

A stylized, high-contrast illustration in shades of brown, black, and white. On the left, a man is shown in profile, wearing a dark suit jacket and a light-colored shirt with a dark tie. On the right, a woman is shown in profile, wearing a dark dress, a long pearl necklace, and a large, ornate earring. The background is a solid dark brown color.

**AMERICAN LITERATURE (MA)**  
**2023/24 - Spring Term**

**The Roaring  
Twenties?**

# The Roaring Twenties?

## **MODULE A: The roaring Twenties - 1: memory and the present**

The module will focus on literary production in the United States in the 1920s. Particular emphasis will be given to the themes of memory, with reference to the trauma of World War I, and of the rejection of the past and the consequent elaboration of new social and cultural myths.

## **MODULE B: The roaring Twenties - 2: the outcasts.**

The module will focus on figures and categories that, in the imagery of the 1920s, were cast to the margins of the US society. Among the themes addressed, particular importance will be given to the South and to African American literature, with special emphasis on the Harlem Renaissance.

## Module A

1. T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land* (1922)
2. Edith Wharton, *The Age of Innocence* (1920)
3. Francis S. Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (1925)
4. Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* (1929)

## Module B

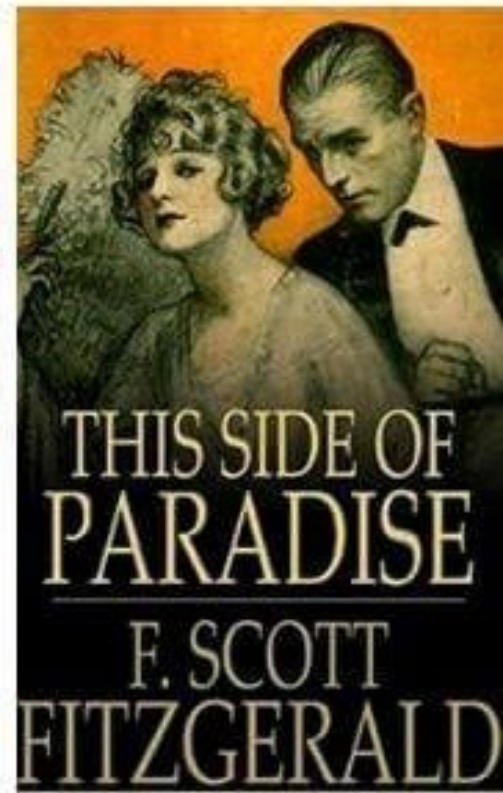
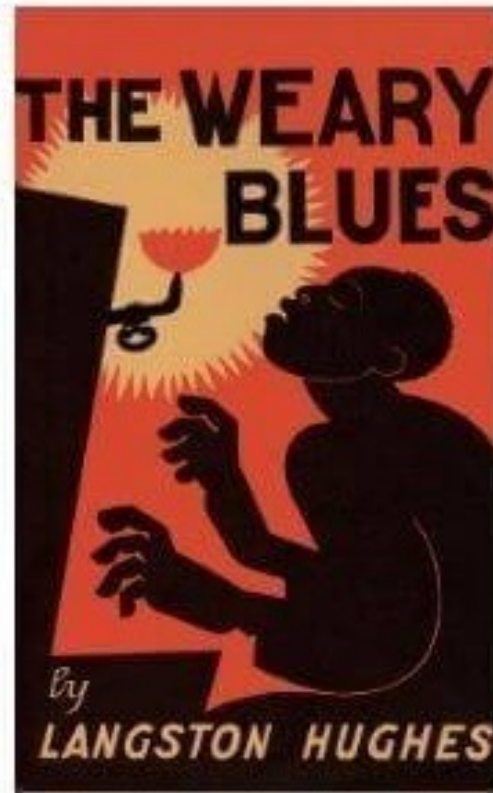
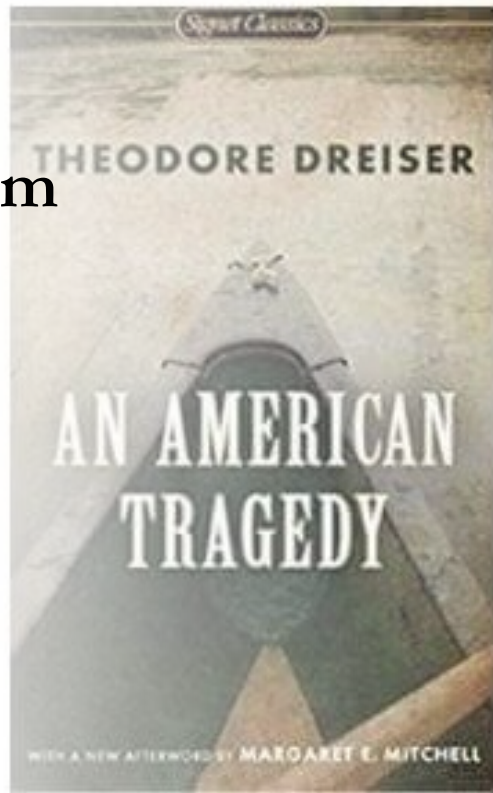
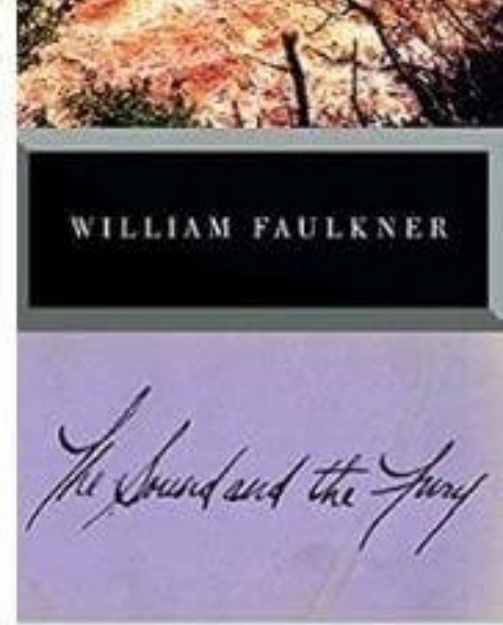
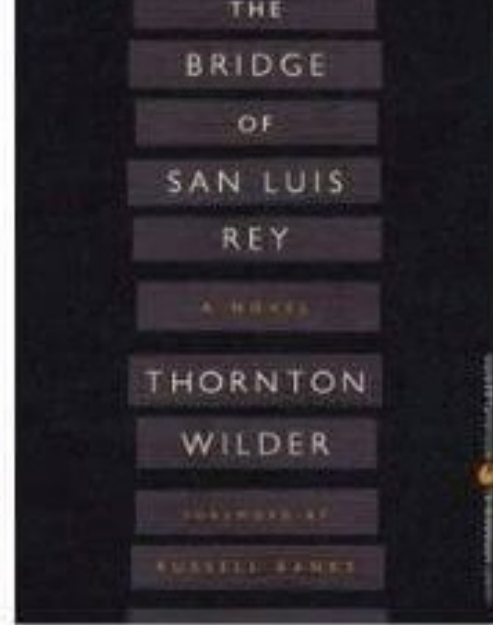
1. Claude McKay, *Home to Harlem* (1928)
2. William Faulkner, *Soldiers' Pay* (1926)
3. From Alain Locke, ed., *The New Negro* (1925):
  - Alain Locke, "The New Negro"
  - Albert C. Barnes, "Negro Art and America"
  - Alain Locke, "Negro Youth Speaks"
  - Alain Locke, "The Negro Spirituals"
  - James Weldon Johnson, "Harlem: the Culture Capital"
4. Langston Hughes, "The Negro Artist And The Racial Mountain" (1926)
5. Nella Larsen, *Passing* (1929)

# Why study the 1920s?

American literature arrived at the world stage

American literature set a paradigm

Books and readers



# Why study the 1920s?

Rejection of the Brahmin tradition

*Brahmins*: Boston upper class, WASP

British-Anglican education

- Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
- Oliver Wendell Holmes
- James Russell Lowell



# AMERICAN RENAISSANCE

ART AND EXPRESSION  
IN THE AGE OF  
EMERSON AND WHITMAN



Interest in Dickinson or Whitman →  
will result in Francis Otto Matthiessen's  
*American Renaissance* (1941)

# Why study the 1920s?

## Why the “Roaring” 1920s?

Commodities, consumerism, leisure time, technology (radio)

- 1900: 8,000 cars in the USA
- 1926: 20,000,000
- Henry Ford: Ford Motor Company, 1903

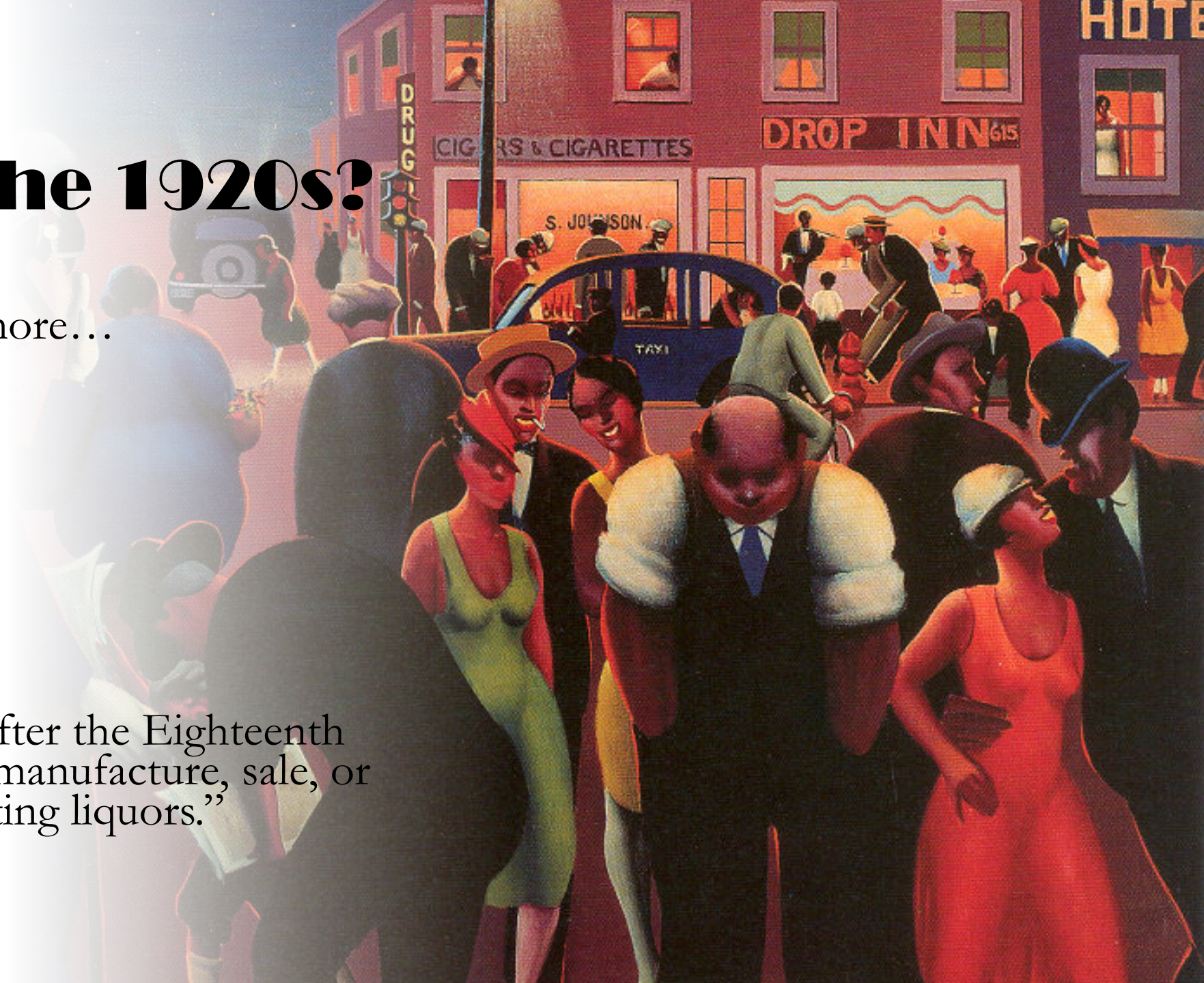


# Why study the 1920s?

The USA was becoming more...

- ... urbanized
- ... secularized
- ... diverse
- ... “libertine”

1920: Prohibition begins after the Eighteenth Amendment forbids the “manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors.”





# Why study the 1920s?

WW1 → end of late 19<sup>th</sup> century optimism  
(progress and Positivism)

The USA entered the war in 1917 “to make the world safe for democracy,” after German troops sunk the Lusitania (128 American soldiers died)

- 100,000 casualties
- Aftermath: increase of unemployment rates
- Racial riots



# Why study the 1920s?

## The racial problem

Internal migration after the Civil War

Segregation in the South (Plessy v. Ferguson, Louisiana, 1896)

“Separate but equal”

Harlem Renaissance

Alain Locke, *The New Negro*, 1925

# Why study the 1920s?

## Psychoanalysis

1909: Freud in the US

Religious backlash

Revolution in gender roles started during the WW1 → overcoming of the separate spheres ideology

1920 - The Nineteenth Amendment gave women the right to vote.



# Why study the 1920s?

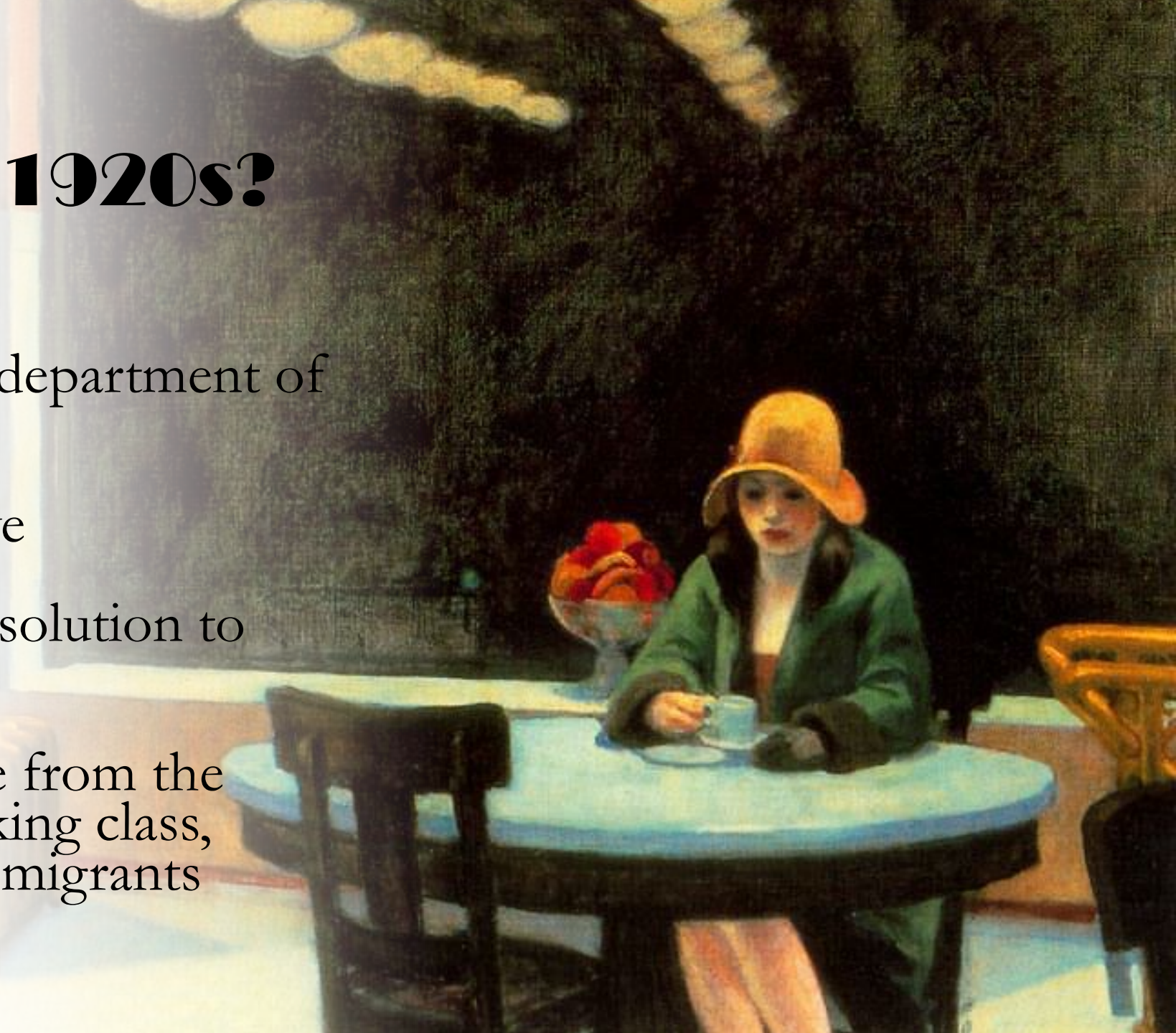
Alienation in big cities

Mass-society: sociological department of the Ford Motor Company

Injunction to be productive

Psychoanalysis: individual solution to collective problems

Gap between white people from the upper classes and the working class, people in the countryside, migrants



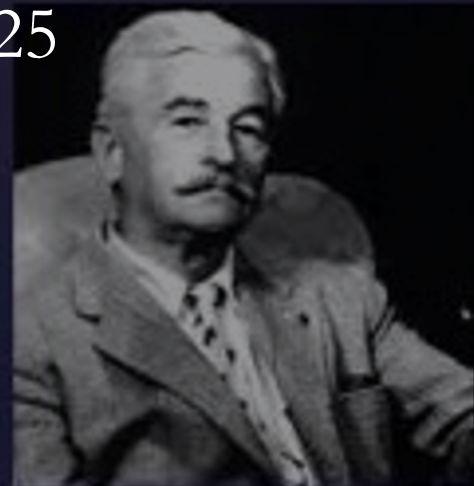
# American Modernism

1. Transnational modernism v. American modernism

2. The Lost Generation

3. The Harlem Renaissance

4. Southern Modernism (Southern Agrarians; *The Fugitive*, 1922-25)

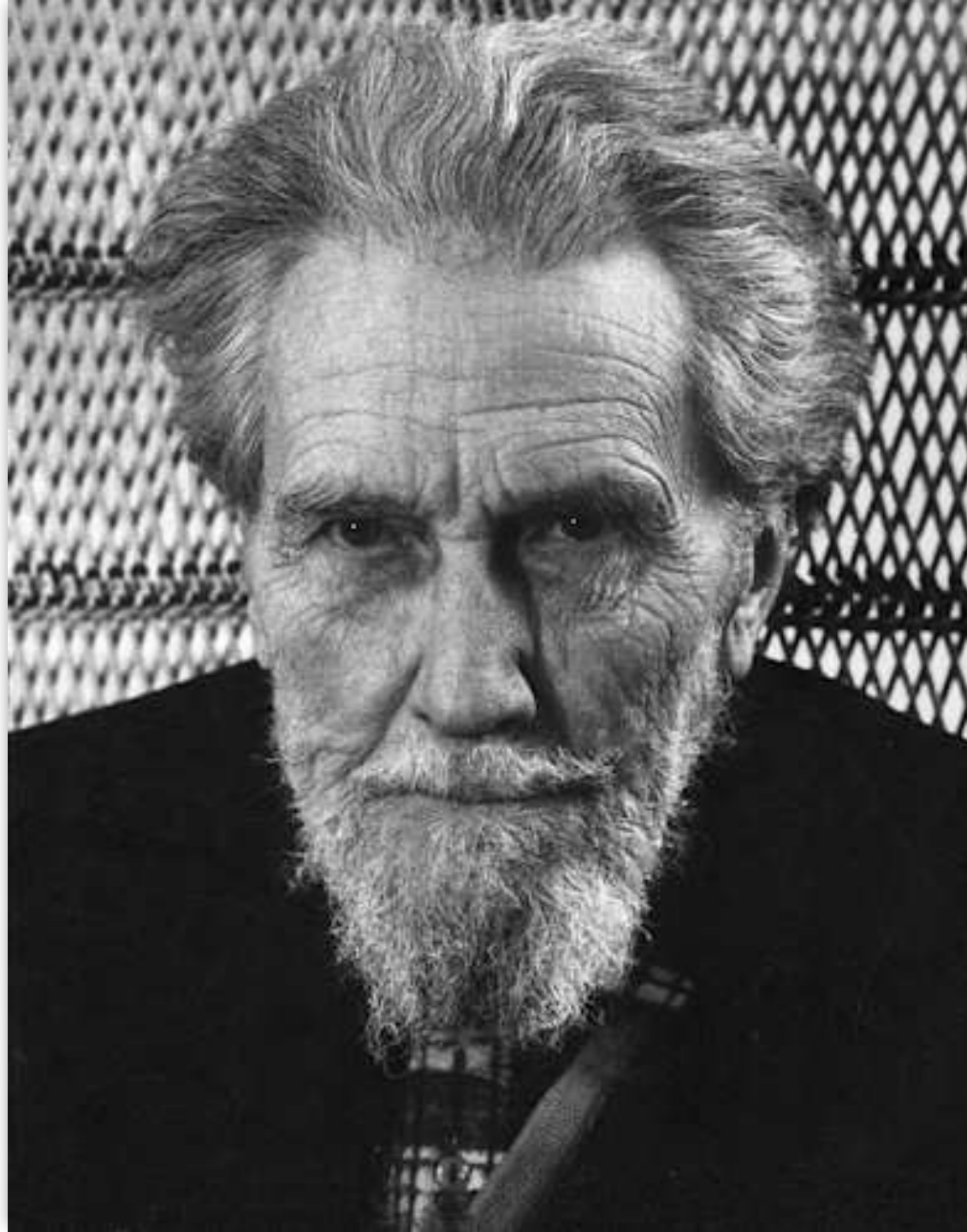


# American Modernism

**Ezra Pound** (1885-1972)  
Imagism and vorticism

“In a Station of the Metro” (1913)

The apparition of these faces in the crowd:  
Petals on a wet, black bough.



## **Ezra Pound, “A Few Dont’s by an Imagiste,” *Poetry*, 1913**

An “Image” is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time. I use the term “complex” rather in the technical sense employed by the newer psychologists [...]. It is better to present one Image in a lifetime than to produce voluminous works.

[...] Use either no ornament or good ornament. Let the candidate fill his mind with the finest cadences he can discover, preferably in a foreign language [This is for rhythm, his vocabulary must of course be found in his native tongue], so that the meaning of the words may be less likely to divert his attention from the movement; e.g. Saxon charms, Hebridean Folk Songs, the verse of Dante, and the lyrics of Shakespeare—if he can dissociate the vocabulary from the cadence.

1. Direct treatment of the “thing” whether subjective or objective.
2. To use absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation.
3. As regarding rhythm: to compose in the sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome.

Indeed *vers libre* has become as prolix and as verbose as any of the flaccid varieties that preceded it. It has brought faults of its own. The actual language and phrasing is often as bad as that of our elders without even the excuse that the words are shovelled in to fill a metric pattern or to complete the noise of a rhyme-sound.

# **Thomas S. Eliot, “Tradition and the Individual Talent” (1919)**

No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead. I mean this as a principle of æsthetic, not merely historical, criticism.

The analogy was that of the catalyst. When the two gases previously mentioned are mixed in the presence of a filament of platinum, they form sulphurous acid. This combination takes place only if the platinum is present; nevertheless the newly formed acid contains no trace of platinum, and the platinum itself is apparently unaffected; has remained inert, neutral, and unchanged. The mind of the poet is the shred of platinum. It may partly or exclusively operate upon the experience of the man himself; but, the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates; the more perfectly will the mind digest and transmute the passions which are its material.

It is not in his personal emotions, the emotions provoked by particular events in his life, that the poet is in any way remarkable or interesting. [...] The emotion in his poetry will be a very complex thing, but not with the complexity of the emotions of people who have very complex or unusual emotions in life. [...] The business of the poet is not to find new emotions, but to use the ordinary ones and, in working them up into poetry, to express feelings which are not in actual emotions at all. [...] we must believe that “emotion recollected in tranquillity” is an inexact formula. [...] Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality. But, of course, only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things.



# **T.S. Eliot** **(Saint Louis, Missouri, 1888 – London, 1965)**

Important family from Boston

1948: Nobel Prize in literature

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Studied at Harvard, Oxford, and the Sorbonne (Paris)

1917: worked at Lloyds Bank

1927: acquired British citizenship and converted to Anglicanism

“classicist in literature, royalist in politics, and anglo-catholic in religion” (*For Lancelot Andrewes: Essays on style and order*, 1929).

*Prufrock and Other Observations* (1917)

***The Waste Land* (1922)**

*The Hollow Men* (1925)

*Ash Wednesday* (1929)

*Four Quartets* (1936-1942)

*Murder in the Cathedral* (drama, 1935)

# THE WASTE LAND

BY  
T. S. ELIOT

"NAM Sibyllam quidem Cumis ego ipse oculis meis  
vidi in ampulla pendere, et cum illi pueri dicerent:  
Σίβυλλα τί θέλεις; respondebat illa: ἀποθανεῖν θέλω."

NEW YORK  
BONI AND LIVERIGHT  
1922

# *The Waste Land*

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Dante, Shakespeare, Baudelaire, Laforgue, Rimbaud, Verlaine,  
classical literature, ancient Indian literature

James G. Frazer's *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and  
Religion* (1890-1915)

Eliot and modernity: music (Igor Stravinskij,  
Arnold Schönberg)

1922: *The Waste Land*

1922: James Joyce's *Ulysses*. Dublin, 16 June 1904. Three  
characters: Stephen Dedalus (Telemachus), Leopold Bloom  
(Ulysses), Molly Bloom (Penelope)

# THE WASTE LAND

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NEW YORK  
BONI AND LIVERIGHT  
1922

# *The Waste Land*

“It is simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history. ... Instead of narrative method, we may now use the **mythical method.**”

(“Ulysses, Order, and Myth,” 1923)

Style: Pound’s revision (“il miglior fabbro”)

1<sup>st</sup> epigraph: Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1899)

1922 epigraph: Petronius’s *Satyricon* (1<sup>st</sup> century AD) → Sybil and Apollo (Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*)

# THE WASTE LAND

BY  
T. S. ELIOT

“NAM Sibyllam quidem Cumis ego ipse oculis meis  
vidi in ampulla pendere, et cum illi pueri dicerent:  
Σίβυλλα τί θέλεις; respondebat illa: ἀποθανεῖν θέλω.”

NEW YORK  
BONI AND LIVERIGHT  
1922

# *The Waste Land*

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Frazer, *The Golden Bough*: the king and the land, death and regeneration

Sterility

Prophecy and its degraded version

John Maynard Keynes, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (1920): Carthaginian peace → Conditions of Europe after the war (Germany and the former Austro-Hungarian Empire; poverty; the Soviet menace)



## 1919: Treaty of Versailles

*Russian Empire* → Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Finland

*Austro-Hungarian Empire* → Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia

*Ottoman Empire* → Turkey

*German Empire* → Germany (lost its territory outside Europe)

# 1. The Burial of the Dead

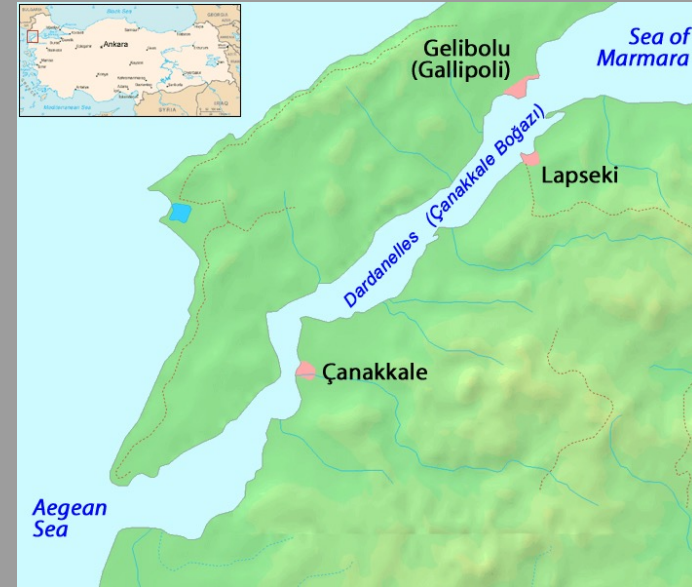
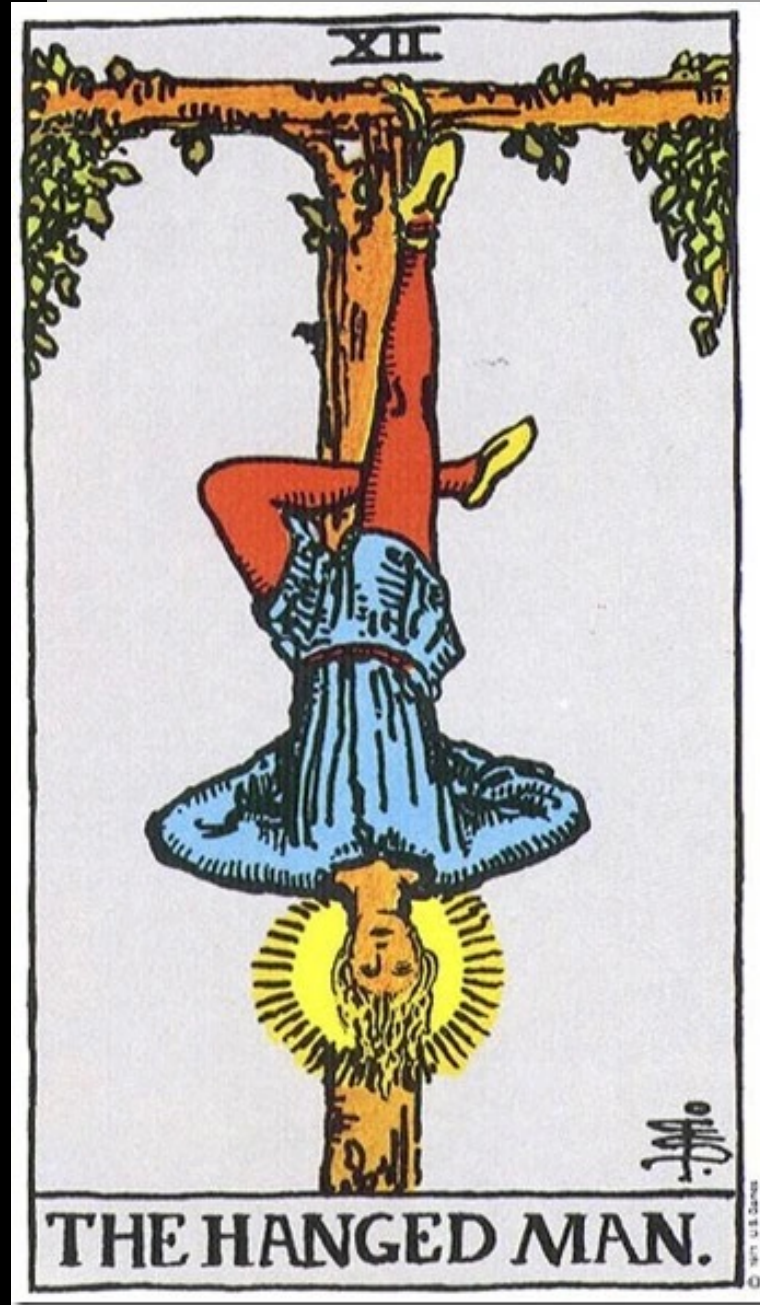
Soldiers who died in the campaign of Gelibolu (1915-1916), won by the Ottomans

1-18: death and rebirth in the eyes of Marie Larisch-Wallersee

19-42: *Bible*: Book of Ezekiel and Ecclesiastes, Richard Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* (1859)

43-59: Madame Sosostris and the tarots

60-75: London and modernity (battle of Gelibolu → battle of Mylae between Rome and Carthage; Carthage → Germany). Baudelaire, "Au lecteur" (*Les Fleurs du Mal*, 1857)



## 2. A Game of Chess

Playing chess as a metaphor for man/woman relationship

**76-96:** Elizabethan drama (Thomas Middleton, *Women Beware Women*, 1614, and *A Game at Chess*, 1624; Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, 1623)

**97-110: Philomel** (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, book 6): sister of Procne, was raped by Procne's husband, Tereus, who cut her tongue out. Procne killed their own son in revenge; she and Philomel were transformed into birds.

**111-138:** middle-class couple and war

**139-172:** working-class women and abortion

Blank verse

Irregular  
verse



**Blank verse** (Iambic Pentameter, 16<sup>th</sup> century):  
ten syllables; stress on syllables 2,4,6,8 and 10

### 3. The Fire Sermon

Fire: destruction/purification

173-202: Thames river → *Heart of Darkness*;  
Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Nymphs v.  
prostitutes

203-06: Philomel (see part 2)

207-14: The Smyrna merchant

215-56: **Tiresias**: the sex scene between a  
typist and her lover

257-91: Tiresias strolling along the Thames

292-306: The monologs of the Three  
Thames Daughters. Voices of women  
(former nymphs?)

307-11: Buddha and St. Augustine

**Buddha**, Fire  
Sermon  
("Ādittapariyāya  
Sutta," from the  
*Pali Canon*):  
liberation from  
suffering through  
detachment



**Tiresias**, Greek  
mythological  
prophet  
transformed into a  
woman by the  
goddess Hera, after  
beating two  
copulating snakes  
with a stick



## 4. Death by Water (312-21)

Madame Sosostris: “Fear death by water” (55)

The Smyrna Merchant → war Greece v. Turkey

Gentile or Jew → St. Paul’s letters and  
Eliot’s antisemitism (“Gerontion” and  
“Burbank with a Baedeker: Bleistein with a Cigar”, 1920)

“Dans le restaurant” (1918)

Phlébas, le Phénicien, pendant quinze jours noyé,  
Oubliait les cris des mouettes et la houle de Cornouaille,  
Et les profits et les pertes, et la cargaison d’étain:  
Un courant de sous-mer l’emporta très loin,  
Le repassant aux étapes de sa vie antérieure.  
Figurez-vous donc, c’était un sort pénible;  
Cependant, ce fut jadis un bel homme, de haute taille.

## 5. What the Thunder Said

Quest: from Jesus's death to India, going through devastated Europe. The waste land is no longer a metaphor, but the real world.

