the work.

> . . . the listening which we have to do when we hear the noises made by musicians is in a way rather like the thinking we have to do when we hear the noises made, for example, by a person lecturing on a scientific subject. We hear the sound of his [*sic*] voice; but what he is doing is not simply to make noises, but to develop a scientific thesis. The noises are meant to assist us in achieving what he assumes to be our purpose in coming to hear him lecture, that is, thinking this same scientific thesis for ourselves. The lecture, therefore, is not a collection of noises made by the lecturer with his organs of speech; it is a collection of scientific thoughts related to those noises in such a way that a person who not only hears but thinks as well becomes able to think these thoughts for himself. [9, p. 140]

In painting a landscape, the painter expresses the experience not just of seeing, but of painting:

> . . . the sensuous elements involved in merely looking, even where looking is accompanied by a smile of pleasure, gestures, and so forth, are **[308]** necessarily much scantier and poorer, and also much less highly organized in their totality, than the sensuous elements involved in painting. If you want to get more out of an experience, you must put more into it. The painter puts a great deal more into his [*sic*] experience of the subject than a man who merely looks at it; he puts into it, in addition, the whole consciously performed activity of painting it; what he gets out of it, therefore, is proportionately more. And this increment is an essential part of

> what he ‘externalizes’ or ‘records’ in his picture: he records there not the experience of looking at the subject without painting it, but the far richer and in some ways very different experience of looking at it and painting it together.

If we read Charlotte Brontë creatively, we have the experience not just of observing her characters, but of inventing them for ourselves.

Is there no difference between what the writer does and what we do when we read her? Brontë spent years creating her novel [5, p. ix]; she

> began writing it some time in 1850, soon after *Shirley* was finished, but for nearly two and a half years she made little or no progress beyond a few desultory sketches. The reasons for this were both simple and complex.

Three siblings died, and then,

> she fell victim to insomnia and depression, a succession of (real and imagined) illnesses, and, most insidiously for the languishing novel, a feverish restlessness that made settled thought and work impossible, and led her to believe she might never write again.

She did write, and we may read the result in a few days. I draw out the experience by selecting the passages and writing the notes here.

2 Text and Typography

My excerpts of *Villette* are cut and pasted from the electronic text of Project Gutenberg (`www.gutenberg.net`). Unfortunately this text does not come with information on its source. I am *reading* the Oxford World's Classics edition of 2008 [5], which has a note explaining,

> The text was based on the Clarendon edition of 1984, prepared in consultation with Professor Ian Jack; the copy was the first edition of January 1853, emended after collation with the manuscript, the surviving proof-sheets, an author-corrected copy, and the posthumous second edition.

Page numbers below are from the Oxford World's Classics edition. If I notice any differences between Gutenberg and Oxford, I follow the latter. An example of such a difference is that "idead" on page 12 of the OWC edition is "idea'd" in Gutenberg.

If I quote a paragraph from the beginning, it is indented. If I do not quote to the end, I use the dots of ellipsis.

Though they published Fowler's *Dictionary of Modern English Usage* in 1926 [13], and in 1965 they published the second edition, revised and edited by Gowers [14], Oxford today, in publishing *Villette,* ignore the good advice that Gowers preserved from Fowler's original article, "Period in Abbreviations":

> Abbreviations are puzzling, but to puzzle is not their purpose, & everything that helps the reader to guess their meaning is a gain. One such help is to let him [*sic*] know when

> the first & last letters of the abbreviations are also those of the full word, which can be done by not using the period, but writing *wt* (not *wt.*) for weight, *Bp* (not *Bp.*) for bishop, *Mr* (not *Mr.*) for Mister . . .

I follow Oxford's practice (which is Project Gutenberg's practice) in quotations, but Fowler in my own writing.

Something else that helps the reader is the tradition of separating sentences more widely than words within a sentence. Oxford no longer follow this practice, but I do here, even in the quotes. I allow the TEX program to adjust spacing automatically, although sometimes I must override its simple algorithm, as for example when a period marks an abbreviation and does not end a sentence. One can make all spaces equal with a single command, but I do not do this.

3 Childhood

We do not learn until Chapter II that the narrator of *Villette* is called Lucy Snowe. She never speaks of parents. She opens Chapter I by telling us of her godmother, who

> lived in a handsome house in the clean and ancient town of Bretton. Her husband's family had been residents there for generations, and bore, indeed, the name of their birthplace—Bretton of Bretton: whether by coincidence, or because some remote ancestor had been a personage of sufficient importance to leave his name to his neighbourhood, I know not. [p. 5]

Chapter I is called "Bretton." We may wonder why Lucy never learned whether the family gave its name to the town, even though, as she goes on to tell us, she spent a lot of happy time there:

> When I was a girl I went to Bretton about twice a year, and well I liked the visit. The house and its inmates specially suited me. The large peaceful rooms, the well-arranged furniture, the clear wide windows, the balcony outside, looking down on a fine antique street, where Sundays and holidays seemed always to abide—so quiet was its atmosphere, so clean its pavement—these things pleased me well. [p. 5]

In place of parents, Lucy has "kinsfolk," but Mrs Bretton takes her away from them. Here I skip ahead two paragraphs:

> In the autumn of the year —— I was staying at Bretton; my godmother having come in person to claim me of

> the kinsfolk with whom was at that time fixed my permanent residence. I believe she then plainly saw events coming, whose very shadow I scarce guessed; **[6]** yet of which the faint suspicion sufficed to impart unsettled sadness, and made me glad to change scene and society.

Mrs Bretton's son, John Graham Bretton, is visiting a schoolfellow in the country. Meanwhile a little girl called Paulina Mary Home, or simply Polly, is sent alone by her father to stay with Mrs Bretton; she shares a room with Lucy.

Chapter II is "Paulina," and here, when Polly longs for her father, Lucy finds it pathological:

> I seldom caught a word of her prayers, for they were whispered low: sometimes, indeed, they were not whispered at all, but put up unuttered; such rare sentences as reached my ear still bore the burden, "Papa; my dear papa!" This, I perceived, was a one-idead nature; betraying that monomaniac tendency I have ever thought the most unfortunate with which man or woman can be cursed. [p. 12]

Lucy may thus herself exhibit a pathology. Being practically and perhaps literally an orphan, she has been forced into emotional autarky.

As I write, agents of the US government are confiscating the children of asylum-seekers. We know something of what has happened to the boys; nothing of the girls. Though the children's material needs may be met, and they may receive kind words from their adult caretakers, they cannot be touched, and they cannot talk to their parents. For their emotional survival, the children may make up their minds that their parents are dead. It seems worse than the beatings that English children were subject to at boarding school. I had reason to discuss Orwell's experience of these elsewhere [18, §4].

Life will thrust Lucy Snowe not only from her home, but from her country; she will however be an adult by then.

Meanwhile, Polly's father comes to Bretton; he has found he cannot leave England without seeing her.

> "She is my comfort!" he could not help saying to Mrs. Bretton. That lady had her own "comfort" and nonpareil on a much larger scale, and, for the moment, absent; so she sympathised with his foible.
>
> This second "comfort" came on the stage in the course of the evening. I knew this day had been fixed for his return, and was aware that Mrs. Bretton had been expecting him through all its hours. We were seated round the fire, after tea, when Graham joined our circle: I should rather say, broke it up—for, of course, his arrival made a bustle; and then, as Mr. Graham was fasting, there was refreshment to be provided. He and Mr. Home met as old acquaintance; of the little girl he took no notice for a time. [p. 15]

Chapter III, "The Playmates," names what Polly and Graham become. Lucy must warn the girl, and here we learn that she is six and Graham is sixteen:

> When I thought she could listen to me, I said—
>
> **[33]** "Paulina, you should not grieve that Graham does not care for you so much as you care for him. It must be so."
>
> Her lifted and questioning eyes asked why.
>
> "Because he is a boy and you are a girl; he is sixteen and you are only six; his nature is strong and gay, and yours is otherwise."
>
> "But I love him so much; he *should* love me a little."
>
> "He does. He is fond of you. You are his favourite."
>
> "Am I Graham's favourite?"
>
> "Yes, more than any little child I know."

We have not *seen* any other children. Meanwhile, Polly's father has left, and Polly will join him:

> I was not long allowed the amusement of this study of character. She had scarcely been at Bretton two months, when a letter came from Mr. Home, signifying that he was now settled amongst his maternal kinsfolk on the Continent; that, as England was become wholly distasteful to him, he had no thoughts of returning hither, perhaps, for years; and that he wished his little girl to join him immediately. [p. 29]

I note an ensuing Ottoman or Turkish reference, to Polly as odalisque.

> "I wonder how she will take this news?" said Mrs. Bretton, when she had read the letter. *I* wondered, too, and I took upon myself to communicate it.
>
> Repairing to the drawing-room—in which calm and decorated apartment she was fond of being alone, and where she could be implicitly trusted, for she fingered nothing, or rather soiled nothing she fingered—I found her seated, like a little Odalisque, on a couch, half shaded by the drooping draperies of the window near. She seemed happy; all her appliances for occupation were about her; the white wood workbox, a shred or two of muslin, an end or two of ribbon collected for conversion into doll-millinery. The doll, duly night-capped and night-gowned, lay in its cradle; she was rocking it to sleep, with an air of the most perfect faith in its possession of sentient and somnolent faculties; her eyes, at the same time, being engaged with a picture-book, which lay open on her lap.

Lucy would seem to be too old for dolls. We shall be able to infer later that she is fourteen.

4 Adolescence

Chapter IV, "Miss Marchmont," is named for the woman who will give Lucy employment. Lucy never asked about the name Bretton; now, with bitterness, she affects not to care for *us* to inquire into the next eight years of her home life.

> On quitting Bretton, which I did a few weeks after Paulina's departure—little thinking then I was never again to visit it; never more to tread its calm old streets—I betook myself home, having been absent six months. It will be conjectured that I was of course glad to return to the bosom of my kindred. Well! the amiable conjecture does no harm, and may therefore be safely left uncontradicted. Far from saying nay, indeed, I will permit the reader to picture me, for the next eight years, as a bark slumbering through halcyon weather, in a harbour still as glass—the steersman stretched on the little deck, his face up to heaven, his eyes closed: buried, if you will, in a long prayer. A great many women and girls are supposed to pass their lives something in that fashion; why not I with the rest? [p. 35]

A storm besets the sea of life; Lucy keeps her own counsel.

> As far as I recollect, I complained to no one about these troubles. Indeed, to whom could I complain? Of Mrs. Bretton I had long lost sight. Impediments, raised by others, had, years ago, come in the way of our intercourse, and cut it off. Besides, time had brought changes for her, too: the handsome property of which she was left guardian for her son, and which had been chiefly invested in some joint-stock

> undertaking, had melted, it was said, to a fraction of its original amount. Graham, I learned from incidental rumours, had adopted a profession; both he and his mother were gone from Bretton, and **[36]** were understood to be now in London. Thus, there remained no possibility of dependence on others; to myself alone could I look. I know not that I was of a self-reliant or active nature; but self-reliance and exertion were forced upon me by circumstances, as they are upon thousands besides; and when Miss Marchmont, a maiden lady of our neighbourhood, sent for me, I obeyed her behest, in the hope that she might assign me some task I could undertake.

Miss Marchmont does put Lucy to work; but then she dies, just as she is planning to leave Lucy a legacy.

Lucy has fifteen pounds, but must leave her late employer's house in a week. She has to engage in what the title of Chapter V says: "Turning a New Leaf." She *seeks* help from her old nurse, but *finds* help in nature, in the form of the Northern Lights. She is now in her twenty-third year, thus two years younger than Graham.

> In this dilemma I went, as a last and sole resource, to see and consult an old servant of our family; once my nurse, now housekeeper at a grand mansion not far from Miss Marchmont's. I spent some hours with her; she comforted, but knew not how to advise me. Still all inward darkness, I left her about twilight; a walk of two miles lay before me; it was a clear, frosty night. In spite of my solitude, my poverty, and my perplexity, my heart, nourished and nerved with the vigour of a youth that had not yet counted twenty-three summers, beat light and not feebly. Not feebly, I am sure, or I should have trembled in that lonely walk, which lay through still fields, and passed neither village nor farmhouse, nor cottage: I should have quailed in the absence of

> moonlight, for it was by the leading of stars only I traced the dim path; I should have quailed still more in the unwonted presence of that which to-night shone in the north, a moving mystery—the Aurora Borealis. But this solemn stranger **[44]** influenced me otherwise than through my fears. Some new power it seemed to bring. I drew in energy with the keen, low breeze that blew on its path. A bold thought was sent to my mind; my mind was made strong to receive it.
>
> "Leave this wilderness," it was said to me, "and go out hence."
>
> "Where?" was the query.
>
> I had not very far to look; gazing from this country parish in that flat, rich middle of England—I mentally saw within reach what I had never yet beheld with my bodily eyes: I saw London.

At Lucy's age, *I* was told what to do next in life. I was working at a farm after graduating from college, and "it was said to me" in a dream that I must study mathematics [19]. Lucy herself will have another vision of the truth in Chapter XXXIX, when she is under the influence of opium.

Back at the house where her old nurse Mrs Barrett is employed, Lucy learns from her where she can stay in London. From Mrs Barrett's mistress, an old schoolfellow of Lucy's—though the woman does not remember, and Lucy does not let on—she learns that many Englishwomen make a good living on the Continent.

5 Miracles

Lucy will indeed not stay in London, but will end up on the Continent. An English Protestant, she will teach Catholic girls in a former convent, which is haunted by the ghost of a nun. Lucy will see the ghost. Therefore part of reading the novel *seriously* will be ascertaining what the author thinks of ghosts; reading *sympathetically,* being able to think the same way. This will depend on what one already thinks of ghosts.