322-30 / 359-65 : Jesus's death and resurrection; and first appearance after death in Emmaus (also: expedition to Antarctica)

331-58 / 366-76: a desert land and Europe

377-84: a woman, contrasted with the typist in "The Fire Sermon"

385-94: the Holy Grail

395-422: India (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*)

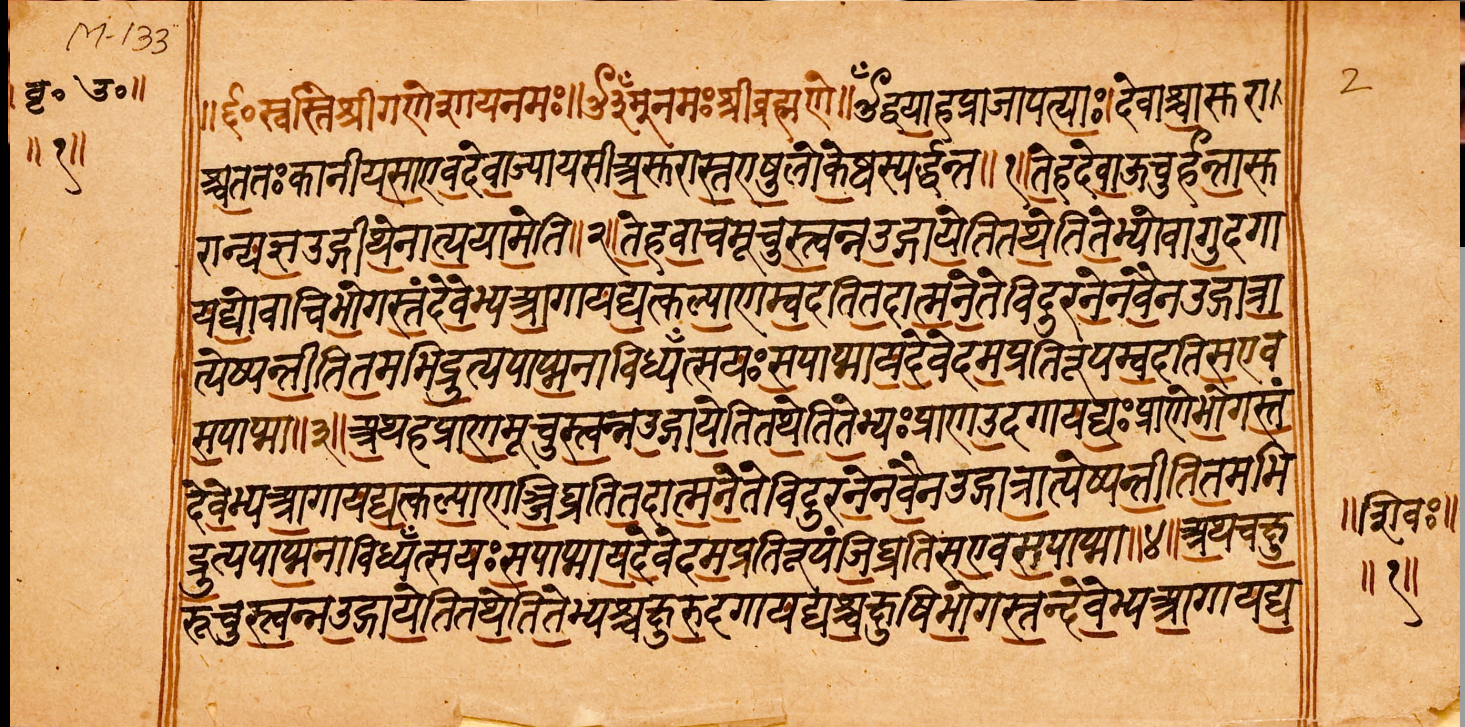
423-33: Fisher King (23-25)

*Purgatorio*, Arnaut Daniel (27-28)

Gerard de Nerval, "El Desdichado", 1854 (29)

Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy*, 1589 (31)

*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* (32-33)



8. **Starnbergersee:** A lake southwest of Munich, in southern Bavaria, West Germany.
10. **Hofgarten:** A garden in the center of Munich, Germany.
12. **Bin gar keine Russin, stamm' aus Litauen, echt deutsch:** “I am not Russian at all; I come from Lithuania, a real German.”
- 31-34. **Frisch weht der Wind/ Der Heimat zu/ Mein Irisch Kind,/ Wo weilest du? :** A line from the opera *Tristan und Isolde*: “Fresh blows the wind to the homeland; my Irish child, where are you waiting?”
42. **Oed' und leer das Meer:** A line from the opera *Tristan und Isolde*: “Desolate and empty is the sea.”
43. **Madame Sosostri:** A mock Egyptian name suggested to Eliot by “Sesostris,” the sorceress of Ecbatana in Aldous Huxley’s novel *Chrome Yellow*.
47. **The drowned Phoenician Sailor:** An invented Tarot card, which suggests two characters later in the poem, the Smyrna merchant Mr. Eugenides and the drowned sailor Phlebas.
49. **Belladonna, the Lady of the Rocks:** Italian for “beautiful lady.” Also suggests the Madonna or Virgin Mary, especially Da Vinci’s painting “The Madonna of the Rocks.”
55. **The Hanged Man:** A Tarot card of a man hanging upside by his foot, signifying suspension, waiting, and new perspectives.
70. **Mylae:** The naval battle of Mylae in the First Punic War (260 BCE), in which Rome defeated Carthage. The war resembled World War I in that it was fought largely for economic reasons.
76. **Hypocrite lecteur!—mon semblable,—mon frère:** A line from Baudelaire. French for “hypocritical reader—my likeness—my brother!”
80. **Cupidon:** A statue of Cupid, the god of love.
92. **Laquearia:** A paneled ceiling.

- 99. Philomel:** A minor figure in Greek mythology who transformed into a nightingale after being raped.
- 103, 204. Jug:** Eliot uses this to imitate the sound that a nightingale makes when it sings.
- 128. Shakespeherian Rag:** The chorus of an American ragtime song, a hit from Ziegfield's Follies in 1912.
- 139. Demobbed:** Slang for demobilized, sent home from war.
- 141, 152, 165, 168-69. HURRY UP PLEASE IT'S TIME:** Common phrase used for last call, or to announce that the bar is closing, at British pubs.
- 159. To bring it off:** This is an implicit reference to having an abortion.
- 175, 179. Nymphs:** Mythological spirits of nature, frequently tied to particular trees, rivers, and other natural landmarks.
- 182. By the waters of Lemman:** Lake Lemman is another name for Lake Geneva in Switzerland. "By the waters of Lemman" also alludes to a line from the Bible: "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea we wept, when we remembered Zion."
- 194. Garret:** A room or unfinished part of a house just under the roof.
- 202. Et O ces voix d'enfants, chantant dans la coupole!:** A line from "Parsifal," a poem about the Holy Grail by the poet Paul Verlaine: "And, oh, those children's voices, singing in the dome!"
- 206. Tereu:** A bird sound. Also an abbreviation of Tereus, the king who raped Philomel.
- 211. C.i.f. London:** Shipping industry abbreviation for "carriage and insurance free to London" or "cost, insurance, and freight."
- 212. Demotic:** Colloquial, common or popular.
- 218, 228, 243. Tiresias:** A blind prophet from Greek myth who is said to have lived as both man and woman.
- 225. Combinations:** A garment combining a chemise and drawers in one; underwear.
- 228. Dugs:** Breasts.

**231. Carbuncular:** Covered with acne.

**234. Bradford millionaire:** A reference to either Bradford, England or Bradford, Pennsylvania, a wool factory town and oil industry town respectively, where many fortunes were made.

**243. Foresuffered:** An invented word, suggesting having previously suffered or foreseen suffering.

**245. Thebes:** A city in ancient Greece where Tiresias is said to have witnessed the tragic fates of Oedipus and Creon.

**257. “This music crept by me upon the waters”:** A line from Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, from Ferdinand’s speech after he weeps over his father the king’s shipwreck.

**264. Magnus Martyr:** A church in London, parts of which date back to the 11th century.

**265. Ionian:** One of the three orders of classical architecture dating back to ancient Greece.

**272. Leeward:** Facing the direction toward which the wind is blowing.

**272. Spar:** A pole used to carry or support the sails of a ship.

**275-76. Greenwich / Isle of Dogs:** Greenwich is a borough in London on the south side of the Thames river; on the other side is the Isle of Dogs (really, a peninsula).

**277-78, 290-91. Weialala leia / Wallala leialala:** From “The Rhine-maidens,” a song in the opera *Götterdämmerung*.

**279. Elizabeth and Leicester:** Queen Elizabeth I, one of England’s greatest monarchs, who never married and was known as the “Virgin Queen”; and Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester, a longtime courtier rumored to have been her lover.

**293. Highbury, Richmond, and Kew:** Pleasant suburbs and neighborhoods of London.

**296. Moorgate:** A subway station on the London Underground.

**300. Margate:** A popular seaside resort on the Thames estuary.

- 307. To Carthage then I came:** An allusion to St. Augustine's *Confessions*. The full line reads, "To Carthage then I came, where a cauldron of unholy loves sang all about mine ears."
- 319. Gentile:** Someone who isn't Jewish.
- 396. Ganga:** The Ganges River, which flows through India and Bangladesh and is sacred to Hindus.
- 398. Himavant:** In Sanskrit, "snowy mountains," usually used to describe the Himalayas.
- 402, 412, 419, 433. Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyatta (दत्त दयध्वम् दाम्यत):** Sanskrit words that translate loosely to "give, sympathize, control." From an Indian myth in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* (बृहदारण्यक उपनिषद्), an ancient holy Hindu text, in which the god Prajapati utters the syllable "DA," which is then interpreted in three different ways by humans ("give"), demons ("sympathize, be compassionate"), and lesser gods ("control" or "self-control").
- 409. Solicitor:** British term for a lawyer.
- 428. Poi s'ascose nel foco che gli affina:** A line from Dante's *Purgatorio*: "He hid himself in the fire which refines him."
- 429. Quando fiam uti chelidon:** From a Roman poem about the change of Philomel. Latin for "When shall I be like the swallow?" Followed by lines in which Philomel yearns for spring and to cease being silent, like a swallow or bird.
- 430. Le Prince d'Aquitaine à la tour abolie:** From a sonnet by Gerard de Nerval. French for "The Prince of Aquitaine in the ruined tower." A reference to the Tower tarot card, which represents cataclysm or catastrophe.
- 432. Why then Ile fit you. Hieronimo's mad againe:** Lines from *The Spanish Tragedy*, by Thomas Kyd, an Elizabethan revenge play in which the character Hieronimo avenges his sons' murders by staging a play in which the murderers are killed in turn.
- 434. Shantih (शान्ति):** "Peace," formal ending or closing used in the Upanishads. Translated from the Sanskrit by Eliot as "the peace which passeth understanding."



# Edith Wharton

**(New York, 1862 - Saint-Brice-sous-Forêt, 1937)**

Long-established merchant family from New York

Born **Edith Newbold Jones**

Educated by private tutors at home and in Europe

Married off at twenty-three to Edward Wharton, a rich Bostonian, but in love with Walter Berry → theme of extramarital love in her fiction

**1907:** moved to France

1913: divorced Edward Wharton

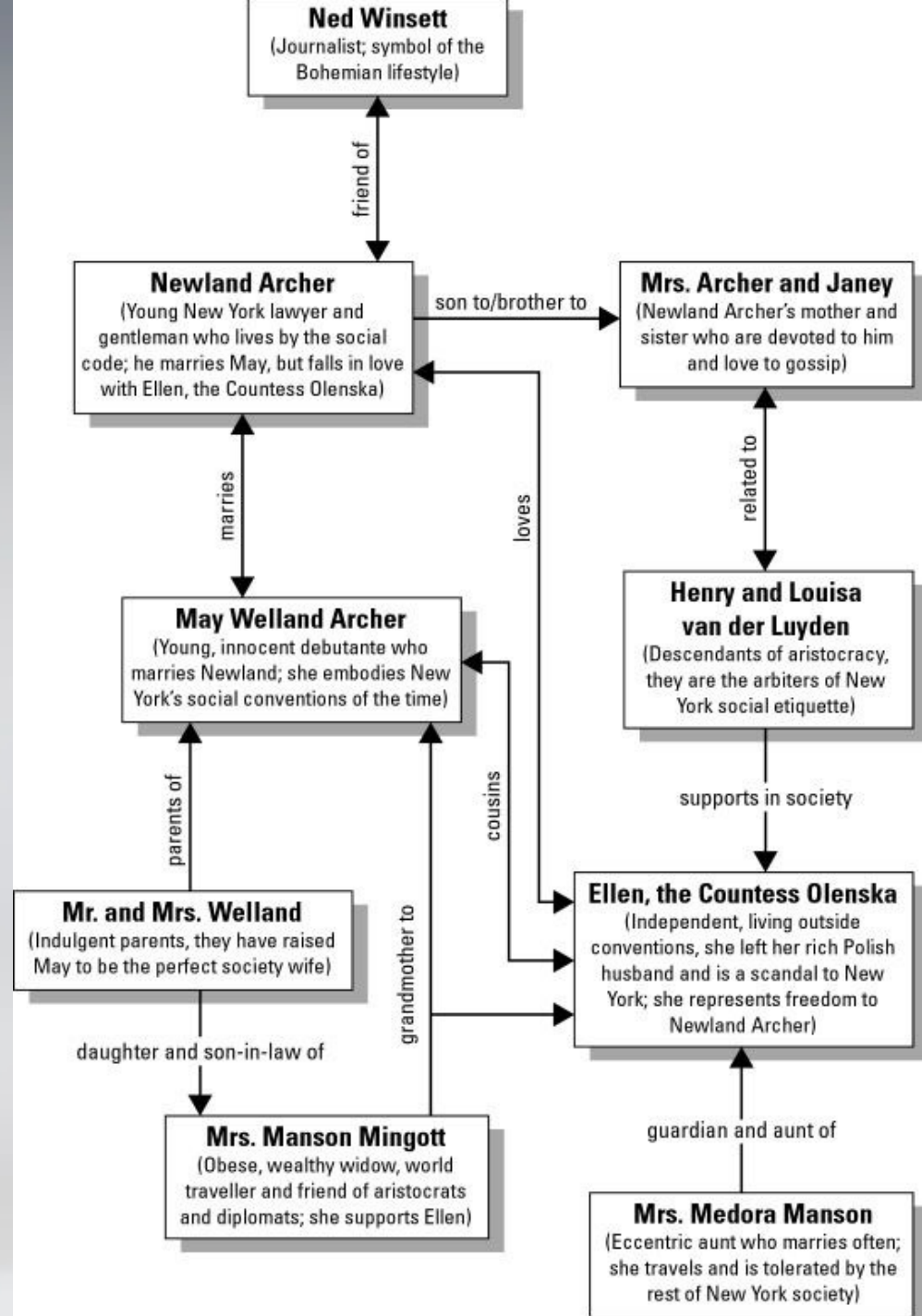
Volunteered for combatants and refugees during the WW1: *The Marne* (1918) and *A Son at the Front* (1923)

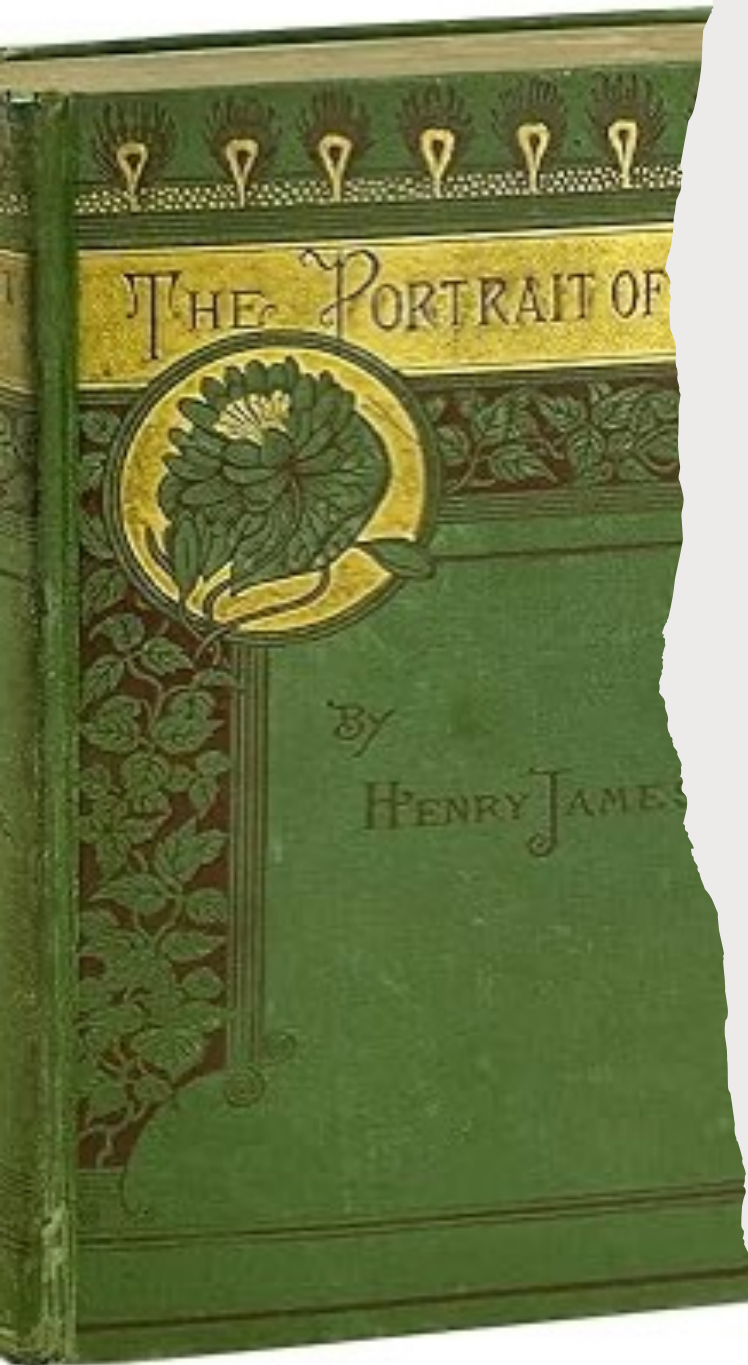
*The House of Mirth* (1905): literary celebrity

*Ethan Frome* (1911)

*Tales of Men and Ghosts* (1910)

*The Age of Innocence* (1920; Pulitzer Prize)





**Newland Archer and Isabel Archer:** both struggle between conformism and individual freedom, finally yielding to social conventions

Isabel Archer was a young person of many theories; her imagination was remarkably active. It had been her fortune to possess a finer mind than most of the persons among whom her lot was cast; to have a larger perception of surrounding facts and to care for knowledge that was tinged with the unfamiliar. [...] It may be affirmed without delay that Isabel was probably very liable to the sin of self-esteem; she often surveyed with complacency the field of her own nature; she was in the habit of taking for granted, on scanty evidence, that she was right; she treated herself to occasions of homage. Meanwhile her errors and delusions were frequently such as a biographer interested in preserving the dignity of his subject must shrink from specifying.

(Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady*, 1881, ch. 6)

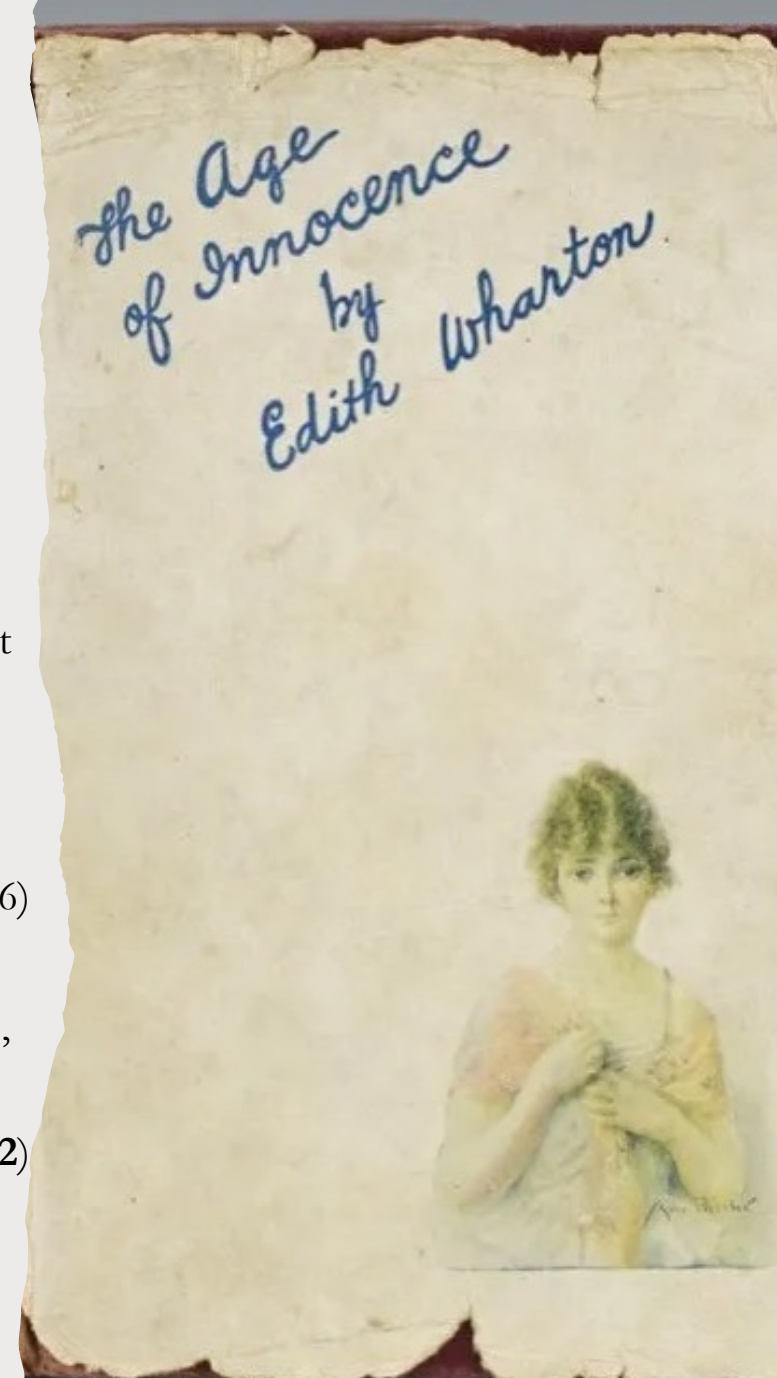
Few things seemed to Newland Archer more awful than an offence against "Taste," that far-off divinity of whom "Form" was the mere visible representative and vicegerent.

(*The Age of Innocence*, **ch. 2**)

"The Portrait of a Gentleman", **ch. 14:**

Henrietta Stackpole (*The Portrait of a Lady*) ≈

Ned Winsett (*The Age of Innocence*)



Academy of Music in NYC: theater located on 14<sup>th</sup> Street, in Union Square, 1854-1886. Families from the old-line aristocracy (descendants of Dutch and English settlers) attended opera and monopolized the boxes.

New Opera House: The Metropolitan:  
October 22, 1883. 39<sup>th</sup> and 40<sup>th</sup> Street and 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue.



Some three or four years before this, Dr. Sloper had moved his household gods up town, as they say in New York. He had been living ever since his marriage in an edifice of red brick, with granite copings and an enormous fanlight over the door, standing in a street within five minutes' walk of the City Hall, which saw its best days (from the social point of view) about 1820. After this, the tide of fashion began to set steadily northward, as, indeed, in New York, thanks to the narrow channel in which it flows, it is obliged to do, and the great hum of traffic rolled farther to the right and left of Broadway.

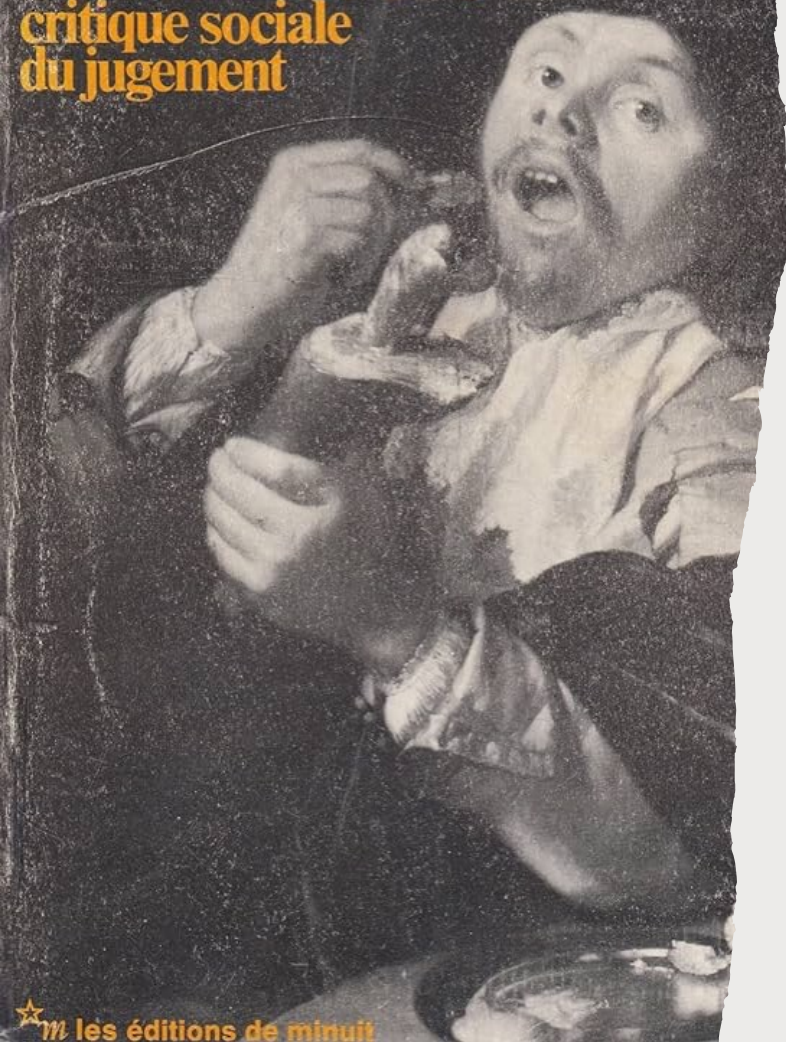
By the time the Doctor changed his residence the murmur of trade had become a mighty uproar, which was music in the ears of all good citizens interested in the commercial development, as they delighted to call it, of their fortunate isle. Dr. Sloper's interest in this phenomenon was only indirect – though, seeing that, as the years went on, half his patients came to be overworked men of business, it might have been more immediate – and when most of his neighbours' dwellings (also ornamented with granite copings and large fanlights) had been converted into offices, warehouses, and shipping agencies, and otherwise applied to the base uses of commerce, he determined to look out for a quieter home.

The ideal of quiet and of genteel retirement, in 1835, was found in Washington Square, where the Doctor built himself a handsome, modern, wide-fronted house, with a big balcony before the drawing-room windows, and a flight of marble steps ascending to a portal which was also faced with white marble. This structure, and many of its neighbours, which it exactly resembled, were supposed, forty years ago, to embody the last results of architectural science, and they remain to this day very solid and honourable dwellings. In front of them was the Square, containing a considerable quantity of inexpensive vegetation, enclosed by a wooden paling, which increased its rural and accessible appearance; and round the corner was the more august precinct of the Fifth Avenue, taking its origin at this point with a spacious and confident air which already marked it for high destinies.

Henry James, *Washington Square* (1880), ch. 3

le sens commun

la pierre bourdieu  
**distinction**  
critique sociale  
du jugement



**Pierre Bourdieu** (1930-2002), French sociologist and intellectual

**Capital:** resources that people desire and struggle to achieve.

**Economic capital:** money, properties or other means for buying goods and services

**Social capital:** friends, social class of family, social connections to people with money and/or power

**Cultural capital:** upbringing, education, academic qualifications

**Symbolic capital:** prestige, distinction sometimes related to cultural capital

# lost innocence

## Innocence of the US / NYC society before the WW1?

Old families v. the new rich

- cultural capital
- taste
- habitus

“those who have particular kinds of taste for art will have similar kinds of taste not just for food but for all kinds of cultural or symbolic goods and practices: for particular kinds of music, film, television, sports, home decor, clothing and fashion, dance, and so on. The habitus, for Bourdieu, consists in the set of unifying principles which underlie such tastes and give them a particular social logic which derives from, while also organizing and articulating, the position which a particular group occupies in social space.”

Tony Bennett, Introduction to Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (New York: Routledge, 2010), p. xix

# **distinction: American v. foreign origins**

**Ch. 3:** Beaufort family

Mingott family

**Ch. 4.** we need new blood and new money

**Ch. 5.** the two great fundamental groups of the Mingotts and Mansons and all their clan, who cared about eating and clothes and money, and the Archer-Newland- van-der-Luyden tribe, who were devoted to travel, horticulture and the best fiction, and looked down on the grosser forms of pleasure.

**Ch. 6.** “Don’t tell me,” Mrs. Archer would say to her children, “all this modern newspaper rubbish about a New York aristocracy. If there is one, neither the Mingotts nor the Mansons belong to it; no, nor the Newlands or the Chiverses either. Our grandfathers and great-grandfathers were just respectable English or Dutch merchants, who came to the colonies to make their fortune, and stayed here because they did so well. One of your great-grandfathers signed the Declaration, and another was a general on Washington’s staff, and received General Burgoyne’s sword after the battle of Saratoga. These are things to be proud of, but they have nothing to do with rank or class. New York has always been a commercial community, and there are not more than three families in it who can claim an aristocratic origin in the real sense of the word.” Mrs. Archer and her son and daughter, like every one else in New York, knew who these privileged beings were: the Dagonets of Washington Square, who came of an old English county family allied with the Pitts and Foxes; the Lannings, who had intermarried with the descendants of Count de Grasse, and the van der Luydens, direct descendants of the first Dutch governor of Manhattan, and related by pre-revolutionary marriages to several members of the French and British aristocracy.

# Ellen Olenska as the foreigner

**Ch. 9.** He knew that the southern races communicated with each other in the language of pantomime, and was mortified to find her shrugs and smiles so unintelligible. At length she returned with a lamp; and Archer, having meanwhile put together a phrase out of Dante and Petrarch, evoked the answer: “*La signora è fuori; ma verrà subito*”; which he took to mean: “She’s out—but you’ll soon see.”

Newland Archer prided himself on his knowledge of Italian art. His boyhood had been saturated with Ruskin, and he had read all the latest books: John Addington Symonds, Vernon Lee’s “Euphorion,” the essays of P. G. Hamerton, and a wonderful new volume called “The Renaissance” by Walter Pater. He talked easily of Botticelli, and spoke of Fra Angelico with a faint condescension. But these pictures bewildered him, for they were like nothing that he was accustomed to look at (and therefore able to see) when he travelled in Italy

New York seemed much farther off than Samarkand, and if they were indeed to help each other she was rendering what might prove the first of their mutual services by making him look at his native city objectively.

Georg Simmel, *Sociology. Inquiries into the Construction of Social Forms* (1908)

[...] being a stranger means that the distant is near. [...] the stranger appears everywhere as a dealer, and the dealer, respectively, as stranger. (601)

[...] the objectivity of the stranger. By not being radically committed to individual components or one-sided tendencies of the group, the stranger faces all of them with the special attitude of the 'objective' person (602)

In practice and theory, the stranger has more freedom, observes circumstances with less prejudice [...] The stranger is near us insofar as we feel similarities of a national or social, occupational or of generally human kind between the stranger and us; the stranger is far from us insofar as these similarities reach over both of us and bind us together only because they bind very many people generally.

the stranger is near and far *at the same time*, [...] Thus strangers are also not really considered as individuals but as strangers of a particular type in general; (603)

# Soziologie.

Untersuchungen

über die

Formen der Vergesellschaftung.

Von

Georg Simmel.



Leipzig,

Verlag von Duncker & Humblot.

1908.

# **identities or performances?**

**Ch. 6.** In reality they all lived in a kind of hieroglyphic world, where the real thing was never said or done or even thought, but only represented by a set of arbitrary signs. [...] The result, of course, was that the young girl who was the centre of this elaborate system of mystification remained the more inscrutable for her very frankness and assurance.

# **a woman from a foreign country or a woman from the future?**

## **Divorce**

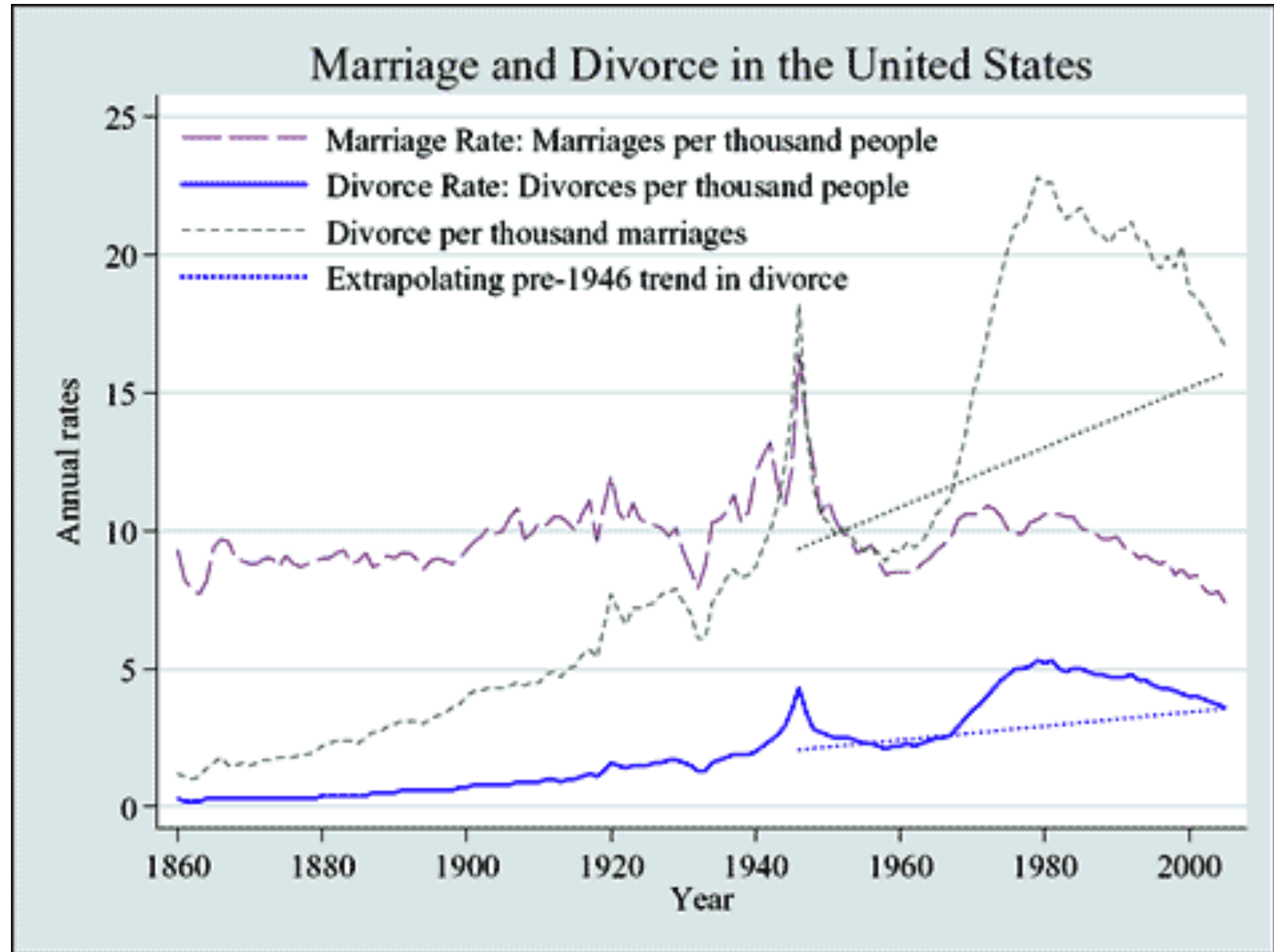
### **Ch. 11**

“Mrs. Manson Mingott sent for me yesterday. Her grand-daughter the Countess Olenska wishes to sue her husband for divorce. Certain papers have been placed in my hands.”

For the first time he perceived how elementary his own principles had always been. He passed for a young man who had not been afraid of risks, and he knew that his secret love-affair with poor silly Mrs. Thorley Rushworth had not been too secret to invest him with a becoming air of adventure. But Mrs. Rushworth was “that kind of woman”; foolish, vain, clandestine by nature, and far more attracted by the secrecy and peril of the affair than by such charms and qualities as he possessed.

“Mr. Archer, I don’t understand you. Do you want to marry into a family with a scandalous divorce-suit hanging over it?”

**Ch. 16.** Mrs. Welland smiled compassionately. “That is just like the extraordinary things that foreigners invent about us. They think we dine at two o’clock and countenance divorce! That is why it seems to me so foolish to entertain them when they come to New York. They accept our hospitality, and then they go home and repeat the same stupid stories.”

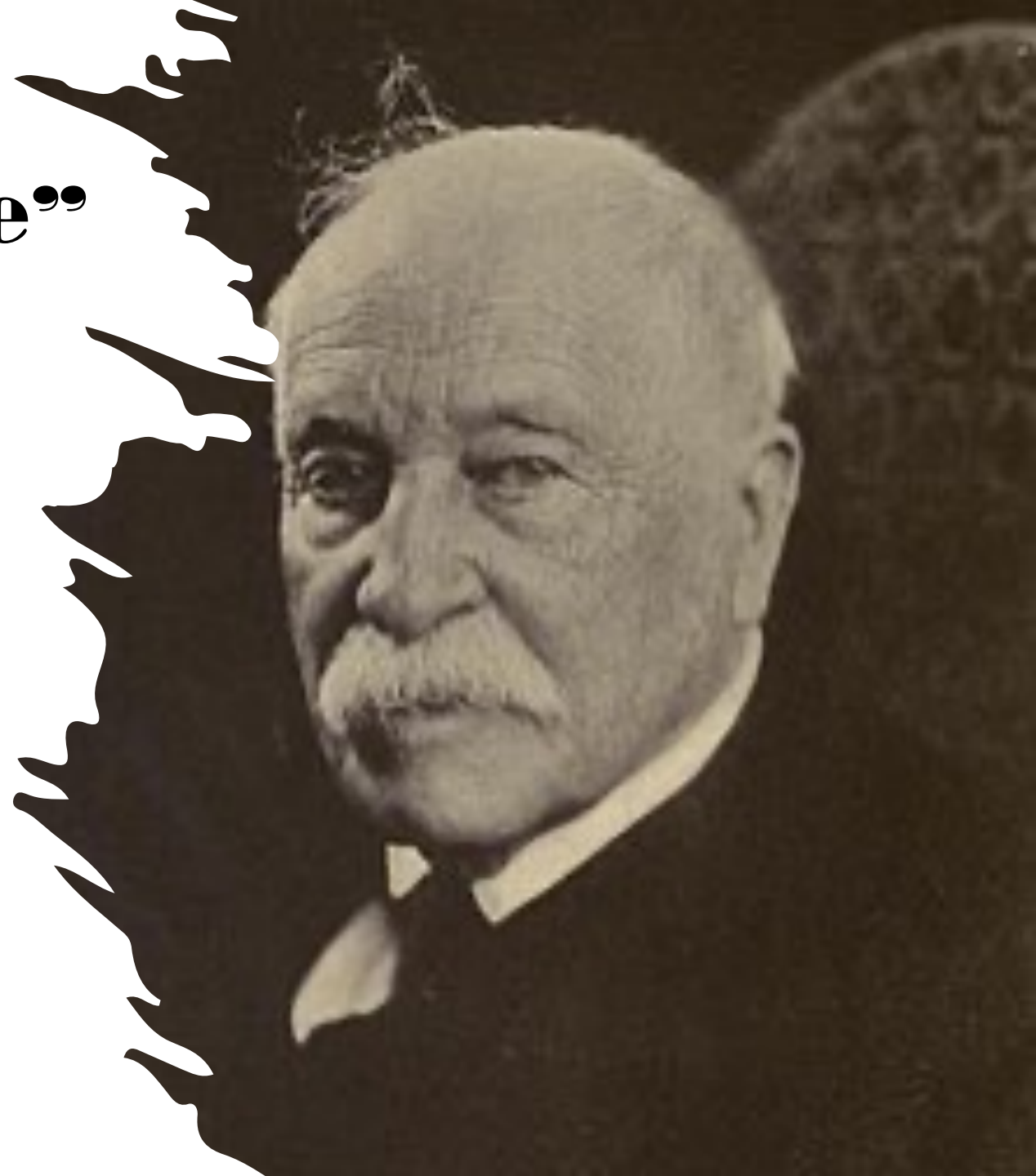


# “...people who wrote”

**William D. Howells** (1837-1920)

“The Man of Letters as a Man of Business” (1893)

The poet must use his emotions to pay his provision bills; he has no other means; society does not propose to pay his bills for him.