Lucy will also have reason to compare the Catholic and Protestant versions of Christianity. *Villette* is thus relevant to a question that once arose in my life: to be a scholar of such a person as Jesus of Nazareth, must one take a stand on the possibility of miracles?

One can try not to take a stand. An example is John P. Meier, author of several volumes (which I have not read) called *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus.* Meier was asked in an interview, when he was a professor at Catholic University of America [12],

> *Q. Would a historian rule out miracles and divine intervention, then?*
>
> A. That is a very ticklish subject. I don't know how in the world you would decide *historically* whether or not Jesus did or did not in fact perform miracles possible only by God alone. It's a matter of faith.
>
> Yet is it fair for a historian to enter into the question saying that obviously miracles are impossible and, therefore, Jesus did not perform any miracles?

> The historian should try as much as possible to be quite modest in claims about what can be known about claims about miracles—especially from the ancient past where our sources are quite fragmentary. The proper stance of a historian is, "I neither claim beforehand that miracles are possible, nor do I claim beforehand they are not possible."

On the contrary, the subject of miracles is *not* ticklish, if one agrees with the assertion of R. G. Collingwood, in *An Autobiography* of 1939, that all history is the history of thought. Collingwood describes how, in 1928 [10, pp. 107–10],

> I first drew the distinction between history proper and what I called pseudo-history. By that name I referred to such things as the narratives of geology, palaeontology, astronomy, and other natural sciences which in the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries had assumed a semblance at least of historicity. Reflection on my experience as an archaeologist enabled me to see that this was no more than a semblance . . .
>
> . . . . **[108]** . . . . **[109]** . . . .
>
> History and pseudo-history alike consisted of narratives: but in history these were narratives of purposive activity, and the evidence for them consisted of relics they had left behind (books or potsherds, the principle was the same) which became evidence precisely to the extent to which the historian conceived them in terms of purpose, that is, understood what they were for . . .
>
> **[110]** I expressed this new conception of history in the phrase: 'all history is the history of thought.' You are thinking historically, I meant, when you say about anything, 'I see what the person who made this (wrote this, used this, designed this, &c.) was thinking.' Until you can say that, you may be trying to think historically but you are not succeeding . . .

If we are historians of the Nazarene, then we ask what Jesus thought he was doing, and what his followers thought he was doing, when he performed those acts that are called miracles. In trying to answer the question, we ought to be clear about what *we* mean by miracles.

Let us consider, as an example, the loaves and fishes from Matthew 14. After the beheading of John the Baptist, when Jesus withdraws to a desert place, people come to him from the cities to be healed. In the evening, Jesus tries to feed them with the food that his disciples have brought. They have only five loaves and two fishes; but after the meal, twelve baskets of fragments are gathered, and five thousand men have eaten, not counting women and children.

For the record, here is the full story from the Bible; I cut and paste from the *Wikisource* text of the King James Version, though I must supply from the Oxford World's Classics edition [6] the italics that were used originally, to show the words with no explicit correlate in the original Greek:

> 13 When Jesus heard *of it,* he departed thence by ship into a desert place apart: and when the people had heard *thereof,* they followed him on foot out of the cities.
>
> 14 And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick.
>
> 15 And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals.
>
> 16 But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat.
>
> 17 And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes.

> 18 He said, Bring them hither to me.
> 19 And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to *his* disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.
> 20 And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full.
> 21 And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children.

According to the story, Jesus created something out of nothing. What was it? Did he violate the law of conservation of mass? If one allows this, even as a possibility, and if one is on the faculty of a university, then one is denying the value and even the possibility of the work of one's colleagues in physics. The natural laws that they study are not such as can be broken by anybody, even a deity. This is not an experimental result; this is the foundation that makes experiments worthwhile.

If a miracle "is a violation of the laws of Nature," in the words of David Hume, as quoted by Joseph Cohen in a 2010 lecture called "Miracles and Belief" [7], then there are no miracles. Cohen describes Spinoza as drawing this conclusion, unless a miracle is simply "an event whose natural cause cannot be explained"; the cause may not in fact be unknowable.

If we find these matters ticklish, we may avoid them; but we can do it more forthrightly than Meier does. The followers of Jesus did *not* think he had broken the law of conservation of mass; for such a law did not yet exist. We know *now* that the law applied then, because we know that such laws apply for all time: this is what we *mean* by saying there is such a law in the first place. But there was no such thought in Biblical times.

There may have been little thought at all, as we understand it, among the masses to whom Jesus preached. Jesus says this himself, in Matthew 13:13: "they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand." Let us set this in its context:

> 10 And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?
> 11 He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.
> 12 For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.
> 13 Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.
> 14 And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive:
> 15 For this people's heart is waxed gross, and *their* ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with *their* eyes and hear with *their* ears, and should understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.
> 16 But blessed *are* your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.
> 17 For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.

For verse 15, I actually checked the Greek New Testament, to confirm that precisely the single non-italicized instance of "their" has a correlate in the Greek [1]. The quoted verses place us at what is described as

> one of the stranger moments in the New Testament, when Jesus explains the parable of the sower to his disciples. This is the one about a farmer sowing seeds—some get eaten by birds, some land in rocky soil, but some find fertile ground and produce a good crop. When the disciples ask the meaning of the story, an irritated Jesus explains that the seeds are the Word of God, the varieties of soil are the varieties of people who hear the Word, etc. The story means just what it sounds like it means.

That is Rivka Galchen in *Harper's,* in a 2016 review of contemporary drama [15]. The parable referred to is Matthew 13:3–9; the explanation, 18–23. The parable means just what it sounds like *to us,* who have been trained to understand metaphors and similes. Many persons have not been so trained. I explored these matters in a blog article, "Thinking & Feeling," written in Turkey, soon after the coup attempt of July 15, 2016 [20].

The disciples want to know why Jesus teaches in parables. At the corresponding verse in Mark 4, what they want is more vague:

> 10 And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable.

Luke 8 is not much more definite:

> 9 And his disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be?

There are three questions in play, of (1) the literal meaning of the parable, (2) the "parabolic" meaning, and (3) why the former should be used to stand for the latter. The *literal* meaning of the parable is what it sounds like. This meaning could be expressed in a stained-glass window, showing a figure with a sack in a plowed field. The parabolic meaning is what Jesus goes on to explain in Matthew 13; if this meaning is also obvious, that is only because we have become accultured to it.

> 18 Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower.
>
> 19 When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.
>
> 20 But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it;
>
> 21 Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.
>
> 22 He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.
>
> 23 But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

Jesus goes on to tell the parables of (1) the man sowing good seed, among which tares are later strewn; (2) the grain of mustard seed; (3) the leaven. Each is explicitly likened to the kingdom of heaven. Still the disciples do not understand.

> 36 Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field.
>
> 37 He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man;

38 The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one;

39 The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.

40 As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world.

If the meaning is obvious to us who are trained in literary analysis, this only shows what a challenge we have to understand, as historians, the thought of the disciples. This is the kind of challenge I have as a teacher of mathematics, to remember that what is obvious to me is so, only after years of familiarity.

The disciples differ from the masses whom Jesus heals, feeds, and teaches, because the disciples need not be taught, but only commanded. We see this in Matthew 4, after the Temptation (which happens to be alluded to in the excerpt from pages 127–8, on page 38 of these notes):

17 From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

18 And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.

19 And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

20 And they straightway left *their* nets, and followed him.

21 And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James *the son* of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them.

22 And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.

> 23 And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.

Unlike Simon Peter, Andrew, James, and John, most persons would not follow Jesus at a word, even if the word was that they would burgeon like good soil, if they did follow him. Anybody might at least *listen* to a story of the sowing of seed, at least if the storyteller were somebody who could heal the sick.

Today we can, like Rivka Galchen, explain the parabolic meaning of the seed. In the time of Jesus, not even the disciples could do that. What made the disciples special was their not *needing* the explanation, in order to follow Jesus. However, even *having* the explanation is not enough.

With the loaves and fishes, Jesus was believed to have done something remarkable, even unprecedented. Call it a miracle, but we are left with the question of what this means. It seems foolish to me to suggest that the miracle might be a violation of laws of nature worked out in the Renaissance, when the Evangelists themselves could not have thought that it was.

"Miracle" is the title of the last chapter of R. G. Collingwood's first book, *Religion and Philosophy* of 1916. Collingwood shows how untenable is the naïve conception of modern times, that a miracle violates a law of physics [8, p. 200].

> The kind of thought which imagines natural law as subject to exceptions is precisely that of the most unscientific and inadequate type; as if Newton after observing the fall of the apple had written, "Everything has a natural property of falling to the earth; this is why the apple falls. Exceptions to this law may be seen in smoke, kites, and the heavenly bodies."

Collingwood has already mentioned [8, p. 197]

> the fundamental axiom of all thinking, namely that whatever exists stands in some definite relation to the other things that exist.

The religious expression of this fundamental axiom is monotheism. Collingwood develops the thought in *An Essay on Metaphysics* of 1940, where he argues that for the Church Fathers (the "Patristic writers"), the words "God exists" or "we believe in God"

> mean that natural scientists standing in the Greek tradition absolutely presuppose in all their inquiries
>
> 1. *That there is a world of nature,* i.e. that there are things which happen of themselves and cannot be produced or prevented by anybody's art, however great that art may be, and however seconded by good luck.
>
> 2. *That this world of nature is a world of events,* i.e. that the things of which it is composed are things to which events happen or things which move.
>
> 3. *That throughout this world there is one set of laws according to which all movements or events, in spite of all differences, agree in happening*; and that consequently there is one science of this world.
>
> 4. *That nevertheless there are in this world many different realms,* each composed of a class of things peculiar to itself, to which events of a peculiar kind happen; that the peculiar laws of these several realms are modifications of the universal laws mentioned in 3; and that the special sciences of these several realms are modifications of the universal science there mentioned.

For Collingwood in *Religion and Philosophy,* and I agree,

> the common conception of miracle is untenable . . . Instead of finding the operation of God in isolated and controvertible tacts, we are now free to find it universalised in everything that is true or good or beautiful.

If I found myself in a large hungry crowd, and I had brought some food, I would be reluctant to bring it out, if I thought others had come empty-handed. Jesus and his disciples were not so reluctant. Following their example, the the crowd *shared* what they had brought from the cities, though they may have denied having brought anything. This is the miracle of the loaves and fishes: the creation of generosity among selfish people. I am sure I have heard this simple explanation somewhere. It is the idea behind the story of Stone Soup.

Such an explanation is not so obvious for the ensuing story in Matthew 14, when Jesus sends his disciples off in a ship, but comes to them in the night, walking across the water:

> 22 And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away.
>
> 23 And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.
>
> 24 But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.
>
> 25 And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.
>
> 26 And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.
>
> 27 But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.

I have no ready explanation of this incident. One might refer to Doubting Thomas, to whom Jesus says in John 20:29, “blessed *are* they that have not seen, and *yet* have believed.” If one need not see the wounds in the body of the risen Jesus, perhaps one need not see him coming over the Sea of Galilee like a water strider.

One might also look for an undersea formation like the one I have walked on at Orhaniye on the Marmaris peninsula in Turkey [3, p. 357]:

> further out in the bay lurks a celebrated curiosity: a long, narrow, submerged sandspit known as **Kızkumu** (Maiden’s Sand) extending halfway across the bay, which allows day-trippers apparently to emulate Jesus walking on the Sea of Galilee. Legend asserts that a local beauty, menaced by raiding pirates, filled her skirts with sand and attempted to escape across the water by creating her own causeway, but upon exhausting her supply at midbay drowned herself rather than surrender her virtue to the marauders.

I am also sympathetic to the attitude of Socrates, expressed near the beginning of the *Phaedrus,* and discussed by me in a blog article [20], that instead of trying to explain away myths and legends, one does better to respect the Delphic command to know oneself.

Charlotte Brontë would seem to be engaged in just this. Her Protestantism is a theme of *Villette,* at least as it is contrasted with the superstitious Catholicism of the persons whom the narrator finds herself among on the Continent. What then are we to think when she starts seeing a ghost?

6 New Life

Chapter VI is named for London. Lucy sees the sights, eats and naps at her inn, thinks for two hours, and then—

> My state of mind, and all accompanying circumstances, were just now such as most to favour the adoption of a new, resolute, and daring—perhaps desperate—line of action. I had nothing to lose. Unutterable loathing of a desolate existence past, forbade return. If I failed in what I now designed to undertake, who, save myself, would **[50]** suffer? If I died far away from—home, I was going to say, but I had no home—from England, then, who would weep?
>
> I might suffer; I was inured to suffering: death itself had not, I thought, those terrors for me which it has for the softly reared. I had, ere this, looked on the thought of death with a quiet eye. Prepared, then, for any consequences, I formed a project.

The project is to sail to the Continent. On shipboard, she meets Ginevra Fanshawe, who is of the type to have "an entire incapacity to endure":

> Miss Fanshawe's berth chanced to be next mine; and, I am sorry to say, she tormented me with an unsparing selfishness during the whole time of our mutual distress. Nothing could exceed her impatience and fretfulness. The Watsons, who were very sick too, and on whom the stewardess attended with shameless partiality, were stoics compared with her. Many a time since have I noticed, in persons of Ginevra Fanshawe's light, careless temperament, and fair, fragile style of

> beauty, an entire incapacity to endure: they seem to sour in adversity, like small beer in thunder. The man who takes such a woman for his wife, ought to be prepared to guarantee her an existence all sunshine. Indignant at last with her teasing peevishness, I curtly requested her "to hold her tongue." The rebuff did her good, and it was observable that she liked me no worse for it. [p. 57]

Chapter VII is named for the town where Lucy ends up, "Villette," apparently an imaginary Brussels, where she finds herself in a male environment.