# “...people who wrote”

## Chh. 12 and 14

12. Beyond the small and slippery pyramid which composed Mrs. Archer's world lay the almost unmapped quarter inhabited by artists, musicians and “people who wrote.” These scattered fragments of humanity had never shown any desire to be amalgamated with the social structure. In spite of odd ways they were said to be, for the most part, quite respectable; but they preferred to keep to themselves.

14. Archer's laugh lingered on his lips in a slightly condescending smile. It was useless to prolong the discussion: everybody knew the melancholy fate of the few gentlemen who had risked their clean linen in municipal or state politics in New York. The day was past when that sort of thing was possible: the country was in possession of the bosses and the emigrant, and decent people had to fall back on sport or culture. “Culture! Yes—if we had it! But there are just a few little local patches, dying out here and there for lack of—well, hoeing and cross-fertilising: the last remnants of the old European tradition that your forebears brought with them. But you're in a pitiful little minority: you've got no centre, no competition, no audience. You're like the pictures on the walls of a deserted house: ‘The Portrait of a Gentleman.’ You'll never amount to anything, any of you, till you roll up your sleeves and get right down into the muck. That, or emigrate . . . God! If I could emigrate . . .”

# marriage

**Ch. 19.** May was still, in look and tone, the simple girl of yesterday, eager to compare notes with him as to the incidents of the wedding, and discussing them as impartially as a bridesmaid talking it all over with an usher. At first Archer had fancied that this detachment was the disguise of an inward tremor; but her clear eyes revealed only the most tranquil unawareness. She was alone for the first time with her husband; but her husband was only the charming comrade of yesterday. There was no one whom she liked as much, no one whom she trusted as completely, and the culminating “lark” of the whole delightful adventure of engagement and marriage was to be off with him alone on a journey, like a grownup person, like a “married woman,” in fact.

It was wonderful that—as he had learned in the Mission garden at St. Augustine—such depths of feeling could coexist with such absence of imagination. But he remembered how, even then, she had surprised him by dropping back to inexpressive girlishness as soon as her conscience had been eased of its burden; and he saw that she would probably go through life dealing to the best of her ability with each experience as it came, but never anticipating any by so much as a stolen glance.

Perhaps that faculty of unawareness was what gave her eyes their transparency, and her face the look of representing a type rather than a person; as if she might have been chosen to pose for a Civic Virtue or a Greek goddess.

# marriage

**Ch. 21.** [...] harmony had been restored by their return to the conditions she was used to. He had always foreseen that she would not disappoint him; and he had been right. He had married (as most young men did) because he had met a perfectly charming girl at the moment when a series of rather aimless sentimental adventures were ending in premature disgust; and she had represented peace, stability, comradeship, and the steadying sense of an unescapable duty.

He could not say that he had been mistaken in his choice, for she had fulfilled all that he had expected. It was undoubtedly gratifying to be the husband of one of the handsomest and most popular young married women in New York, especially when she was also one of the sweetest-tempered and most reasonable of wives; and Archer had never been insensible to such advantages. As for the momentary madness which had fallen upon him on the eve of his marriage, he had trained himself to regard it as the last of his discarded experiments. The idea that he could ever, in his senses, have dreamed of marrying the Countess Olenska had become almost unthinkable, and she remained in his memory simply as the most plaintive and poignant of a line of ghosts.

# family

**Ch. 25.** He saw in a flash that if the family had ceased to consult him it was because some deep tribal instinct warned them that he was no longer on their side; and he recalled, with a start of comprehension, a remark of May's during their drive home from Mrs. Manson Mingott's on the day of the Archery Meeting: "Perhaps, after all, Ellen would be happier with her husband."

Even in the tumult of new discoveries Archer remembered his indignant exclamation, and the fact that since then his wife had never named Madame Olenska to him. Her careless allusion had no doubt been the straw held up to see which way the wind blew; the result had been reported to the family, and thereafter Archer had been tacitly omitted from their counsels. He admired the tribal discipline which made May bow to this decision. She would not have done so, he knew, had her conscience protested; but she probably shared the family view that Madame Olenska would be better off as an unhappy wife than as a separated one, and that there was no use in discussing the case with Newland, who had an awkward way of suddenly not seeming to take the most fundamental things for granted.

**Ch. 33.** now the whole tribe had rallied about his wife on the tacit assumption that nobody knew anything, or had ever imagined anything, and that the occasion of the entertainment was simply May Archer's natural desire to take an affectionate leave of her friend and cousin.

# Europe

**Ch. 20.** But in reality travelling interested her even less than he had expected. She regarded it (once her clothes were ordered) as merely an enlarged opportunity for walking, riding, swimming, and trying her hand at the fascinating new game of lawn tennis; and when they finally got back to London (where they were to spend a fortnight while he ordered his clothes) she no longer concealed the eagerness with which she looked forward to sailing.

[...] If her simplicity had been the simplicity of pettiness he would have chafed and rebelled; but since the lines of her character, though so few, were on the same fine mould as her face, she became the tutelary divinity of all his old traditions and reverences.

[...] Archer too would have preferred to escape their friends' hospitality: in conformity with the family tradition he had always travelled as a sight-seer and looker-on, affecting a haughty unconsciousness of the presence of his fellow-beings. Once only, just after Harvard, he had spent a few gay weeks at Florence with a band of queer Europeanised Americans, dancing all night with titled ladies in palaces, and gambling half the day with the rakes and dandies of the fashionable club; but it had all seemed to him, though the greatest fun in the world, as unreal as a carnival. These queer cosmopolitan women, deep in complicated love-affairs which they appeared to feel the need of retailing to every one they met, and the magnificent young officers and elderly dyed wits who were the subjects or the recipients of their confidences, were too different from the people Archer had grown up among, too much like expensive and rather malodorous hot-house exotics, to detain his imagination long. To introduce his wife into such a society was out of the question; and in the course of his travels no other had shown any marked eagerness for his company.

# Europe

**M. Rivière.** [...] he had lived much in Paris, frequented the Goncourt grenier, been advised by Maupassant not to attempt to write (even that seemed to Archer a dazzling honour!), and had often talked with Merimee in his mother's house. [...] Do you suppose, for instance, there would be any opening for me in America—in New York?" Archer looked at him with startled eyes. New York, for a young man who had frequented the Goncourts and Flaubert, and who thought the life of ideas the only one worth living! He continued to stare at M. Riviere perplexedly, wondering how to tell him that his very superiorities and advantages would be the surest hindrance to success. "New York—New York—but must it be especially New York?" he stammered, utterly unable to imagine what lucrative opening his native city could offer to a young man to whom good conversation appeared to be the only necessity. A sudden flush rose under M. Riviere's sallow skin. "I—I thought it your metropolis: is not the intellectual life more active there?"

# Ellen as (still) the foreigner?

**Ch. 24.** “A convert to what?”

“To all sorts of new and crazy social schemes. But, do you know, they interest me more than the blind conformity to tradition—somebody else’s tradition—that I see among our own friends. It seems stupid to have discovered America only to make it into a copy of another country.” She smiled across the table. “Do you suppose Christopher Columbus would have taken all that trouble just to go to the Opera with the Selfridge Merrys?”

[...] “Ah, it’s what I’ve always told you; you don’t like us. And you like Beaufort because he’s so unlike us.” He looked about the bare room and out at the bare beach and the row of stark white village houses strung along the shore. “We’re damnably dull. We’ve no character, no colour, no variety.—I wonder,” he broke out, “why you don’t go back?”

Her eyes darkened, and he expected an indignant rejoinder. But she sat silent, as if thinking over what he had said, and he grew frightened lest she should answer that she wondered too.

At length she said: “I believe it’s because of you.”

# Ellen as (still) the foreigner?

**Ch. 25.** “Ah, Monsieur, if I could tell you!” M. Riviere paused. “*Tenez*—the discovery, I suppose, of what I’d never thought of before: that she’s an American. And that if you’re an American of her kind—of your kind—things that are accepted in certain other societies, or at least put up with as part of a general convenient give-and-take—become unthinkable, simply unthinkable. If Madame Olenska’s relations understood what these things were, their opposition to her returning would no doubt be as unconditional as her own; but they seem to regard her husband’s wish to have her back as proof of an irresistible longing for domestic life.” M. Riviere paused, and then added: “Whereas it’s far from being as simple as that.”

# historical temporality

**Ch 26.** For New York, to Mrs. Archer's mind, never changed without changing for the worse [...] These points had been raised, as usual, at Mrs. Archer's Thanksgiving dinner. At the date when she was officially enjoined to give thanks for the blessings of the year it was her habit to take a mournful though not embittered stock of her world, and wonder what there was to be thankful for. At any rate, not the state of society; society, if it could be said to exist, was rather a spectacle on which to call down Biblical imprecations—and in fact, every one knew what the Reverend Dr. Ashmore meant when he chose a text from Jeremiah (chap. ii., verse 25) for his Thanksgiving sermon. Dr. Ashmore, the new Rector of St. Matthew's, had been chosen because he was very “advanced”: his sermons were considered bold in thought and novel in language. When he fulminated against fashionable society he always spoke of its “trend”; and to Mrs. Archer it was terrifying and yet fascinating to feel herself part of a community that was trending.

# psychic temporality

**Ch. 22.** He was not sure that he wanted to see the Countess Olenska again; but ever since he had looked at her from the path above the bay he had wanted, irrationally and indescribably, to see the place she was living in, and to follow the movements of her imagined figure as he had watched the real one in the summer-house. The longing was with him day and night, an incessant undefinable craving, like the sudden whim of a sick man for food or drink once tasted and long since forgotten. He could not see beyond the craving, or picture what it might lead to, for he was not conscious of any wish to speak to Madame Olenska or to hear her voice. He simply felt that if he could carry away the vision of the spot of earth she walked on, and the way the sky and sea enclosed it, the rest of the world might seem less empty.

[...] His whole future seemed suddenly to be unrolled before him; and passing down its endless emptiness he saw the dwindling figure of a man to whom nothing was ever to happen. He glanced about him at the unpruned garden, the tumble-down house, and the oak-grove under which the dusk was gathering. It had seemed so exactly the place in which he ought to have found Madame Olenska; and she was far away, and even the pink sunshade was not hers . . .

## Historical temporality

**Ch. 29.** His wife's dark blue brougham (with the wedding varnish still on it) met Archer at the ferry, and conveyed him luxuriously to the Pennsylvania terminus in Jersey City.

It was a sombre snowy afternoon, and the gas-lamps were lit in the big reverberating station. As he paced the platform, waiting for the Washington express, he remembered that there were people who thought there would one day be a tunnel under the Hudson through which the trains of the Pennsylvania railway would run straight into New York. They were of the brotherhood of visionaries who likewise predicted the building of ships that would cross the Atlantic in five days, the invention of a flying machine, lighting by electricity, telephonic communication without wires, and other Arabian Night marvels.

## Psychic temporality

**Ch. 29.** “Do you know—I hardly remembered you?”

“Hardly remembered me?”

“I mean: how shall I explain? I—it's always so. *Each time you happen to me all over again.*”

**Ch. 34.** When he thought of Ellen Olenska it was abstractly, serenely, as one might think of some imaginary beloved in a book or a picture: she had become the composite vision of all that he had missed.



Henri Bergson (1859–1941)  
“Introduction to Metaphysics” (1903)

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Duration, for Bergson, is continuity of progress and heterogeneity; moreover, thanks to this image, we can also see that duration implies a conservation of the past. Indeed, for Bergson and this is the center of his truly novel idea of memory, memory conserves the past and this conservation does not imply that one experiences the same (re-cognition), but difference. One moment is added onto the old ones, and thus, when the next moment occurs, it is added onto all the other old ones plus the one that came immediately before. In comparison, therefore to the past collection of moments, it cannot be the same as the one immediately before, because the past is “larger” for the current moment than it was for the previous moment. Although Bergson does not say this, one might say that Tuesday is different from Monday because Monday only includes itself and Sunday, while Tuesday includes itself, Monday, and Sunday. This first image, therefore, implies that duration is memory: the prolongation of the past into the present.

Leonard Lawlor and Valentine Moulard-Leonard, “Henri Bergson,”  
*The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2022 Edition)

# conclusion

**Ch. 33.** [...] You say you're not tired: well, I am. Horribly tired . . .”

In an instant she was all tender anxiety. “Oh, I've seen it coming on, Newland! You've been so wickedly overworked—”

“Perhaps it's that. Anyhow, I want to make a break—”

“A break? To give up the law?”

“To go away, at any rate—at once. On a long trip, ever so far off—away from everything—”

He paused, conscious that he had failed in his attempt to speak with the indifference of a man who longs for a change, and is yet too weary to welcome it. Do what he would, the chord of eagerness vibrated. “Away from everything—” he repeated. “Ever so far? Where, for instance?” she asked.

“Oh, I don't know. India—or Japan.”

She stood up, and as he sat with bent head, his chin propped on his hands, he felt her warmly and fragrantly hovering over him.

“As far as that? But I'm afraid you can't, dear . . .” she said in an unsteady voice. “Not unless you'll take me with you.” And then, as he was silent, she went on, in tones so clear and evenly-pitched that each separate syllable tapped like a little hammer on his brain: “That is, if the doctors will let me go . . . but I'm afraid they won't. For you see, Newland, I've been sure since this morning of something I've been so longing and hoping for—”

He looked up at her with a sick stare, and she sank down, all dew and roses, and hid her face against his knee.

“Oh, my dear,” he said, holding her to him while his cold hand stroked her hair.

**Ch. 34.** The young men nowadays were emancipating themselves from the law and business and taking up all sorts of new things. If they were not absorbed in state politics or municipal reform, the chances were that they were going in for Central American archaeology, for architecture or landscape-engineering; taking a keen and learned interest in the prerevolutionary buildings of their own country, studying and adapting Georgian types, and protesting at the meaningless use of the word “Colonial.” Nobody nowadays had “Colonial” houses except the millionaire grocers of the suburbs.

But above all—sometimes Archer put it above all—it was in that library that the Governor of New York, coming down from Albany one evening to dine and spend the night, had turned to his host, and said, banging his clenched fist on the table and gnashing his eye-glasses: “Hang the professional politician! You’re the kind of man the country wants, Archer. If the stable’s ever to be cleaned out, men like you have got to lend a hand in the cleaning.”

**Ch. 14.** Every one in polite circles knew that, in America, “a gentleman couldn’t go into politics.”

**Ch. 34.** Sitting alone at night in his library, after the household had gone to bed, he had evoked the radiant outbreak of spring down the avenues of horse-chestnuts, the flowers and statues in the public gardens, the whiff of lilacs from the flower-carts, the majestic roll of the river under the great bridges, and the life of art and study and pleasure that filled each mighty artery to bursting. Now the spectacle was before him in its glory, and as he looked out on it he felt shy, old-fashioned, inadequate: a mere grey speck of a man compared with the ruthless magnificent fellow he had dreamed of being. . . .

[...] A few streets away, a few hours away, Ellen Olenska waited. She had never gone back to her husband, and when he had died, some years before, she had made no change in her way of living. There was nothing now to keep her and Archer apart—and that afternoon he was to see her.

[...] Archer sat down on the bench and continued to gaze at the awninged balcony. He calculated the time it would take his son to be carried up in the lift to the fifth floor, to ring the bell, and be admitted to the hall, and then ushered into the drawing-room. He pictured Dallas entering that room with his quick assured step and his delightful smile, and wondered if the people were right who said that his boy “took after him.”

[...] “It’s more real to me here than if I went up,” he suddenly heard himself say; and the fear lest that last shadow of reality should lose its edge kept him rooted to his seat as the minutes succeeded each other.

He sat for a long time on the bench in the thickening dusk, his eyes never turning from the balcony. At length a light shone through the windows, and a moment later a man-servant came out on the balcony, drew up the awnings, and closed the shutters.

At that, as if it had been the signal he waited for, Newland Archer got up slowly and walked back alone to his hotel.



# Francis Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940)

The “Roaring 1920s” and the “Jazz Age”: flappers and speakeasies

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Studied at Princeton University and served in the US Navy in WW1

**1920** Married Zelda Sayre (author of *Save Me the Waltz*, 1932)

Worked for an advertising agency and wrote for “slick magazines”

**1924-26** Europe (Paris, French Riviera, Rome). Friend with Gertrude Stein, Ezra Pound, Ernest Hemingway, James Joyce

1927 Hollywood

1929 Back to Europe, Zelda diagnosed with schizophrenia (hospitalized in Switzerland and in the US)

Last years in California, died in LA

*This Side of Paradise* (1920, American youth and the beginning of the Jazz age)

*Flappers and Philosophers* (short stories, 1920)

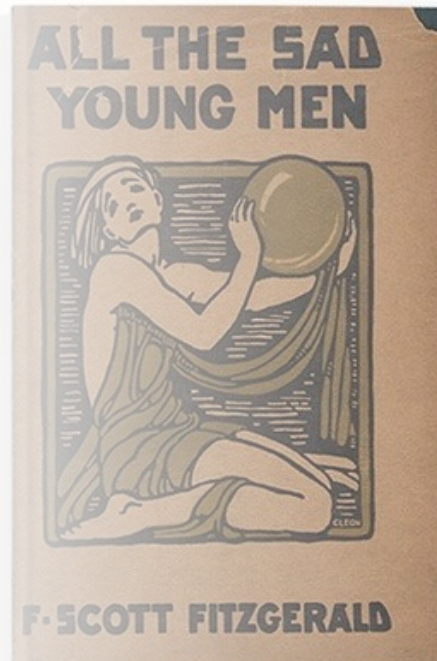
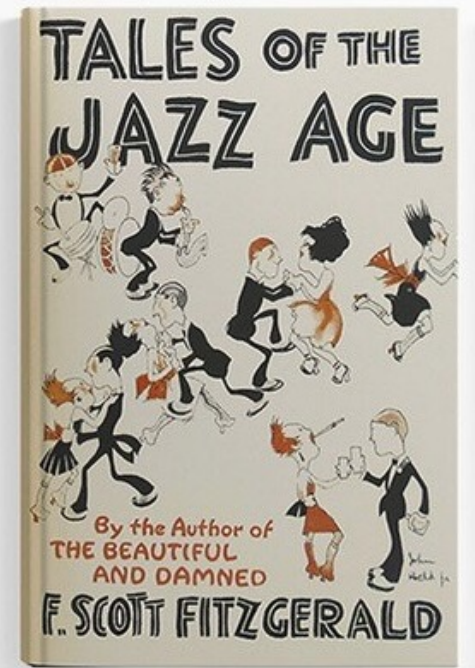
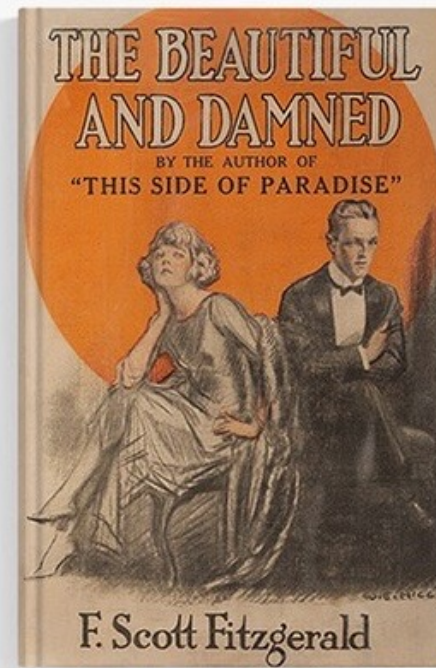
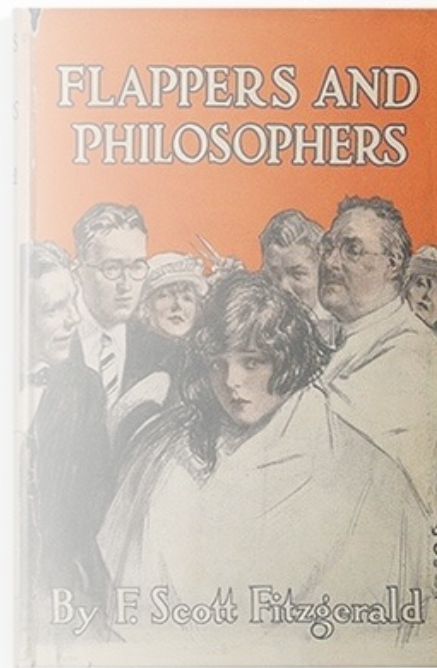
*The Beautiful and Damned* (1922)

*Tales of the Jazz Age* (short stories, 1922)

*The Great Gatsby* (1925)

*Tender Is the Night* (1934, Scott and Zelda troubles with alcoholism and mental illness)

*The Last Tycoon* (1940, unfinished, about Hollywood film industry)



**Nick Carraway**, narrator, a mid-westerner who moved East, Daisy Buchanan's cousin

**Jay Gatsby**, “new money”, a mid-westerner who moved East to win back **Daisy Buchanan**, the love he lost five years earlier

**Tom Buchanan**, “old money” elite, Daisy's husband

**George & Myrtle Wilson**, Tom's mistress and her husband

### Setting

The East and West Eggs, fictional peninsulas on Long Island Sound (East Egg: “old money”; West Egg: “the newly rich”)

Gatsby's mansion: 40 acres, embodies Gatsby's success and the “American Dream”

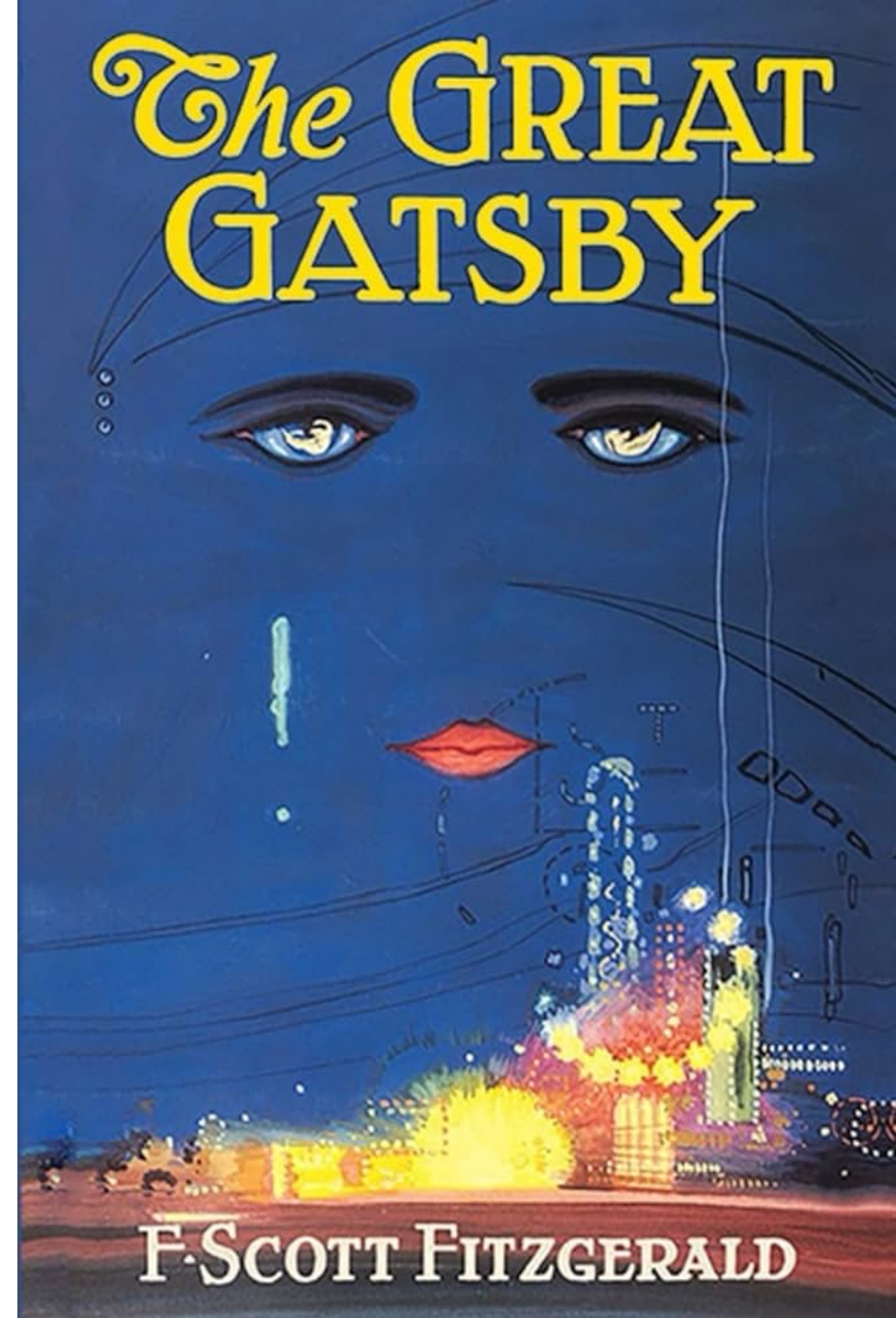
New York City and Plaza Hotel, the excess of the times

**Valley of Ashes** (Flushing, in Queens), where George and Myrtle live, desolate area filled with industrial waste, represents the social and moral decay of society during the 1920's

### Symbols

Green Light, at the end of Daisy's dock and visible from Gatsby's place: dreams and hopes Daisy

The Eyes of Dr. T. J. Eckleburg: a decaying billboard in the Valley of Ashes with eyes advertising an optometrist





# The Great Gatsby Setting Map

Created by Shaheena Papa

**Ch. 1.** If personality is an unbroken series of successful gestures, then there was something gorgeous about him, some heightened sensitivity to the promises of life, as if he were related to one of those intricate machines that register earthquakes ten thousand miles away. This responsiveness had nothing to do with that flabby impressionability which is dignified under the name of the “creative temperament.”— it was an extraordinary gift for hope, a romantic readiness such as I have never found in any other person and which it is not likely I shall ever find again. No — Gatsby turned out all right at the end

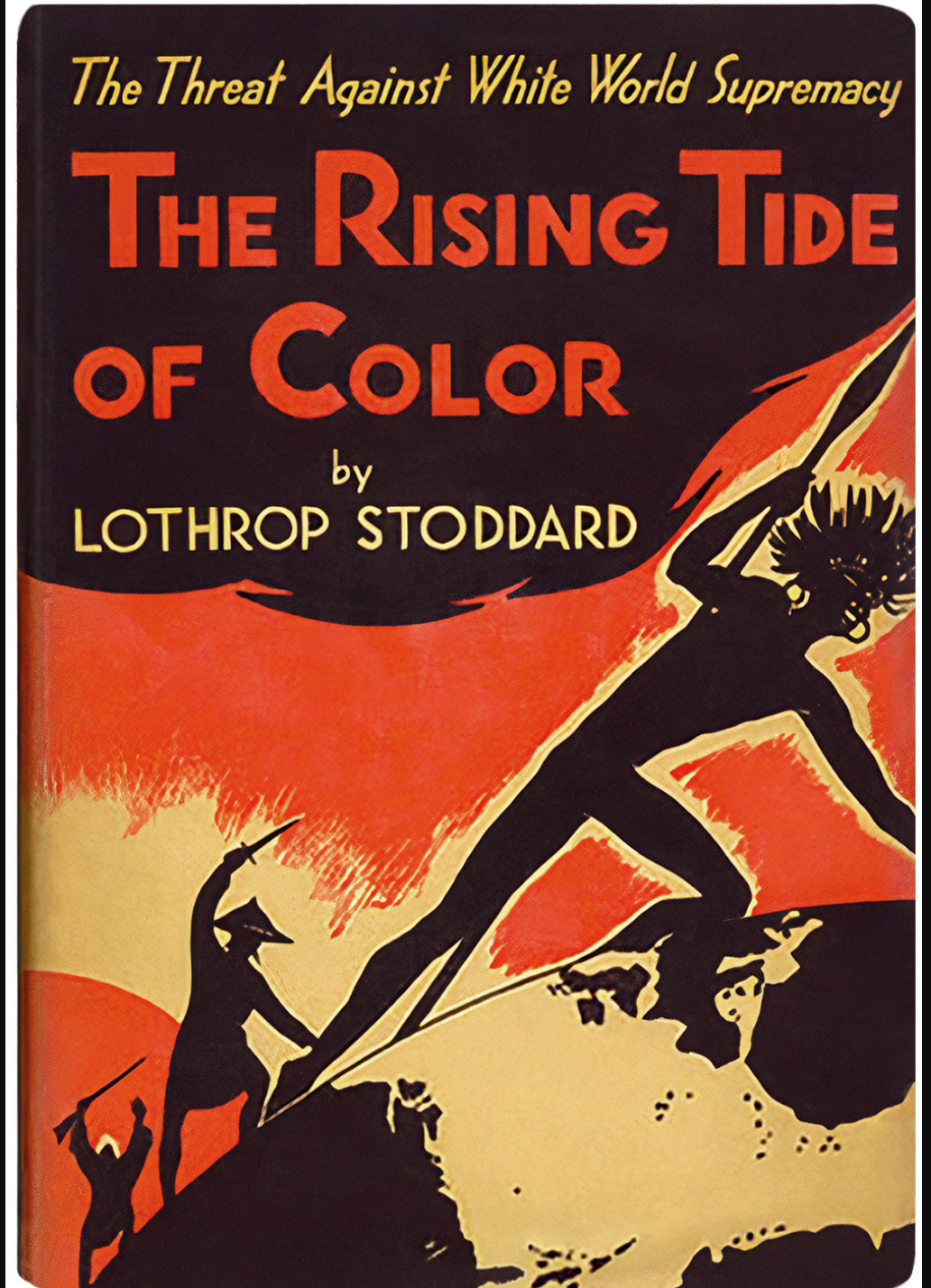


**Ch. 1.** I lived at West Egg, the — well, the less fashionable of the two, though this is a most superficial tag to express the bizarre and not a little sinister contrast between them. my house was at the very tip of the egg, only fifty yards from the Sound, and squeezed between two huge places that rented for twelve or fifteen thousand a season. the one on my right was a colossal affair by any standard — **it was a factual imitation of some Hotel de Ville in Normandy, with a tower on one side, spanning new under a thin beard of raw ivy, and a marble swimming pool, and more than forty acres of lawn and garden.** It was Gatsby's mansion. Or, rather, as I didn't know Mr. Gatsby, it was a mansion inhabited by a gentleman of that name.

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Lothrop Stoddard (American historian, journalist, and white supremacist), *The Rising Tide of Color: The Threat Against White World-Supremacy* (1920): the collapse of white supremacy was due of the population growth among African Americans, nationalism in European colonies, and industrialization in China and Japan

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**Ch. 2.** The eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg are blue and gigantic—their retinas are one yard high. They look out of no face, but, instead, from a pair of enormous yellow spectacles which pass over a non-existent nose. [...] I followed him over a low whitewashed railroad fence, and we walked back a hundred yards along the road under Doctor Eckleburg’s persistent stare. The only building in sight was a small block of yellow brick sitting on the edge of **the waste land**, a sort of compact Main Street ministering to it, and contiguous to absolutely nothing.

**Ch. 8.** Standing behind him, Michaelis saw with a shock that he was looking at the eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg, which had just emerged, pale and enormous, from the dissolving night.

“God sees everything,” repeated Wilson.

“That’s an advertisement,” Michaelis assured him.

# Who is Gatsby?

**Ch. 2.** “Well, they say he’s a nephew or a cousin of Kaiser Wilhelm’s. That’s where all his money comes from.”

**Ch. 3.** “Somebody told me they thought he killed a man once.”

A thrill passed over all of us. The three Mr. Mumbles bent forward and listened eagerly.

“I don’t think it’s so much THAT,” argued Lucille sceptically; “it’s more that he was a German spy during the war.” One of the men nodded in confirmation.

“I heard that from a man who knew all about him, grew up with him in Germany,” he assured us positively.

“Oh, no,” said the first girl, “it couldn’t be that, because he was in the American army during the war.” As our credulity switched back to her she leaned forward with enthusiasm. “You look at him sometimes when he thinks nobody’s looking at him. I’ll bet he killed a man.”

[...]

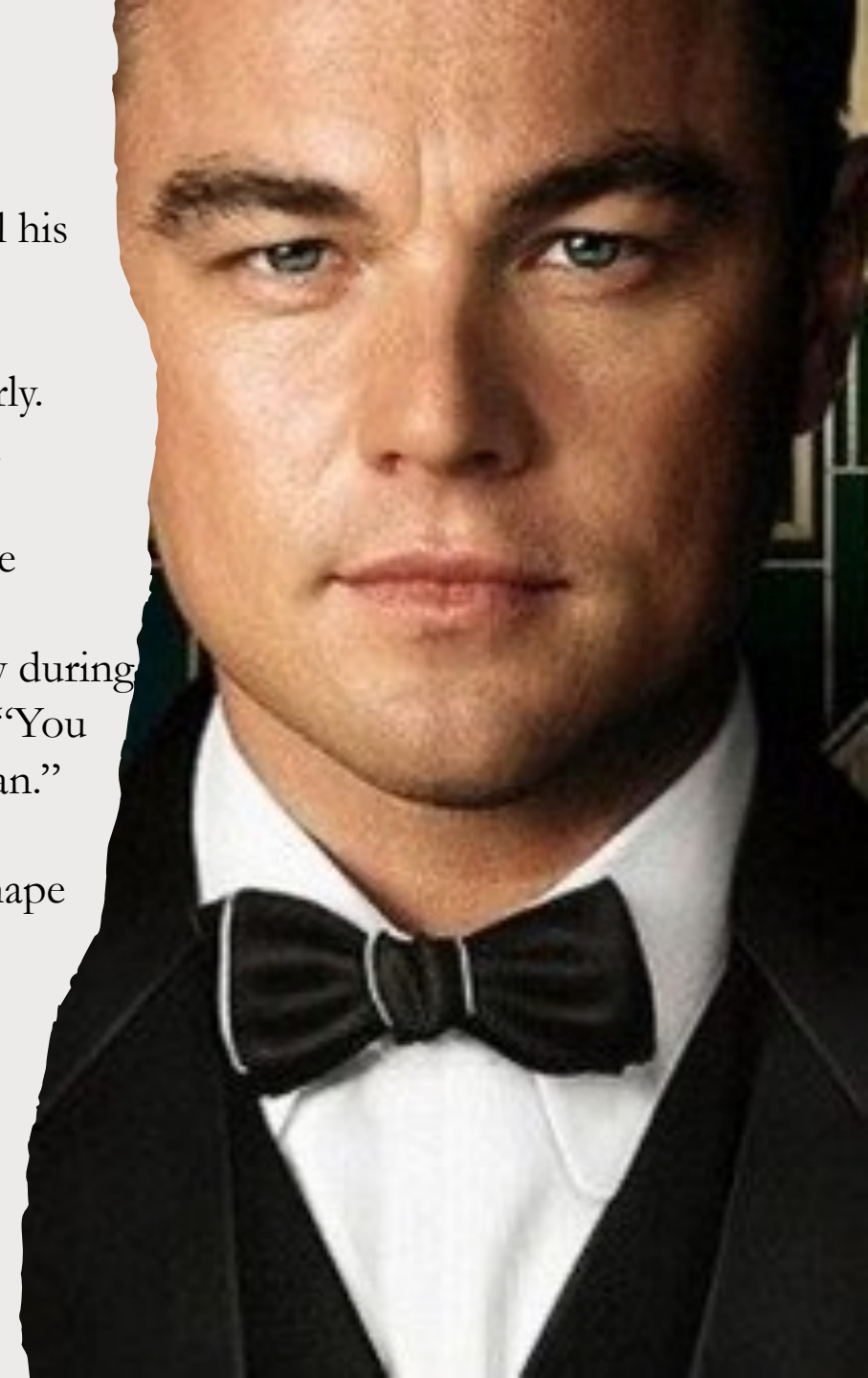
“Well, he told me once he was an Oxford man.” A dim background started to take shape behind him, but at her next remark it faded away.

“However, I don’t believe it.”

“Why not?” “I don’t know,” she insisted, “I just don’t think he went there.”

Something in her tone reminded me of the other girl’s “I think he killed a man,” and had the effect of stimulating my curiosity.

**Ch. 4.** “He’s a bootlegger,” said the young ladies, moving somewhere between his cocktails and his flowers. “One time he killed a man who had found out that he was nephew to Von Hindenburg and second cousin to the devil.



# Who is Gatsby?

**Ch. 4.** “Well, I’m going to tell you something about my life,” he interrupted. “I don’t want you to get a wrong idea of me from all these stories you hear.”

So he was aware of the bizarre accusations that flavored conversation in his halls.

“I’ll tell you God’s truth.” His right hand suddenly ordered divine retribution to stand by. “I am the son of some wealthy people in the Middle West — all dead now. I was brought up in America but educated at Oxford, because all my ancestors have been educated there for many years. It is a family tradition.”

He looked at me sideways — and I knew why Jordan Baker had believed he was lying. He hurried the phrase “educated at Oxford,” or swallowed it, or choked on it, as though it had bothered him before. And with this doubt, his whole statement fell to pieces, and I wondered if there wasn’t something a little sinister about him, after all.

“What part of the Middle West?” I inquired casually.

“San Francisco.”

“I see.”

“My family all died and I came into a good deal of money.” His voice was solemn, as if the memory of that sudden extinction of a clan still haunted him. For a moment I suspected that he was pulling my leg, but a glance at him convinced me otherwise.

# Who is Gatsby?

“After that I lived like a young rajah in all the capitals of Europe — Paris, Venice, Rome — collecting jewels, chiefly rubies, hunting big game, painting a little, things for myself only, and trying to forget something very sad that had happened to me long ago.”

With an effort I managed to restrain my incredulous laughter. The very phrases were worn so threadbare that they evoked no image except that of a turbaned “character,” leaking sawdust at every pore as he pursued a tiger through the Bois de Boulogne.

“Then came the war, old sport. It was a great relief, and I tried very hard to die, but I seemed to bear an enchanted life. I accepted a commission as first lieutenant when it began. In the Argonne Forest I took two machine-gun detachments so far forward that there was a half mile gap on either side of us where the infantry couldn’t advance. We stayed there two days and two nights, a hundred and thirty men with sixteen Lewis guns, and when the infantry came up at last they found the insignia of three German divisions among the piles of dead. I was promoted to be a major, and every Allied government gave me a decoration — even Montenegro, little Montenegro down on the Adriatic Sea!”

Little Montenegro! He lifted up the words and nodded at them — with his smile. The smile comprehended Montenegro’s troubled history and sympathized with the brave struggles of the Montenegrin people. It appreciated fully the chain of national circumstances which had elicited this tribute from Montenegro’s warm little heart. My incredulity was submerged in fascination now; it was like skimming hastily through a dozen magazines.

# self-made man

“In Kentucky, almost every manufactory known to me is in the hands of enterprising self-made men, who have whatever wealth they possess by patient and diligent labor”  
(Henry Clay, “Defence of the American System,” 1832)

“all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness”  
(“Declaration of Independence,” July 4, 1776)

## Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790)

“It was about this time I conceiv’d the bold and arduous project of arriving at moral perfection. I wish’d to live without committing any fault at any time; I would conquer all that either natural inclination, custom, or company might lead me into.” (*Autobiography*, 1793)

**Horatio Alger (1832-1899)**, American writer:  
‘Rags-to-riches’ stories, “impoverished boys who through hard work and virtue achieve great wealth and respect”



**Ch. 9.** “Look here, this is a book he had when he was a boy. It just shows you.”

He opened it at the back cover and turned it around for me to see. On the last fly-leaf was printed the word SCHEDULE, and the date September 12, 1906. and underneath:

Rise from bed	6.00	A.M.
Dumbbell exercise and wall-scaling	6.15-6.30	”
Study electricity, etc	7.15-8.15	”
Work	8.30-4.30	P.M.
Baseball and sports	4.30-5.00	”
Practice elocution, poise and how to attain it	5.00-6.00	”
Study needed inventions	7.00-9.00	”

**GENERAL RESOLVES**

- No wasting time at Shafers or [a name, indecipherable]
  - No more smokeing or chewing
  - Bath every other day
  - Read one improving book or magazine per week
  - Save \$5.00 {crossed out} \$3.00 per week Be better to parents
- “I come across this book by accident,” said the old man. “It just shows you, don’t it?”

Morning question, What good shall I do this day?	5	Rise, wash, and address <i>Powerful Goodness</i> ; contrive day's business and take the resolution of the day; prosecute the present study; and breakfast.
	6	
	7	
	8	
	9	Work.
	10	
	11	Read or overlook my accounts, and dine.
	12	
	1	
	2	Work.
	3	
	4	
5	Put things in their places, supper, music, or diversion, or conversation; examination of the day.	
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
Evening question, What good have I done today?	11	Sleep.
	12	
	1	
	2	
	3	
	4	

# who is Gatsby?

**Ch. 6.** Just why these inventions were a source of satisfaction to James Gatz of North Dakota, isn't easy to say.

**James Gatz** — that was really, or at least legally, his name. He had changed it at the age of seventeen and at the specific moment that witnessed **the beginning of his career** — when he saw **Dan Cody's** yacht drop anchor over the most insidious flat on Lake Superior. It was James Gatz who had been loafing along the beach that afternoon in a torn green jersey and a pair of canvas pants, but it was already Jay Gatsby who borrowed a rowboat, pulled out to the TUOLOMEE, and informed Cody that a wind might catch him and break him up in half an hour.

I suppose he'd had the name ready for a long time, even then. His parents were shiftless and unsuccessful farm people — his imagination had never really accepted them as his parents at all. **The truth was that Jay Gatsby of West Egg, Long Island, sprang from his Platonic conception of himself. He was a son of God — a phrase which, if it means anything, means just that** — and he must be about His Father's business, the service of a vast, vulgar, and meretricious beauty. So **he invented just the sort of Jay Gatsby that a seventeen-year-old boy would be likely to invent, and to this conception he was faithful to the end.**

# who is Gatsby?

**Ch. 6.** At any rate Cody asked him a few questions (one of them elicited **the brand new name**) and found that he was quick and extravagantly ambitious. A few days later he took him to Duluth and bought him a blue coat, six pair of white duck trousers, and a yachting cap. And when the TUOLOMEE left for the West Indies and the Barbary Coast Gatsby left too.

He was employed in a vague personal capacity — while he remained with Cody he was in turn steward, mate, skipper, secretary, and even jailor, [...] It might have lasted indefinitely except for the fact that Ella Kaye came on board one night in Boston and a week later Dan Cody inhospitably died.

I remember the portrait of him up in Gatsby's bedroom, a gray, florid man with a hard, empty face — **the pioneer debauchee, who during one phase of American life brought back to the Eastern seaboard the savage violence of the frontier brothel and saloon.** It was indirectly due to Cody that Gatsby drank so little. Sometimes in the course of gay parties women used to rub champagne into his hair; for himself he formed the habit of letting liquor alone.

And it was from Cody that he inherited money — a legacy of twenty-five thousand dollars. He didn't get it. He never understood the legal device that was used against him, but what remained of the millions went intact to Ella Kaye. He was left with his singularly appropriate education; **the vague contour of Jay Gatsby had filled out to the substantiality of a man.**

# who is Gatsby?

**Ch. 7.** “An Oxford man!” He was incredulous. “Like hell he is! He wears a pink suit.”

“Nevertheless he’s an Oxford man.”

“Oxford, New Mexico,” snorted Tom contemptuously, “or something like that.” [...]

“By the way, Mr. Gatsby, I understand you’re an Oxford man.”

“Not exactly.”

“Oh, yes, I understand you went to Oxford.”

“Yes — I went there.”

A pause. Then Tom’s voice, incredulous and insulting: “You must have gone there about the time Biloxi went to New Haven.”

Another pause. A waiter knocked and came in with crushed mint and ice but, the silence was unbroken by his “thank you.” and the soft closing of the door. This tremendous detail was to be cleared up at last.

“I told you I went there,” said Gatsby.

“I heard you, but I’d like to know when.”

“It was in nineteen-nineteen, I only stayed five months. That’s why I can’t really call myself an Oxford man.”

[...]

“Wait a minute,” snapped Tom, “I want to ask Mr. Gatsby one more question.”

“Go on,” Gatsby said politely.


“What kind of a row are you trying to cause in my house anyhow?”

They were out in the open at last and Gatsby was content.

“He isn’t causing a row.” Daisy looked desperately from one to the other. “You’re causing a row. Please have a little self-control.”

“Self-control!” Repeated Tom incredulously. “I suppose the latest thing is to sit back and let Mr. Nobody from Nowhere make love to your wife. Well, if that’s the idea you can count me out... . Nowadays people begin by sneering at family life and family institutions, and next they’ll throw everything overboard and have intermarriage between black and white.”

# New York City

An aerial photograph of New York City, showing the Manhattan skyline with numerous skyscrapers. In the foreground, the steel truss structure of the Manhattan Bridge is visible, spanning across the water. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds.

**Ch. 3.** I began to like New York, the racy, adventurous feel of it at night, and the satisfaction that the constant flicker of men and women and machines gives to the restless eye. I liked to walk up Fifth Avenue and pick out romantic women from the crowd and imagine that in a few minutes I was going to enter into their lives, and no one would ever know or disapprove. Sometimes, in my mind, I followed them to their apartments on the corners of hidden streets, and they turned and smiled back at me before they faded through a door into warm darkness. At the enchanted metropolitan twilight I felt a haunting loneliness sometimes, and felt it in others — poor young clerks who loitered in front of windows waiting until it was time for a solitary restaurant dinner — young clerks in the dusk, wasting the most poignant moments of night and life.

# New York City

**Ch. 4.** The city seen from the Queensboro Bridge is always the city seen for the first time, in its first wild promise of all the mystery and the beauty in the world.

A dead man passed us in a hearse heaped with blooms, followed by two carriages with drawn blinds, and by more cheerful carriages for friends. The friends looked out at us with the tragic eyes and short upper lips of southeastern Europe, and I was glad that the sight of Gatsby's splendid car was included in their sombre holiday. As we crossed Blackwell's Island a limousine passed us, driven by a white chauffeur, in which sat three modish negroes, two bucks and a girl. I laughed aloud as the yolks of their eyeballs rolled toward us in haughty rivalry.

“Anything can happen now that we've slid over this bridge,” I thought; “anything at all... .”

Even Gatsby could happen, without any particular wonder.

# the green light

**Ch. 1.** But I didn't call to him, for he gave a sudden intimation that he was content to be alone — he stretched out his arms toward the dark water in a curious way, and, far as I was from him, I could have sworn he was trembling. Involuntarily I glanced seaward — and distinguished nothing except a single green light, minute and far away, that might have been the end of a dock. When I looked once more for Gatsby he had vanished, and I was alone again in the unquiet darkness.

**Ch. 5.** “If it wasn't for the mist we could see your home across the bay,” said Gatsby. “You always have a green light that burns all night at the end of your dock.”

Daisy put her arm through his abruptly, but he seemed absorbed in what he had just said. Possibly it had occurred to him that **the colossal significance of that light had now vanished forever.** Compared to the great distance that had separated him from Daisy it had seemed very near to her, almost touching her. It had seemed as close as a star to the moon. **Now it was again a green light on a dock.** His count of enchanted objects had diminished by one.

**Ch. 4.** “It was a strange coincidence,” I said.

“But it wasn't a coincidence at all.”

“Why not?”

“Gatsby bought that house so that Daisy would be just across the bay.”

Then it had not been merely the stars to which he had aspired on that June night. **He came alive to me, delivered suddenly from the womb of his purposeless splendor.**

“He wants to know,” continued Jordan, “if you'll invite Daisy to your house some afternoon and then let him come over.”

# the green light

**Ch. 9.** I became aware of the old island here that flowered once for Dutch sailors' eyes — a fresh, green breast of the new world. Its vanished trees, the trees that had made way for Gatsby's house, had once pandered in whispers to the last and greatest of all human dreams; for a transitory enchanted moment man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent, compelled into an aesthetic contemplation he neither understood nor desired, face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder.

And as I sat there brooding on the old, unknown world, I thought of Gatsby's wonder when he first picked out the green light at the end of Daisy's dock. He had come a long way to this blue lawn, and his dream must have seemed so close that he could hardly fail to grasp it. He did not know that it was already behind him, somewhere back in that vast obscurity beyond the city, where the dark fields of the republic rolled on under the night.

Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter — to-morrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther... . And one fine morning —

So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.

# psychic temporality and the American dream

Ch. 6. “She didn’t like it,” he said immediately.

“Of course she did.”

“She didn’t like it,” he insisted. “She didn’t have a good time.”

He was silent, and I guessed at his unutterable depression.

“I feel far away from her,” he said. “It’s hard to make her understand.”

“You mean about the dance?”

“The dance?” He dismissed all the dances he had given with a snap of his fingers. “Old sport, the dance is unimportant.”

He wanted nothing less of Daisy than that she should go to Tom and say: “I never loved you.” After she had obliterated four years with that sentence they could decide upon the more practical measures to be taken. One of them was that, after she was free, they were to go back to Louisville and be married from her house — **just as if it were five years ago.**

“And she doesn’t understand,” he said. “She used to be able to understand. We’d sit for hours ——”

He broke off and began to walk up and down a desolate path of fruit rinds and discarded favors and crushed flowers.

# **psychic temporality and the American dream**

“I wouldn’t ask too much of her,” I ventured. **“You can’t repeat the past.”**

**“Can’t repeat the past?”** he cried incredulously. **“Why of course you can!”**

**He looked around him wildly, as if the past** were lurking here in the shadow of his house, just out of reach of his hand.

“I’m going to fix everything just the way it was before,” he said, nodding determinedly. “She’ll see.”

[...]

He knew that when he kissed this girl, and forever wed his unutterable visions to her perishable breath, his mind would never romp again like the mind of God. So he waited, listening for a moment longer to the tuning-fork that had been struck upon a star. Then he kissed her. At his lips’ touch she blossomed for him like a flower and the incarnation was complete.

# psychic temporality and the American dream

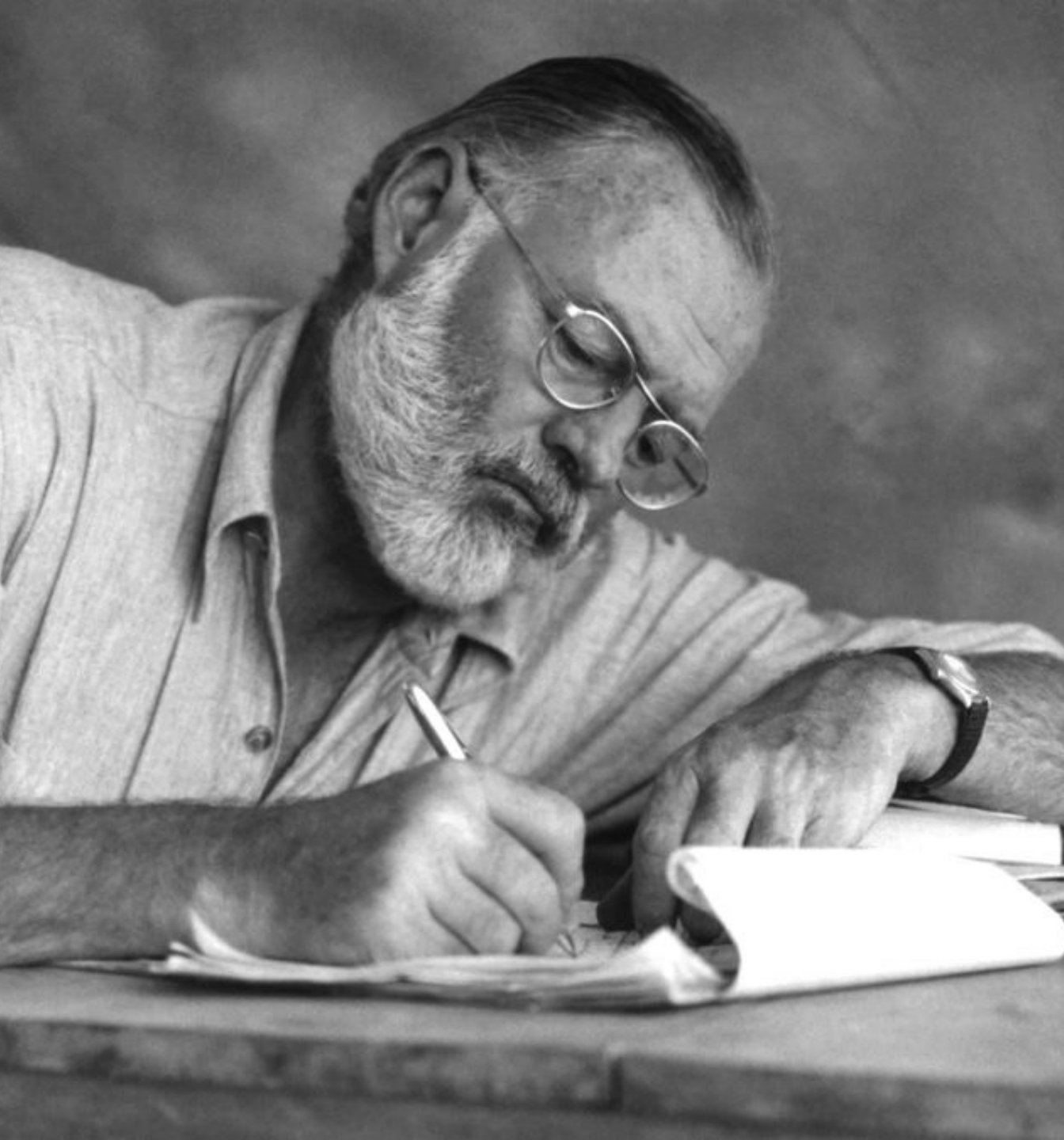
**Ch. 7.** “Oh, you want too much!” she cried to Gatsby. “I love you now — isn’t that enough? **I can’t help what’s past.**” She began to sob helplessly. “I did love him once — but I loved you too.” Gatsby’s eyes opened and closed.  
“You loved me **TOO?**” he repeated.

**Ch. 8.** However glorious might be his future as Jay Gatsby, he was at present **a penniless young man without a past**, and at any moment the invisible cloak of his uniform might slip from his shoulders. So he made the most of his time. He took what he could get, ravenously and unscrupulously — eventually he took Daisy one still October night, took her because he had no real right to touch her hand.

# a story of the West

**Ch. 9.** That's my Middle West — not the wheat or the prairies or the lost Swede towns, but the thrilling returning trains of my youth, and the street lamps and sleigh bells in the frosty dark and the shadows of holly wreaths thrown by lighted windows on the snow. I am part of that, a little solemn with the feel of those long winters, a little complacent from growing up in the Carraway house in a city where dwellings are still called through decades by a family's name. I see now that this has been a story of the West, after all — Tom and Gatsby, Daisy and Jordan and I, were all Westerners, and perhaps we possessed some deficiency in common which made us subtly unadaptable to Eastern life.

Even when the East excited me most, even when I was most keenly aware of its superiority to the bored, sprawling, swollen towns beyond the Ohio, with their interminable inquisitions which spared only the children and the very old — even then it had always for me a quality of distortion.



# Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961)

Born in Illinois, in **1917** was employed by the *Kansas City Star* (newspaper)

1918 joined the ambulance corps in Italy (→ *A Farewell to Arms*)

1919 back to the States

Worked as a journalist and married four times

1922 **Paris**, lost generation (→ *Fiesta*)

1930 **Africa** (→ *The Green Hills of Africa*)

1937 reporter during the **Spanish Civil War**  
(→ *For Whom the Bell Tolls*)

1939 **Cuba**

1954 Nobel Prize in literature

1961 took his life

It was when we had come back from Canada and were living in the rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs and Miss Stein and I were still good friends that Miss Stein made the remark about the lost generation. She had some ignition trouble with the old Model T Ford she then drove and the young man who worked in the garage and had served in the last year of the war had not been adept, or perhaps had not broken the priority of other vehicles, in repairing Miss Stein's Ford. Anyway he had not been *sérieux* and had been corrected severely by the *patron* of the garage after Miss Stein's protest. The *patron* had said to him,

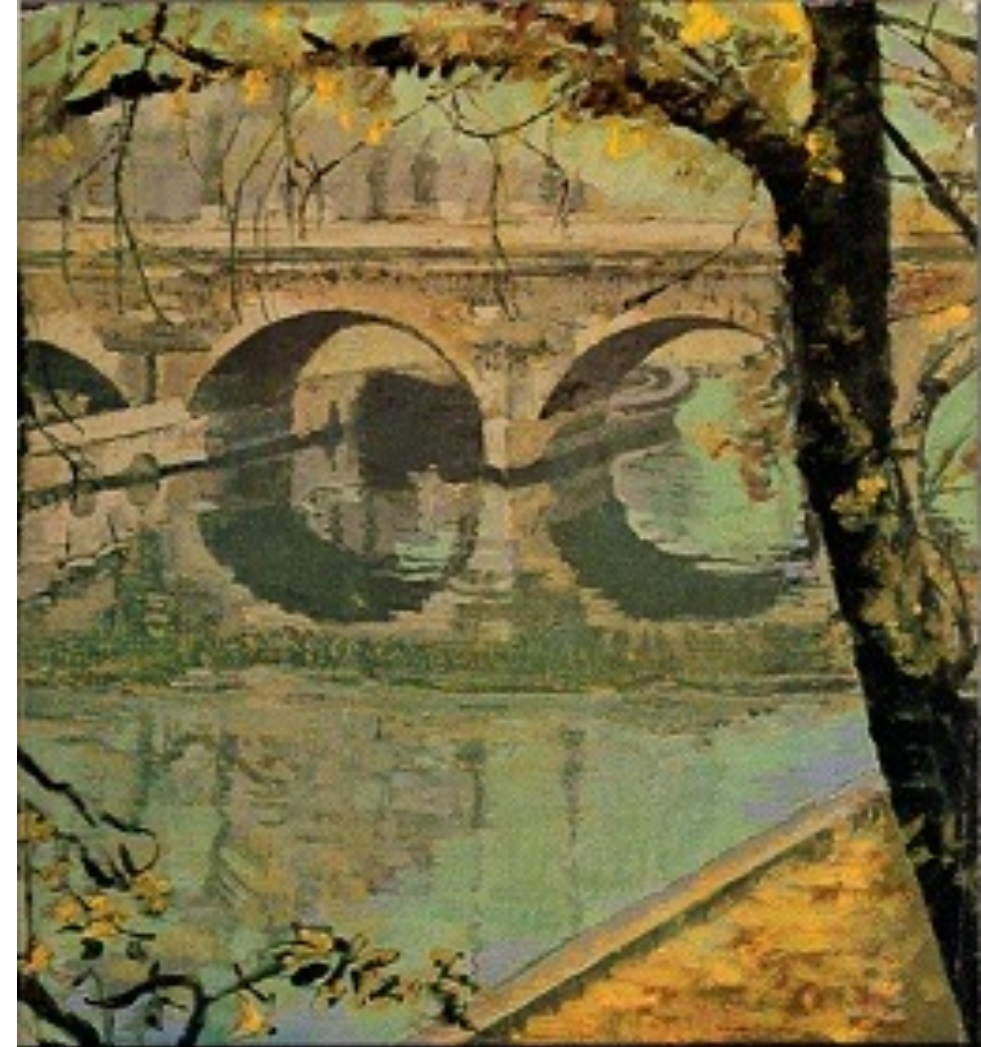
**“You are all a *génération perdue*.”**

“That's what you are. That's what you all are,” Miss Stein said.

“All of you young people who served in the war. **You are a lost generation.**”

“Really?” I said.

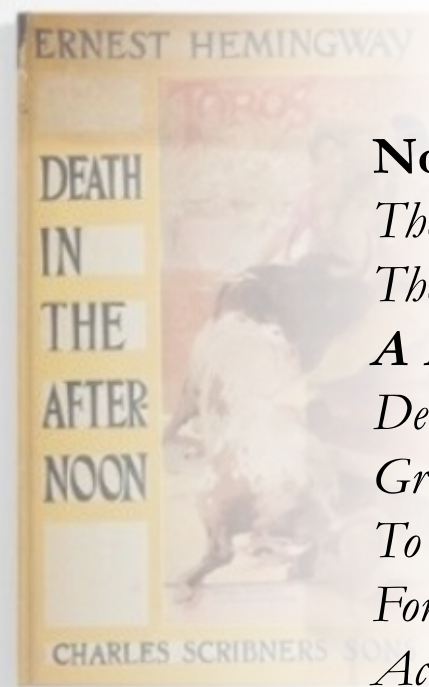
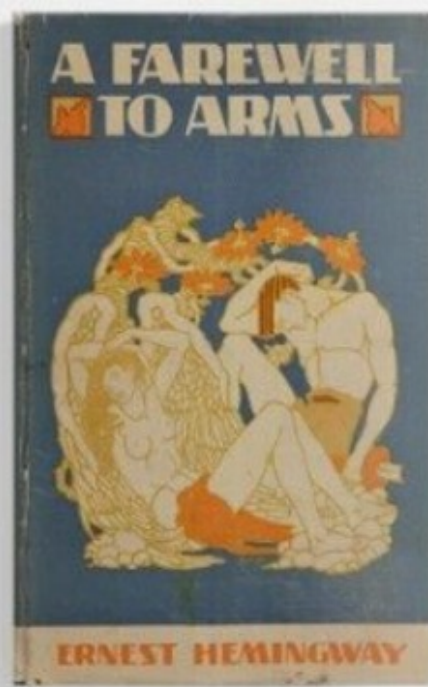
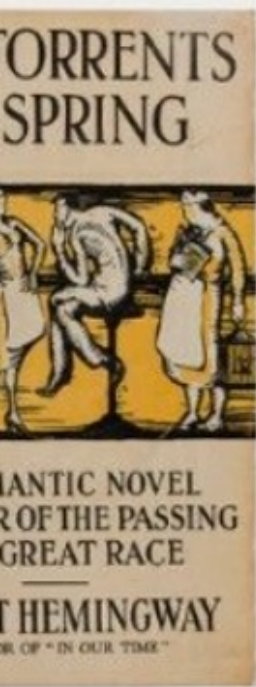
“You are,” she insisted. “You have no respect for anything. You drink yourselves to death....”



## A Moveable Feast

SKETCHES OF THE AUTHOR'S LIFE  
IN PARIS IN THE TWENTIES

ERNEST HEMINGWAY



## Novels and non-fiction

*The Torrents of Spring* (1926)

*The Sun Also Rises* (1926)

***A Farewell to Arms* (1929)**

*Death in the Afternoon* (1932)

*Green Hills of Africa* (1935)

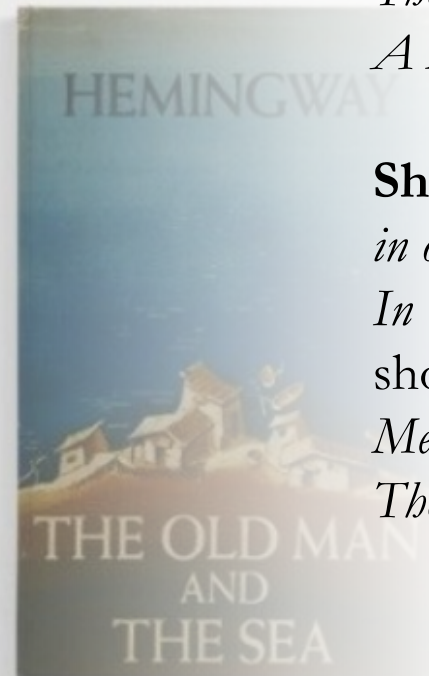
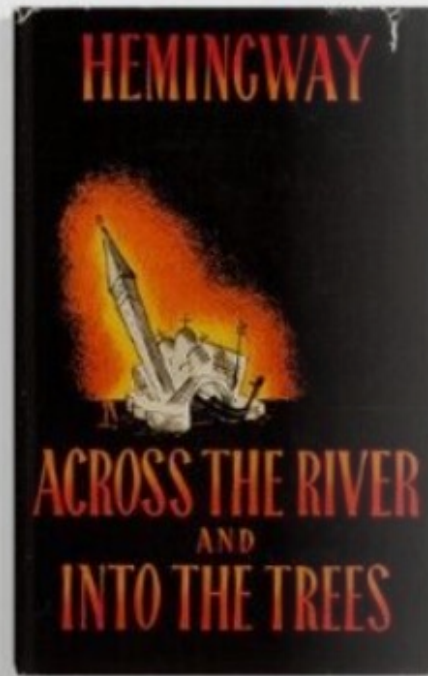
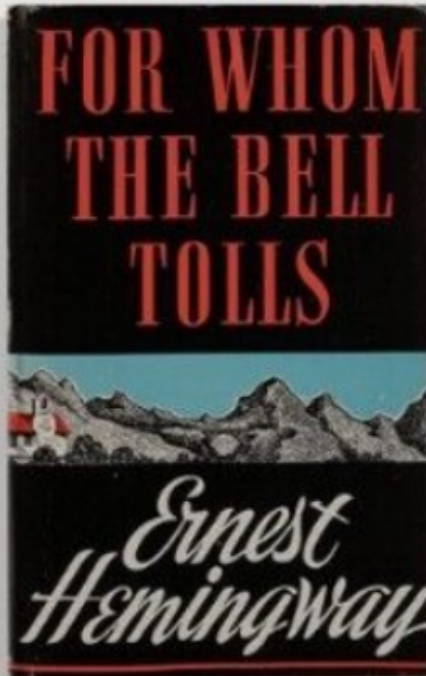
*To Have and Have Not* (1937)

*For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940)

*Across the River and into the Trees* (1950)

*The Old Man and the Sea* (1952)

*A Moveable Feast* (1964)



## Short stories

*in our time* (1924)

*In Our Time* (in our time + fourteen more short stories; 1925)

*Men Without Women* (1927)

*The Snows of Kilimanjaro* (1961)

ERNEST HEMINGWAY

DEATH  
IN  
THE  
AFTER  
NOON



CHARLES SCRIBNERS SON

## iceberg theory

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If a writer of a prose knows enough about what he is writing about he may omit things that he knows and the reader, if the writer is writing truly enough, will have a feeling of those things as strongly as though the writer had stated them. The dignity of movement of the iceberg is due to only one-eighth of it being above water. The writer who omits things because he does not know them only makes hollow places in his writing.

*(Death in the Afternoon, 1932)*

**Stephen Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage: An Episode of the American Civil War* (1893)**

Henry Fleming had enlisted in the army (against his mother's will), dreaming of fighting in glorious battles. He worries that he might act cowardly and run away during fighting. When the enemy charge comes on, Henry runs away with a terrified mob of fellow soldiers. Close to the battlefield, Henry encounters a large group of blue soldiers running away. He grabs one to ask "Why—why—" but the soldier bashes his rifle on Henry's head to escape. At the end, running with the flag, Henry leads his regiment to overwhelm the enemy soldiers. They all congratulate each other and feel that "they were men." Henry reflects on his triumphs and guilt still haunts him.


**Erich Maria Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front* (*Im Westen nichts Neues*; 1929)**

Paul Bäumer (the novel's narrator), and his friends Kropp, Tjaden, Leer, Katschinsky (Kat), and Müller bitterly remember how their schoolteacher Kantorek convinced them to enlist in the army with idealistic and romantic ideas about war and glory. They have got more become pragmatic and only focus on their survival. Only 32 of the 150 men in Paul's company survive the war. Paul is killed on a day of otherwise quiet on the western front. The expression on the face of his dead body is calm, as though he were relieved to be dead.



THE RED BADGE  
OF COURAGE

BY  
STEPHEN CRANE

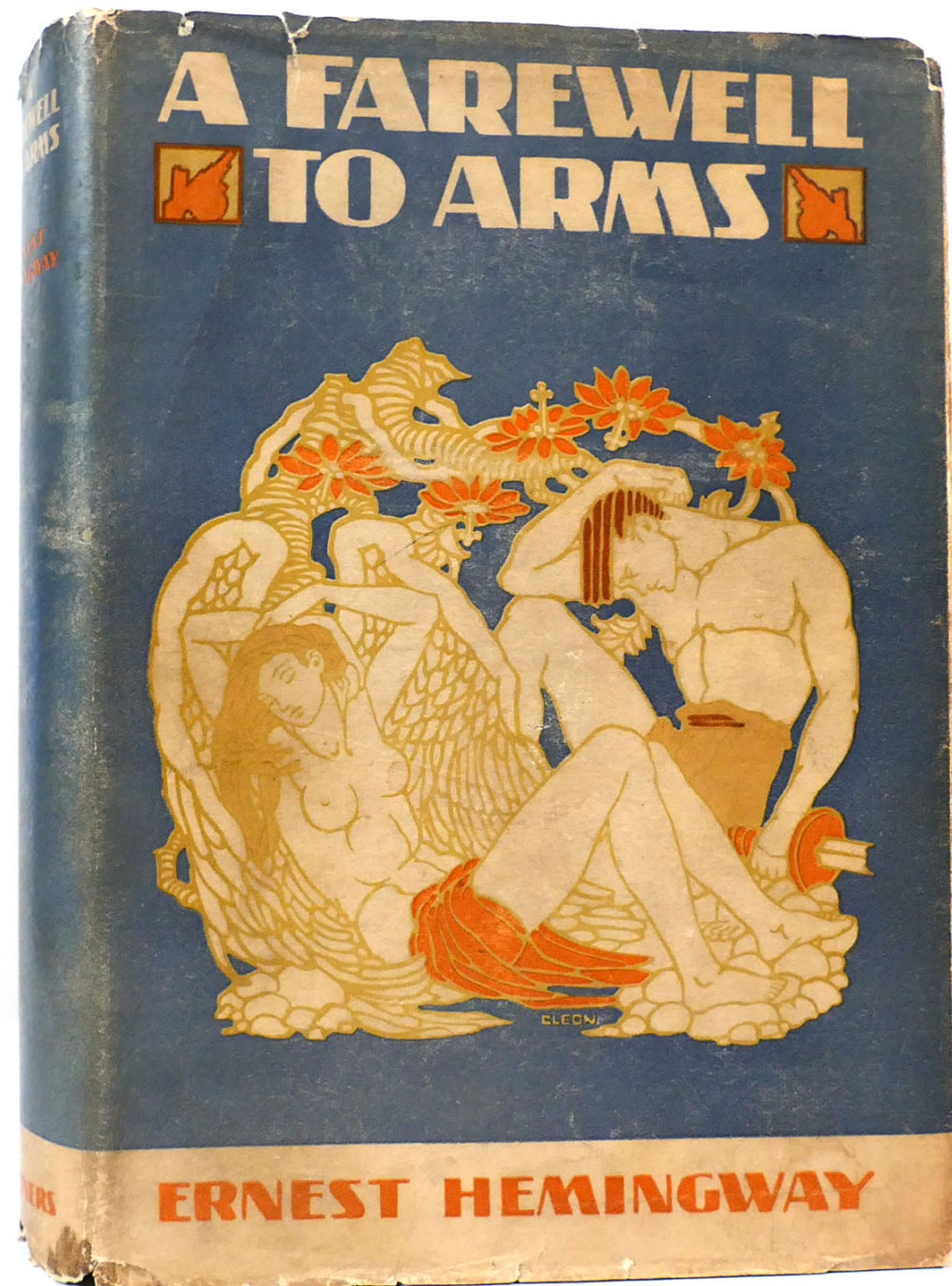


ERICH MARIA REMARQUE

Im  
Westen  
nichts  
Neues

Remarques Buch ist das Denkmal  
unseres unbekanntem Soldaten  
Von allen Toten geschrieben

Balter von Brel



August 1914	World War I begins in Europe
April 6, 1917	The United States enters the war
1917	Hemingway is 18 and works as a reporter for <i>The Kansas City Star</i>
October 24, 1917	The Italian retreat from Caporetto begins. <i>The Kansas City Star</i> publishes about the retreat for days
May 23, 1918	Hemingway and his friend Ted Brumback join American Red Cross and go to Europe
June 4, 1918	Hemingway is assigned to Schio, Italy, and to Red Cross Ambulance
July 8, 1918	After midnight, along the Piave River, Hemingway is wounded by a trench mortar shell while handing out cigarettes, chocolate, and postcards to Italian troops
Summer-Fall 1918	While recuperating in the American hospital in Milan, he undergoes two operations and the removal of more than two hundred pieces of shrapnel from his legs
January 4, 1919	Hemingway, discharged from American Red Cross, leaves Italy for the United States
January 22, 1929	Hemingway completes the final typescript copy of <i>A Farewell to Arms</i>
May-October 1929	<i>A Farewell to Arms</i> is published in <i>Scribner's Magazine</i> in six parts; the June and July issues (parts 2 and 3) are banned in Boston.
September 27, 1929	<b><i>A Farewell to Arms</i> is published in book form by Charles Scribner's Sons in New York</b>



## 1919: Treaty of Versailles

*Russian Empire* → Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Finland

*Austro-Hungarian Empire* → Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia

*Ottoman Empire* → Turkey

*German Empire* → Germany (lost its territory outside Europe)

Great powers of Germany and Austria vs. Great Britain, France, Russia and the United States (20 million military and civilian deaths)

Italy joined the war in 1915, in order to stop Germans from joining Austrian troops on the eastern front

**October 24, 1917:** The most historically significant event narrated in the novel is the Italian retreat that took place following the **Battle of Caporetto**

**October 1918:** the Italian army mounted an offensive that resulted in the surrender of 300,000 Austrian soldiers.







# whose war?

**Ch. 1.** In the late summer of that year we lived in a house in a village that looked across the river and the plain to the mountains. [...] The plain was rich with crops; there were many orchards of fruit trees and beyond the plain the mountains were brown and bare. [...] Sometimes in the dark we heard the troops marching under the window and guns going past pulled by motor tractors. [...] the men, passing on the road, marched as though they were six months gone with child. [...] At the start of the winter came the permanent rain and with the rain came the cholera.