> Having at last landed in a great hall, full of skylight glare, I made my way somehow to what proved to be the coffee-room. It cannot be **[60]** denied that on entering this room I trembled somewhat; felt uncertain, solitary, wretched; wished to Heaven I knew whether I was doing right or wrong; felt convinced that it was the last, but could not help myself. Acting in the spirit and with the calm of a fatalist, I sat down at a small table, to which a waiter presently brought me some breakfast; and I partook of that meal in a frame of mind not greatly calculated to favour digestion. There were many other people breakfasting at other tables in the room; I should have felt rather more happy if amongst them all I could have seen any women; however, there was not one—all present were men. But nobody seemed to think I was doing anything strange; one or two gentlemen glanced at me occasionally, but none stared obtrusively: I suppose if there was anything eccentric in the business, they accounted for it by this word "Anglaise!"

Lucy ends up at the establishment run by Madame Beck, who gives her name to Chapter VIII and has a certain way in the education of children.

Often in the evening, after she had been plotting and counter-plotting, spying and receiving the reports of spies all day, she would come up to my room—a trace of real weariness on her brow—and she would sit down and listen while the children said their little prayers to me in English: the Lord's Prayer, and the hymn beginning "Gentle Jesus," these little Catholics were permitted to repeat at my knee; and, when I had put them to bed, she would talk to me (I soon gained enough French to be able to understand, and even answer her) about England and Englishwomen, and the reasons for what she was pleased to term their superior intelligence, and more real and reliable probity. Very good sense she often showed; very sound opinions she often broached: she seemed to know that keeping girls in distrustful restraint, in blind ignorance, and under a surveillance that left them no moment and no corner for retirement, was not the best way to make them grow up honest and modest women; but she averred that ruinous consequences would ensue if any other method were tried with continental children: they were so accustomed to restraint, that relaxation, however guarded, would be misunderstood and fatally presumed on. She was sick, she would declare, of the means she had to use, but use them she must; and after discoursing, often with dignity and delicacy, to me, she would move away on her "souliers de silence," and glide ghost-like through the house, watching and spying everywhere, peering through every keyhole, listening behind every door.

After all, Madame's system was not bad—let me do her justice. Nothing could be better than all her arrangements for the physical well-being of her scholars. No minds were overtasked: the lessons were well distributed and made incomparably easy to the learner; there was a liberty of amusement, and a provision for exercise which kept the girls healthy; the food was abundant and good: neither pale nor

> puny faces were anywhere to be seen in the Rue Fossette. She never grudged a holiday; she allowed plenty of time for sleeping, dressing, washing, eating; her method in all these matters was easy, liberal, salutary, and rational: many an austere English school-mistress would do vastly well to imitate her—and I believe many would be glad to do so, if exacting English parents would let them. [p. 73]

Lucy Snowe ultimately agrees to be a teacher.

> "Dites donc," said Madame sternly, "vous sentez vous réellement trop faible?"
>
> I might have said "Yes," and gone back to nursery obscurity, and there, perhaps, mouldered for the rest of my life; but looking up at Madame, I saw in her countenance a something that made me think twice ere I decided. At that instant she did not wear a woman's aspect, but rather a man's. Power of a particular kind strongly **[78]** limned itself in all her traits, and that power was not my kind of power: neither sympathy, nor congeniality, nor submission, were the emotions it awakened. I stood—not soothed, nor won, nor overwhelmed. It seemed as if a challenge of strength between opposing gifts was given, and I suddenly felt all the dishonour of my diffidence—all the pusillanimity of my slackness to aspire.
>
> "Will you," she said, "go backward or forward?" indicating with her hand, first, the small door of communication with the dwelling-house, and then the great double portals of the classes or schoolrooms.
>
> "En avant," I said.

In Chapter IX, Ginevre describes the suitor whom she calls Isidore, and for whom the chapter is named, though Lucy does not see him for herself till Chapter XIV. Meanwhile, though Lucy is a monotheist, even a Christian, she learns she will burn in hell for not being the right *kind* of Christian.

> The opinion of my Catholic acquaintance concerning my spiritual prospects was somewhat naïvely expressed to me on one occasion. A pensionnaire, to whom I had rendered some little service, exclaimed one day as she sat beside me: "Mademoiselle, what a pity you are a Protestant!"
>
> "Why, Isabelle?"
>
> "Parceque, quand vous serez morte—vous brûlerez tout de suite dans l'Enfer."
>
> "Croyez-vous?"
>
> "Certainement que j'y crois: tout le monde le sait; et d'ailleurs le prêtre me l'a dit."
>
> **[85]** Isabelle was an odd, blunt little creature. She added, *sotto voce*: "Pour assurer votre salut là-haut, on ferait bien de vous brûler toute vive ici-bas."
>
> I laughed, as, indeed, it was impossible to do otherwise.

A boy in Cappadocia once told me that I too would burn in hell, for not being a Muslim. His grandfather had taught him this. The boy recognized my name. I said David had been a king; for the boy, he had been a prophet of Islam.

Chapter X is named for Dr John, who, we shall find in Chapter XIV, is Ginevra's Isidore, and who, we shall find in Chapter XVI, is also Graham Bretton. He worries about what Lucy thinks of him.

> "Mademoiselle does not spare me: I am not vain enough to fancy that it is my merits which attract her attention; it must then be some defect. Dare I ask—what?"
>
> I was confounded, as the reader may suppose, yet not with an irrecoverable confusion; being conscious that it was from no emotion of incautious admiration, nor yet in a spirit of unjustifiable inquisitiveness, that I had incurred this reproof. I might have cleared myself on the spot, but would not. I did not speak. I was not in the habit of speaking to him.

> Suffering him, then, to think what he chose and accuse me of what he would, I resumed some work I had dropped, and kept my head bent over it during the remainder of his stay. There is a perverse mood of the mind which is rather soothed than irritated by misconstruction; and in quarters where we can never be rightly known, we take pleasure, I think, in being consummately ignored. What honest man, on being casually taken for a housebreaker, does not feel rather tickled than vexed at the mistake? [p. 99]

Perhaps I had such a response, working on the farm I mentioned, when yelled at for some perceived failure. It was not a positive pleasure to withhold my explanation, but I recognized somehow that the boss did not deserve it.

In Chapter XI, "The Portresse's Cabinet," Madame Beck insists on Dr John's treating her feverish daughter Georgette.

7 The Supernatural and the Natural

Chapter XII, “The Casket,” is named for a box thrown into the garden of the school. Here the story of the ghost is introduced, but Lucy dismisses it as “romantic rubbish.”

> There went a tradition that Madame Beck’s house had in old days been a convent. That in years gone by—how long gone by I cannot tell, but I think some centuries—before the city had over-spread this quarter, and when it was tilled ground and avenue, and such deep and leafy seclusion as ought to embosom a religious house—that something had happened on this site which, rousing fear and inflicting horror, had left to the place the inheritance of a ghost-story. A vague tale went of a black and white nun, sometimes, on some night or nights of the year, seen in some part of this vicinage. The ghost must have been built out some ages ago, for there were houses all round now; but certain convent-relics, in the shape of old and huge fruit-trees, yet consecrated the spot; and, at the foot of one—a Methuselah of a pear-tree, dead, all but a few boughs which still faithfully renewed their perfumed snow in spring, and their honey-sweet pendants in autumn—you saw, in scraping away the mossy earth between the half-bared roots, a glimpse of slab, smooth, hard, and black. The legend went, unconfirmed and unaccredited, but still propagated, that this was the portal of a vault, imprisoning deep beneath that ground, on whose surface grass grew and flowers bloomed, the bones of a girl whom a monkish conclave of the drear middle ages had here buried alive for some sin against her vow. Her shadow it was that tremblers

> had feared, through long generations after her poor frame was dust; her black robe and white veil that, for timid eyes, moonlight and shade had mocked, as they fluctuated in the night-wind through the garden-thicket.
>
> Independently of romantic rubbish, however, that old garden had its charms. On summer mornings I used to rise early, to enjoy them alone; on summer evenings, to linger solitary, to keep tryste with the **[107]** rising moon, or taste one kiss of the evening breeze, or fancy rather than feel the freshness of dew descending. The turf was verdant, the gravelled walks were white; sun-bright nasturtiums clustered beautiful about the roots of the doddered orchard giants. There was a large berceau, above which spread the shade of an acacia; there was a smaller, more sequestered bower, nestled in the vines which ran all along a high and grey wall, and gathered their tendrils in a knot of beauty, and hung their clusters in loving profusion about the favoured spot where jasmine and ivy met and married them.

Later, while the Catholic girls are frightened, Lucy Snowe is energized by a thunderstorm in the night.

> At that time, I well remember whatever could excite—certain accidents of the weather, for instance, were almost dreaded by me, because they woke the being I was always lulling, and stirred up a craving cry I could not satisfy. One night a thunder-storm broke; a sort of hurricane shook us in our beds: the Catholics rose in panic and prayed to their saints. As for me, the tempest took hold of me with tyranny: I was roughly roused and obliged to live. I got up and dressed myself, and creeping outside the casement close by my bed, sat on its ledge, with my feet on the roof of a lower adjoining building. It was wet, it was wild, it was pitch-dark. Within the dormitory they gathered round the night-lamp in consternation, praying loud. I could not go in: too resistless was

> the delight of staying with the wild hour, black and full of thunder, pealing out such an ode as language never delivered to man—too terribly glorious, the spectacle of clouds, split and pierced by white and blinding bolts. [p. 109]

In Chapter XIII, "A Sneeze Out of Season," there is another kind of visitor in the night: Madame Beck, who searches meticulously through Lucy's possessions.

8 Festival

Chapter XIV is "The Fête," alluding to, "in the ripest glow of summer," "the fête of madame." Lucy observes how the Church nourishes the body at the expense of the mind:

> A strange, frolicsome, noisy little world was this school: great pains were taken to hide chains with flowers: a subtle essence of Romanism pervaded every arrangement: large sensual indulgence (so to speak) was permitted by way of counterpoise to jealous spiritual restraint. Each mind was being reared in slavery; but, to prevent reflection from dwelling on this fact, every pretext for physical recreation was seized and made the most of. There, as elsewhere, the CHURCH strove to bring up her children robust in body, feeble in soul, fat, ruddy, hale, joyous, ignorant, unthinking, unquestioning. "Eat, drink, and live!" she says. "Look after your bodies; leave your souls to me. I hold their cure—guide their course: I guarantee their final fate." A bargain, in which every true Catholic deems himself a gainer. Lucifer just offers the same terms: "All this power will I give **[128]** thee, and the glory of it; for that is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou, therefore, wilt worship me, all shall be thine!"

Collingwood makes a similar complaint about his English public school, though he does not blame the Anglican Church. In fact he was both baptised and confirmed in the Church while at Rugby [11, p. 185]. Nonetheless, he recalls from there [10, pp. 8–9] the frightful boredom of being taught things (and things which ought to have been frightfully interesting) by weary, absent-minded or incompetent masters; then the torment of living by a time-table expressly devised to fill up the day with scraps and snippets of occupation in such a manner that no one could get down to a job of work and make something of it, and, in particular, devised to prevent one from doing that 'thinking' in which, long ago, I had recognized my own vocation.

Nor did I get any compensating satisfaction out of the organized games which constituted the real religion of the school; for at football in my first year I suffered an injury to the knee which the surgery of those days rendered incurable. This was a crucial point in my school life. The orthodox theory of public-school athletics is that they distract the adolescent from sex. They do not do that; but they give him a most necessary outlet for the energies he is not allowed to use in the class-room. Apart from a few eccentrics like Whitelaw, the public school masters of my acquaintance were like the schoolmaster in the *Dunciad*:

> Plac'd at the door of learning, youth to guide,
> We never suffer it to stand too wide.

The boys were nothing if not teachable. They soon saw that any exhibition of interest in their studies **[9]** was a sure way to get themselves disliked, not by their contemporaries, but by the masters; and they were not long in acquiring that pose of boredom towards learning and everything connected with it which is notoriously part of the English public school man's character. But they must have some compensation for their frustrated and inhibited intellects; and this they got in athletics, where nobody minds how hard you work, and the triumphs of the football field make amends for the miseries of the class-room.

For the fête of Madame Beck, we are introduced to

> M. Paul Emanuel, professor of literature. It was never my lot to be present at the histrionic lessons of M. Paul, but I often saw him as he crossed the *carré* (a square hall between the dwelling-house and school-house). I heard him, too, in the warm evenings, lecturing with open doors, and his name, with anecdotes of him, resounded in ones ears from all sides. [p. 129]

He will direct a play, but is not satisfied with the girls who will act in it.

> "Vous n'êtes donc que des poupées," I heard him thunder. "Vous n'avez pas de passions—vous autres. Vous ne sentez donc rien? Votre chair est de neige, votre sang de glace! Moi, je veux que tout cela s'allume, qu'il ait une vie, une âme!"
>
> Vain resolve! And when he at last found it *was* vain, he suddenly broke the whole business down. Hitherto he had been teaching them **[130]** a grand tragedy; he tore the tragedy in morsels, and came next day with a compact little comic trifle. To this they took more kindly; he presently knocked it all into their smooth round pates.