**Ch. 2.** [...] we crossed the river in August and lived in a house in Gorizia. [...] Now the fighting was in the next mountains beyond and was not a mile away. [...] Up the river the mountains had not been taken ; none of the mountains beyond the river had been taken.

# love and war: tragedy or simulation?

**Ch. 6.** I knew I did not love Catherine Barkley nor had any idea of loving her. This was a game, like bridge, in which you said things instead of playing cards. Like bridge you had to pretend you were playing for money or playing for some stakes. Nobody had mentioned what the stakes were. It was all right with me. [...] **“This is a rotten game we play, isn’t it?”**

“What game?”

“Don’t be dull.”

“I’m not, on purpose.”

“You’re a nice boy,” she said. “And you play it as well as you know how. But **it’s a rotten game.**”

“Do you always know what people think?”

“Not always. But I do with you. **You don’t have to pretend you love me.** That’s over for the evening. Is there anything you’d like to talk about?”

“But I do love you.”

“Please let’s not lie when we don’t have to. I had a very fine little show and I’m all right now. You see I’m not mad and I’m not gone off. It’s only a little sometimes.”

# love and war: tragedy or simulation?

**Ch. 6.** I sat on a chair and held my cap. We were supposed to wear steel helmets even in Gorizia but they were uncomfortable and **too bloody theatrical** in a town where the civilian inhabitants had not been evacuated.

**Ch. 7.**

“How you like this goddam war?” **“Rotten.”**

**“I say it’s rotten. Jesus Christ, I say it’s rotten.”**

“Were you in the States?”

[...]

British ambulance drivers were killed sometimes. Well, I knew I would not be killed. Not in this war. It did not have anything to do with me. It seemed no more dangerous to me myself than war in the movies. I wished to God it was over though. Maybe it would finish this summer. Maybe the Austrians would crack. They had always cracked in other wars.

# “let’s drop the war”

**Ch. 9.** “I believe we should get the war over,” I said. “It would not finish it if one side stopped fighting. It would only be worse if we stopped fighting.”

“It could not be worse,” Passini said respectfully. “There is nothing worse than war.”

“**Defeat is worse.**”

“I do not believe it,” Passini said still respectfully. “What is defeat? You go home.”

“They come after you. They take your home. They take your sisters.” [...]

“**War is not won by victory.** What if we take San Gabriele? What if we take the Carso and Monfalcone and Trieste? Where are we then? Did you see all the far mountains today? Do you think we could take all them too? Only if the Austrians stop fighting. One side must stop fighting. Why don’t we stop fighting? If they come down into Italy they will get tired and go away. They have their own country. But no, instead there is a war.”



# “let’s drop the war”

“You’re an orator.”

“We think. We read. We are not peasants. We are mechanics. But even the peasants know better than to believe in a war. Everybody hates this war.”

“There is a class that controls a country that is stupid and does not realize anything and never can. That is why we have this war.”

[...]

A big shell came in and burst outside in the brickyard. Another burst and in the noise you could hear the smaller noise of the brick and dirt raining down.

“What is there to eat?”

“We have a little pasta asciutta,” the major said.

# “I knew I was dead”

**Ch. 9.** I ate the end of my piece of cheese and took a swallow of wine. Through the other noise I heard a cough, then came the chuh-chuhchuhchuh--then there was a flash, as when a blast-furnace door is swung open, and a roar that started white and went red and on and on in a rushing wind. I tried to breathe but my breath would not come and **I felt myself rush bodily out of myself and out and out and out and all the time bodily in the wind. I went out swiftly, all of myself, and I knew I was dead and that it had all been a mistake to think you just died.** Then I floated, and instead of going on I felt myself slide back. I breathed and I was back. [...] I tried to get closer to Passini to try to put a tourniquet on the legs but I could not move. I tried again and my legs moved a little. I could pull backward along with my arms and elbows. Passini was quiet now. [...] **I made sure he was dead.** There were three others to locate. I sat up straight and as I did so something inside my head moved like the weights on a doll's eyes and it hit me inside in back of my eyeballs. My legs felt warm and wet and my shoes were wet and warm inside. I knew that I was hit and leaned over and put my hand on my knee. My knee wasn't there. My hand went in and my knee was down on my shin. I wiped my hand on my shirt and another floating light came very slowly down and I looked at my leg and was very afraid. Oh, God, I said, get me out of here. I knew, however, that there had been three others. There were four drivers. Passini was dead. That left three. Some one took hold of me under the arms and somebody else lifted my legs.

# “let’s drop the war”

**Ch. 10.** Rinaldi: “How are you, baby? How do you feel? I bring you this —” It was a bottle of cognac. The orderly brought a chair and he sat down, “and good news. You will be decorated. They want to get you the medaglia d’argento but perhaps they can get only the bronze.”

“What for?”

“Because you are gravely wounded. They say if you can prove you did any heroic act you can get the silver. Otherwise it will be the bronze. **Tell me** exactly what happened. **Did you do any heroic act?**”

“**No,**” I said. “**I was blown up while we were eating cheese.**”

[...]

“Splendid. We are all splendid. Everybody is proud of you. **Tell me** just exactly how it happened. I am positive you will get the silver. Go on tell me. **Tell me** all about it.”

# ★ whose war?

**Ch. 12. The States had declared war on Germany** but not on Austria. [...] They asked me if I thought President Wilson would declare war on Austria and I said it was only a matter of days. **I did not know what we had against Austria** but it seemed logical that they should declare war on her if they did on Germany. They asked me if we would declare war on Turkey. I said that was doubtful. Turkey, I said, was our national bird but the joke translated so badly and they were so puzzled and suspicious that I said yes, we would probably declare war on Turkey. And on Bulgaria? We had drunk several glasses of brandy and I said yes by God on Bulgaria too and on Japan. But, they said, Japan is an ally of England. You can't trust the bloody English. The Japanese want Hawaii, I said. **Where is Hawaii? It is in the Pacific Ocean. Why do the Japanese want it? They don't really want it, I said. That is all talk.** The Japanese are a wonderful little people fond of dancing and light wines. Like the French, said the major. We will get Nice and Savoia from the French. We will get Corsica and all the Adriatic coast-line, Rinaldi said. Italy will return to the splendors of Rome, said the major. I don't like Rome, I said. It is hot and full of fleas. You don't like Rome? Yes, I love Rome. Rome is the mother of nations. I will never forget Romulus suckling the Tiber. What? Nothing. Let's all go to Rome. Let's go to Rome to-night and never come back. Rome is a beautiful city, said the major. The mother and father of nations, I said. Roma is feminine, said Rinaldi. It cannot be the father. Who is the father, then, the Holy Ghost? Don't blaspheme.

# Italian masculinities

**Ch. 3 - Lieutenant Rinaldi (Amalfi):** “Ciaou!” he said. “What kind of time did you have?”

“Magnificent.” We shook hands and he put his arm around my neck and kissed me.

“Oughf,” I said.

“You’re dirty,” he said. “You ought to wash. Where did you go and what did you do? Tell me everything at once.”

“I went everywhere. **Milan, Florence, Rome, Naples, Villa San Giovanni, Messina, Taormina—**”

“You talk like a time-table. Did you have any beautiful adventures?”

“Yes.”

“Where?”

“**Milano, Firenze, Rome, Napoli.**”

That’s enough. Tell me really what was the best.”

“In Milano.”

**The Priest (Abruzzo):** I had wanted to go to Abruzzi. I had gone to no place where the roads were frozen and hard as iron, where it was clear cold and dry and the snow was dry and powdery and hare-tracks in the snow and the peasants took off their hats and called you Lord and there was good hunting.

# Italian masculinities

**Ch. 25.** “Are you married?” he asked from the bed. I was standing against the wall by the window.  
“Not yet.”  
“Are you in love?”  
“Yes.” “With that English girl?”  
“Yes.”  
“Poor baby. Is she good to you?”  
“Of course.”  
“I mean is she good to you practically speaking?”  
“Shut up.”  
“I will. You will see I am a man of extreme delicacy. Does she--?”  
“Rinin,” I said. “Please shut up. If you want to be

my friend, shut up.”  
“I don’t *want* to be your friend, baby. I *am* your friend.” “Then shut up.”  
“All right.”  
I went over to the bed and sat down beside Rinaldi. He was holding his glass and looking at the floor.  
“You see how it is, Rinin?”  
“Oh, yes. All my life I encounter **sacred subjects**. But very few with you. I suppose you must have them too.” He looked at the floor.  
“You haven’t any?”  
“No.”  
“Not any?”

“No.”

“I can say this about your mother and that about your sister?”

“And that about *your sister*,” Rinaldi said swiftly.

We both laughed.

“The **old superman**,” I said.

“I am jealous maybe,” Rinaldi said.

“No, you’re not.”

“I don’t mean like that. I mean something else.

Have you any married friends?”

“Yes,” I said.

“I haven’t,” Rinaldi said. “Not if they love each other.”

“Why not?”

“They don’t like me.”

“Why not?”

“I am the snake. I am the snake of reason.”

“You’re getting it mixed. The apple was reason.”

“No, it was the snake.” He was more cheerful.

“You are better when you don’t think so deeply,” I said.

“I love you, baby,” he said. “You puncture me when I become a great Italian thinker. But I know many things I can’t say. I know more than you.”

# BETWEEN MEN

*English Literature  
and  
Male Homosocial Desire*



# homosociality

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick,  
*Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*  
(New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), pp. 1-2.

“Homosocial” is a word occasionally used in history and the social sciences, where it describes social bonds between persons of the same sex; it is a neologism, obviously formed by analogy with “homosexual,” and just as obviously meant to be distinguished from “homosexual.” In fact, it is applied to such activities as “male bonding,” which may, as in our society, be characterized by intense homophobia, fear and hatred of homosexuality. To draw the “homosocial” back into the orbit of “desire,” of the potentially erotic, then, is to hypothesize the potential unbrokenness of a continuum between homosocial and homosexual—a continuum whose visibility, for men, in our society, is radically disrupted. It will become clear, in the course of my argument, that my hypothesis of the unbrokenness of this continuum is not a genetic one—I do not mean to discuss genital homosexual desire as “at the root of” other forms of male homosociality—but rather a strategy for making generalizations about, and marking historical differences in, the structure of men’s relations with other men. “Male homosocial desire” is the name this book will give to the entire continuum.

EVE KOSOFSKY SEDGWICK

# homosociality

Charles Hatten, “The Crisis of Masculinity, Reified Desire, and Catherine Barkley in *A Farewell to Arms*”, *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (1993), p. 88

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Tensions around sexual reification and gender roles emerge even in the novel’s many scenes of male homosociality. Such tension contributes to the structural contrast in the early part of the novel between Henry’s two friends, the priest and Rinaldi, who are linked respectively with traditional ideals and modern cynicism. The priest, his own masculinity doubted by the other soldiers, fails as a role model for Henry. Although he does not join in ridiculing him, Henry shows his distance from the priest’s traditional ideals by his failure to accept his invitation to visit his home in Abruzzi. The more important influence, Rinaldi (a cynical doctor who introduces Henry to reified sexuality by taking him to a brothel), is associated with the modernizing spirit seen in Barkley.

But just as the reified sexuality embodied in Barkley ultimately will undercut Henry’s masculinity, so too Rinaldi represents a threat to Henry’s Anglo-Saxon notion of masculinity. Indeed, at one point Rinaldi tries to kiss him, a gesture that Henry resists, presumably reading it as effeminate or incipiently homosexual. Rinaldi’s characteristic celebration of reified desire thus slips into a transgression of an Anglo-Saxon sense of male identity.

# homosociality

**Ch. 10.** “Oh I love to tease you, baby. With your priest and your English girl, and really you are just like me underneath.”

“No, I’m not.”

“Yes, we are. **You are really an Italian. All fire and smoke and nothing inside.** You only pretend to be American. We are brothers and we love each other.”

“Be good while I’m gone,” I said.

“I will send Miss Barkley. You are better with her without me. You are purer and sweeter.”

“Oh, go to hell.”

“I will send her. **Your lovely cool goddess.** English goddess. My God what would a man do with a woman like that except worship her? What else is an Englishwoman good for?”

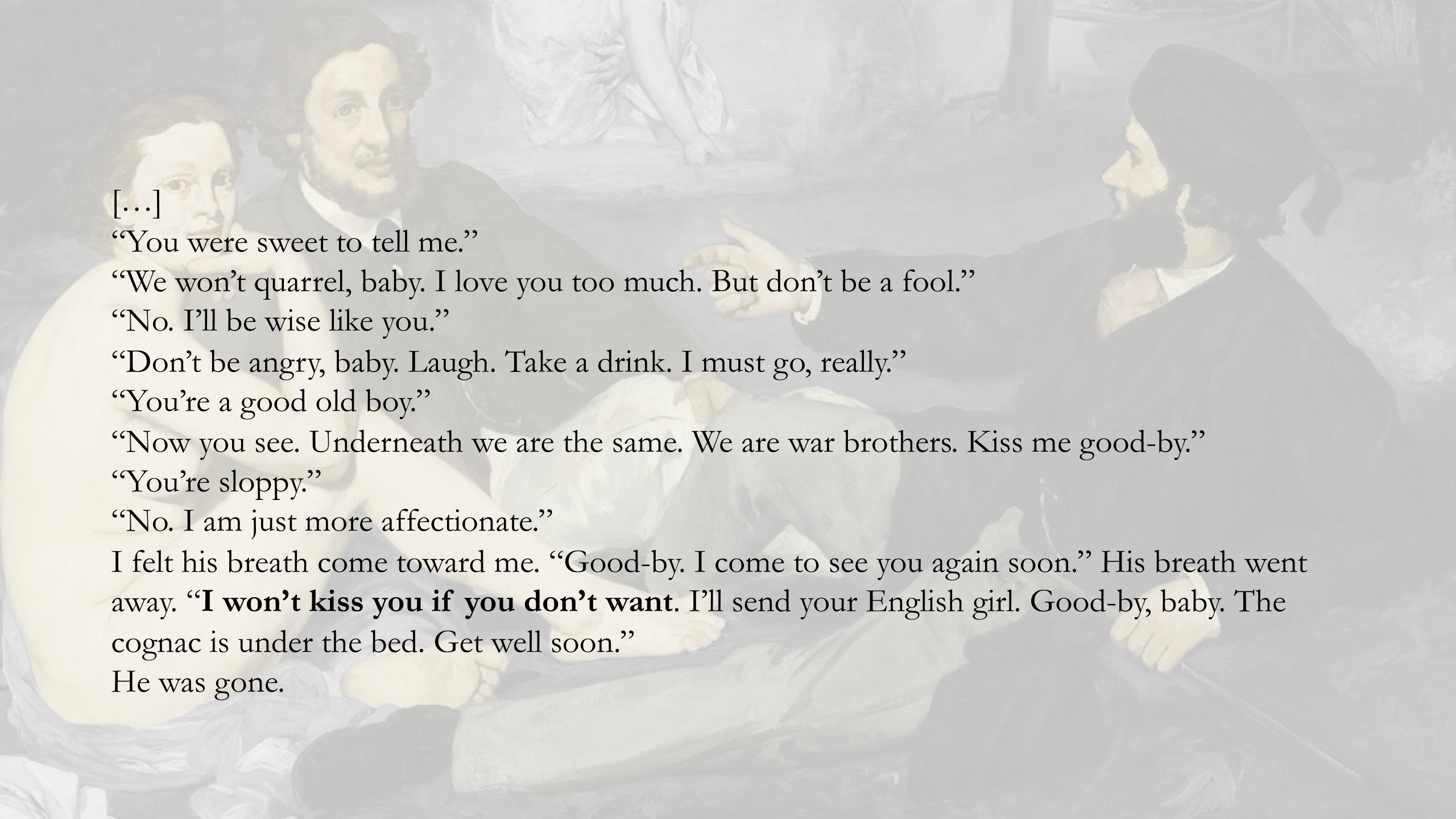
“You are an ignorant foul-mouthed **dago.**”

“A what?”

“An ignorant wop.”

“Wop. You are a frozen-faced . . . **wop.**”

“You are ignorant. Stupid.” I saw that word pricked him and kept on. “Uninformed. Inexperienced, stupid from inexperience.”



[...]

“You were sweet to tell me.”

“We won’t quarrel, baby. I love you too much. But don’t be a fool.”

“No. I’ll be wise like you.”

“Don’t be angry, baby. Laugh. Take a drink. I must go, really.”

“You’re a good old boy.”

“Now you see. Underneath we are the same. We are war brothers. Kiss me good-by.”

“You’re sloppy.”

“No. I am just more affectionate.”

I felt his breath come toward me. “Good-by. I come to see you again soon.” His breath went away. “**I won’t kiss you if you don’t want.** I’ll send your English girl. Good-by, baby. The cognac is under the bed. Get well soon.”

He was gone.



# homosociality

**Ch. 11.** “If it is possible I will return to the Abruzzi.” His brown face was suddenly very happy.”

“You love the Abruzzi

“Yes, I love it very much.”

“You ought to go there then.”

“I would be too happy. If I could live there and love God and serve Him.”

“And be respected,” I said.

“Yes and be respected. Why not?”

“No reason not. You should be respected.”

“It does not matter. But there in my country it is understood that a man may love God. It is not a dirty joke.”



“I understand.”

He looked at me and smiled.

“You understand but you do not love God.”

“No.” “You do not love Him at all?” he asked.

“I am afraid of him in the night sometimes.”

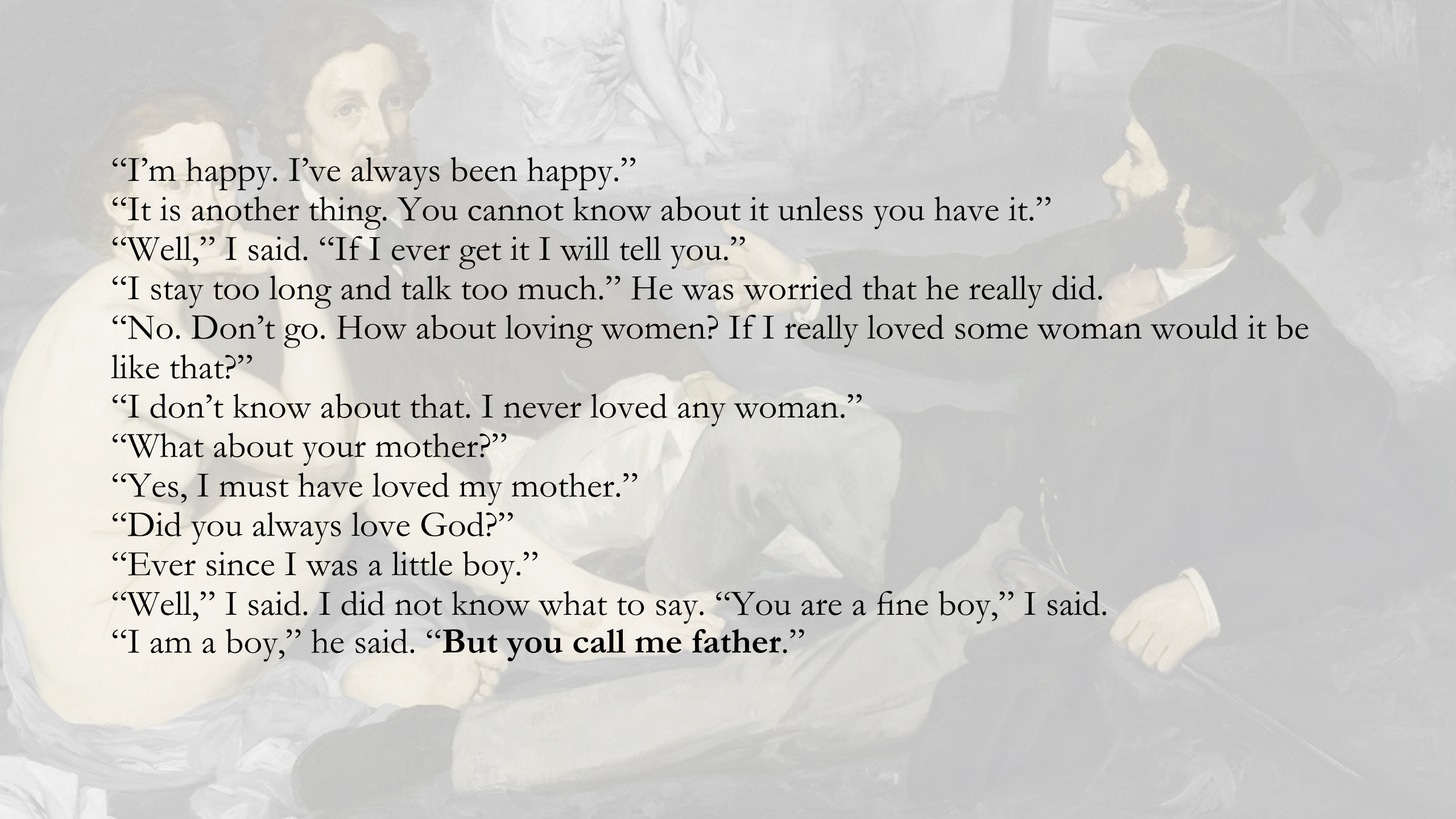
“You should love Him.”

“**I don't love much.**”

“Yes,” he said. “You do. What you tell me about in the nights. That is not love. That is only passion and lust. When you love you wish to do things for. **You wish to sacrifice for. You wish to serve.**”

“I don't love.”

“You will. I know you will. Then you will be happy.”



“I’m happy. I’ve always been happy.”

“It is another thing. You cannot know about it unless you have it.”

“Well,” I said. “If I ever get it I will tell you.”

“I stay too long and talk too much.” He was worried that he really did.

“No. Don’t go. How about loving women? If I really loved some woman would it be like that?”

“I don’t know about that. I never loved any woman.”

“What about your mother?”

“Yes, I must have loved my mother.”

“Did you always love God?”

“Ever since I was a little boy.”

“Well,” I said. I did not know what to say. “You are a fine boy,” I said.

“I am a boy,” he said. “**But you call me father.**”



**love**

**Ch.14. God** knows I had not wanted to fall in love with her. I had not wanted to fall in love with any one. But **God** knows I had.

**Ch.16.** “There, darling. Now you’re all clean inside and out. Tell me. How many people have you ever loved?”  
“Nobody.”

**Ch.18.** “**You’re my religion.** You’re all I’ve got.”

# biologically trapped

Ch. 21. “I’m going to have a baby, darling. It’s almost three months along. You’re not worried, are you? Please please don’t. You mustn’t worry.” [...]

“You aren’t angry are you, darling?”

“No.”

“And you don’t feel trapped?”

“Maybe a little. But not by you.”

“I didn’t mean by me. You mustn’t be stupid. I meant trapped at all.”

**“You always feel trapped biologically.”**

She went away a long way without stirring or removing her hand.

“‘Always’ isn’t a pretty word.”

“I’m sorry.”

“It’s all right. But you see I’ve never had a baby and I’ve never even loved any one. And I’ve tried to be the way you wanted and then you talk about ‘always’.”

“I could cut off my tongue,” I offered.

# I had seen nothing sacred

Ch. 27. "I am a patriot," Gino said. "But I cannot love Brindisi or Taranto."

"Do you love the Bainsizza?" I asked.

"**The soil is sacred,**" he said. "**But I wish it grew more potatoes.** You know when we came here we found fields of potatoes the Austrians had planted."

[...]

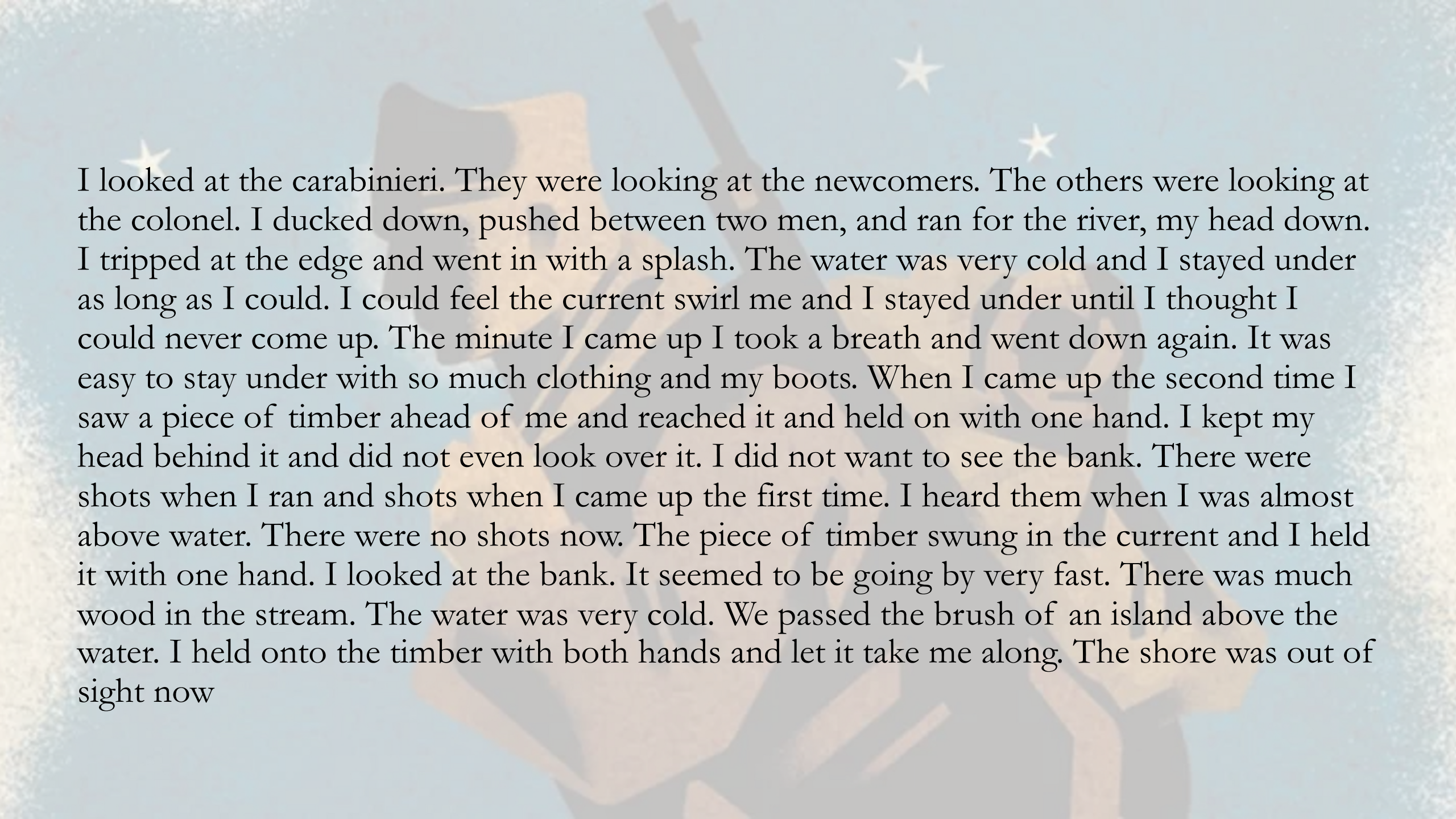
"Yes," I said. "It can't win a war but it can lose one."

"We won't talk about losing. There is enough talk about losing. What has been done this summer cannot have been done in vain." I did not say anything. I was always embarrassed by the words sacred, glorious, and sacrifice and the expression in vain. We had heard them, sometimes standing in the rain almost out of earshot, so that only the shouted words came through, and had read them, on proclamations that were slapped up by billposters over other proclamations, now for a long time, and **I had seen nothing sacred, and the things that were glorious had no glory** and the sacrifices were like the stockyards at Chicago if nothing was done with the meat except to bury it. There were many words that you could not stand to hear and finally **only the names of places had dignity**. Certain numbers were the same way and certain dates and these with the names of the places were all you could say and have them mean anything. **Abstract words such as glory, honor, courage, or hallow were obscene beside the concrete names of villages, the numbers of roads, the names of rivers, the numbers of regiments and the dates.** Gino was a patriot, so he said things that separated us sometimes, but he was also a fine boy and I understood his being a patriot. He was born one. He left with Peduzzi in the car to go back to Gorizia.

## a separate peace

**Ch. 30.** Two carabinieri took the lieutenant-colonel to the river bank. He walked in the rain, an old man with his hat off, a carabinieri on either side. **I did not watch them shoot him but I heard the shots.** They were questioning some one else. This officer too was separated from his troops. He was not allowed to make an explanation. **He cried** when they read the sentence from the pad of paper, and they were questioning another when they shot him. They made a point of being intent on questioning the next man while the man who had been questioned before was being shot. In this way there was obviously nothing they could do about it. [...] They were all young men and they were saving their country. [...] The questioners had that beautiful detachment and devotion to stern justice of men dealing in death without being in any danger of it. They were questioning a full colonel of a line regiment. Three more officers had just been put in with us.

“Where was his regiment?”



I looked at the carabinieri. They were looking at the newcomers. The others were looking at the colonel. I ducked down, pushed between two men, and ran for the river, my head down. I tripped at the edge and went in with a splash. The water was very cold and I stayed under as long as I could. I could feel the current swirl me and I stayed under until I thought I could never come up. The minute I came up I took a breath and went down again. It was easy to stay under with so much clothing and my boots. When I came up the second time I saw a piece of timber ahead of me and reached it and held on with one hand. I kept my head behind it and did not even look over it. I did not want to see the bank. There were shots when I ran and shots when I came up the first time. I heard them when I was almost above water. There were no shots now. The piece of timber swung in the current and I held it with one hand. I looked at the bank. It seemed to be going by very fast. There was much wood in the stream. The water was very cold. We passed the brush of an island above the water. I held onto the timber with both hands and let it take me along. The shore was out of sight now



## a separate peace

**Ch. 32.** Anger was washed away in the river along with any obligation. Although that ceased when the carabinieri put his hands on my collar. I would like to have had the uniform off although I did not care much about the outward forms. **I had taken off the stars, but that was for convenience. It was no point of honor. I was not against them. I was through.** I wished them all the luck. There were the good ones, and the brave ones, and the calm ones and the sensible ones, and they deserved it. But **it was not my show** any more and I wished this bloody train would get to Mestre and I would eat and stop thinking. I would have to stop.

# a separate peace

**Ch. 34.** In civilian clothes **I felt a masquerader.** I had been in uniform a long time and I missed the feeling of being held by your clothes. The trousers felt very floppy. I had bought a ticket at Milan for Stresa. I had also bought a new hat. I could not wear Sim's hat but his clothes were fine. They smelled of tobacco and as I sat in the compartment and looked out the window the new hat felt very new and the clothes very old. I myself felt as sad as the wet Lombard country that was outside through the window. There were some aviators in the compartment who did not think much of me. They avoided looking at me and were very scornful of a civilian my age. I did not feel insulted. In the old days I would have insulted them and picked a fight. They got off at Gallarate and I was glad to be alone. I had the paper but I did not read it because I did not want to read about the war. **I was going to forget the war. I had made a separate peace.** I felt damned lonely and was glad when the train got to Stresa.  
[...]

“Don't talk about the war,” I said. The war was a long way away. Maybe there wasn't any war. There was no war here. Then I realized it was over for me. But I did not have the feeling that it was really over. I had **the feeling of a boy** who thinks of what is happening at a certain hour at the schoolhouse from which he has played truant.



## a separate peace

[...]

A little while later Catherine said, “You don’t feel like a criminal do you?”

“No,” I said. “Not when I’m with you.”

“You’re such a **silly boy**,” she said. “But I’ll look after you. Isn’t it splendid, darling, that I don’t have any morning-sickness?”

“It’s grand.”

“You don’t appreciate what a fine wife you have. But I don’t care. I’ll get you some place where they can’t arrest you and then we’ll have a lovely time.”

“Let’s go there right away.”

“We will, darling. I’ll go any place any time you wish.”

“Let’s not think about anything.”

“All right.”