Chapter XV, "The Long Vacation":

> My heart almost died within me; miserable longings strained its chords. How long were the September days! How silent, how lifeless! How vast and void seemed the desolate premises! How gloomy the forsaken garden—grey now with the dust of a town summer departed. Looking forward at the commencement of those eight weeks, I hardly knew how I was to live to the end. My spirits had long been gradually sinking; now that the prop of employment was withdrawn, they went down fast. Even to look forward was not to hope:

> the dumb future spoke no comfort, offered no promise, gave no inducement to bear present evil in reliance on future good. A sorrowful indifference to existence often pressed on me—a despairing resignation to reach betimes the end of all things earthly. Alas! When I had full leisure to look on life as life must be looked on by such as me, I found it but a hopeless desert: tawny sands, with no green fields, no palm-tree, no well in view. The hopes which are dear to youth, which bear it up and lead it on, I knew not and dared not know. If they knocked at my heart sometimes, an inhospitable bar to admission must be inwardly drawn. When they turned away thus **[157]** rejected, tears sad enough sometimes flowed: but it could not be helped: I dared not give such guests lodging. So mortally did I fear the sin and weakness of presumption.
>
> Religious reader, you will preach to me a long sermon about what I have just written, and so will you, moralist: and you, stern sage: you, stoic, will frown; you, cynic, sneer; you, epicure, laugh. Well, each and all, take it your own way. I accept the sermon, frown, sneer, and laugh; perhaps you are all right: and perhaps, circumstanced like me, you would have been, like me, wrong. The first month was, indeed, a long, black, heavy month to me.

Lonely and ill, Lucy goes out one evening, visits a Catholic church, and talks with a priest. Outside, she swoons.

Chapter XVI, "Auld Lang Syne":

> Where my soul went during that swoon I cannot tell. Whatever she saw, or wherever she travelled in her trance on that strange night she kept her own secret; never whispering a word to Memory, and baffling imagination by an indissoluble silence. She may have gone upward, and come in sight of her eternal home, hoping for leave to rest now, and deeming that her painful union with matter was at last

> dissolved. While she so deemed, an angel may have warned her away from heaven's threshold, and, guiding her weeping down, have bound her, once more, all shuddering and unwilling, to that poor frame, cold and wasted, of whose companionship she was grown more than weary. [p. 165]

Lucy finds that she has been brought to the home of—Mrs Bretton and Graham, who is the Dr John she has known at the pensionnat.

Chapter XVIII, "We Quarrel," we being Lucy and Dr John:

> This little scene took place in the morning; I had to meet him again in the evening, and then I saw I had done mischief. He was not **[190]** made of common clay, not put together out of vulgar materials; while the outlines of his nature had been shaped with breadth and vigour, the details embraced workmanship of almost feminine delicacy: finer, much finer, than you could be prepared to meet with; than you could believe inherent in him, even after years of acquaintance. Indeed, till some over-sharp contact with his nerves had betrayed, by its effects, their acute sensibility, this elaborate construction must be ignored; and the more especially because the sympathetic faculty was not prominent in him: to feel, and to seize quickly another's feelings, are separate properties; a few constructions possess both, some neither. Dr. John had the one in exquisite perfection; and because I have admitted that he was not endowed with the other in equal degree, the reader will considerately refrain from passing to an extreme, and pronouncing him *un*sympathizing, unfeeling: on the contrary, he was a kind, generous man. Make your need known, his hand was open. Put your grief into words, he turned no deaf ear. Expect refinements of perception, miracles of intuition, and realize disappointment. This night, when Dr.

John entered the room, and met the evening lamp, I saw well and at one glance his whole mechanism.

9 Love

There are mentions of *Villette* and its author in a review of a recent novel by a writer I do not know.

> [Alan] Hollinghurst's early novels are sexually explicit, full of the iconoclastic joy that comes from breaking the silence, but the later ones have been interested in leaving certain things out. How would our sense of a novel change if we were to think of it not as the sum of what is said in its sentences but as an accumulation of silences, a series of nothings that are actually somethings? In his latest novel, *The Sparsholt Affair,* Hollinghurst combines a deeply pleasurable riffing on the repressed English novel—Forster, James, Eliot, Charlotte Brontë, Austen; indeed, about half the canon—with another layer of play on his first five works of fiction, which themselves defy and enrich the tradition he is heir to.

This is Joanna Biggs, "an editor at the *London Review of Books,*" writing in *Harper's* [4].

If sexual relations are to be called repressed, when they are left out of a novel because they don't happen, then I suppose *Villette* is a repressed novel.

In the fall of 1996, my future spouse and I were students together in Toronto. One weekend, my mother visited with a friend of hers. After having dinner with them on Saturday night, I was walking home along Baldwin Street, and I saw some of my fellow students drinking beer. I sat with them a bit, but then Ayşe caught me looking at my watch.

"You want to go work, don't you?" she said.

I admitted that she was right.

I told the story to my mother the next day. At the end of the semester, when we students would soon be going our separate ways, this forced some feelings into the open. Had they been repressed before? If so, then indeed Lucy would seem to have repressed loves in *Villette.* When I told my mother by telephone that *I* was in love, she said, "It's Ayşe, isn't it?"

Chapter XIX of *Villette* concerns visits to art galleries. First Lucy makes some general remarks.

> It seemed to me that an original and good picture was just as scarce as an original and good book; nor did I, in the end, tremble to say to myself, standing before certain *chef-d'oeuvres* bearing great names, "These are not a whit like nature. Nature's daylight never had that colour: never was made so turbid, either by storm or cloud, as it is laid out there, under a sky of indigo: and that indigo is not ether; and those dark weeds plastered upon it are not trees." Several very well executed and complacent-looking fat women struck me as by no means the goddesses they appeared to consider themselves. Many scores of marvellously-finished little Flemish pictures, and also of sketches, excellent for fashion-books displaying varied costumes in the handsomest materials, gave evidence of laudable industry whimsically applied. And yet there were fragments of truth here and there which satisfied the conscience, and gleams of light that cheered the vision. Nature's power here broke through in a mountain snow-storm; and there her glory in a sunny southern day. An expression in this portrait proved clear insight into character; a face in that historical painting, by its vivid filial likeness, startlingly reminded you that genius gave it birth. These exceptions I loved: they grew dear as friends. [p. 199]

The narrator continues, now describing a painting called the "Cleopatra": this provides the title of the chapter.

> One day, at a quiet early hour, I found myself nearly alone in a certain gallery, wherein one particular picture of portentous size, set up in the best light, having a cordon of protection stretched before it, and a cushioned bench duly set in front for the accommodation of worshipping connoisseurs, who, having gazed themselves off their feet, might be fain to complete the business sitting: this picture, I say, seemed to consider itself the queen of the collection.

The narrator has a response to this queen that is puritanical, but not particularly sexual, unless *everything* is sexual:

> It represented a woman, considerably larger, I thought, than the life. I calculated that this lady, put into a scale of magnitude, suitable for the reception of a commodity of bulk, would infallibly turn from fourteen to sixteen stone. She was, indeed, extremely well fed: very much butcher's meat—to say nothing of bread, vegetables, and liquids—must she have consumed to attain that breadth and height, **[200]** that wealth of muscle, that affluence of flesh. She lay half-reclined on a couch: why, it would be difficult to say; broad daylight blazed round her; she appeared in hearty health, strong enough to do the work of two plain cooks; she could not plead a weak spine; she ought to have been standing, or at least sitting bolt upright. She had no business to lounge away the noon on a sofa. She ought likewise to have worn decent garments; a gown covering her properly, which was not the case: out of abundance of material—seven-and-twenty yards, I should say, of drapery—she managed to make inefficient raiment. Then, for the wretched untidiness surrounding her, there could be no excuse. Pots and pans—perhaps I ought to say vases and goblets—were rolled here

and there on the foreground; a perfect rubbish of flowers was mixed amongst them, and an absurd and disorderly mass of curtain upholstery smothered the couch and cumbered the floor. On referring to the catalogue, I found that this notable production bore the name "Cleopatra."

The narrator stays in front of the painting, but denies interest:

> Well, I was sitting wondering at it (as the bench was there, I thought I might as well take advantage of its accommodation), and thinking that while some of the details—as roses, gold cups, jewels, &c., were very prettily painted, it was on the whole an enormous piece of claptrap; the room, almost vacant when I entered, began to fill. Scarcely noticing this circumstance (as, indeed, it did not matter to me) I retained my seat; rather to rest myself than with a view to studying this huge, dark-complexioned gipsy-queen; of whom, indeed, I soon tired, and betook myself for refreshment to the contemplation of some exquisite little pictures of still life: wild-flowers, wild-fruit, mossy woodnests, casketing eggs that looked like pearls seen through clear green sea-water; all hung modestly beneath that coarse and preposterous canvas.

Now the narrator is accosted by a person of *sexually* puritanical sensibilities.

> Suddenly a light tap visited my shoulder. Starting, turning, I met a face bent to encounter mine; a frowning, almost a shocked face it was.
>
> "Que faites-vous ici?" said a voice.
>
> "Mais, Monsieur, je m'amuse."
>
> "Vous vous amusez! et à quoi, s'il vous plait? Mais d'abord, faites-moi le plaisir de vous lever; prenez mon bras, et allons de l'autre côté."

> I did precisely as I was bid. M. Paul Emanuel (it was he) returned from Rome, and now a travelled man, was not likely to be less **[201]** tolerant of insubordination now, than before this added distinction laurelled his temples.
>
> "Permit me to conduct you to your party," said he, as we crossed the room.
>
> "I have no party."
>
> "You are not alone?"
>
> "Yes, Monsieur."
>
> "Did you come here unaccompanied?"
>
> "No, Monsieur. Dr. Bretton brought me here."
>
> "Dr. Bretton and Madame his mother, of course?"
>
> "No; only Dr. Bretton."
>
> "And he told you to look at that picture?"
>
> "By no means; I found it out for myself."
>
> M. Paul's hair was shorn close as raven down, or I think it would have bristled on his head. Beginning now to perceive his drift, I had a certain pleasure in keeping cool, and working him up.
>
> "Astounding insular audacity!" cried the Professor. "Singulières femmes que ces Anglaises!"

One may infer that M. Emanuel and the narrator are madly in love; are they repressing it?

I return to Joanna Biggs, who says, later in her review in *Harper's,*

> Sex, Hollinghurst shows, can be about friendship, and self-discovery, and power, and distraction, and comfort, among many other things, but love—well, love is rare. And sex with someone you love is rarer still, and not necessarily a straightforward experience. In *The Folding Star,* the thirty-something Edward Manners is in love, *Villette*-like, with Luc Altidore, a seventeen-year-old to whom he is giving English

> lessons in a Belgian city. Before Manners confesses his feelings, he has sex with people to whom he isn't romantically available: most frequently and comfortingly with Cherif, who says he is in love with him; with a man whose name he never learns in a darkened park, simply for the thrill; with Matt, who becomes a source of extra money and a way of getting to know the city.

Lucy is giving English lessons in a Belgian city, but not to Paul. Neither does she have sex with persons, whether she is romantically available to them or not. One may at first imagine that Paul visits prostitutes; later this will seem highly improbable. Perhaps one just has to read Alan Hollinghurst's *Folding Star* to understand Biggs's idea of *Villette*-like love. It is illuminated only partially by the first part of the paragraph from which I just quoted:

> It is a commonplace to remark on the amount and the nature of the sex in Hollinghurst's fiction. And there is a lot of sex: when reading back over his oeuvre, I started to think about it as functioning the way weather does in realist novels, always available for a quick change of mood. But the sheer abundance of it, as well as the care and detail and lack of squeamishness with which it is treated, has, paradoxically, the same effect as the more common lack of sex in canonical novels: it is love that comes into focus.

I should like to know why urination and defecation are suppressed in just about every novel that I have read. Well, Gulliver does extinguish a fire in Lilliput with his urine, and I recall from *Gargantua and Pantagruel* that a goose's neck is great for wiping one's bum. In *Jaws,* listening to her lover in the loo, a woman muses on the size of his bladder. See also the Salinger excerpt below (page 62).

10 Reason

Chapter XXI, “Reaction.” Lucy returns to the the pensionnat. Graham says he will write, but Lucy is not sure. She wonders to herself whether *she* may write.

> “But if I feel, may I *never* express?”
>
> “*Never*!” declared Reason.
>
> I groaned under her bitter sternness. Never—never—oh, hard word! This hag, this Reason, would not let me look up, or smile, or hope: she could not rest unless I were altogether crushed, cowed, broken-in, and broken-down. According to her, I was born only to work for a piece of bread, to await the pains of death, and steadily through all life to despond. Reason might be right; yet no wonder we are glad at times to defy her, to rush from under her rod and give a truant hour to Imagination—*her* soft, bright foe, *our* sweet Help, our divine Hope. We shall and must break bounds at intervals, despite the terrible revenge that awaits our return. Reason is vindictive as a devil: for me she was always envenomed as a step-mother. If I have obeyed her it has chiefly been with the obedience of fear, not of love. Long ago I should have died of her ill-usage: her stint, her chill, her barren board, her icy bed, her savage, ceaseless blows; but for that kinder Power who holds my secret and sworn allegiance. Often has Reason turned me out by night, in mid-winter, on cold snow, flinging for **[230]** sustenance the gnawed bone dogs had forsaken: sternly has she vowed her stores held nothing more for me—harshly denied my right to ask better things. . . . Then, looking up, have I seen in the sky a head amidst circling stars, of

> which the midmost and the brightest lent a ray sympathetic and attent. A spirit, softer and better than Human Reason, has descended with quiet flight to the waste—bringing all round her a sphere of air borrowed of eternal summer; bringing perfume of flowers which cannot fade—fragrance of trees whose fruit is life; bringing breezes pure from a world whose day needs no sun to lighten it. My hunger has this good angel appeased with food, sweet and strange, gathered amongst gleaning angels, garnering their dew-white harvest in the first fresh hour of a heavenly day; tenderly has she assuaged the insufferable fears which weep away life itself—kindly given rest to deadly weariness—generously lent hope and impulse to paralyzed despair. Divine, compassionate, succourable influence! When I bend the knee to other than God, it shall be at thy white and winged feet, beautiful on mountain or on plain. Temples have been reared to the Sun—altars dedicated to the Moon. Oh, greater glory! To thee neither hands build, nor lips consecrate: but hearts, through ages, are faithful to thy worship. A dwelling thou hast, too wide for walls, too high for dome—a temple whose floors are space—rites whose mysteries transpire in presence, to the kindling, the harmony of worlds!