# William Faulkner

(New Albany, Mississippi 1897-1962)

Upper-middle class family, tried to join the US Army and attended the University of Mississippi in 1919, never graduated

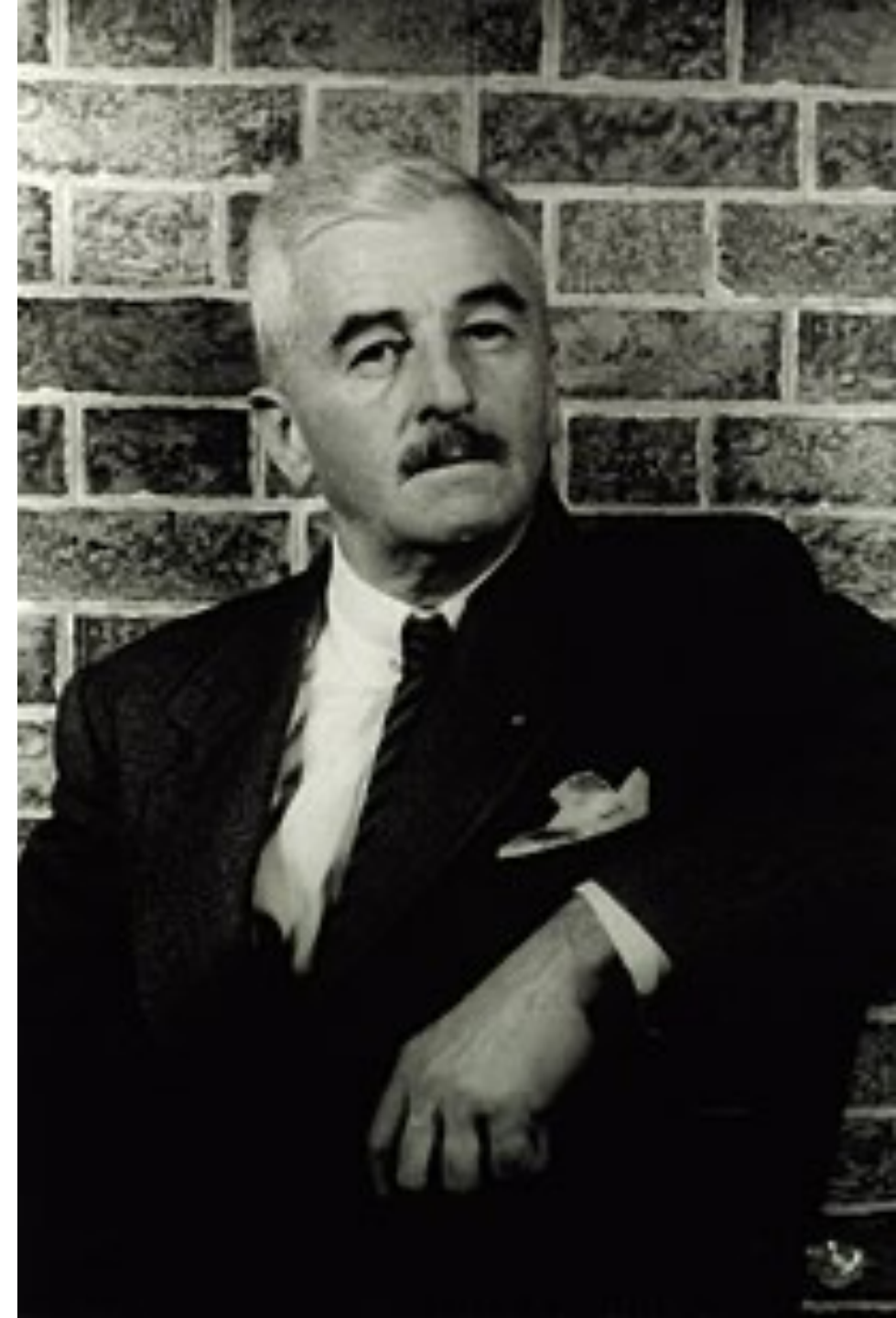
Moved to New Orleans, wrote for periodicals (*Double Dealer* and the *Times-Picayune*)

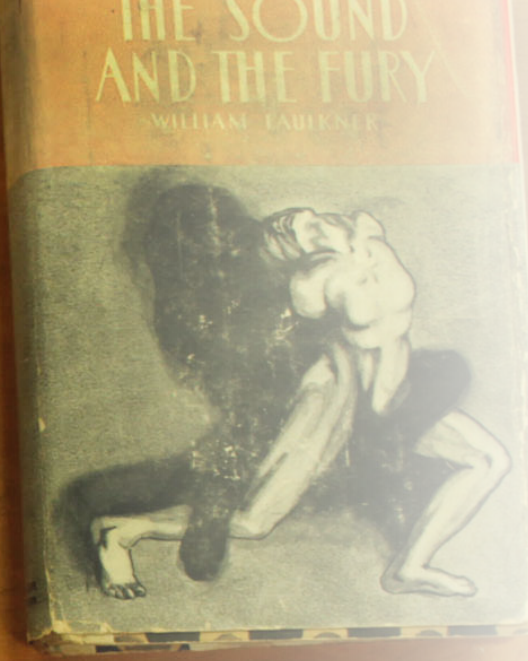
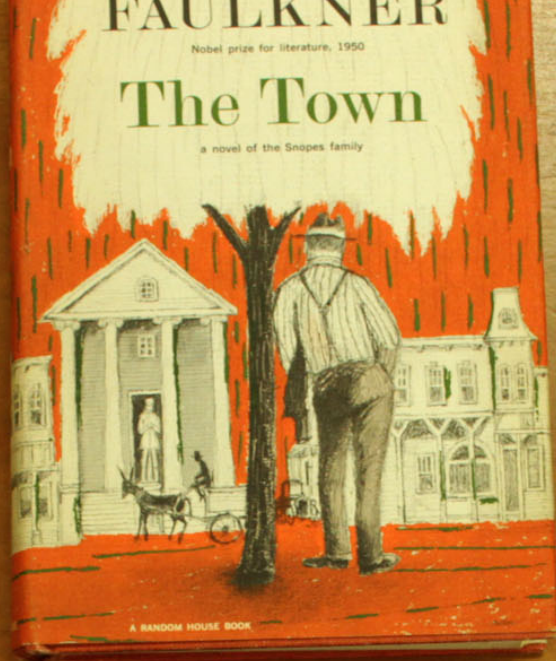
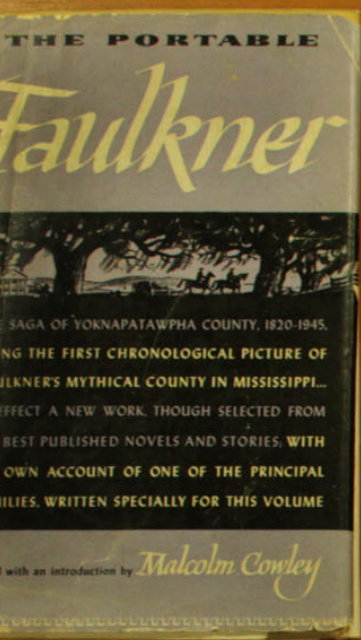
Modernism and the South: stream of consciousness and implicit references to myth and earlier writers

Southern tragic and Southern Gothic

Yoknapatawpha County / Jefferson (Lafayette County, Mississippi / Oxford)

Nobel Prize in Literature, 1949





*Soldiers' Pay* (1926)

*Mosquitoes* (1927)

*The Sound and the Fury* (1929)

*As I Lay Dying* (1930)

*Sanctuary* (1931)

*Light in August* (1932)

*Absalom, Absalom!* (1936)

*The Hamlet* (1940)

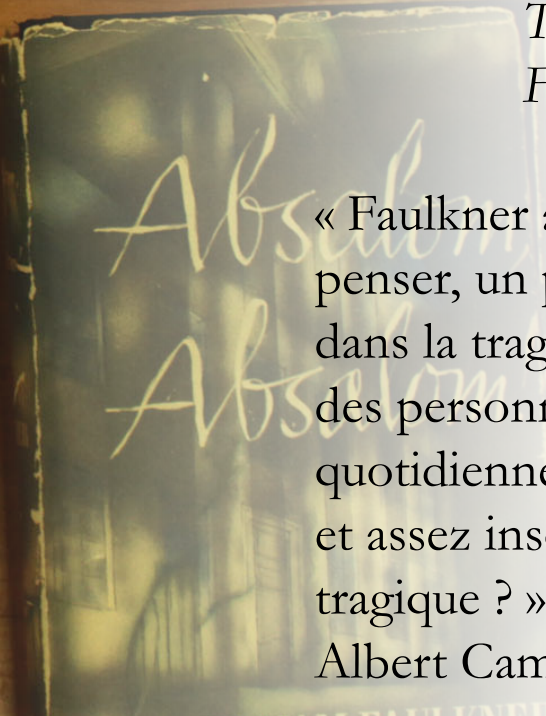
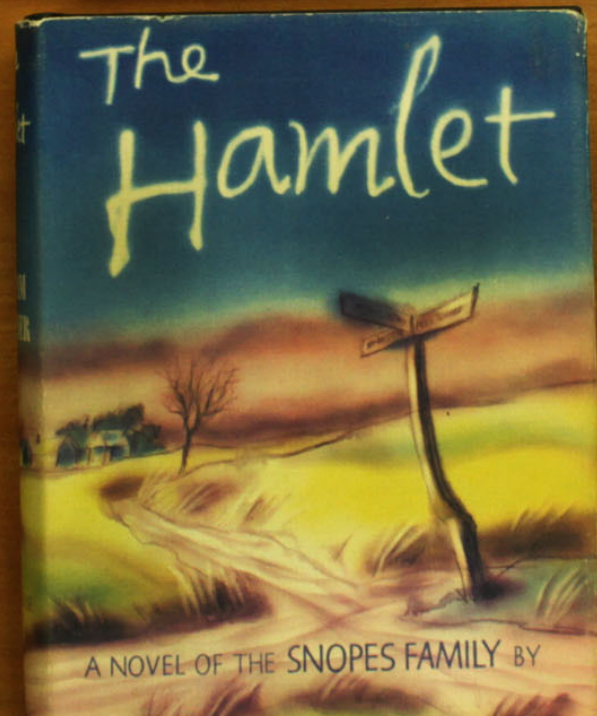
*Go Down, Moses* (1942)

*Intruder in the Dust* (1948)

*Requiem for a Nun* (1951)

*The Town* (1957)

*Flags in the Dust* (1973)



« Faulkner avait résolu à sa manière, et sans même y penser, un problème très difficile : celui du langage dans la tragédie moderne. Comment faire parler à des personnages en veston une langue qui soit assez quotidienne pour être parlée dans nos appartements et assez insolite pour rester à la hauteur d'un destin tragique ? »

Albert Camus

Written in 1925-26

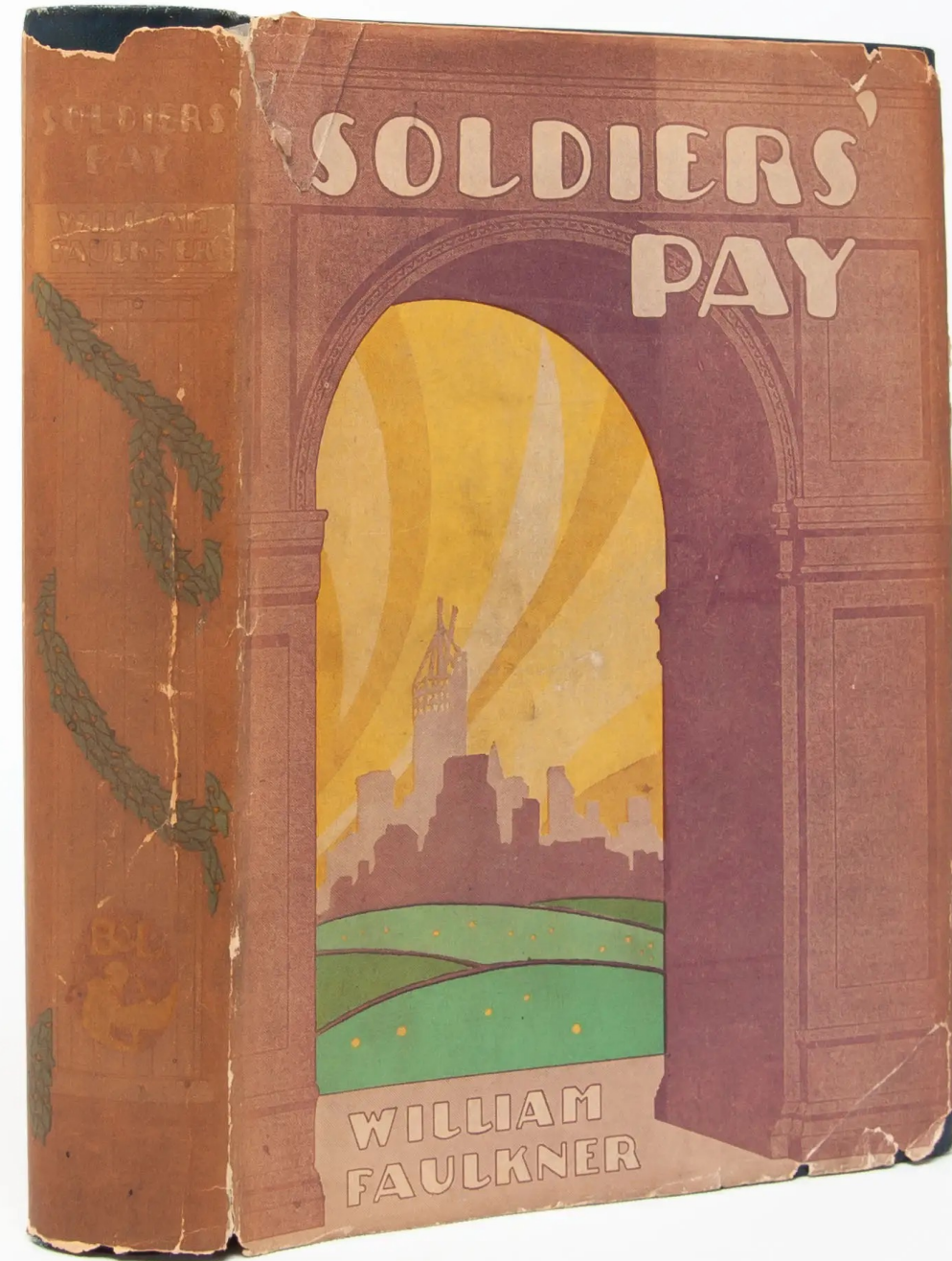
Influence: Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922)

Akin to novels like Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925), Dos Passos's *Three Soldiers* (1921), Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919)

Charlestown, Georgia: the South, its myth and its moral laws:

African Americans / former slaves

Where is heroism?



# **dramatis personae**

**Donald Mahon**, a veteran from the WW1, former aviator

**Margaret Powers**, dark-skinned war nurse, widow, looks after Donald

**Joe Gilligan** discharged soldier, in love with Margaret

**Julian Lowe**, cadet, in love with Margaret

**Cecily Saunders**, Donald's fiancée, in love with George Farr

**Joseph Mahon**, Donald's father, Episcopal minister

**Emmy**, housemaid, lost her virginity to Donald and submits to **Januarius**

**Jones**, the villain of the story



## NOTES.

Coely, with his teeth in demonstrating himself. engaged to an ass's report in dead. ✓  
 Stupidity gets along as well as any other quality with women. Boldness also ✓  
 Story of man who employed boldness, bootlegs told get you'd be surprised. ✓  
 Jon: when a man moves he loses his confidence.  
 " Thank, with my aft hair ✓

Part two — 1. Rector and Jon. 2. Saunders. 3. Rector, Saunders, Power and George. ~~at Mahan al~~  
~~home, in getting blindness.~~  
 Part 3 — 1. Rector for Cadet loan to Power. Mahan at home, in getting blindness. <sup>for Jon & George</sup> wedding.  
 Saunders repairs, Power late place. George & Saunders.  
 Part 4. Death of Mahan. Rector's day. Power and Orligan.

Epicure, Jon says of Saunders.

J. Conrad  
 Jones — There is a hearty balance Napoleon. Balance and John Brown: Napoleon death in  
 actions are important, Conrad death in execution are important, John Brown death in beliefs are important.  
 What is Epicure? not Gallegan. Why you want and not get, Mr Mahan says.

Jon — Bold ✓  
 " Stupidity ✓

Wind walking Fred H. Story. O Jon into the useless world of space, beyond the pain

Saunders  
 5978 JM 92

# **soldiers**

1.1. LOWE, JULIAN, number —, late a Flying Cadet, Umptieth Squadron, Air Service, known as 'One Wing' by the other embryonic aces of his flight, regarded the world with a yellow and disgruntled eye. He suffered the same jaundice that many a more booted one than he did, from Flight Commanders through Generals to the ambrosial single-barred (not to mention that inexplicable beast of the field which the French so beautifully call an aspiring aviator); they had stopped the war on him.

So he sat in a smouldering of disgusted sorrow, not even enjoying his Pullman prerogatives, spinning on his thumb his hat with its accursed white band.

‘Why, sure, General—or should I of said Lootenant? Excuse me, madam. I got gassed doing k.p. and my sight ain’t been the same since. On to Berlin! Yeh, sure, we’re on to Berlin. I’m on to you, Berlin. I got your number. Number no thousand no hundred and naughty naught Private (very private) Joe Gilligan, late for parade, late for fatigue, late for breakfast when breakfast is late. The Statue of Liberty ain’t never seen me, and if she do, she’ll have to ’bout face.’

[...]

‘Why, poor soldier,’ said his friend, tearfully, ‘all alone in no man’s land and no matches. Ain’t war hell? I ask you.’ He tried to push the other over with his leg, then he fell to kicking him, slowly. ‘Move over, you ancient mariner. Move over, you goddam bastard. Alas, poor Jerks or something (I seen that in a play, see? Good line) come on, come on; here’s General Pershing come to have a drink with the poor soldiers.’ He addressed Cadet Lowe. ‘Look at him: ain’t he sodden in depravity?’

His private parts, flooded, washed back to his gulping and a sweet fire ran through him, and the Pullman conductor came and regarded them in helpless disgust.

[...]

Yaphank stared at him quietly. Then he turned to his companions. 'Men,' he said solemnly, 'he don't want us here. And this is the reward we get for giving our flesh and blood to our country's need. Yes, sir, he don't want us here; he begrudges us riding on his train, even. Say, suppose we hadn't sprang to the nation's call, do you know what kind of a train you'd have? A train full of Germans. A train full of folks eating sausage and drinking beer, all going to Milwaukee, that's what you'd have.' 'Couldn't be worse than a train full of you fellows not knowing where you're going,' the conductor replied.

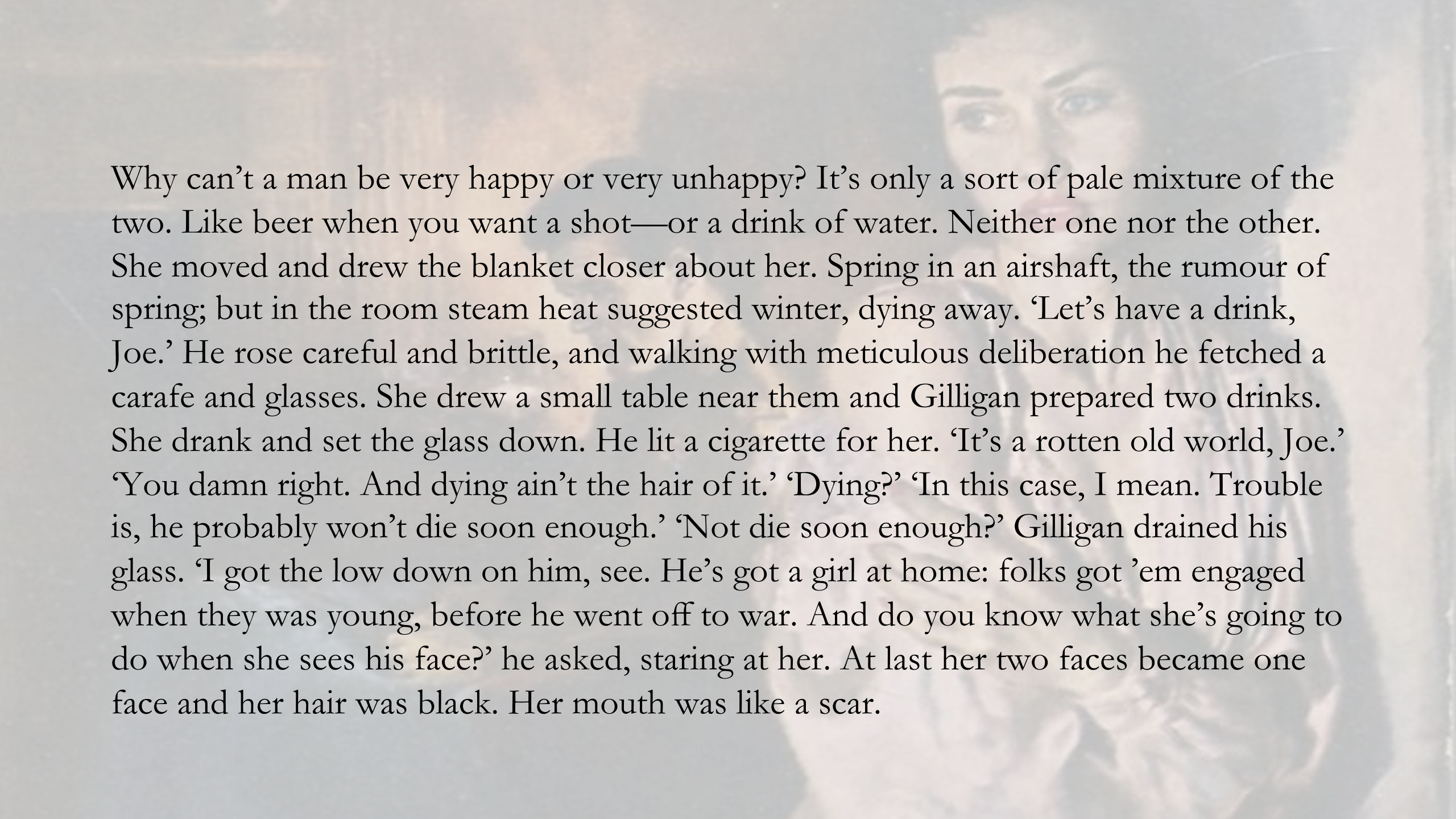
## Donald Mahon

1.2. I might have known he would have gotten another one, thought Cadet Lowe, looking up. He saw a belt and wings, he rose and met a young face with a dreadful scar across his brow. My God he thought, turning sick. He saluted and the other peered at him with strained distraction. Gilligan, holding his arm, helped him into the seat. The man turned his puzzled gaze to Gilligan and murmured, 'Thanks.' 'Lootenant,' said Gilligan, 'you see here the pride of the nation. General, ring the bell for ice water. The lootenant here is sick.'

The man looked at Lowe kindly, not replying, and Gilligan said: 'Hush. Let him alone. Don't you see he don't remember himself? Do you reckon you would, with that scar? Let the war be. Hey, Lootenant?' 'I don't know. Another drink is better.' 'Sure it is. Buck up, General. He don't mean no harm. He's just got to let her ride as she lays for a while. We all got horrible memories of the war. I lose eighty-nine dollars in a crap game once, besides losing, as that wop writer says, that an' which thou knowest at Chatter Teary. So how about a little whisky, men?' 'Cheer-O,' said the officer again. 'What do you mean, Chateau Thierry?' said Lowe, boyish in disappointment, feeling that he had been deliberately ignored by one to whom Fate had been kinder than to himself. 'You talking about Chatter Teary?' 'I'm talking about a place you were not at, anyway.' 'I was there in spirit, sweetheart. That's what counts.' 'You couldn't have been there any other way. There ain't any such place.' 'Hell there ain't! Ask the Loot here if I ain't right. How about it, Loot?' But he was asleep. They looked at his face, young, yet old as the world, beneath the dreadful scar. Even Gilligan's levity left him. 'My God, it makes you sick at the stomach, don't it?

# Margaret Powers

1.3. She thought of her husband youngly dead in France in a recurrence of fretful exasperation with having been tricked by a wanton Fate: a joke amusing to no one. Just when she had calmly decided that they had taken advantage of a universal hysteria for the purpose of getting of each other a brief ecstasy, just when she had decided calmly that they were better quit of each other with nothing to mar the memory of their three days together and had written him so, wishing him luck, she must be notified casually and impersonally that he had been killed in action. So casually, so impersonally; as if Richard Powers, with whom she had spent three days, were one man and Richard Powers commanding a platoon in the —— Division were another.

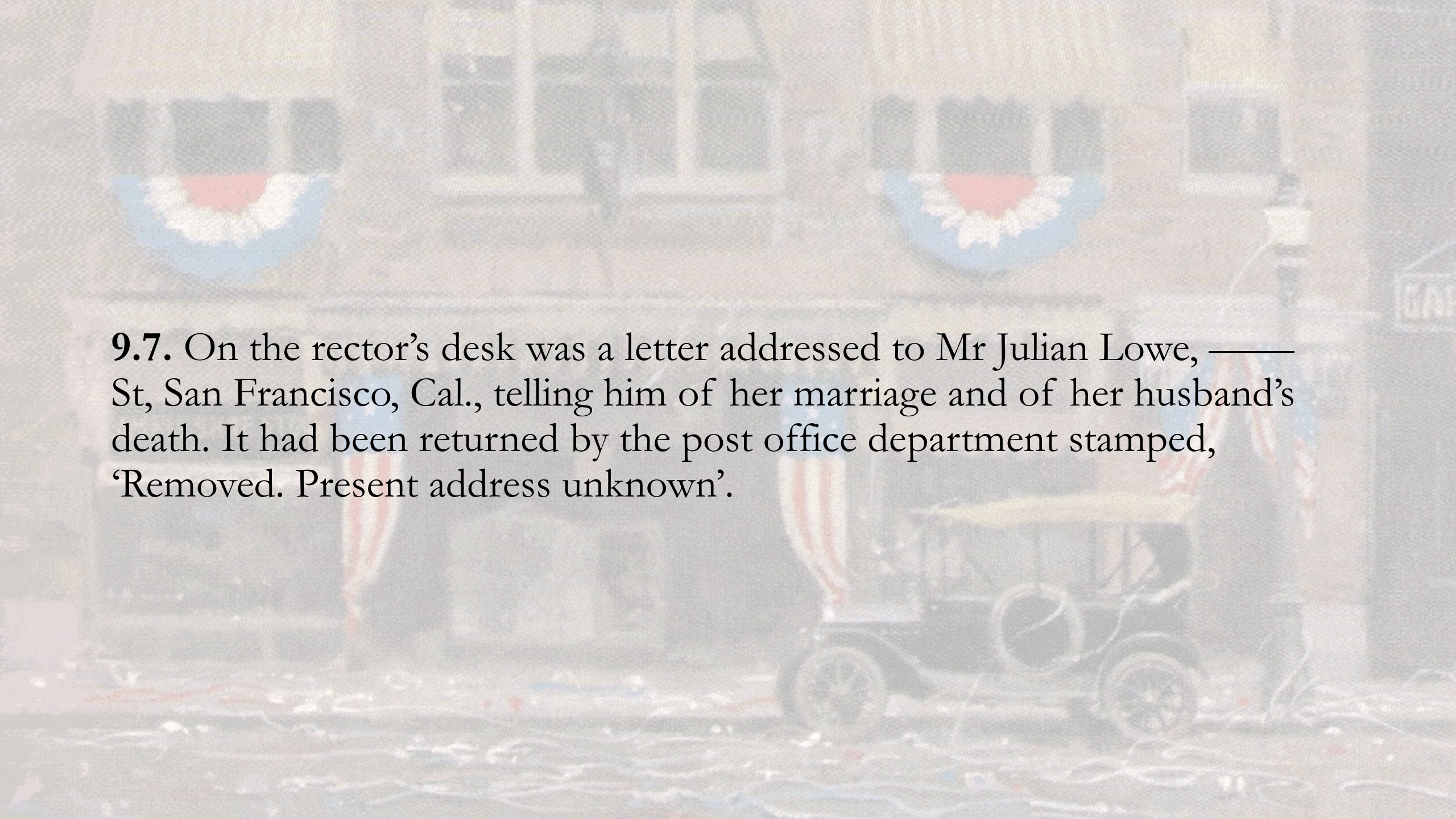


Why can't a man be very happy or very unhappy? It's only a sort of pale mixture of the two. Like beer when you want a shot—or a drink of water. Neither one nor the other. She moved and drew the blanket closer about her. Spring in an airshaft, the rumour of spring; but in the room steam heat suggested winter, dying away. 'Let's have a drink, Joe.' He rose careful and brittle, and walking with meticulous deliberation he fetched a carafe and glasses. She drew a small table near them and Gilligan prepared two drinks. She drank and set the glass down. He lit a cigarette for her. 'It's a rotten old world, Joe.' 'You damn right. And dying ain't the hair of it.' 'Dying?' 'In this case, I mean. Trouble is, he probably won't die soon enough.' 'Not die soon enough?' Gilligan drained his glass. 'I got the low down on him, see. He's got a girl at home: folks got 'em engaged when they was young, before he went off to war. And do you know what she's going to do when she sees his face?' he asked, staring at her. At last her two faces became one face and her hair was black. Her mouth was like a scar.

# Julian Lowe

1.4. After a time, he recalled his body, remembering where he was, and by an effort he turned his head. In the other bed the man slept beneath his terrible face. (I am Julian Lowe, **I eat, I digest, evacuate**: I have flown. This man . . . this man here, sleeping beneath his scar. . . . Where do we touch? Oh, God, oh, God: knowing his own body, his stomach.) [...]

He tasted his sour mouth, knowing his troubled stomach. To have been him! he moaned. Just to be him. Let him take this sound body of mine! Let him take it. **To have got wings on my breast, to have wings; and to have got his scar**, too, I would take death tomorrow. Upon a chair Mahon's tunic evinced above the left breast pocket wings breaking from an initialled circle beneath a crown, tipping downward in an arrested embroidered sweep; a symbolized desire. **To be him, to have gotten wings, but to have got his scar too!** Cadet Lowe turned to the wall with passionate disappointment like a gnawing fox at his vitals.

A faded, historical photograph of a street scene. In the foreground, a vintage car with a yellow top is parked. The background shows a building with windows and patriotic decorations, including bunting and flags. The overall image has a grainy, aged appearance.

9.7. On the rector's desk was a letter addressed to Mr Julian Lowe, ——  
St, San Francisco, Cal., telling him of her marriage and of her husband's  
death. It had been returned by the post office department stamped,  
'Removed. Present address unknown'.

## Cecily

**3.1.** ‘Now look here, Minnie. If he went to war expecting her to wait for him and come back expecting her to take him, there’s nothing else for them to do. And if she still wants to don’t you go persuading her out of it, you hear?’

[...]

‘Are you going to **force your daughter into marriage?** You just said yourself she is too young.’ ‘Remember, I said if she still wants to. By the way, he ain’t lame or badly hurt, is he?’ he asked quickly.

‘I don’t know. Cecily cried when I tried to find out.’

[...]

I declare, Robert, I don’t understand you sometimes. The idea of you driving your own daughter into marriage with **a man who has nothing and who may be half dead, and who probably won’t work anyway.** You know yourself how these ex-soldiers are.’

‘You are the one wants her to get married. I ain’t. Who do you want her to take, then?’

‘Well, there’s Dr Gary. He likes her, and Harrison Maurier from Atlanta. Cecily likes him, I think.’

Mr Saunders inelegantly snorted. ‘Who? That Maurier feller? I wouldn’t have that damn feller around here at all. Slick hair and cigarettes all over the place. You better pick out another one.’

‘I’m not picking out anybody. I just don’t want you to drive her into marrying that Mahon boy.’



# Emmy

3.7. ‘Sometimes he used to walk home from school with me. He wouldn’t never have a hat or a coat, and his face was like—**it was like he ought to live in the woods. You know: not like he ought to went to school or had to dress up.** And so you never did know when you’d see him. He’d come in school at almost any time and folks would see him way out in the country at night. Sometimes he’d sleep in folks’ houses in the country and sometimes niggers would find him asleep in sand ditches. Everybody knew him. And then one night—’

‘How old were you then?’

‘I was sixteen and he was nineteen. And then one night—’

‘But you are going too fast. Tell me about you and him before that. Did you like him?’

‘I liked him better than anybody. When we was both younger we dammed up a place in a creek and built a swimming hole and we used to go in every day. And then we’d lie in a old blanket we had and sleep until time to get up and go home. And in summer we was together nearly all the time. Then one day he’d just disappear and nobody wouldn’t know where he was. And then he’d be outside our house some morning, calling me. [...]

And then when I was fourteen pappy found out about how I liked Donald, **and so he took me out of school and kept me at home all the time.** So I didn't hardly ever get to see Donald. Pappy made me promise I wouldn't go around with him any more. He had come for me once or twice and I told him I couldn't go, and then one day he came and pappy was at home. [...]

'And afterwards **we laid there and held each other, and I felt so quiet, so good, and some cows came up and looked at us and went away.** And I could feel his hand going right slow from my shoulder along my side so far as he could reach and then back again, slow, slow. We didn't talk at all, just his hand going up and down my side, so smooth and quiet. And after a while I was asleep.

'Then I waked up. It was getting dawn and I was cramped and wet and cold, and he was gone. . . . But I knew he would come back. And so he did, with some blackberries. We ate 'em and watched it getting light in the east.

Then when the blackberries were gone I could feel the cold, wet grass under me again and see the sky all yellow and chilly behind his head. [...]

'And what then, Emmy?' Mrs Powers prompted again.

'Well, when I came to the porch I stopped and he said, "Where have you been?" and I said, "None of your business," and he said, **"You whore, I'll beat you to death,"** and I said, "Touch me." But he didn't. I think I would have killed him if he had. He went into the house and I went in and dressed and bundled up my clothes and left. And I haven't been back since, either.'

'What did you do then?'

'I got a job sewing for a dressmaker named Mrs Miller, and she let me sleep in her shop until I could earn some money.



4.2. Cecily:

And now I'm not a good woman any more. Oh, well, it had to be sometime, I guess.

...

[...]

Margaret Powers:

Can nothing at all move me again? Nothing to desire? Nothing to stir me, to move me, save pity? . . .

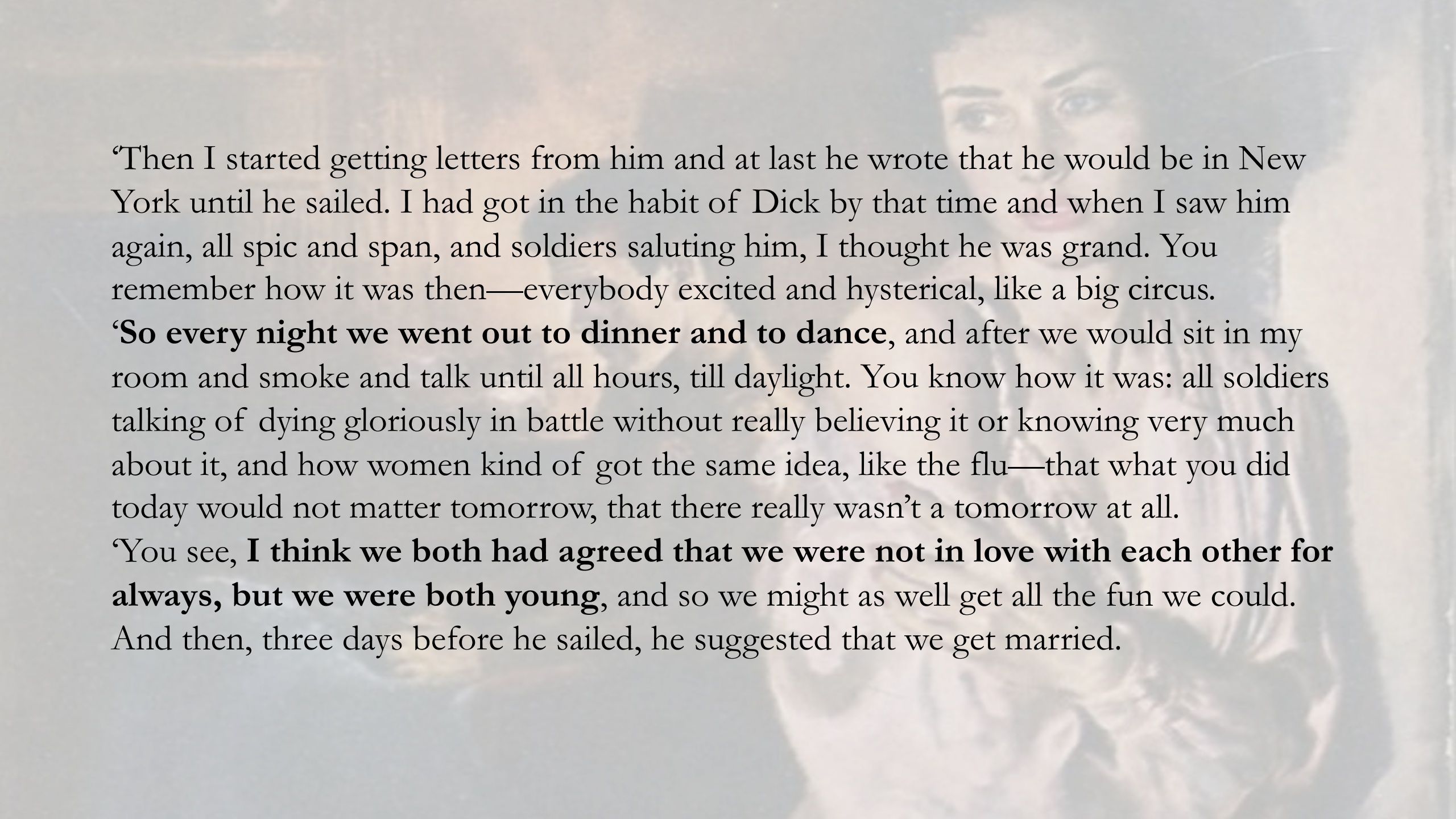
# Margaret

4.4. ‘Margaret,’ said Gilligan at last, ‘were you in love with your husband?’

Her face in the dusk was a smooth pallor, and after a while:

‘I don’t know, Joe, I don’t think I was. You see, I lived in a small town and I had got kind of sick lazing around home all morning and **dressing up just to walk downtown in the afternoon and spending the evenings messing around with men, so after we got in the war I persuaded some friends of my mother’s to get me a position in New York. Then I got into the Red Cross—you know, helping in canteens, dancing with those poor country boys on leave, lost as sheep, trying to have a good time. And nothing in the world is harder to do in New York.**

‘And one night Dick (my husband) came in. I didn’t notice him at first, but after we had danced together and I saw he was—well—impressed, I asked him about himself. He was in an officers’ training camp.



‘Then I started getting letters from him and at last he wrote that he would be in New York until he sailed. I had got in the habit of Dick by that time and when I saw him again, all spic and span, and soldiers saluting him, I thought he was grand. You remember how it was then—everybody excited and hysterical, like a big circus.

‘**So every night we went out to dinner and to dance**, and after we would sit in my room and smoke and talk until all hours, till daylight. You know how it was: all soldiers talking of dying gloriously in battle without really believing it or knowing very much about it, and how women kind of got the same idea, like the flu—that what you did today would not matter tomorrow, that there really wasn’t a tomorrow at all.

‘You see, **I think we both had agreed that we were not in love with each other for always, but we were both young**, and so we might as well get all the fun we could. And then, three days before he sailed, he suggested that we get married.

## the south

3.4. Charlestown, like **numberless other towns** throughout the south, had been built around a circle of tethered horses and mules. In the middle of the square was the courthouse—a simple utilitarian edifice of brick and sixteen beautiful Ionic columns stained with generations of casual tobacco. Elms surrounded the courthouse and beneath these trees, on scarred and carved wood benches and chairs the **city fathers, progenitors of solid laws and solid citizens who believed in Tom Watson and feared only God and drouth**, in black string ties or the faded brushed grey and bronze meaningless medals of the Confederate States of America, no longer having to make any pretence toward labour, slept or whittled away the long drowsy days while their juniors of all ages, **not yet old enough to frankly slumber in public**, played checkers or chewed tobacco and talked. A lawyer, a drug clerk, and two nondescripts tossed iron discs back and forth between two holes in the ground. And above all brooded early April sweetly pregnant with noon. [...]

Mr Saunders walked beside him, returning greetings, preoccupied. Damn these womenfolks, he fretted. They passed beneath a stone shaft bearing a Confederate soldier shading his marble eyes forever in eternal rigid vigilance and the rector repeated his question. [...]

The rector said: ‘We have a beautiful town, Mr Saunders, these streets, these trees. . . . This quiet is just the thing for Donald.’