The four dots of ellipsis were in the original. Lucy's troubles continue.

> After breakfast my custom was to withdraw to the first classe, and sit and read, or think (oftenest the latter) there alone, till the nine-o'clock bell threw open all doors, admitted the gathered rush of externes and demi-pensionnaires, and gave the signal for entrance on that bustle and business to which, till five P.M., there was no relax.
>
> I was just seated this morning, when a tap came to the door.

> "Pardon, Mademoiselle," said a pensionnaire, entering gently; and having taken from her desk some necessary book or paper, she withdrew on tip-toe, murmuring as she passed me, "Que mademoiselle est appliquée!"
>
> Appliquée, indeed! The means of application were spread before me, but I was doing nothing; and had done nothing, and meant to do nothing. Thus does the world give us credit for merits we have not. Madame Beck herself deemed me a regular bas-bleu, and often and solemnly used to warn me not to study too much, lest "the blood should all go to my head." Indeed, everybody in the Rue Fossette held a superstition that "Meess Lucie" was learned; with the notable exception of M. Emanuel, who, by means peculiar to himself, and quite inscrutable to me, had obtained a not inaccurate inkling of my real qualifications, and used to take quiet opportunities of chuckling in my ear his malign glee over their scant measure. For my part, I never troubled myself about this penury. I dearly like to think my own thoughts; I had great pleasure in reading a few books, but not many: preferring always those on whose style or sentiment the writer's individual nature was plainly stamped; flagging inevitably over characterless books, however clever and meritorious: perceiving well that, as far as my own mind was concerned, God had limited its **[235]** powers and, its action—thankful, I trust, for the gift bestowed, but unambitious of higher endowments, not restlessly eager after higher culture.

After a fortnight, Lucy receives a letter, which she savors without opening.

In Chapter XXII, "The Letter," Lucy steals away to the locked garret to read it; but she encounters the ghost.

> Something in that vast solitary garret sounded strangely. Most surely and certainly I heard, as it seemed, a stealthy

foot on that floor: a sort of gliding out from the direction of the black recess haunted by the malefactor cloaks. I turned: my light was dim; the room was long—but as I live! I saw in the middle of that ghostly chamber a figure all black and white; the skirts straight, narrow, black; the head bandaged, veiled, white.

Say what you will, reader—tell me I was nervous or mad; affirm that I was unsettled by the excitement of that letter; declare that I dreamed; this I vow—I saw there—in that room—on that night—an image like—a NUN.

I cried out; I sickened. Had the shape approached me I might have swooned. It receded: I made for the door. How I descended all the stairs I know not. By instinct I shunned the refectory, and shaped my course to Madame's sitting-room: I burst in. I said—

"There is something in the grenier; I have been there: I saw something. Go and look at it, all of you!" [p. 245]

One of the persons in the sitting-room is Dr John, but Lucy does not notice him. He counsels her in her distress.

"Now," he pursued, "they will talk about thieves, burglars, and so on: let them do so—mind you say nothing, and keep your resolution of describing your nun to nobody. She may appear to you again: don't start."

"You think then," I said, with secret horror, "she came out of my brain, and is now gone in there, and may glide out again at an hour and a day when I look not for her?"

"I think it a case of spectral illusion: I fear, following on and resulting from long-continued mental conflict."

[250] "Oh, Doctor John—I shudder at the thought of being liable to such an illusion! It seemed so real. Is there no cure?—no preventive?"

"Happiness is the cure—a cheerful mind the preventive: cultivate both."

> No mockery in this world ever sounds to me so hollow as that of being told to *cultivate* happiness. What does such advice mean? Happiness is not a potato, to be planted in mould, and tilled with manure. Happiness is a glory shining far down upon us out of Heaven. She is a divine dew which the soul, on certain of its summer mornings, feels dropping upon it from the amaranth bloom and golden fruitage of Paradise.

In Chapter XXIII, "Vashti," over the next three weeks, Lucy receives four more letters from Graham. She says she read them "in after years," although later in the novel she will bury them in a jar. Meanwhile she continues the battle with "Reason" begun on page 229 of the novel (page 50 above):

> To begin with: Feeling and I turned Reason out of doors, drew against her bar and bolt, then we sat down, spread our paper, dipped in the ink an eager pen, and, with deep enjoyment, poured out our sincere heart. When we had done—when two sheets were covered with the language of a strongly-adherent affection, a rooted and active gratitude—(once, for all, in this parenthesis, I disclaim, with the utmost scorn, every sneaking suspicion of what are called "warmer feelings:" women do not entertain these "warmer feelings" where, from the commencement, through the whole progress of an acquaintance, they have never once been cheated of the conviction that, to do so would be to commit a mortal absurdity: nobody ever launches into Love unless he has seen or dreamed the rising of Hope's star over Love's troubled waters)—when, then, I had given expression to a closely-clinging and deeply-honouring attachment—an attachment that wanted to attract to itself and take to its own lot all that was painful in the destiny of its object; that would, if it could, have absorbed and conducted away all storms and lightnings from an existence viewed with a passion of

> solicitude—then, just at that moment, the doors of my heart would shake, bolt and bar would yield, Reason would leap in vigorous and revengeful, snatch the full sheets, read, sneer, erase, tear up, re-write, fold, seal, direct, and send a terse, curt missive of a page. She did right.

Dr Bretton comes to take her to the theater, to see a famous actress, when his mother cannot go. Lucy does not stop to think that going out unchaperoned might be improper. Meanwhile, she must fetch a dress from the grenier.

> The reader may believe it or not, but when I thus suddenly entered, that garret was not wholly dark as it should have been: from one point there shone a solemn light, like a star, but broader. So plainly it shone, that it revealed the deep alcove with a portion of the tarnished scarlet curtain drawn over it. Instantly, silently, before my eyes, it vanished; so did the curtain and alcove: all that end of the garret became black as night. I ventured no research; I had not time nor will; snatching my dress, which hung on the wall, happily near the door, I rushed out, relocked the door with convulsed haste, and darted downwards to the dormitory.

Dr John can tell that Lucy must have seen the ghost. At the theater,

> I had heard this woman termed "plain," and I expected bony harshness and grimness—something large, angular, sallow. What I saw was the shadow of a royal Vashti: a queen, fair as the day once, turned pale now like twilight, and wasted like wax in flame.
>
> .... **[258]** ....
>
> Swordsmen thrust through, and dying in their blood on the arena sand; bulls goring horses disembowelled, made a meeker vision for the public—a milder condiment for a people's palate—than Vashti torn by seven devils: devils which

> cried sore and rent the tenement they haunted, but still refused to be exorcised.
>
> . . . .
>
> Where was the artist of the Cleopatra? Let him come and sit down and study this different vision. Let him seek here the mighty brawn, the muscle, the abounding blood, the full-fed flesh he worshipped: let all materialists draw nigh and look on.

John is not so moved.

> Miss Fanshawe, with her usual ripeness of judgment, pronounced Dr. Bretton a serious, impassioned man, too grave and too impressible. Not in such light did I ever see him: no such faults could I lay to his charge. His natural attitude was not the meditative, nor his natural mood the sentimental; *impressionable* he was as dimpling water, but, almost as water, *unimpressible*: the breeze, the sun, moved him—metal could not grave, nor fire brand.

There is a report of fire in the theater; a young woman is injured and taken home by her father, who agrees with John that he is an Englishman, a countryman; John and Lucy follow to the Hotel Crécy.

Chapter XXIV is named for M. de Bassompierre, who is Ginevra's godfather and will turn out to have been the man in the theater. The chapter begins:

> Those who live in retirement, whose lives have fallen amid the seclusion of schools or of other walled-in and guarded dwellings, are liable to be suddenly and for a long while dropped out of the memory of their friends, the denizens of a freer world. Unaccountably, perhaps, and close upon some space of unusually frequent intercourse—some congeries of rather exciting little circumstances, whose natural sequel

> would rather seem to be the quickening than the suspension of communication—there falls a stilly pause, a wordless silence, a long blank of oblivion. Unbroken always is this blank; alike entire and unexplained. The letter, the message once frequent, are cut off; the visit, formerly periodical, ceases to occur; the book, paper, or other token that indicated remembrance, comes no more. [p. 266]

Seven weeks pass with no more letters.

Lucy learns from Ginevra that M. de Bassompierre is her mother's sister's husband and is English, but *his* mother was a foreigner, and through her he interited his name in "de."

Lucy has a letter from *Mrs* Bretton, inviting Lucy to her house. There she meets Miss de Bassompierre, who turns out to be Paulina Mary Home de Bassompierre. We had been told at the beginning that Polly's father was Scottish.

Chapter XXVI is "A Burial," referring to what Lucy does with the five letters from Graham. They have gone missing for a time, and later, after their return, they are tampered with yet again. Lucy buries them in a hollow near the root of Methuselah, the old pear-tree, beneath which the Nun was supposed to be buried. Lucy will see the Nun:

> I meant also to bury a grief . . .
>
> . . . .
>
> If life be a war, it seemed my destiny to conduct it single-handed. I pondered now how to break up my winter-quarters—to leave an encampment where food and forage failed. Perhaps, to effect this **[297]** change, another pitched battle must be fought with fortune; if so, I had a mind to the encounter: too poor to lose, God might destine me to gain. But what road was open?—what plan available?
>
> On this question I was still pausing, when the moon, so dim hitherto, seemed to shine out somewhat brighter: a ray

gleamed even white before me, and a shadow became distinct and marked. I looked more narrowly, to make out the cause of this well-defined contrast appearing a little suddenly in the obscure alley: whiter and blacker it grew on my eye: it took shape with instantaneous transformation. I stood about three yards from a tall, sable-robed, snowy-veiled woman.

Five minutes passed. I neither fled nor shrieked. She was there still. I spoke.

"Who are you? and why do you come to me?"

She stood mute. She had no face—no features: all below her brow was masked with a white cloth; but she had eyes, and they viewed me.

I felt, if not brave, yet a little desperate; and desperation will often suffice to fill the post and do the work of courage. I advanced one step. I stretched out my hand, for I meant to touch her. She seemed to recede. I drew nearer: her recession, still silent, became swift. A mass of shrubs, full-leaved evergreens, laurel and dense yew, intervened between me and what I followed. Having passed that obstacle, I looked and saw nothing. I waited. I said,—"If you have any errand to men, come back and deliver it." Nothing spoke or re-appeared.

This time there was no Dr. John to whom to have recourse: there was no one to whom I dared whisper the words, "I have again seen the nun."

Polly wants Lucy for a professional lady's companion.

Mr. Home himself offered me a handsome sum—thrice my present salary—if I would accept the office of companion to his daughter. I declined. I think I should have declined had I been poorer than I was, and with scantier fund of resource, more stinted narrowness of future prospect. I had not that vocation. I could teach; I could give lessons; but to be either

> a private governess or a companion was unnatural to me. Rather than fill the former post in any great house, I would deliberately have taken a housemaid's place, bought a strong pair of gloves, swept bedrooms and staircases, and cleaned stoves and locks, in peace and independence. Rather than be a companion, I would have made shirts and starved. [p. 298]

Polly's father refers to French, the language, as "the French."

> "*The* French! Scotch again: incorrigible papa. You, too, need schooling."
>
> "Well, Polly, you must persuade Miss Snowe to undertake both you and me; to make you steady and womanly, and me refined and classical."
>
> The light in which M. de Bassompierre evidently regarded "Miss Snowe," used to occasion me much inward edification. What contradictory attributes of character we sometimes find ascribed to us, according to the eye with which we are viewed! Madame Beck esteemed me learned and blue; Miss Fanshawe, caustic, ironic, and cynical; Mr. Home, a model teacher, the essence of the sedate and discreet: somewhat conventional, perhaps, too strict, limited, and scrupulous, but still the pink and pattern of governess-correctness; whilst another person, Professor Paul Emanuel, to wit, never lost an opportunity of intimating his opinion that mine was rather a fiery and rash nature—adventurous, indocile, and audacious. I smiled at them all. If any one knew me it was little Paulina Mary. [p. 301]

Seeing how often Lucy now goes out, Paul is jealous. The ensuing passage displays the now-odd practice of putting quotation marks around reported speech.

> " . . . What had a person devoted to a serious calling, that of education, to do with Counts and Countesses, hotels and

châteaux? To him, I seemed altogether 'en l'air.' On his faith, he believed I went out six days in the seven."

I said, "Monsieur exaggerated. I certainly had enjoyed the advantage of a little change lately, but not before it had become necessary; and the privilege was by no means exercised in excess."

"Necessary! How was it necessary? I was well enough, he supposed? Change necessary! He would recommend me to look at the Catholic 'religieuses,' and study *their* lives. *They* asked no change."

I am no judge of what expression crossed my face when he thus spoke, but it was one which provoked him: he accused me of being reckless, worldly, and epicurean; ambitious of greatness, and feverishly athirst for the pomps and vanities of life. It seems I had no "dévouement," no "récueillement" in my character; no spirit of grace, faith, sacrifice, or self-abasement. Feeling the inutility of answering these charges, I mutely continued the correction of a pile of English exercises. [p. 302]

Lucy has agreed with Polly to study German.

Our German mistress, Fräulein Anna Braun, was a worthy, hearty woman, of about forty-five; she ought, perhaps, to have lived in the days of Queen Elizabeth, as she habitually consumed, for her first and second breakfasts, beer and beef: also, her direct and downright Deutsch nature seemed to suffer a sensation of cruel restraint from what she called our English reserve; though we thought we were very cordial with her: but we did not slap her on the shoulder, and if we consented to kiss her cheek, it was done quietly, and without any explosive smack. These omissions oppressed and depressed her considerably; still, on the whole, we got on very well. Accustomed to instruct foreign girls, who hardly ever will think and study for themselves—who have no idea of grappling with a difficulty, and overcoming it by dint of reflection or application—our progress, which in truth was very leisurely, seemed to astound her. In her eyes, we were a pair of glacial prodigies, cold, proud, and preternatural. [p. 303]

11 Women

In "Franny," J. D. Salinger describes the visit of a young woman to a toilet stall when she has been having lunch with her idiot boyfriend [21, pp. 21–2]:

> THE ladies' room at Sickler's was almost as large as the dining room proper, and, in a special sense, appeared to be hardly less commodious. It was unattended and apparently unoccupied when Franny came in. She stood for a moment—rather as though it were a rendezvous point of some kind—in the middle of the tiled floor. Her brow was beaded with perspiration now, her mouth was slackly open, and she was still paler than she had been in the dining room.
>
> Abruptly, then, and very quickly, she went into the furthest and most anonymous-looking of the seven or eight enclosures—which, by luck, didn't require a coin for entrance—closed the door behind her, and, with some little difficulty, manipulated the bolt to a locked position. Without any apparent regard to the suchness of her environment, she sat down. She brought her **[22]** knees together very firmly, as if to make herself a smaller, more compact unit. Then she placed her hands, vertically, over her eyes and pressed the heels hard, as though to paralyze the optic nerve and drown all images into a voidlike black . . .

How does Salinger know what a woman might do, alone in the ladies' room? Comedian Michelle Wolf has a good routine on YouTube about how male legislators make false extrapolations from what they know the men's room to be like. Men make themselves vulnerable by standing face to the wall, their pants open . . .

At the very beginning of *Marjorie Morningstar,* Herman Wouk describes a young woman's waking up after a night of debauchery [23, p. 9]:

> Customs of courtship vary greatly in different times and places, but the way the thing happens to be done here and now always seems the only natural way to do it.
>
> Marjorie's mother looked in on her sleeping daughter at half past ten of a Sunday morning with feelings of puzzlement and dread. She disapproved of everything she saw. She disapproved of the expensive black silk evening dress crumpled on a chair, the pink frothy underwear thrown on top of the dress, the stockings like dead snakes on the floor, the brown wilting gardenias on the desk. Above all she disapproved of the beautiful seventeen-year-old girl lying happily asleep on a costly oversize bed in a square of golden sunlight, her hair a disordered brown mass of curls, her red mouth streaked with cracking purplish paint, her breathing peaceful and regular through her fine little nose. Marjorie was recovering from a college dance . . . Marjorie's mother did not get much sleep when her daughter went to a college dance . . . She sighed, took the dying flowers to try to preserve them in the refrigerator, and went out, softly closing the door.
>
> The slight noise woke Marjorie. She opened large blue-gray eyes, rolled her head to glance at the window, then sat up eagerly. The day was brilliantly clear and fine. She jumped from the bed in her white nightgown, and ran to the window and looked out.
>
> It was one of the many charms of the El Dorado that it faced Central Park. Here on the seventeenth floor there was no one to peer in on her nakedness but the birds of the air . . .

There was no one to peer in but the birds, a man called Herman Wouk, and his readers.

I read *Marjorie Morningstar* for a second time in 2014, to confirm (or perhaps refute) my twenty-four-year-old memory of a scene in which Freudian analysis was criticized. The scene is in Chapter 42, and I have digitized it elsewhere. Mike Eden once fell asleep at the wheel of a car, killing the wife whom he wanted to be rid of.

> Ordinarily, Marjorie, you understand, the wonderful thing about psychoanalysis is that it *frees* you from responsibility and guilt. You walk into the doctor's office an adulterer, a liar, a drunk, a phony, a failure, a pervert. In due time, after lying around on a couch and babbling for a year or so, it turns out you're none of these things at all. Shucks, no, it was your Unconscious all the time. An entirely different person, a guy named Joe, so to speak. Some occurrence in your childhood sex life has festered into a sort of demon inside you. Well, you track this demon down, recognize it, name it, exorcise it. You pay your bill and go your way absolved.

If your psychoanalysis had been successful, I think you would go away not absolved, but *cured* of the neurosis that had brought you to the analyst in the first place. Perhaps psychiatrists known to Wouk had been misrepresenting their job, like ecclesiastics selling indulgences. Or maybe Wouk himself misunderstood psychiatry. The character Mike Eden continues:

> That's all perfectly fine. Unless you happen to have been in a fatal accident and killed somebody. Then this whole scheme turns upon you. It can absolutely destroy you mentally. Because don't you see—this is what my benighted friends will *never* see—it's just as horrible to believe that

> a demon under the surface of your brain took charge and caused you to kill, as it is to believe that you killed in cold blood. More so, possibly. Because if you think about it, the implication is that subsurface devils possess you and can cause you to commit any number of shocking crimes.

A twentieth-century reader may think that there are many subsurface devils, active in the characters of *Villette.* I'm not sure about the twenty-first-century reader.

Chapter XXVII, "The Hotel Crécy," is named for where Paulina and her father are staying. Getting ready to join them for an affair, Ginevra and Lucy have an exchange that may serve as a condemnation of certain kinds of idiocy. Or call it a cat-fight. Ginevra uses "Turk" as an insult; Lucy, "maggots" in what is supposedly the archaic sense of "whimsical fancy" [22].

> As Miss Fanshawe and I were dressing in the dormitory of the Rue Fossette, she (Miss F.) suddenly burst into a laugh.
>
> "What now?" I asked; for she had suspended the operation of arranging her attire, and was gazing at me.
>
> "It seems so odd," she replied, with her usual half-honest half-insolent unreserve, "that you and I should now be so much on a level, visiting in the same sphere; having the same connections."
>
> "Why, yes," said I; "I had not much respect for the connections you chiefly frequented awhile ago: Mrs. Cholmondeley and Co. would never have suited me at all."
>
> "Who are you, Miss Snowe?" she inquired, in a tone of such undisguised and unsophisticated curiosity, as made me laugh in my turn.
>
> "You used to call yourself a nursery governess; when you first came here you really had the care of the children in this house: I have seen you carry little Georgette in your

arms, like a bonne—few **[308]** governesses would have condescended so far—and now Madame Beck treats you with more courtesy than she treats the Parisienne, St. Pierre; and that proud chit, my cousin, makes you her bosom friend!"

"Wonderful!" I agreed, much amused at her mystification. "Who am I indeed? Perhaps a personage in disguise. Pity I don't look the character."

"I wonder you are not more flattered by all this," she went on; "you take it with strange composure. If you really are the nobody I once thought you, you must be a cool hand."

"The nobody you once thought me!" I repeated, and my face grew a little hot; but I would not be angry: of what importance was a school-girl's crude use of the terms nobody and somebody? I confined myself, therefore, to the remark that I had merely met with civility; and asked "what she saw in civility to throw the recipient into a fever of confusion?"

"One can't help wondering at some things," she persisted.

"Wondering at marvels of your own manufacture. Are you ready at last?"

"Yes; let me take your arm."

"I would rather not: we will walk side by side."

When she took my arm, she always leaned upon me her whole weight; and, as I was not a gentleman, or her lover, I did not like it.

"There, again!" she cried. "I thought, by offering to take your arm, to intimate approbation of your dress and general appearance: I meant it as a compliment."

"You did? You meant, in short, to express that you are not ashamed to be seen in the street with me? That if Mrs. Cholmondeley should be fondling her lapdog at some window, or Colonel de Hamal picking his teeth in a balcony, and should catch a glimpse of us, you would not quite blush for your companion?"

"Yes," said she, with that directness which was her best point—which gave an honest plainness to her very fibs when she told them—which was, in short, the salt, the sole preservative ingredient of a character otherwise not formed to keep.

I delegated the trouble of commenting on this "yes" to my countenance; or rather, my under-lip voluntarily anticipated my tongue of course, reverence and solemnity were not the feelings expressed in the look I gave her.

[309] "Scornful, sneering creature!" she went on, as we crossed a great square, and entered the quiet, pleasant park, our nearest way to the Rue Crécy. "Nobody in this world was ever such a Turk to me as you are!"

"You bring it on yourself: let me alone: have the sense to be quiet: I will let you alone."

"As if one could let you alone, when you are so peculiar and so mysterious!"

"The mystery and peculiarity being entirely the conception of your own brain—maggots—neither more nor less, be so good as to keep them out of my sight."

"But are you anybody?" persevered she, pushing her hand, in spite of me, under my arm; and that arm pressed itself with inhospitable closeness against my side, by way of keeping out the intruder.

"Yes," I said, "I am a rising character: once an old lady's companion, then a nursery-governess, now a school-teacher."

"Do—do tell me who you are? I'll not repeat it," she urged, adhering with ludicrous tenacity to the wise notion of an incognito she had got hold of; and she squeezed the arm of which she had now obtained full possession, and coaxed and conjured till I was obliged to pause in the park to laugh. Throughout our walk she rang the most fanciful changes on this theme; proving, by her obstinate credulity, or incredulity, her incapacity to conceive how any person not bolstered up by birth or wealth, not supported by some consciousness of name or connection, could maintain an at-

> titude of reasonable integrity. As for me, it quite sufficed to my mental tranquillity that I was known where it imported that known I should be; the rest sat on me easily: pedigree, social position, and recondite intellectual acquisition, occupied about the same space and place in my interests and thoughts; they were my third-class lodgers—to whom could be assigned only the small sitting-room and the little back bedroom: even if the dining and drawing-rooms stood empty, I never confessed it to them, as thinking minor accommodations better suited to their circumstances. The world, I soon learned, held a different estimate: and I make no doubt, the world is very right in its view, yet believe also that I am not quite wrong in mine.
>
> There are people whom a lowered position degrades morally, to whom loss of connection costs loss of self-respect: are not these **[310]** justified in placing the highest value on that station and association which is their safeguard from debasement? If a man feels that he would become contemptible in his own eyes were it generally known that his ancestry were simple and not gentle, poor and not rich, workers and not capitalists, would it be right severely to blame him for keeping these fatal facts out of sight—for starting, trembling, quailing at the chance which threatens exposure? The longer we live, the more out experience widens; the less prone are we to judge our neighbour's conduct, to question the world's wisdom: wherever an accumulation of small defences is found, whether surrounding the prude's virtue or the man of the world's respectability, there, be sure, it is needed.

The affair is in honor of one of the local princes. An address is to be given, and it turns out to be by Paul Emanuel. Lucy thinks well of it.

> A gentleman introduced him to M. de Bassompierre; and

> the Count, who had likewise been highly gratified, asked him to join his friends (for the most part M. Emanuel's likewise), and to dine with them at the Hotel Crécy. He declined dinner, for he was a man always somewhat shy at meeting the advances of the wealthy: there was a strength of sturdy independence in the stringing of his sinews—not obtrusive, but pleasant enough to discover as one advanced in knowledge of his character; he promised, however, to step in with his friend, M. A——, a French Academician, in the course of the evening.

At dinner, Lucy compares the cousins Polly and Ginevra, particularly in their spoken language.

> I was charmed with her French; it was faultless—the structure correct, the idioms true, the accent pure; Ginevra, who had lived half her life on the Continent, could do nothing like it: not that words **[313]** ever failed Miss Fanshawe, but real accuracy and purity she neither possessed, nor in any number of years would acquire. Here, too, M. de Bassompierre was gratified; for, on the point of language, he was critical.
>
> Another listener and observer there was; one who, detained by some exigency of his profession, had come in late to dinner. Both ladies were quietly scanned by Dr. Bretton, at the moment of taking his seat at the table; and that guarded survey was more than once renewed. His arrival roused Miss Fanshawe . . . Her light, disconnected prattle might have gratified Graham once; perhaps it pleased him still: perhaps it was only fancy which suggested the thought that, while his eye was filled and his ear fed, his taste, his keen zest, his lively intelligence, were not equally consulted and regaled . . .

In the drawing-room after dinner, Ginevra is bored till the men come, when she runs to the piano to play. Graham stands near, but Lucy thinks he must be listening to Polly as she talks with the Frenchmen around her.

> In Paulina there was more force, both of feeling and character, than most people thought—than Graham himself imagined—than she would ever show to those who did not wish to see it. To speak truth, reader, there is no excellent beauty, no accomplished grace, no reliable refinement, without strength as excellent, as complete, as trustworthy. As well might you look for good fruit and blossom on a rootless and sapless tree, as for charms that will endure in a feeble and relaxed nature. For a little while, the blooming semblance of beauty may flourish round weakness; but it cannot bear a blast: it soon fades, even in serenest sunshine. Graham would have started had any suggestive spirit whispered of the sinew and the stamina sustaining that delicate nature; but I who had known her as a child, knew or guessed by what a good and strong root her graces held to the firm soil of reality. [p. 314]

Graham has a revealing conversation with Lucy.