3.9. The room was depressingly hung with **glum portraits of someone's forebears**, between which the principal strain of kinship appeared to be some sort of stomach trouble. Or perhaps they were portraits of **the Ancient Mariner** at different ages before he wore out his albatross. (Not even a dead fish could make a man look like that, thought Jones, refusing the dyspeptic gambit of their fretful painted eyes. No wonder the parson believes in hell.) A piano had not been opened in years, and opened would probably sound like the faces looked. Jones rose and from a bookcase he got a copy of *Paradise Lost* (cheerful thing to face a sinner with, he thought) and returned to his chair. The chair was hard, but Jones was not. He elevated his feet again.

3.14. They walked beneath awnings. Wagons tethered to slumbering mules and horses were motionless in the square. They were lapped, surrounded, **submerged by the frank odour of unwashed Negroes**, most of whom wore at least one ex-garment of the army O.D.; and their slow, unemphatic voices and careless, ready laughter, which has also somehow beneath it something elemental and sorrowful and unresisting, lay drowsily upon the noon.

4.2. Donald Mahon's homecoming, poor fellow, was hardly a nine days' wonder even. Curious, kindly neighbours came in—men who stood or sat jovially respectable, cheerful: **solid businessmen interested in the war only as a by-product of the rise and fall of Mr Wilson, and interested in that only as a matter of dollars and cents, while their wives chatted about clothes to each other across Mahon's scarred, oblivious brow;** a few of the rector's more casual acquaintances democratically uncravated, hushing their tobacco into a bulged cheek, diffidently but firmly refusing to surrender their hats; girls that he had known, had danced with or courted of summer nights, come now to look once upon his face, and then quickly aside in hushed nausea, not coming any more unless his face happened to be hidden on the first visit (upon which they finally found opportunity to see it); boys come to go away fretted because he wouldn't tell any war stories—all this going on about him while Gilligan, his glum major-domo, handled them all with impartial discouraging efficiency.

[...]

## the black

3.4. Along the street passed slowly the hourly quota of Negro children who, **seeming to have no arbitrary hours, seemingly free of all impulses of time or higher learning**, went to and from school at any hour of a possible lighted eight, carrying lunch pails of ex-molasses and lard tins. Some of them also carried books. The lunch was usually eaten on the way to school, which was conducted by a fattish Negro in a lawn tie and an alpaca coat who could take a given line from any book from the telephone directory down and soon have the entire present personnel chanting it after him, like Vachel Lindsay. Then they were off for the day.

4.2. **Niggers and mules.** Afternoon lay in a coma in the street, like a woman recently loved. Quiet and warm: nothing now that the lover has gone away. Leaves were like a green liquid arrested in mid flow, flattened and spread; leaves were as though cut with scissors from green paper and pasted flat on the afternoon: someone dreamed them and then forgot his dream. **Niggers and mules.**

3.11. 'I've put him out of my mind. He doesn't need me any more.'

'Course he does,' heartily, **'we expect you to be his best medicine.'**

'How can I?'

'How? What do you mean?'

'He brought his own medicine with him.'

Her calmness, her exasperating calmness. He must flog himself into yesterday's rage. That was the only way to do anything with 'em, damn 'em.

'Did it ever occur to you that I, in my limited way, may know more about this than you?'

She withdrew her hand and slid it beneath the covers, making no reply, not even looking at him.

He continued: 'You are acting like a fool, Cecily. What did the man do to you yesterday?'

'He simply insulted me before another woman. But I don't care to discuss it.'

'But listen, Sis. Are you refusing to even see him when seeing him means whether or not he will get well again?'

**'He's got that black woman.** If she can't cure him with all her experience, I certainly can't.'

Her father's face slowly suffused. She glanced at him impersonally then turned her head on the pillow, staring out the window.

'So you refuse to see him any more?'

'What else can I do? He very evidently does not want me to bother him any longer. Do you want me to go where I am not wanted?'

8.6. 'You fool, you idiot, marrying a **blind man, a man with nothing, practically dead.**'

'He is not! He is not!'

'What do you call him then? Aunt Callie Nelson was here the other day saying that the white folks had killed him.'

'**You know nigger talk doesn't mean anything.** They probably wouldn't let her worry him, so she says he—'

'Nonsense. Aunt Callie has raised more children than I can count. If she says he is sick, he is sick.'

'I don't care. I am going to marry him.'

Mrs Saunders sighed creakingly. Cecily stood before her, flushed and obstinate. 'Listen, honey. If you marry him **you are throwing yourself away, all your chances, all your youth and prettiness, all the men that like you: men who are good matches.**'

'I don't care,' she repeated, stubbornly.

'Think. There are so many you can have for the taking, so much you can have: a big wedding in Atlanta with all your friends for bridesmaids, clothes, a wedding trip. . . . And then to throw yourself away. After your father and I have done so much for you.'

‘I don’t care. I am going to marry him.’ ‘But, why? Do you love him?’

‘Yes, yes!’

‘That scar, too?’

[...]

‘Hush, hush. There now, lie here and tell me what it is. You must have some reason.’ She ceased to struggle and became completely lax. ‘I haven’t. I just want to marry him. Let me go. Please, mamma.’

[...]

‘Got to marry him? What do you mean?’ She stared at her daughter, gradually remembering old rumours about Mahon, gossip she had forgot. ‘Got to marry him? **Do you mean that you—that a daughter of mine—with a blind man, a man who has nothing, a pauper—?**’

Cecily stared at her mother and her face flamed. ‘You think—you said that to—Oh, you’re not my mother: you are somebody else.’ Suddenly she cried like a child, wide-mouthed, not even hiding her face. She whirled running. ‘Don’t ever speak to me again,’ she gasped and fled wailing up the stairs. And a door slammed.

Mrs Saunders sat thinking, tapping her teeth monotonously with a finger-nail. After a while she rose, and going to the telephone, she called her husband downtown.

**9.1. Sex and death:** the front door and the back door of the world. How indissolubly are they associated in us! In youth they lift us out of the flesh, in old age they reduce us again to the flesh; one to fatten us, the other to flay us, for the worm. When are sexual compulsions more readily answered than in war or famine or flood or fire?

[...]

(The procession moved slowly across the square. Country people, in town to trade, turned to stare vacuously, merchant and doctor and lawyer came to door and window to look; the city fathers, drowsing in the courthouse yard, having successfully circumvented sex, having reached the point where death would look after them instead of they after death, waked and looked and slept again. Into a street, among and between horses and mules tethered to wagons, it passed, into a street bordered by shabby Negro stores and shops, and here was Loosh standing stiffly at salute as it passed. ‘Who dat, Loosh?’ ‘Mist’ Donald Mahon.’ ‘Well, Jesus! we all gwine dat way, some day. All roads leads to de graveyard.’)

There was no sound in the kitchen save a clock. **Life. Death. Life. Death. Life. Death. Forever and ever.** (If I could only cry!) She could hear the dusty sound of sparrows and she imagined she could see the shadows growing longer across the grass. Soon it will be night, she thought, remembering that night long, long ago, the last time she had seen Donald, her Donald—not that one! and he had said, ‘Come here, Emmy,’ and she had gone to him. Her Donald was dead long, long ago. . . . The clock went Life. Death. Life. Death. There was something frozen in her chest, like a dish-cloth in winter.

(The procession moved beneath arching iron letters. Rest in Peace in cast repetition: Our motto is one for every cemetery, a cemetery for everyone throughout the land. Away, following where fingers of sunlight pointed among cedars, doves were cool, throatily unemphatic among the dead.)

9.6. 'Sweet chariot . . . comin' fer to ca'y me home. . . .'

Three young men passed him, shuffling in the dust, aping their own mute shadows in the dusty road, sharp with the passed sweat of labour: 'You may be fas', but you can't las'; cause yo' mommer go' slow you down.' [...]

' . . sweet chariot, comin' fer to ca'y me home . . . yes, Jesus, comin' fer to ca'y me hoooooome. . . .'

'Yet ah, that Spring should vanish with the Rose! That Youth's sweet-scented Manuscript should close! The Nightingale that in the Branches sang, Ah, whence, and whither flown again, who knows! . . .'

[...]

'Ah, Moon of my Delight, that knows't no wane, The Moon of Heav'n is rising once again: How oft hereafter rising shall she look Through this same Garden after me—in vain!'

[...]'As autumn and the moon of death draw nigh The sad long days of summer herein lie And she too warm in sorrow 'neath the trees Turns to night and weeps, and longs to die.' And in the magic of spring and youth and moonlight Jones raised his clear sentimental tenor.

Spiritual *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot*

Saying from African American tradition

The quatrains (rubā'iyāt ربايعيات) by Omar Khayyam, a Persian mathematician, poet, and philosopher (1048-1131), were translated into English by Edward FitzGerald (*Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, 1859), and became very popular in the Western world. The third one is probably authored by Faulkner himself.

9.8. 'You did. I was trying to beat hell out of that fat one, but I couldn't hold the so—I couldn't hold him. He lit out.'

'Fighting? My dear boy!'

'It wasn't no fight; he was too busy getting away. It takes two folks to fight, padre.'

**'Fighting doesn't settle anything, Joe. I'm sorry you resorted to it. Was anyone hurt?'**

'No, worse luck,' Gilligan replied ruefully, thinking of his soiled clothes and his abortive vengeance.

'I am glad of that. **But boys will fight, eh, Joe? Donald fought in his day.'**

**'You damn right he did, reverend. I bet he was a son-of-a-gun in his day.'**

The rector's heavy lined face took a flared match, between his cupped hands he sucked at his pipe. He walked slowly in the moonlight across the lawn, towards the gate.

Gilligan followed. 'I feel restless tonight,' he explained. 'Shall we walk a while?'

They paced slowly beneath arched and moon-bitten trees, scuffing their feet in shadows of leaves. Under the moon lights in houses were yellow futilities.

‘Well, Joe, things are back to normal again. People come and go, but **Emmy and I seem to be like the biblical rocks.** What are your plans?’

Gilligan lit a cigarette with ostentatiousness, hiding his embarrassment. ‘Well, padre, to tell the truth, I ain’t got any. If it’s all the same to you I think I’ll stay on with you a while longer.’

‘And welcome, dear boy,’ the rector answered heartily.

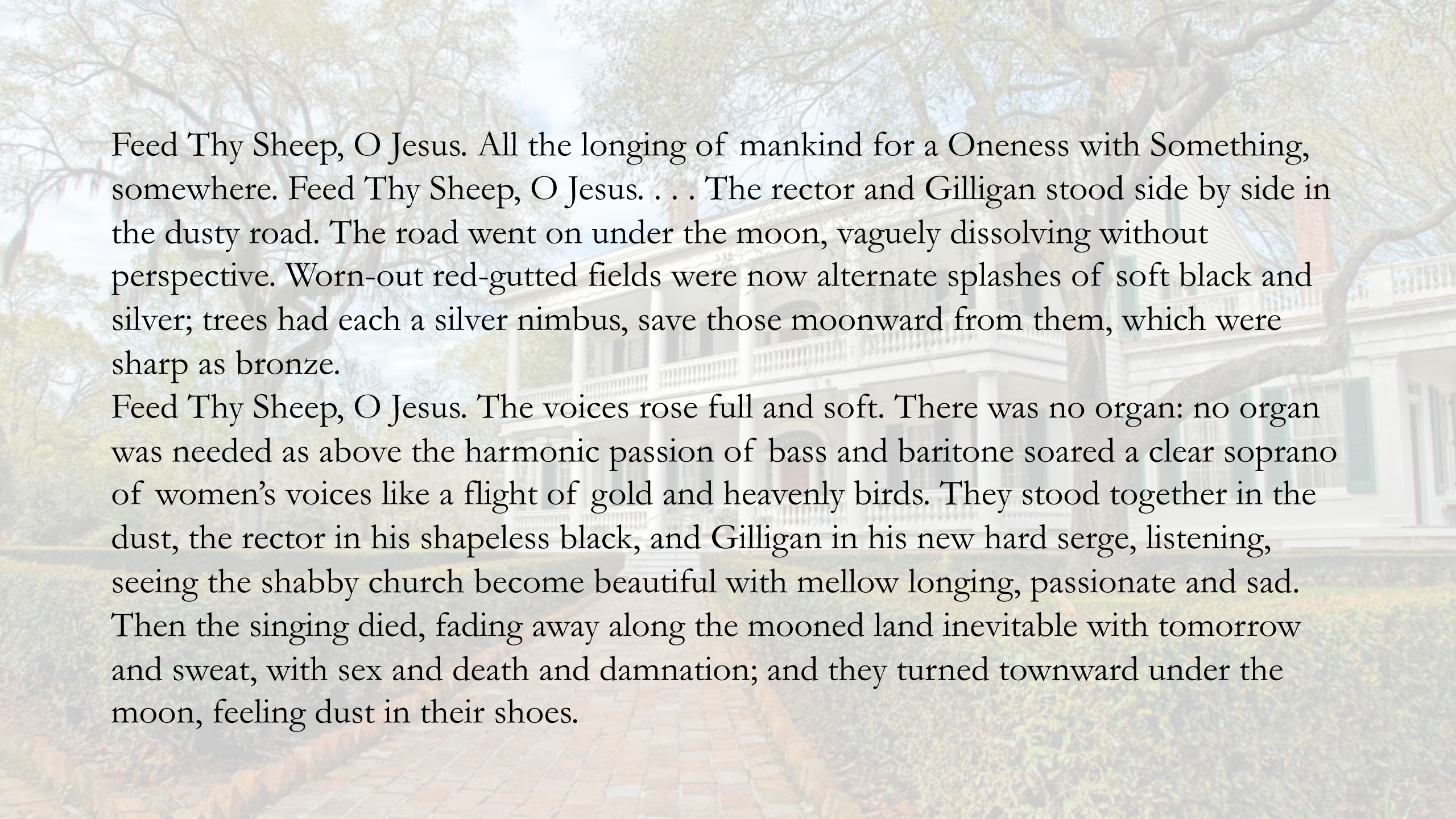
[...]

The rector’s bald forehead and his blobby nose were intersecting planes in the moonlight. His eyes were cavernous. Gilligan knew suddenly all the old sorrows of the race, black or yellow or white, and he found himself telling the rector all about her.

‘Tut, tut,’ the divine said, ‘this is bad, Joe.’ He lowered himself hugely to the edge of the sidewalk and Gilligan sat beside him. ‘**Circumstance** moves in marvellous ways, Joe.’

‘**I thought you’d a said God,** reverend.’

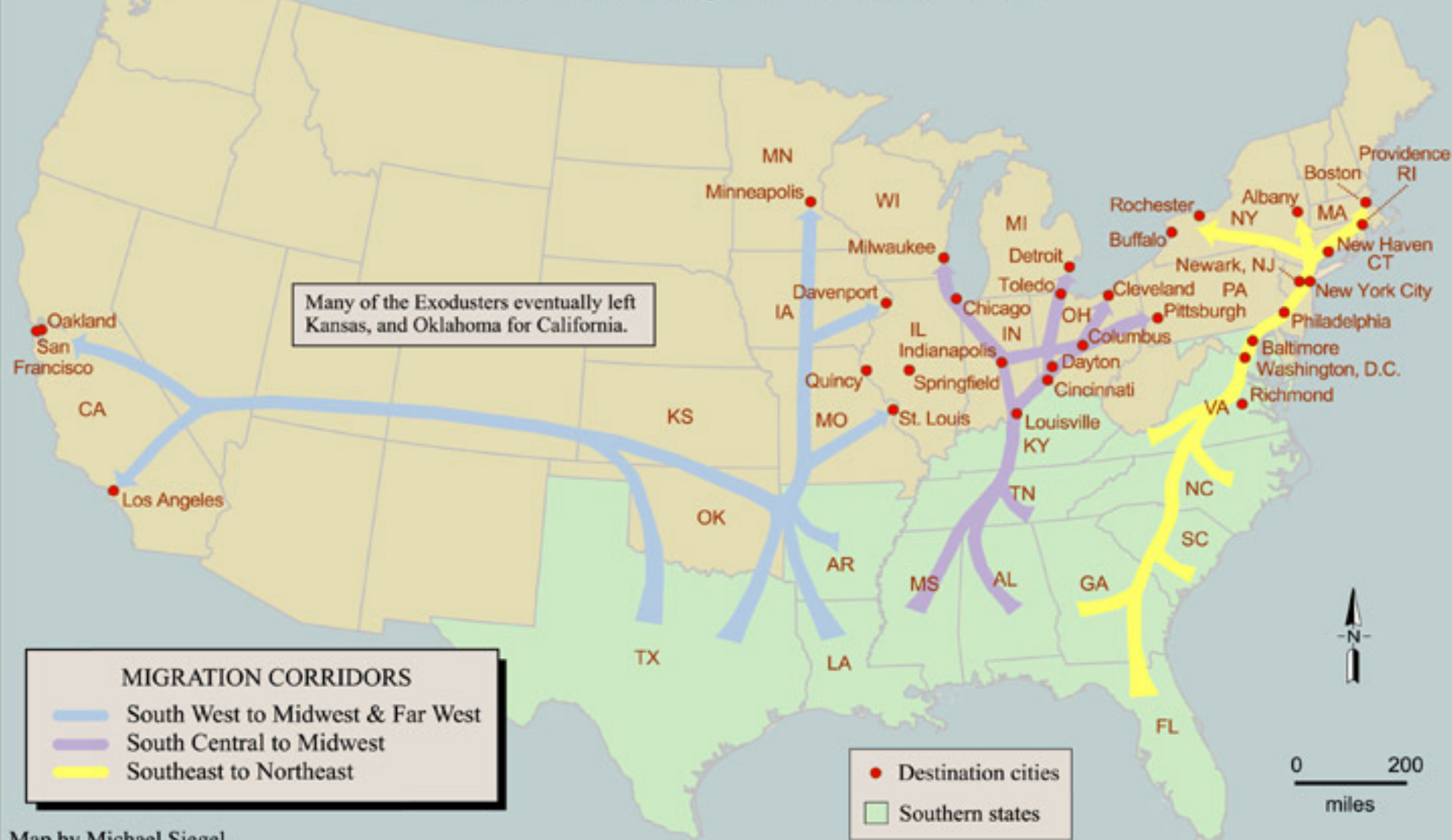
‘God is circumstance, Joe. God is in this life. We know nothing about the next. That will take care of itself in good time. “The Kingdom of God is in man’s own heart,” the Book says.’



Feed Thy Sheep, O Jesus. All the longing of mankind for a Oneness with Something, somewhere. Feed Thy Sheep, O Jesus. . . . The rector and Gilligan stood side by side in the dusty road. The road went on under the moon, vaguely dissolving without perspective. Worn-out red-gutted fields were now alternate splashes of soft black and silver; trees had each a silver nimbus, save those moonward from them, which were sharp as bronze.

Feed Thy Sheep, O Jesus. The voices rose full and soft. There was no organ: no organ was needed as above the harmonic passion of bass and baritone soared a clear soprano of women's voices like a flight of gold and heavenly birds. They stood together in the dust, the rector in his shapeless black, and Gilligan in his new hard serge, listening, seeing the shabby church become beautiful with mellow longing, passionate and sad. Then the singing died, fading away along the mooned land inevitable with tomorrow and sweat, with sex and death and damnation; and they turned townward under the moon, feeling dust in their shoes.

## The Great Migration, 1916–1930



Map by Michael Siegel  
Rutgers Cartography 2005

Source: "The Atlas of African-American History and Politics"

## 1910s - 1930s

20% rise in the African American population in the North (Chicago, Detroit, New York); Black people were employed after the shortage of workers due to the **Immigration Act (1924)**, which stopped European migrants

### UNEMPLOYMENT, 1918–1930

Year	Percent of Civilian Labor Force
1918	1.4
1919	1.4
1920	5.2
1921	11.7
1922	6.7
1923	2.4
1924	5.0
1925	3.2
1926	1.8
1927	3.3
1928	4.2
1929	3.2
1930	8.7

*Note:* Data presented are in thousands of persons 14 years and over.  
*Source:* Kurian, *Datapedia of the United States, 1790–2000*, p. 75.

### PEOPLE LYNCHED IN THE UNITED STATES, 1918–1930

Year	Total	White	African American
1918	64	4	60
1919	83	7	76
1920	61	8	53
1921	64	5	59
1922	57	6	51
1923	33	4	29
1924	16	...	16
1925	17	...	17
1926	30	7	23
1927	16	...	16
1928	11	1	10
1929	10	3	7
1930	21	1	20

*Source:* U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States*, Washington, D.C.: Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1960, p. 422.



# Claude McKay (1889-1948)

Born on a small farm in Clarendon Parish, Jamaica, the youngest of eleven children in a rural Jamaican family

1912 *Songs of Jamaica* and *Constab Ballads* (Jamaican dialect)

1912 moved to the USA, enrolled at Tuskegee Institute, then at Kansas State College, to study agronomy

Worked as bar boy, longshoreman, fireman, porter, waiter on the Pennsylvania Railroad

1918 wrote for *The Liberator* (communist magazine); 1919 “**If We Must Die**”

1922 traveled to Moscow (4th Congress of the 3rd International)

1931 France (didn't meet Hemingway or Fitzgerald) and Morocco

In Europe and North Africa, published all his major fiction

1928 *Home to Harlem*, 1929 *Banjo: A Story Without a Plot*, 1933 *Banana Bottom*

1934 returned to New York

Ellen Terry, a Catholic writer, rescued him from a Harlem rooming house, joined the Chicago's Catholic Youth Organization

## If We Must Die

If we must die, let it be not like hogs  
Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot,  
While round us bark the mad and hungry dogs,  
Making their mock at our accursed lot.

If we must die, O let us nobly die,  
So that our precious blood may not be shed  
In vain; then even the monsters we defy  
Shall be constrained to honor us though dead!

O kinsmen! we must meet the common foe!  
Though far outnumbered let us show us brave  
And for their thousand blows deal one deathblow!  
What though before us lies the open grave?

Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack,  
Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!



FIRST VICTIMS.  
"WE JUST BEGUN" PASSWORD  
Blacks Had Armed Themselves and  
Planned to Kill Every White  
Person in Sight When Plot  
Was Exposed.

## Georgia Whites Burn Five Negro Churches

MACON, Ga., May 30.—Following a minor racial clash at Dennis Station, a small community in Putnam County, Ga., a band of white men set fire to five negro churches, two schools and one lodge building in different sections of the county. The trouble was the refusal of a merchant to sell a negro a bottle of soda water.

At a mass meeting late today \$1,100 was a reward for the arrest of members of the band was raised by leading white people and the state was requested to duplicate the offer.



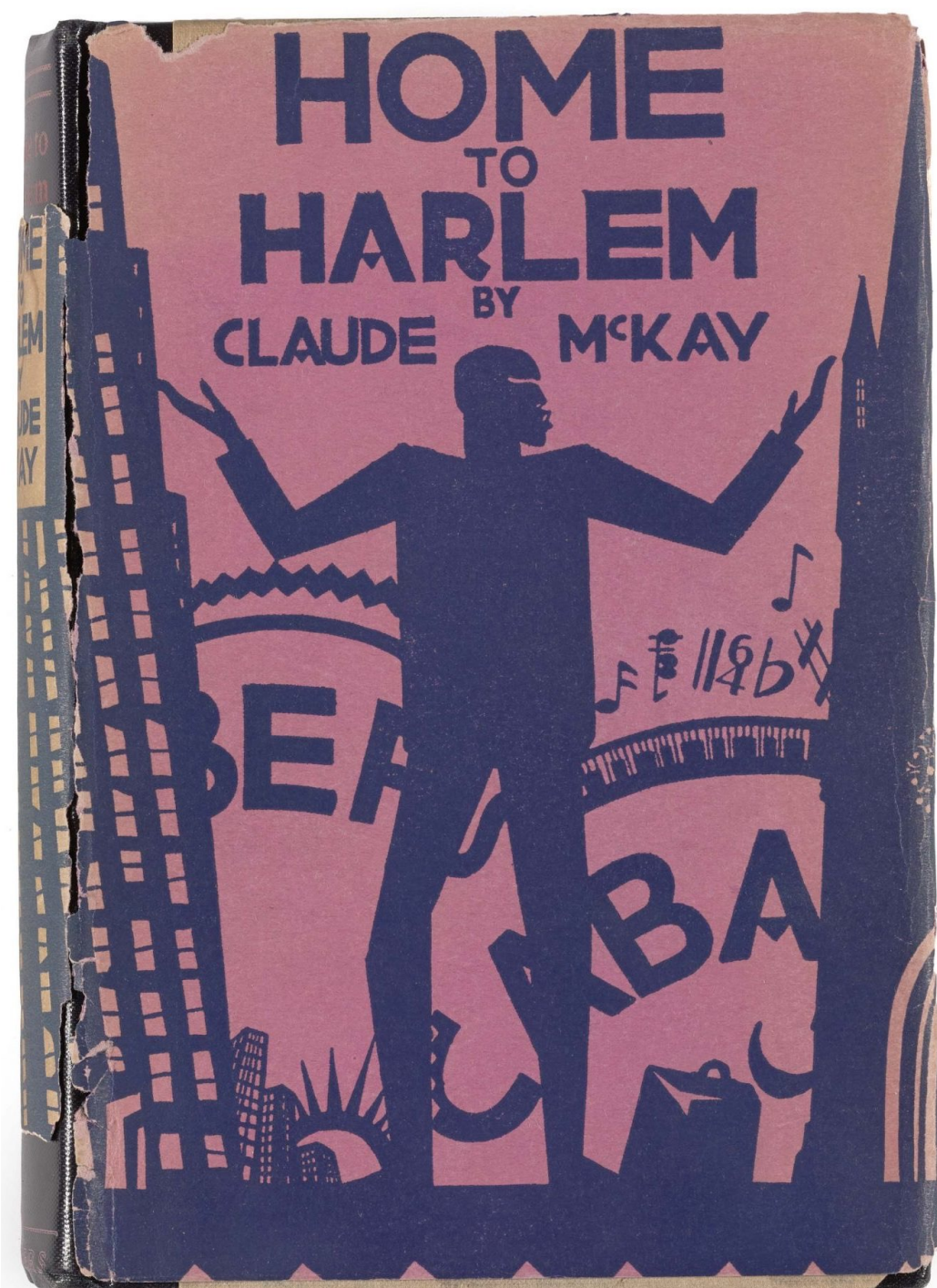
# *Home to Harlem*

**Jake Brown** deserted the United States Army during World War I. After living in London he goes back to Harlem

**Zeddy**, a veteran of World War I, who stays in the military for his entire tour

**Felice**, a sex worker Jake encounters on his first night back in Harlem and falls in love with

**Ray**, a Haitian exile and college dropout who dreams of becoming a writer





## Harlem and the Harlem Renaissance

Harlem as a black utopia

### Music

Every section of the novel includes lyrics from the blues, jazz, and ragtime

### Primitivism

African Americans are people who live comfortably in their own bodies, feel no sense of shame about sex

### The Great Migration

Jake is originally from St. Petersburg, Virginia,

### Black Identity in an International Context

Ray comes from Haiti, forced to live in the US after the invasion of Haiti by US forces in 1914-15. Ray understands black identity in an international context (Pan-Africanism)

**Ch. 1.** Jake thought he would like to have a crack at the Germans. ...And he enlisted.

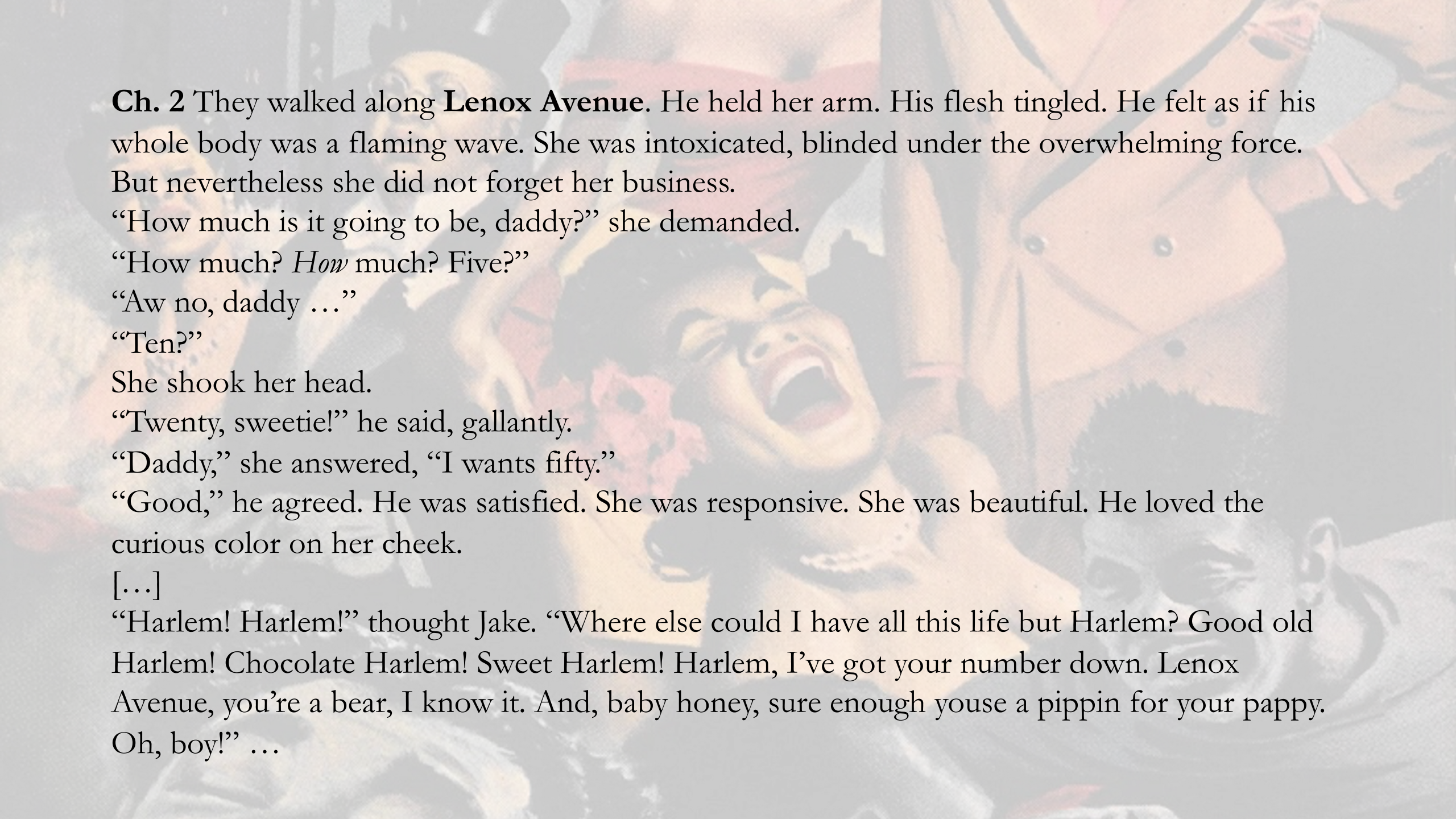
In the winter he sailed for Brest with a happy chocolate company. Jake had his own daydreams of going over the top. But his company was held at Brest. Jake toted lumber—boards, planks, posts, rafters—for the hundreds of huts that were built around the walls of Brest and along the coast between Brest and Saint-Pierre, to house the United States soldiers.

Jake was disappointed. He had enlisted to fight. [...] **Jake obtained leave.**

[...]

One day an English sailor from a Channel sloop made up to Jake. “**Darkey,**” he said, “you ‘Arvin’ a good time ‘round ‘ere.”

Jake thought how strange it was to hear the Englishman say “darky” without being offended. Back home he would have been spoiling for a fight. **There he would rather hear “nigger” than “darky,” for he knew that when a Yankee said “nigger” he meant hatred for Negroes, whereas when he said “darky” he meant friendly contempt. He preferred white folks’ hatred to their friendly contempt.** To feel their hatred made him strong and aggressive, while their friendly contempt made him ridiculously angry, even against his own will.



**Ch. 2** They walked along **Lenox Avenue**. He held her arm. His flesh tingled. He felt as if his whole body was a flaming wave. She was intoxicated, blinded under the overwhelming force. But nevertheless she did not forget her business.

“How much is it going to be, daddy?” she demanded.

“How much? *How* much? Five?”

“Aw no, daddy ...”

“Ten?”

She shook her head.

“Twenty, sweetie!” he said, gallantly.

“Daddy,” she answered, “I wants fifty.”

“Good,” he agreed. He was satisfied. She was responsive. She was beautiful. He loved the curious color on her cheek.

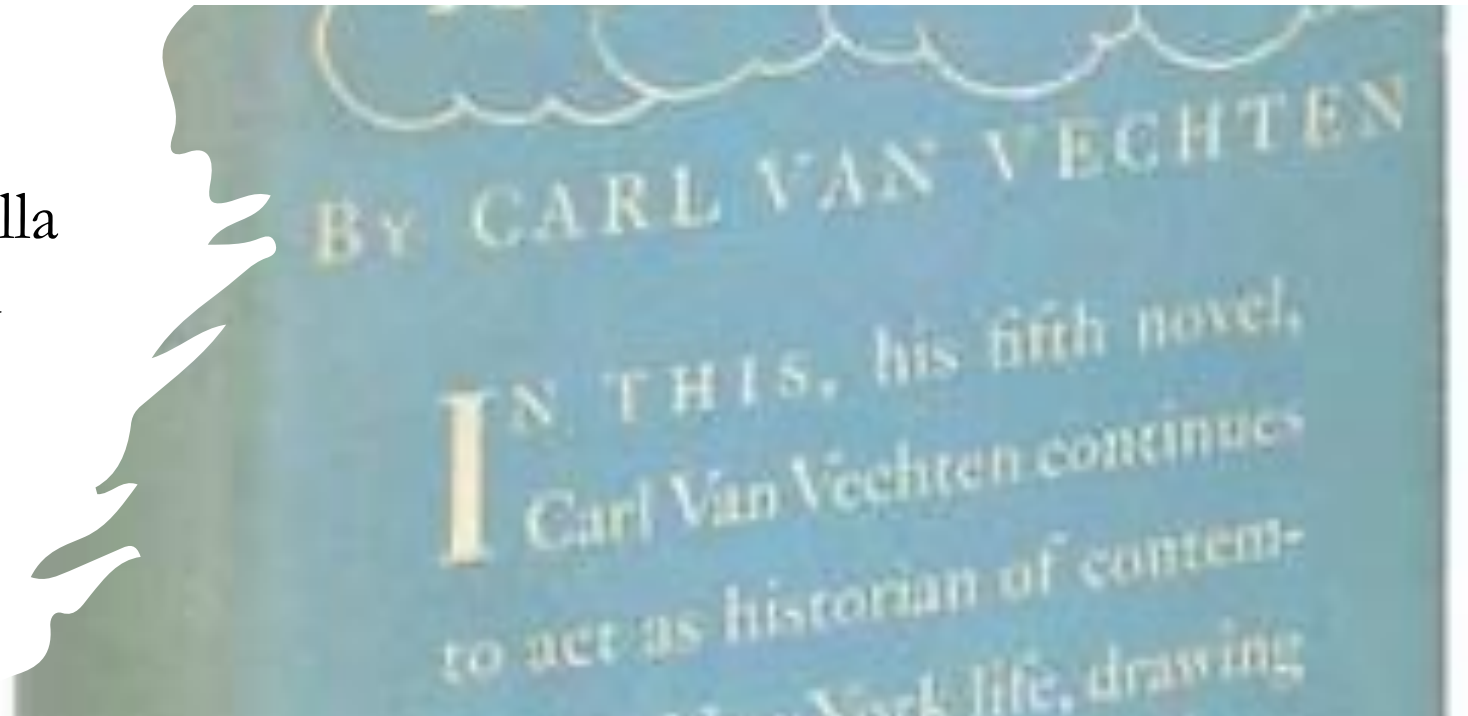
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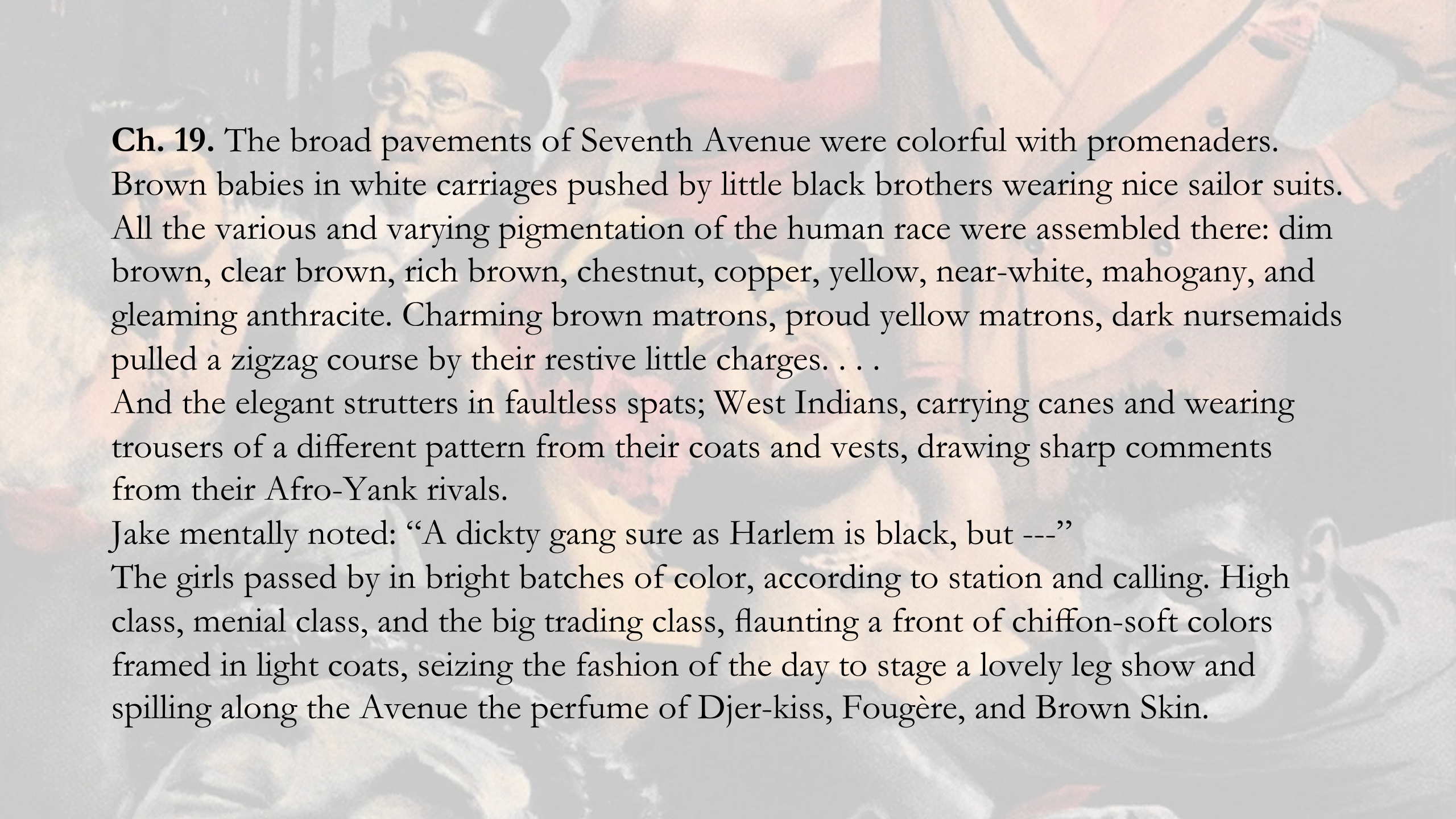
“Harlem! Harlem!” thought Jake. “Where else could I have all this life but Harlem? Good old Harlem! Chocolate Harlem! Sweet Harlem! Harlem, I’ve got your number down. Lenox Avenue, you’re a bear, I know it. And, baby honey, sure enough youse a pippin for your pappy. Oh, boy!” ...