> He had assumed a bantering air: a light, half-caressing, half-ironic, shone aslant in his eye. Ah, Graham! I have given more than one solitary moment to thoughts and calculations of your estimate of Lucy Snowe: was it always kind or just? Had Lucy been intrinsically the same but possessing the additional advantages of wealth and station, would your manner to her, your value for her, have been quite what they actually were? And yet by these questions I would not seriously infer blame. No; you might sadden and trouble me sometimes; but then mine was a soon-depressed, an easily-deranged temperament—it fell if a cloud crossed the sun. Perhaps before the eye of severe equity I should stand more at fault than you. [p. 315]

Graham wants Lucy to help him figure out what Polly thinks of him.

> "Could I manage to make you ever grateful?" said I. "NO, *I could not.*" And I felt my fingers work and my hands interlock: I felt, too, **[318]** an inward courage, warm and resistant. In this matter I was not disposed to gratify Dr. John: not at all. With now welcome force, I realized his entire misapprehension of my character and nature. He wanted always to give me a role not mine. Nature and I opposed him. He did not at all guess what I felt: he did not read my eyes, or face, or gestures; though, I doubt not, all spoke. Leaning towards me coaxingly, he said, softly, "*Do* content me, Lucy."

Paul Emanuel has been jealous to see Lucy with Graham.

> Having sought my shawl, I returned to the vestibule. M. Emanuel stood there as if waiting. He observed that the night was fine.
>
> "Is it?" I said, with a tone and manner whose consummate chariness and frostiness I could not but applaud. It was so seldom I could properly act out my own resolution to be reserved and cool where I had been grieved or hurt, that I felt almost proud of this one successful effort. That "Is it?" sounded just like the manner of other people. I had heard hundreds of such little minced, docked, dry phrases, from the pursed-up coral lips of a score of self-possessed, self-sufficing misses and mesdemoiselles. That M. Paul would not stand any prolonged experience of this sort of dialogue I knew; but he **[320]** certainly merited a sample of the curt and arid. I believe he thought so himself, for he took the dose quietly. He looked at my shawl and objected to its lightness. I decidedly told him it was as heavy as I wished. Receding aloof, and standing apart, I leaned on the banister of the stairs, folded my shawl about me, and fixed my eyes on a dreary religious painting darkening the wall.

In the carriage, Lucy has words with Ginevra.

> In a pretty humour was Mistress Fanshawe; she had found the evening a grand failure: completely upset as to temper, she gave way to the most uncontrolled moroseness as soon as we were seated, and the carriage-door closed. Her invectives against Dr. Bretton had something venomous in them. Having found herself impotent either to charm or sting him, hatred was her only resource; and this hatred she expressed in terms so unmeasured and proportion so monstrous, that, after listening for a while with assumed stoicism, my outraged sense of justice at last and suddenly caught fire. An explosion ensued . . . **[322]** . . . This was the right discipline for Ginevra; it suited her. I am quite sure she went to bed that night all the better and more settled in mind and mood, and slept all the more sweetly for having undergone a sound moral drubbing.

12 Paul Emanuel

In Chapter XXIX, "Monsieur's Fête," is seen the remarkable power of M. Emanuel to discern the veiled "perverted tendencies" of spirit:

> . . . Poor Zélie! It was much her wont to declare about this time, that she was tired to death of a life of seclusion and labour; that she longed to have the means and leisure for relaxation; to have some one to work for her—a husband who would pay her debts (she was woefully encumbered with debt), supply her wardrobe, and leave her at liberty, as she said, to "goûter un peu les plaisirs." It had long been rumoured, that her eye was upon M. Emanuel. Monsieur Emanuel's eye was certainly often upon her. He would sit and watch her perseveringly for minutes together. I have seen him give her a quarter-of-an-hour's gaze, while the class was silently composing, and he sat throned on his estrade, unoccupied. Conscious always of this basilisk attention, she would writhe under it, half-flattered, half-puzzled, and Monsieur would follow her sensations, sometimes looking appallingly acute; for in some cases, he had the terrible unerring penetration of instinct, and pierced in its hiding-place the last lurking thought of the heart, and discerned under florid veilings the bare; barren places of the spirit: yes, and its perverted tendencies, and its hidden false curves—all that men and women would not have known—the twisted spine, the malformed limb that was born with them, and far worse, the stain or disfigurement they have perhaps brought on themselves. No calamity so accursed but M. Emanuel

> could pity and forgive, if it were acknowledged candidly; but where his questioning eyes met dishonest denial—where his ruthless researches found deceitful **[337]** concealment—oh, then, he could be cruel, and I thought wicked! he would exultantly snatch the screen from poor shrinking wretches, passionately hurry them to the summit of the mount of exposure, and there show them all naked, all false—poor living lies—the spawn of that horrid Truth which cannot be looked on unveiled. He thought he did justice; for my part I doubt whether man has a right to do such justice on man: more than once in these his visitations, I have felt compelled to give tears to his victims, and not spared ire and keen reproach to himself. He deserved it; but it was difficult to shake him in his firm conviction that the work was righteous and needed.

For his birthday, all of the girls and women give flowers to M. Emanuel—all except Lucy:

> . . . I like to see flowers growing, but when they are gathered, they cease to please. I look on them as things rootless and perishable; their likeness to life makes me sad. I never offer flowers to those I love; I never wish to receive them from hands dear to me . . . [p. 337]

Everybody notices. M. Emanuel is heart-broken, but hopes that perhaps Lucy did not know the custom. She did:

> "I *did* know that it was expected: I *was* prepared; yet I laid out no centimes on flowers." [p. 345]

He omits to ask how Lucy was prepared:

> "It is well—you do right to be honest. I should almost have hated you had you flattered and lied. Better declare

at once ‘Paul Carl Emanuel—je te déteste, mon garçon!’—than smile an interest, look an affection, and be false and cold at heart. False and cold I don’t think you are; but you have made a great mistake in life, that I believe; I think your judgment is warped—that you are indifferent where you ought to be grateful—and perhaps devoted and infatuated, where you ought to be cool as your name. Don’t suppose that I wish you to have a passion for me, Mademoiselle; Dieu vous en garde! What do you start for? Because I said passion? Well, I say it again. There is such a word, and there is such a thing—though not within these walls, thank heaven! You are no child that one should not speak of what exists; but I only uttered the word—the thing, I assure you, is alien to my whole life and views. It died in the past—in the present it lies buried—its grave is deep-dug, well-heaped, and many winters old: in the future there will be a resurrection, as I believe to my souls consolation; but all will then be changed—form and feeling: the mortal will have put on immortality—it will rise, not for earth, but heaven. All I say to *you,* Miss Lucy Snowe, is—that you ought to treat Professor Paul Emanuel decently.”

I could not, and did not contradict such a sentiment. [p. 345]

Presently Lucy does give Paul the shell box she has bought, for more than a few centimes, containing the watchguard she has made. The *OED* hyphenates *watch-guard* and defines it as “a chain, cord, ribbon, or the like used to secure a watch when it is worn on the person” [17]; the term, like the thing, seems to have fallen out of use.

“We are friends now,” thought I, “till the next time we quarrel.”

We *might* have quarrelled again that very same evening, but, wonderful to relate, failed, for once, to make the most

> of our opportunity. [p. 347]

Chapter XXX is named for M. Paul, who undertakes to educate Lucy in subjects in which she has appeared ignorant.

> But, strange grief! when that heavy and overcast dawn began at last to yield to day; when my faculties began to struggle themselves, free, and my time of energy and fulfilment came; when I voluntarily doubled, trebled, quadrupled the tasks he set, to please him as I thought, his kindness became sternness; the light changed in his eyes from a beam to a spark; he fretted, he opposed, he curbed me imperiously; the more I did, the harder I worked, the less he seemed content. Sarcasms of which the severity amazed and puzzled me, harassed my ears; then flowed out the bitterest inuendoes against the "pride of intellect." I was vaguely threatened with I know not what doom, if I ever trespassed the limits proper to my sex, and conceived a contraband appetite for unfeminine knowledge. Alas! I had no such appetite. What I loved, it joyed me by any effort to content; but the noble hunger for science in the abstract—the godlike thirst after discovery—these feelings were known to me but by briefest flashes.
>
> Yet, when M. Paul sneered at me, I wanted to possess them more fully; his injustice stirred in me ambitious wishes—it imparted a strong stimulus—it gave wings to aspiration.
>
> In the beginning, before I had penetrated to motives, that **[352]** uncomprehended sneer of his made my heart ache, but by-and-by it only warmed the blood in my veins, and sent added action to my pulses. Whatever my powers—feminine or the contrary—God had given them, and I felt resolute to be ashamed of no faculty of his bestowal.

Paul wants Lucy, on the next public examination-day, to "improvise a composition in French, on any subject any spectator might dictate, without benefit of grammar or lexicon." Lucy explains her response to us with a very long sentence, which I think is really a noun phrase standing in apposition to the "I" of the preceding short sentence. The phrase contains an unusual word, *vaticination* "prophecy."

> I knew what the result of such an experiment would be. I, to whom nature had denied the impromptu faculty; who, in public, was by nature a cypher; whose time of mental activity, even when alone, was not under the meridian sun; who needed the fresh silence of morning, or the recluse peace of evening, to win from the Creative Impulse one evidence of his presence, one proof of his force; I, with whom that Impulse was the most intractable, the most capricious, the most maddening of masters (him before me always excepted)—a deity which sometimes, under circumstances apparently propitious, would not speak when questioned, would not hear when appealed to, would not, when sought, be found; but would stand, all cold, all indurated, all granite, a dark Baal with carven lips and blank eye-balls, and breast like the stone face of a tomb; and again, suddenly, at some turn, some sound, some long-trembling sob of the wind, at some rushing past of an unseen stream of electricity, the irrational demon would wake unsolicited, would stir strangely alive, would rush from its pedestal like a perturbed Dagon, calling to its votary for a sacrifice, whatever the hour—to its victim for some blood, or some breath, whatever the circumstance or scene—rousing its priest, treacherously promising vaticination, perhaps filling its temple with a strange hum of oracles, but sure to give half the significance to fateful winds, and grudging to the desperate listener even a miserable remnant—yielding it sordidly, as though each word had been a **[357]** drop of the deathless ichor of its own dark veins. And this tyrant I was to compel into bondage, and

> make it improvise a theme, on a school estrade, between a Mathilde and a Coralie, under the eye of a Madame Beck, for the pleasure, and to the inspiration of a bourgeois of Labassecour!

Chapter XXXI is "The Dryad." At the beginning, Lucy contemplates her future:

> I went to my own alley: had it been dark, or even dusk, I should have hardly ventured there, for I had not yet forgotten the curious illusion of vision (if illusion it were) experienced in that place some months ago. But a ray of the setting sun burnished still the grey crown of Jean Baptiste; nor had all the birds of the garden yet vanished into their nests amongst the tufted shrubs and thick wall-ivy. I paced up and down, thinking almost the same thoughts I had pondered that night when I buried my glass jar—how I should make some advance in life, take another step towards an independent position; for this train of reflection, though not lately pursued, had never by me been wholly abandoned; and whenever a certain eye was averted from me, and a certain countenance grew dark with unkindness and injustice, into that track of speculation did I at once strike; so that, little by little, I had laid half a plan. [p. 360]

The plan is to set up her own school. She tells herself,

> "Courage, Lucy Snowe! With self-denial and economy now, and steady exertion by-and-by, an object in life need not fail you. Venture not to complain that such an object is too selfish, too limited, and lacks interest; be content to labour for independence until you have proved, by winning that prize, your right to look higher . . . " [p. 361]

She meets Paul in the garden, and we learn the reason for the title of the chapter. There will be another sighting of the ghost.

“Mademoiselle, do you Protestants believe in the supernatural?”

“There is a difference of theory and belief on this point amongst **[367]** Protestants as amongst other sects,” I answered. “Why, Monsieur, do you ask such a question?”

“Why do you shrink and speak so faintly? Are you superstitious?”

“I am constitutionally nervous. I dislike the discussion of such subjects. I dislike it the more because—”

“You believe?”

“No: but it has happened to me to experience impressions—”

“Since you came here?”

“Yes; not many months ago.”

“Here?—in this house?”

“Yes.”

“Bon! I am glad of it. I knew it, somehow; before you told me. I was conscious of rapport between you and myself. You are patient, and I am choleric; you are quiet and pale, and I am tanned and fiery; you are a strict Protestant, and I am a sort of lay Jesuit: but we are alike—there is affinity between us. Do you see it, Mademoiselle, when you look in the glass? Do you observe that your forehead is shaped like mine—that your eyes are cut like mine? Do you hear that you have some of my tones of voice? Do you know that you have many of my looks? I perceive all this, and believe that you were born under my star. Yes, you were born under my star! Tremble! for where that is the case with mortals, the threads of their destinies are difficult to disentangle; knottings and catchings occur—sudden breaks leave damage in the web. But these ‘impressions,’ as you say, with English caution. I, too, have had my ‘impressions.’ ”

“Monsieur, tell me them.”

"I desire no better, and intend no less. You know the legend of this house and garden?"

"I know it. Yes. They say that hundreds of years ago a nun was buried here alive at the foot of this very tree, beneath the ground which now bears us."

"And that in former days a nun's ghost used to come and go here."

"Monsieur, what if it comes and goes here still?"

"Something comes and goes here: there is a shape frequenting this house by night, different to any forms that show themselves by day. I have indisputably seen a something, more than once; and to me its conventual weeds were a strange sight, saying more than they can do to any other living being. A nun!"

"Monsieur, I, too, have seen it."

[368] "I anticipated that. Whether this nun be flesh and blood, or something that remains when blood is dried, and flesh is wasted, her business is as much with you as with me, probably. Well, I mean to make it out; it has baffled me so far, but I mean to follow up the mystery. I mean—"

Instead of telling what he meant, he raised his head suddenly; I made the same movement in the same instant; we both looked to one point—the high tree shadowing the great berceau, and resting some of its boughs on the roof of the first classe. There had been a strange and inexplicable sound from that quarter, as if the arms of that tree had swayed of their own motion, and its weight of foliage had rushed and crushed against the massive trunk. Yes; there scarce stirred a breeze, and that heavy tree was convulsed, whilst the feathery shrubs stood still. For some minutes amongst the wood and leafage a rending and heaving went on. Dark as it was, it seemed to me that something more solid than either night-shadow, or branch-shadow, blackened out of the boles. At last the struggle ceased. What birth succeeded this travail?

What Dryad was born of these throes? We watched fixedly. A sudden bell rang in the house—the prayer-bell. Instantly into our alley there came, out of the berceau, an apparition, all black and white. With a sort of angry rush-close, close past our faces—swept swiftly the very NUN herself! Never had I seen her so clearly. She looked tall of stature, and fierce of gesture. As she went, the wind rose sobbing; the rain poured wild and cold; the whole night seemed to feel her.

Chapter XXXV is "Fraternity": what Lucy has with Paul.

While he spoke, the tone of his voice, the light of his now affectionate eye, gave me such a pleasure as, certainly, I had never felt. I envied no girl her lover, no bride her bridegroom, no wife her husband; I was content with this my voluntary, self-offering friend. If he would but prove reliable, and he *looked* reliable, what, beyond his friendship, could I ever covet? But, if all melted like a dream, as once before had happened—?

"Qu'est-ce donc? What is it?" said he, as this thought threw its weight on my heart, its shadow on my countenance. I told him; and after a moment's pause, and a thoughtful smile, he showed me how an equal fear—lest I should weary of him, a man of moods so difficult and fitful—had haunted his mind for more than one day, or one month.

On hearing this, a quiet courage cheered me. I ventured a word of re-assurance. That word was not only tolerated; its repetition was courted. I grew quite happy—strangely happy—in making him secure, content, tranquil. Yesterday, I could not have believed that earth held, or life afforded, moments like the few I was now passing. Countless times it had been my lot to watch apprehended sorrow close darkly in; but to see unhoped-for happiness take form, find place,

> and grow more real as the seconds sped, was indeed a new experience.
>
> "Lucy," said M. Paul, speaking low, and still holding my hand, "did you see a picture in the boudoir of the old house?"
>
> "I did; a picture painted on a panel."
>
> "The portrait of a nun?"
>
> "Yes."
>
> **[408]** "You heard her history?"
>
> "Yes."
>
> "You remember what we saw that night in the berceau?"
>
> "I shall never forget it."
>
> "You did not connect the two ideas; that would be folly?"
>
> "I thought of the apparition when I saw the portrait," said I; which was true enough.
>
> "You did not, nor will you fancy," pursued he, "that a saint in heaven perturbs herself with rivalries of earth? Protestants are rarely superstitious; these morbid fancies will not beset *you?*"
>
> "I know not what to think of this matter; but I believe a perfectly natural solution of this seeming mystery will one day be arrived at."
>
> "Doubtless, doubtless. Besides, no good-living woman—much less a pure, happy spirit—would trouble amity like ours—n'est-il pas vrai?"

The amity is troubled in Chapter XXXVI, "The Apple of Discord":

> The morrow would not restore him to the Rue Fossette, that day being devoted entirely to his college. I got through my teaching; I got over the intermediate hours; I saw evening approaching, and armed myself for its heavy ennuis. Whether it was worse to stay with my co-inmates, or to sit alone, I had not considered; I naturally took up the latter alternative; if there was a hope of comfort for any moment, the

> heart or head of no human being in this house could yield it; only under the lid of my desk could it harbour, nestling between the leaves of some book, gilding a pencil-point, the nib of a pen, or tinging the black fluid in that ink-glass. With a heavy heart I opened my desk-lid; with a weary hand I turned up its contents. [p. 412]

In the desk is a new book from Paul:

> It preached Romanism; it persuaded to conversion . . .
>
> . . . .
>
> I remember one capital inducement to apostacy was held out in the fact that the Catholic who had lost dear friends by death could enjoy the unspeakable solace of praying them out of purgatory. The writer did not touch on the firmer peace of those whose belief dispenses with purgatory altogether: but I thought of this; and, on the whole, preferred the latter doctrine as the most consolatory. [p. 413]

Paul has told his confessor of his relations with Lucy. The confessor is the priest whom Lucy has already visited.

> Pére Silas, it seems, had closely watched me, had ascertained that I went by turns, and indiscriminately, to the three Protestant Chapels of Villette—the French, German, and English—*id est*, the Presbyterian, Lutheran, Episcopalian. Such liberality argued in the father's eyes profound indifference—who tolerates all, he reasoned, can be attached to none. Now, it happened **[419]** that I had often secretly wondered at the minute and unimportant character of the differences between these three sects—at the unity and identity of their vital doctrines: I saw nothing to hinder them from being one day fused into one grand Holy Alliance, and I respected them all, though I thought that in each there were faults of form, incumbrances, and trivialities. Just what I

thought, that did I tell M. Emanuel, and explained to him that my own last appeal, the guide to which I looked, and the teacher which I owned, must always be the Bible itself, rather than any sect, of whatever name or nation.

He left me soothed, yet full of solicitude, breathing a wish, as strong as a prayer, that if I were wrong, Heaven would lead me right. I heard, poured forth on the threshold, some fervid murmurings to "Marie, Reine du Ciel," some deep aspiration that *his* hope might yet be *mine*.

Strange! I had no such feverish wish to turn him from the faith of his fathers. I thought Romanism wrong, a great mixed image of gold and clay; but it seemed to me that *this* Romanist held the purer elements of his creed with an innocency of heart which God must love.

The preceding conversation passed between eight and nine o'clock of the evening, in a schoolroom of the quiet Rue Fossette, opening on a sequestered garden. Probably about the same, or a somewhat later hour of the succeeding evening, its echoes, collected by holy obedience, were breathed verbatim in an attent ear, at the panel of a confessional, in the hoary church of the Magi. It ensued that Pére Silas paid a visit to Madame Beck, and stirred by I know not what mixture of motives, persuaded her to let him undertake for a time the Englishwoman's spiritual direction.

Hereupon I was put through a course of reading—that is, I just glanced at the books lent me; they were too little in my way to be thoroughly read, marked, learned, or inwardly digested. And besides, I had a book up-stairs, under my pillow, whereof certain chapters satisfied my needs in the article of spiritual lore, furnishing such precept and example as, to my heart's core, I was convinced could not be improved on.

Then Pére Silas showed me the fair side of Rome, her good works; and bade me judge the tree by its fruits.

In answer, I felt and I avowed that these works were *not* the fruits of Rome; they were but her abundant blossoming, but the fair **[420]** promise she showed the world, that bloom when set, savoured not of charity; the apple full formed was ignorance, abasement, and bigotry. Out of men's afflictions and affections were forged the rivets of their servitude. Poverty was fed and clothed, and sheltered, to bind it by obligation to "the Church;" orphanage was reared and educated that it might grow up in the fold of "the Church;" sickness was tended that it might die after the formula and in the ordinance of "the Church;" and men were overwrought, and women most murderously sacrificed, and all laid down a world God made pleasant for his creatures' good, and took up a cross, monstrous in its galling weight, that they might serve Rome, prove her sanctity, confirm her power, and spread the reign of her tyrant "Church."

For man's good was little done; for God's glory, less. A thousand ways were opened with pain, with blood-sweats, with lavishing of life; mountains were cloven through their breasts, and rocks were split to their base; and all for what? That a Priesthood might march straight on and straight upward to an all-dominating eminence, whence they might at last stretch the sceptre of their Moloch "Church."

It will not be. God is not with Rome, and, were human sorrows still for the Son of God, would he not mourn over her cruelties and ambitions, as once he mourned over the crimes and woes of doomed Jerusalem!

Oh, lovers of power! Oh, mitred aspirants for this world's kingdoms! an hour will come, even to you, when it will be well for your hearts—pausing faint at each broken beat—that there is a Mercy beyond human compassions, a Love, stronger than this strong death which even you must face, and before it, fall; a Charity more potent than any sin, even yours; a Pity which redeems worlds—nay, absolves Priests.

> My third temptation was held out in the pomp of Rome—the glory of her kingdom. I was taken to the churches on solemn occasions—days of fête and state; I was shown the Papal ritual and ceremonial. I looked at it.
>
> Many people—men and women—no doubt far my superiors in a thousand ways, have felt this display impressive, have declared that though their Reason protested, their Imagination was subjugated. I **[421]** cannot say the same. Neither full procession, nor high mass, nor swarming tapers, nor swinging censers, nor ecclesiastical millinery, nor celestial jewellery, touched my imagination a whit. What I saw struck me as tawdry, not grand; as grossly material, not poetically spiritual.
>
> This I did not tell Pére Silas; he was old, he looked venerable: through every abortive experiment, under every repeated disappointment, he remained personally kind to me, and I felt tender of hurting his feelings. But on the evening of a certain day when, from the balcony of a great house, I had been made to witness a huge mingled procession of the church and the army—priests with relics, and soldiers with weapons, an obese and aged archbishop, habited in cambric and lace, looking strangely like a grey daw in bird-of-paradise plumage, and a band of young girls fantastically robed and garlanded—*then* I spoke my mind to M. Paul.
>
> "I did not like it," I told him; "I did not respect such ceremonies; I wished to see no more."

Chapter XXXVII is "Sunshine." M. de Bassompierre notes (on page 430) that Polly turns 18 on May 5. Having written a letter for Graham, she says,

> "I hate to hide my actions from you, papa. I fear you and love you above everything but God. Read the letter; look at the address."

With great reluctance, M. de Bassompierre agrees that his daughter may marry Graham.

> "Is there, indeed, such happiness on earth?" I asked, as I watched the father, the daughter, the future husband, now united—all blessed and blessing.
>
> Yes; it is so. Without any colouring of romance, or any exaggeration of fancy, it is so. Some real lives do—for some certain days or years—actually anticipate the happiness of Heaven; and, I believe, if such perfect happiness is once felt by good people (to the wicked it never comes), its sweet effect is never wholly lost. Whatever trials follow, whatever pains of sickness or shades of death, the glory precedent still shines through, cheering the keen anguish, and tinging the deep cloud. [p. 436]

Chapter XXXVIII is "Cloud." Madame Beck announces to the school that M. Emanuel must go abroad. "Perhaps he may tell you more himself" (page 439). When he does come, Madame Beck prevents him from seeing Lucy, but he is able to pass her a note with a student, telling her to expect him.

> I waited my champion. Apollyon came trailing his Hell behind him. I think if Eternity held torment, its form would not be fiery rack, nor its nature despair. I think that on a certain day amongst those days which never dawned, and will not set, an angel entered **[446]** Hades—stood, shone, smiled, delivered a prophecy of conditional pardon, kindled a doubtful hope of bliss to come, not now, but at a day and hour unlooked for, revealed in his own glory and grandeur the height and compass of his promise: spoke thus—then towering, became a star, and vanished into his own Heaven. His legacy was suspense—a worse boon than despair.

Lucy becomes sick with waiting. Madame Beck gets her to take a sedative, an opiate.

> The drug wrought. I know not whether Madame had overcharged or under-charged the dose; its result was not that she intended. Instead of stupor, came excitement. I became alive to new thought—to reverie peculiar in colouring. A gathering call ran **[450]** among the faculties, their bugles sang, their trumpets rang an untimely summons. Imagination was roused from her rest, and she came forth impetuous and venturous. With scorn she looked on Matter, her mate—"Rise!" she said. "Sluggard! this night I will have *my* will; nor shalt thou prevail."
>
> "Look forth and view the night!" was her cry; and when I lifted the heavy blind from the casement close at hand—with her own royal gesture, she showed me a moon supreme, in an element deep and splendid.

At first I have trouble understanding whether Lucy goes out into town in body, or only in imagination. Later it will transpire that her nocturnal excursion has been real.

The excursion continues in Chapter XXXIX, "Old and New Acquaintance." At a midnight fête, Lucy encounters Madame Beck, Paul, and—Justine Marie, who is *not* the Nun, not the late Justine Marie to whom Paul was once affianced, but an heiress to whom Paul is guardian or godfather and whom Paul is desired by Madame Beck to marry.

> Nothing remained now but to take my freedom to my chamber, to carry it with me to my bed and see what I could make of it. The play was not yet, indeed, quite played out. I might have waited and watched longer that love-scene under the trees, that sylvan courtship. **[468]** Had there been nothing of love in the demonstration, my Fancy in this hour was so generous, so creative, she could have modelled for it the most salient lineaments, and given it the deepest life and highest colour of passion. But I *would* not look; I had fixed

> my resolve, but I would not violate my nature. And then—something tore me so cruelly under my shawl, something so dug into my side, a vulture so strong in beak and talon, I must be alone to grapple with it. I think I never felt jealousy till now. This was not like enduring the endearments of Dr. John and Paulina, against which while I sealed my eyes and my ears, while I withdrew thence my thoughts, my sense of harmony still acknowledged in it a charm. This was an outrage. The love born of beauty was not mine; I had nothing in common with it: I could not dare to meddle with it, but another love, venturing diffidently into life after long acquaintance, furnace-tried by pain, stamped by constancy, consolidated by affection's pure and durable alloy, submitted by intellect to intellect's own tests, and finally wrought up, by his own process, to his own unflawed completeness, this Love that laughed at Passion, his fast frenzies and his hot and hurried extinction, in *this* Love I had a vested interest; and whatever tended either to its culture or its destruction, I could not view impassibly.

The Nun is discovered on page 470.

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