**1658** Nieuw-Haarlem was founded by a group of Dutch farmers led by Peter Stuyvesant, in then New Holland and then recognized by the West India Company. In **1664** it was conquered by the English.



***Nigger Heaven*** (1926) by Carl Van Vechten. Langston Hughes and Nella Larsen liked it, Countee Cullen and W.E.B. DuBois criticized it.



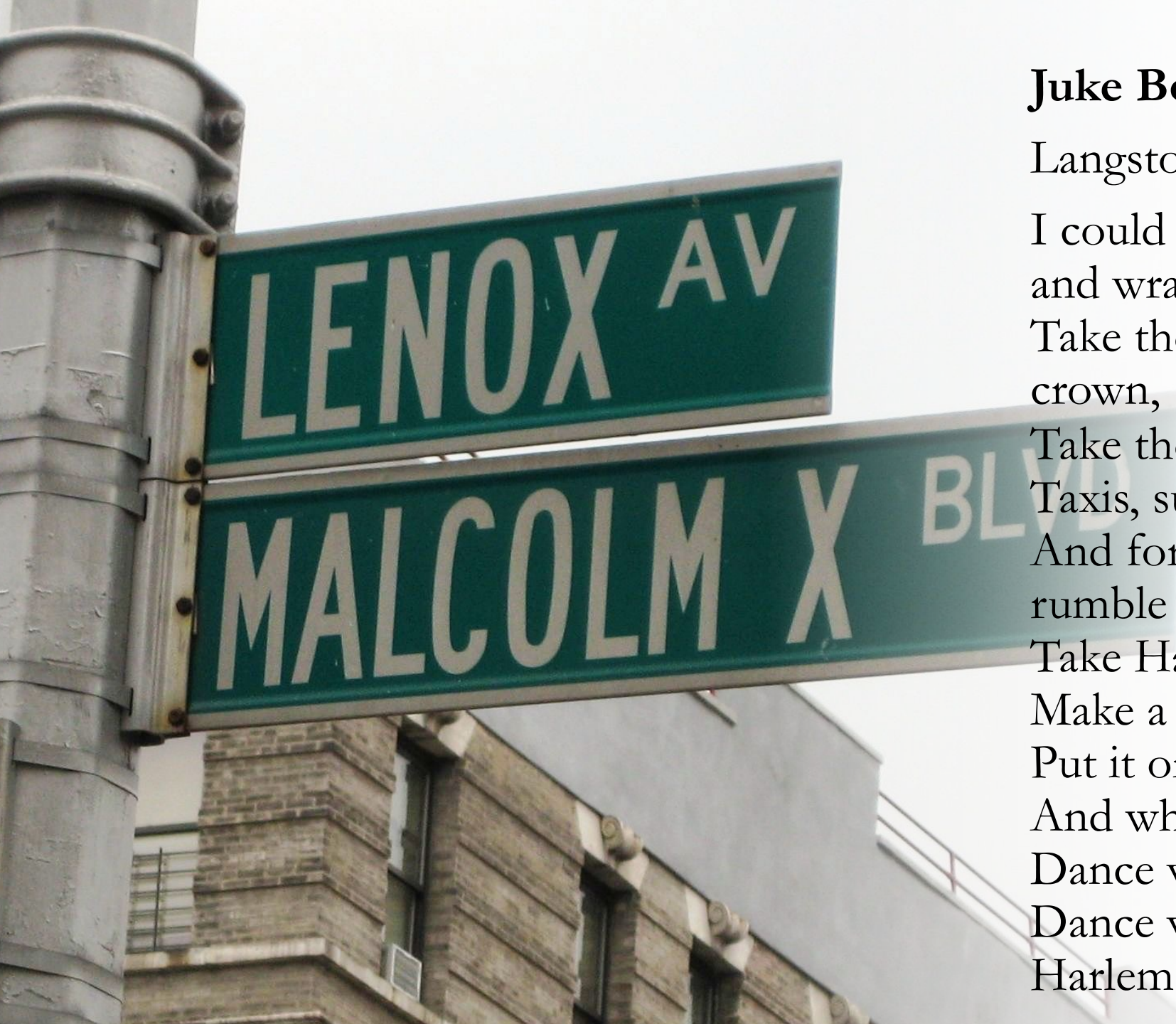


**Ch. 19.** The broad pavements of Seventh Avenue were colorful with promenaders. Brown babies in white carriages pushed by little black brothers wearing nice sailor suits. All the various and varying pigmentation of the human race were assembled there: dim brown, clear brown, rich brown, chestnut, copper, yellow, near-white, mahogany, and gleaming anthracite. Charming brown matrons, proud yellow matrons, dark nursemaids pulled a zigzag course by their restive little charges. . . .

And the elegant strutters in faultless spats; West Indians, carrying canes and wearing trousers of a different pattern from their coats and vests, drawing sharp comments from their Afro-Yank rivals.

Jake mentally noted: “A dicky gang sure as Harlem is black, but ---”

The girls passed by in bright batches of color, according to station and calling. High class, menial class, and the big trading class, flaunting a front of chiffon-soft colors framed in light coats, seizing the fashion of the day to stage a lovely leg show and spilling along the Avenue the perfume of Djer-kiss, Fougère, and Brown Skin.



## Juke Box Love Song

Langston Hughes

I could take the Harlem night  
and wrap around you,  
Take the neon lights and make a  
crown,  
Take the Lenox Avenue busses,  
Taxis, subways,  
And for your love song tone their  
rumble down.  
Take Harlem's heartbeat,  
Make a drumbeat,  
Put it on a record, let it whirl,  
And while we listen to it play,  
Dance with you till day—  
Dance with you, my sweet brown  
Harlem girl.

**Ch. 10.** Sitting at one of the large tables, four of the waiters were playing poker. Jake wanted to join them, but he had no money. One waiter sat alone at a small table. He was reading. He was of average size, slim, a smooth pure ebony with straight features and a suggestion of whiskers. Jake shuffled up to him and asked him for the loan of two dollars. He got it and went to play....

Jake finished playing with five dollars. He repaid the waiter and said: “Youse a good sport. I’ll always look out for you in that theah hole.”

The waiter smiled. He was very friendly. Jake half-sprawled over the table. “Wha’s this here stuff you reading? **Looks lak Greek to me.**” He spelled the title, “S-A-P-H-O, Sapho.” [...]

“It’s a story,” he told Jake, “by a French writer named Alphonse Daudet. It’s about a sporting woman who was beautiful like a rose and had the soul of a wandering cat. Her lovers called her Sapho. I like the story, but I hate the use of Sapho for its title.”

“Why does you?” Jake asked.

“Because Sappho was a real person. A wonderful woman, a great Greek poet---”

“So theah *is* some Greek in the book!” said Jake.

The waiter smiled. “In a sense, yes.”

And he told Jake the story of Sappho, of her poetry, of her loves and her passion for the beautiful boy, Phaon. And of her leaping into the sea from the Leucadian cliff because of her love for him.

[...]

“Sapphic and Lesbian . . . beautiful words.”

“What is that there Leshbian?”

“... Lovely word, eh?”

“Tha’s what we calls **bulldyker** in Harlem,” drawled Jake. “**Them’s all ugly womens.**” [...] “Not *all*. And that’s a damned ugly name,” the waiter said. “**Harlem is too savage about some things.** *Bulldyker*” the waiter stressed with a sneer.

Jake grinned. “But tha’s what they is, ain’t it?”

He began humming: “**And there is two things in Harlem I don’t understan’ It is a bulldyking woman and a faggoty man...**” [...]

“You know French?” the waiter asked.

“*Parlee-vous? Mademoiselle, un baiser, s’il vous plait. Voilat* I larned that much offn the froggies.”

“So you were over there?”

“*Au oui, camarade*” Jake beamed. “I was way, way ovah there after Democracy and them boches, and when I couldn’t find one or the other, I jest turned mah black moon from the A. E. F. . . . But you! How come you jest plowing through this here stuff lak that? I could nevah see no light at all in them print, chappie. *Eh bien. Mais vous compris beaucoup*”

“*C’est ma langue maternelle*” [...]

“Of course I’m Negro,” the waiter said, “but I was born in Hayti and the language down there is French.” [...]

He learned that the **universal spirit of the French Revolution** had reached and lifted up the slaves far away in that remote island; that Black Hayti's independence was **more dramatic and picturesque than the United States' independence** and that it was a strange, almost unimaginable eruption of the beautiful ideas of the "Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité" of Mankind, that shook the foundations of that romantic era.

For the first time he heard the name **Toussaint L'Ouverture**, the black slave and leader of the Haytian slaves. Heard how he fought and conquered the slave-owners and then protected them; decreed laws for Hayti that held more of human wisdom and nobility than the Code Napoleon; defended his baby revolution against the Spanish and the English vultures; defeated Napoleon's punitive expedition; and how tragically he was captured by a civilized trick, taken to France, and sent by Napoleon to die broken-hearted in a cold dungeon. [...]

Jake was very American in spirit and shared a little of that comfortable Yankee contempt for poor foreigners. **And as an American Negro he looked askew at foreign niggers. Africa was jungle, and Africans bush niggers, cannibals. And West Indians were monkey-chasers. But now he felt like a boy who stands with the map of the world in colors before him, and feels the wonder of the world.**

The waiter told him that Africa was not jungle as he dreamed of it, nor slavery the peculiar role of black folk. [...]

He told Jake of the old destroyed cultures of West Africa and of their vestiges, of black kings who struggled stoutly for the independence of their kingdoms: Prempreh of Ashanti, Tofa of Dahomey, Gbehanzin of Benin, Cetawayo of Zulu-Land, Menelik of Abyssinia. . . .

Had Jake ever heard of the little Republic of Liberia, founded by American Negroes? And Abyssinia, deep-set in the shoulder of Africa, besieged by the hungry wolves of Europe? [...]

**Toussaint L'Ouverture** (1743–1803) leader of the Haitian Revolution.

**1791** slave rebellion in Saint-Domingue (French colony), 100,000 slaves burned the sugarcane fields and killed slave owners; the rebels took control over the island (also the Spanish part called Santo Domingo).

**1802** French soldiers landed in Saint-Domingue  
Agreement between Toussaint L'Ouverture and Napoleon Bonaparte (Saint-Domingue back to France /abolition of slavery)

In Paris L'Ouverture was accused and sent to jail in the French Alps

**1803** he died

**1855** Herman Melville publishes *Benito Cereno*, inspired to the Haiti revolution and to the figure of Toussaint



“All the ancient countries have been yielding up the buried secrets of their civilizations,” the waiter said. “I wonder what Abyssinia will yield in her time? Next to the romance of Hayti, because it is my native country, I should love to write the romance of **Abyssinia . . . Ethiopia.**”

“Is that theah country the same Ethiopia that we done l’arned about in the Bible?” asked Jake.

“The same. The Latin peoples still call it Ethiopia.”

**“Is you a professor?”**

**“No, I’m a student.”**

“Whereat? Where did you l’arn English?” “Well, I learned English home in Port-au-Prince. And I was at Howard. You know the Negro university at Washington. Haven’t even finished there yet.”

“Then what *in* the name of mah holy rabbit foot youse doing on this heah white man’s chuh-chuh? It ain’t no place foh no student. It seems to me you’ place down there sounds a whole lot better.”

**“Uncle Sam put me here.”**

“Whadye mean Uncle Sam?” cried Jake. “Don’t hand me that bull.”

“Let me tell you about it,” the waiter said. “Maybe you don’t know that during the World War Uncle Sam grabbed Hayti. My father was an official down there. He didn’t want Uncle Sam in Hayti and he said so and said it loud. They told him to shut up and he wouldn’t, so they shut him up in jail. My brother also made a noise and American marines killed him in the street I had no- body to pay for me at the university, so I had to get out and work. *Voilà!*”

**Ch. 11.** “Raymond, but everybody calls me Ray.”

Jake heaved off. Ray bought some weekly Negro newspapers: *The Pittsburgh Courier*, *The Baltimore American*, *The Negro World*, *The Chicago Defender*. Here he found a big assortment of all the Negro publications that he never could find in Harlem. [...]

Ray fixed his eyes on the offensive bug-bitten bulk of the chef. These men claimed kinship with him. They were black like him. Man and nature had put them in the same race. He ought to love them and feel them (if they felt anything). He ought to if he had a shred of social morality in him. They were all chain-ganged together and he was counted as one link. Yet he loathed every soul in that great barrack-room, except Jake. Race. . . . **Why should he have and love a race? Races and nations were things like skunks, whose smells poisoned the air of life. Yet civilized mankind reposed its faith and future in their ancient, silted channels. Great races and big nations!** [...]

Ray felt that as he was conscious of being black and impotent, so, correspondingly, each marine down in Hayti must be conscious of being white and powerful. What a unique feeling of confidence about life the typical white youth of his age must have! Knowing that his skin-color was a passport to glory, making him one with ten thousands like himself. All perfect Occidentals and investors in that grand business called civilization. [...]

He remembered when little Hayti was floundering uncontrolled, how proud he was to be the son of a free nation. **He used to feel condescendingly sorry for those poor African natives; superior to ten millions of suppressed Yankee “coons.”** Now he was just one of them and he hated them for being one of them. . . .

But he was not entirely of them, he reflected. **He possessed another language and literature that they knew not of.** And some day Uncle Sam might let go of his island and he would escape from the clutches of that magnificent monster of civilization and retire behind the natural defenses of his island, where the steam-roller of progress could not reach him. Escape he would. He had faith. He had hope.

[...]

The chef bulked big in the room, dressed and ready to go to the railroad yards. He gave a contemptuous glance at Jake looking after Ray and said: **“Better leave that theah nigger professor alone and come on ‘long to the dining-car with us. That theah nigger is dopey from them books o’ hisn.** I done told befoh them books would git him yet.”

The chef went off with the second and fourth cooks. Jake stayed with Ray. They got his shoes and coat on. The first waiter telephoned the steward, and Ray was taken to the hospital.

“We may all be niggers aw’right, but we ain’t nonetall all the same,” Jake said as he hurried along to the dining-car, thinking of Ray.



**Ch. 13.** Ray was in bed. Jake pulled him up.

“Come on outa that, you slacker. Let’s go over to North Philly.”

“What for?”

“A li’l’ fun. I knows a swell outfit I wanta show you.” [...]

“Come on. Don’t be so particular about you’ person. You gotta go with me.”

“I have a girl in New York.”

“Tha’s awright. This is Philly.”

“I tell you, Jake, there’s no fun in those kinds for me. They’ll bore me just like that night in Baltimore.”

“Oh, these here am different chippies, I tell you. Come on, le’s spend the night away from this damn dump. Wese laying ovah all day tomorrow.” [...]

They went to a house in Fifteenth Street. As they entered Jake was greeted by a mulatto woman in the full vigor of middle life.

“Why, *you* heart-breaker! It’s ages and ages since I saw you. You and me sure going to have a bust-up tonight.”

Jake grinned, prancing a little, as if he were going to do the old cakewalk.

“Here, Laura, this is mah friend,” he introduced Ray casually.

[...]

Ray felt alone and a little sorry for himself. Now that he was there, **he would like to be touched by the spirit of that atmosphere and, like Jake, fall naturally into its rhythm. He also envied Jake. Just for this night only he would like to be like him. ...**

They were dancing. The little yellow girl, her legs kicked out at oblique angles, appeared as if she were going to fall through the big-built black man.

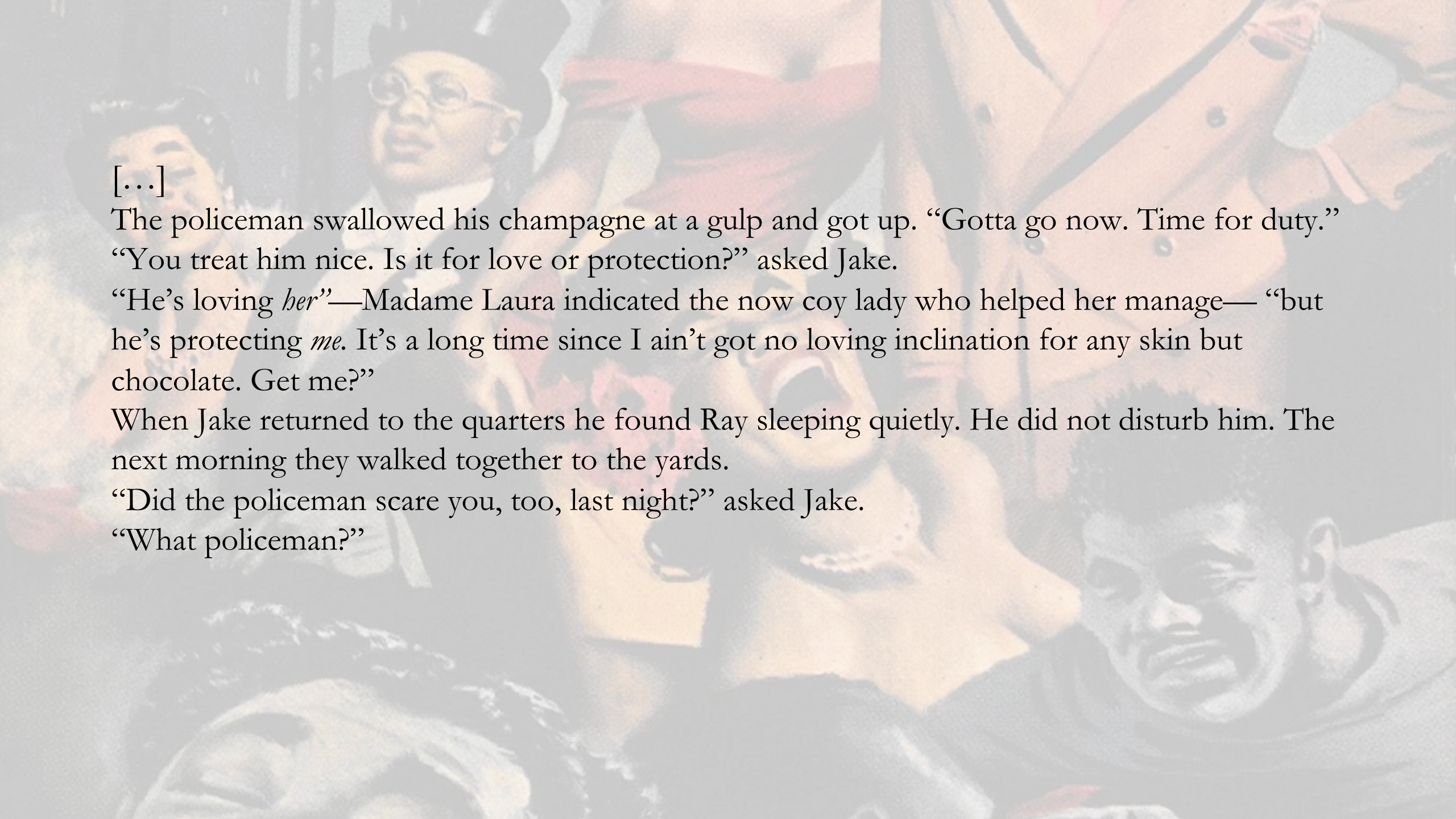
We'll all be merry when you taste a cherry, And we'll twine and twine like a fruitful vine.

[...]

**“Raided!”** A voice screamed. Standing in the rear door, a policeman, white, in full uniform, smilingly contemplated the spectacle. There was a wild scramble for hats and wraps. The old-timers giggled, shrugged, and kept their seats. Madame Laura pushed aside the policeman.

“Keep you’ pants on, all of you and carry on with you’ fun. **What’s matter? Scared of a uniform?** Pat”—she turned to the policeman— “what you want to throw a scare in the company for? Come on here with you.”

The policeman, twirling his baton, marched to a table and sat down with Madame Laura.



[...]

The policeman swallowed his champagne at a gulp and got up. “Gotta go now. Time for duty.”

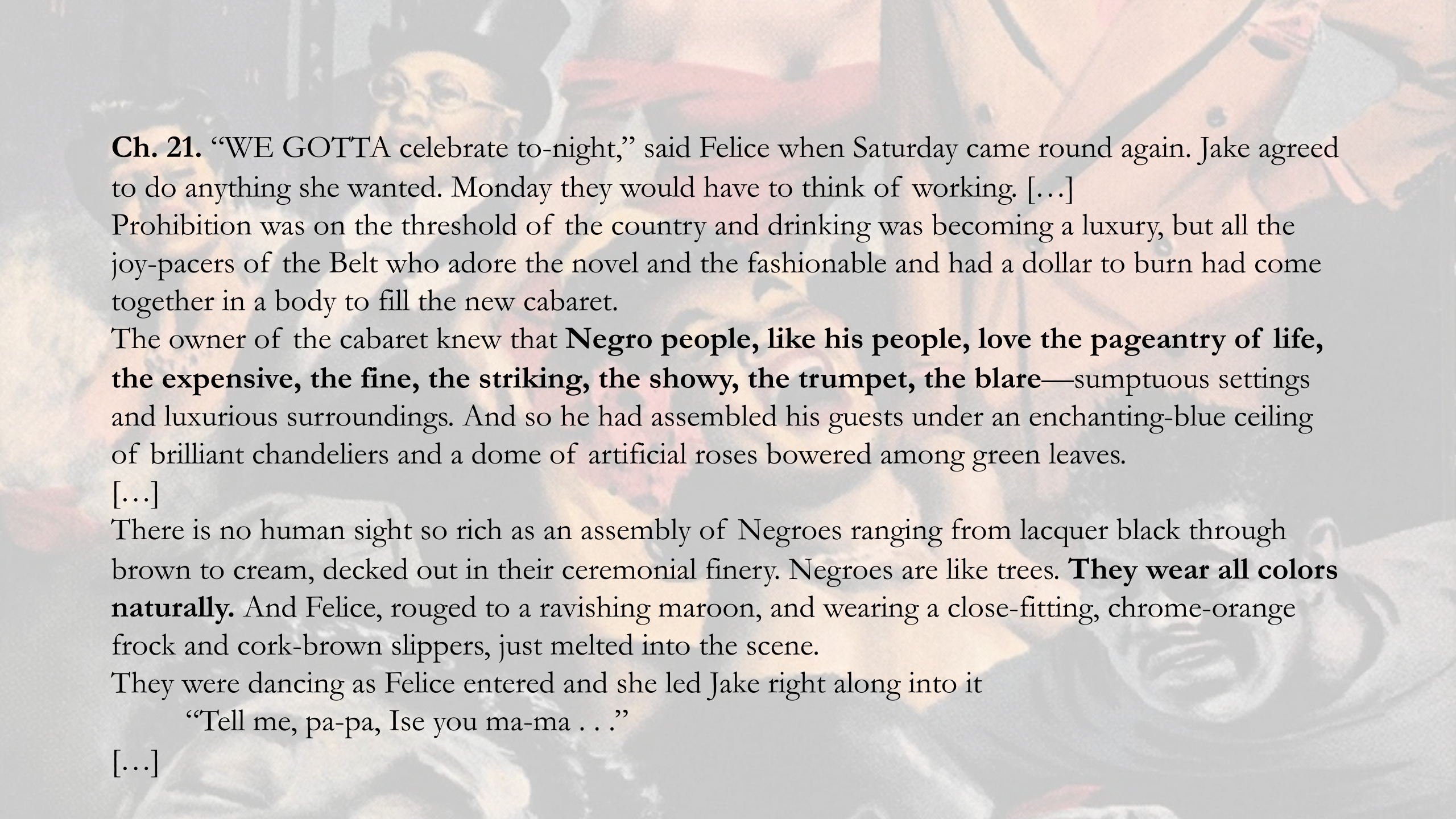
“You treat him nice. Is it for love or protection?” asked Jake.

“He’s loving *her*”—Madame Laura indicated the now coy lady who helped her manage— “but he’s protecting *me*. It’s a long time since I ain’t got no loving inclination for any skin but chocolate. Get me?”

When Jake returned to the quarters he found Ray sleeping quietly. He did not disturb him. The next morning they walked together to the yards.

“Did the policeman scare you, too, last night?” asked Jake.

“What policeman?”



**Ch. 21.** “WE GOTTA celebrate to-night,” said Felice when Saturday came round again. Jake agreed to do anything she wanted. Monday they would have to think of working. [...]

Prohibition was on the threshold of the country and drinking was becoming a luxury, but all the joy-pacers of the Belt who adore the novel and the fashionable and had a dollar to burn had come together in a body to fill the new cabaret.

The owner of the cabaret knew that **Negro people, like his people, love the pageantry of life, the expensive, the fine, the striking, the showy, the trumpet, the blare**—sumptuous settings and luxurious surroundings. And so he had assembled his guests under an enchanting-blue ceiling of brilliant chandeliers and a dome of artificial roses bowered among green leaves.

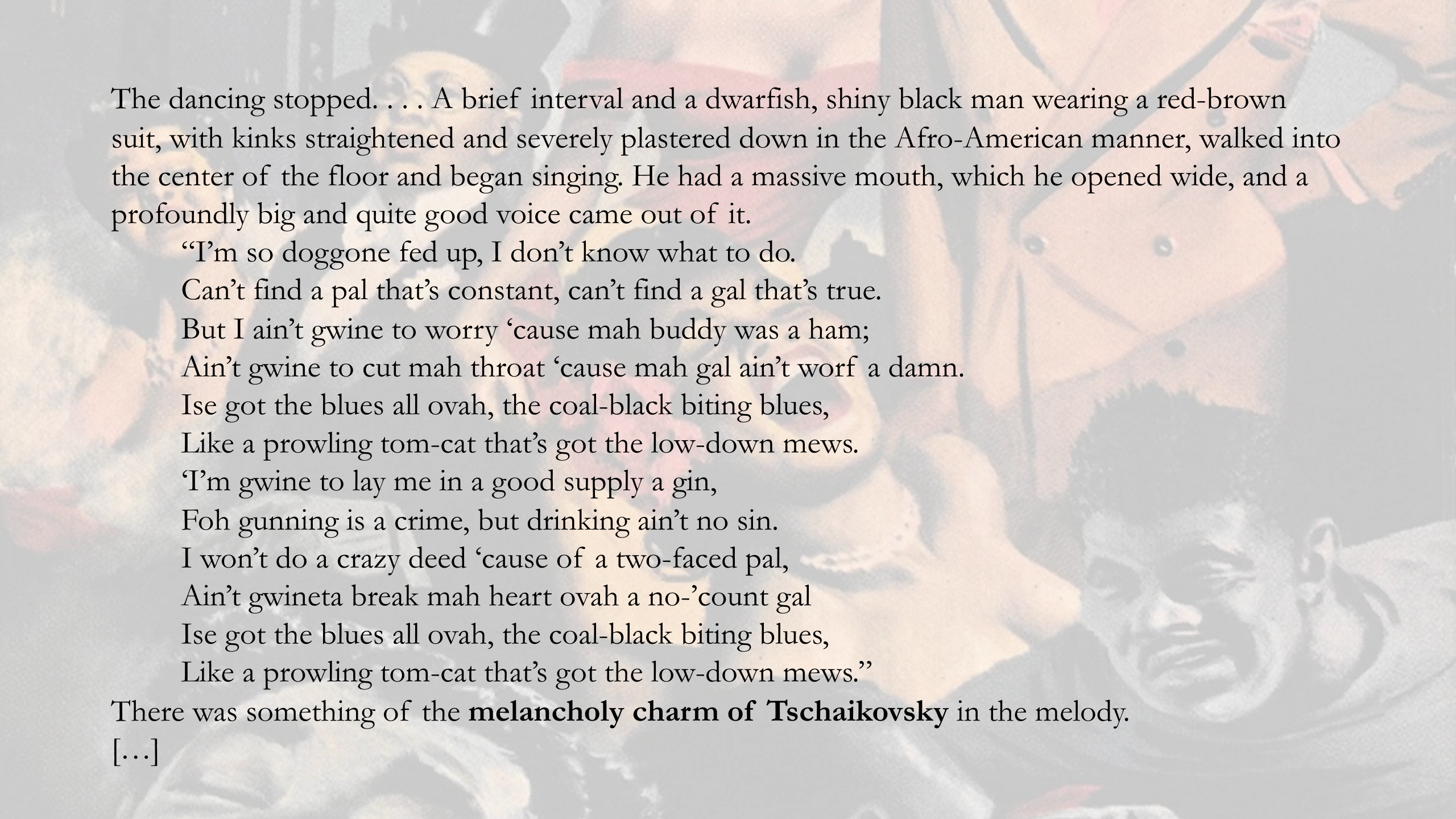
[...]

There is no human sight so rich as an assembly of Negroes ranging from lacquer black through brown to cream, decked out in their ceremonial finery. Negroes are like trees. **They wear all colors naturally.** And Felice, rouged to a ravishing maroon, and wearing a close-fitting, chrome-orange frock and cork-brown slippers, just melted into the scene.

They were dancing as Felice entered and she led Jake right along into it

“Tell me, pa-pa, Ise you ma-ma . . .”

[...]



The dancing stopped. . . . A brief interval and a dwarfish, shiny black man wearing a red-brown suit, with kinks straightened and severely plastered down in the Afro-American manner, walked into the center of the floor and began singing. He had a massive mouth, which he opened wide, and a profoundly big and quite good voice came out of it.

“I’m so doggone fed up, I don’t know what to do.  
Can’t find a pal that’s constant, can’t find a gal that’s true.  
But I ain’t gwine to worry ‘cause mah buddy was a ham;  
Ain’t gwine to cut mah throat ‘cause mah gal ain’t worf a damn.  
Ise got the blues all ovah, the coal-black biting blues,  
Like a prowling tom-cat that’s got the low-down mew.  
‘I’m gwine to lay me in a good supply a gin,  
Foh gunning is a crime, but drinking ain’t no sin.  
I won’t do a crazy deed ‘cause of a two-faced pal,  
Ain’t gwineta break mah heart ovah a no-’count gal  
Ise got the blues all ovah, the coal-black biting blues,  
Like a prowling tom-cat that’s got the low-down mew.”

There was something of the **melancholy charm of Tschaikovsky** in the melody.

[...]



Jake strode up to Zeddy. “Turn that girl loose.”

“Whose gwineta make me?” growled Zeddy.

“I is. **She’s mah woman.** I knowed her long before you. For Gawd’s sake quit you’ fooling and don’t let’s bust up the man’s cabaret.”

All the fashionable folk had already fled.

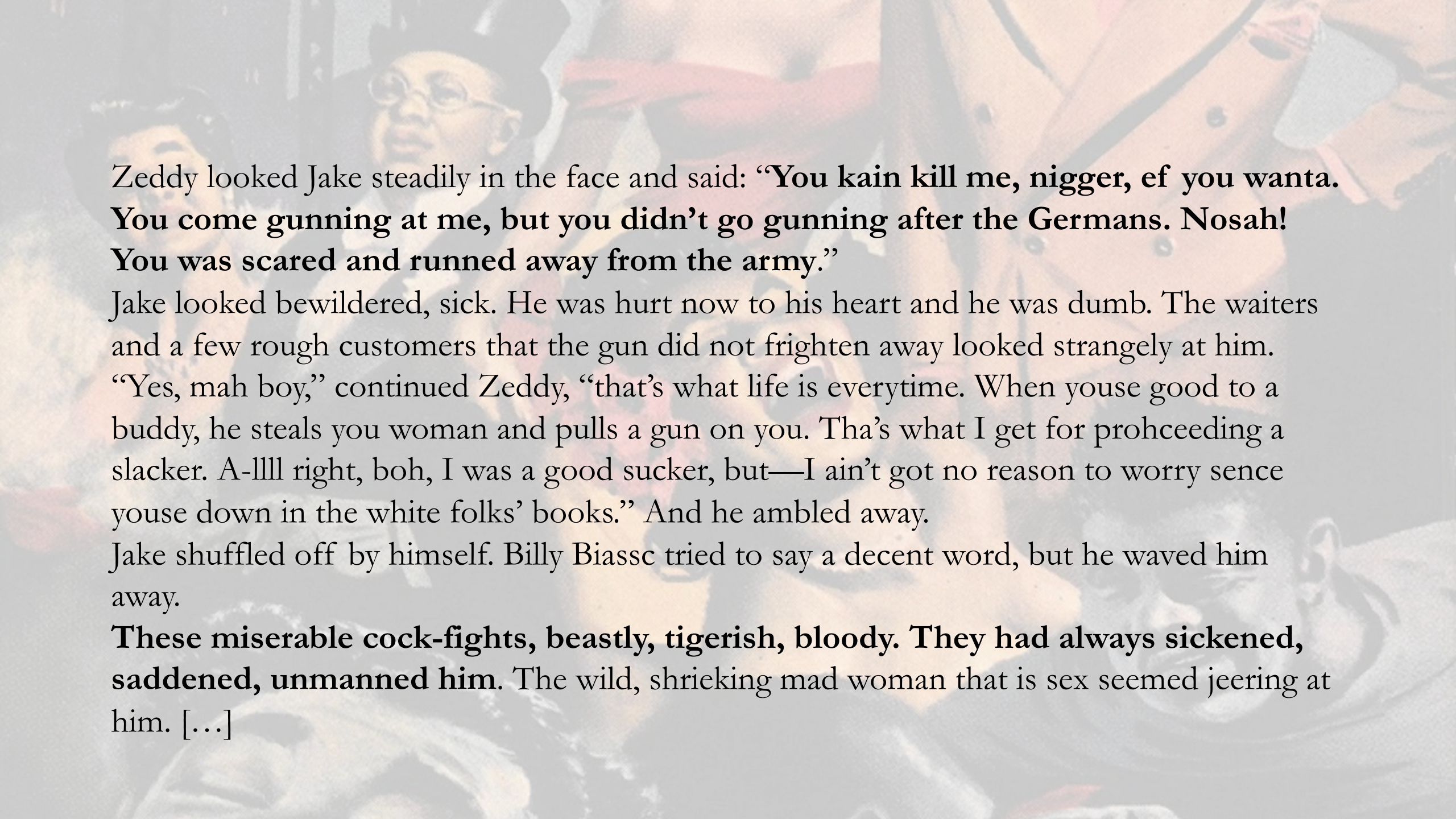
“**She’s *my* woman** and I’ll carve any **damn-fool nigger** for her.”

[...]

But Zeddy had stopped like a cowed brute in his tracks, for leveled straight at his heart was the gift that Billy gave.

“Drop that razor and git you’ hands up,” Jake commanded, “and don’t make a fool move or youse a dead nigger.”

[...]

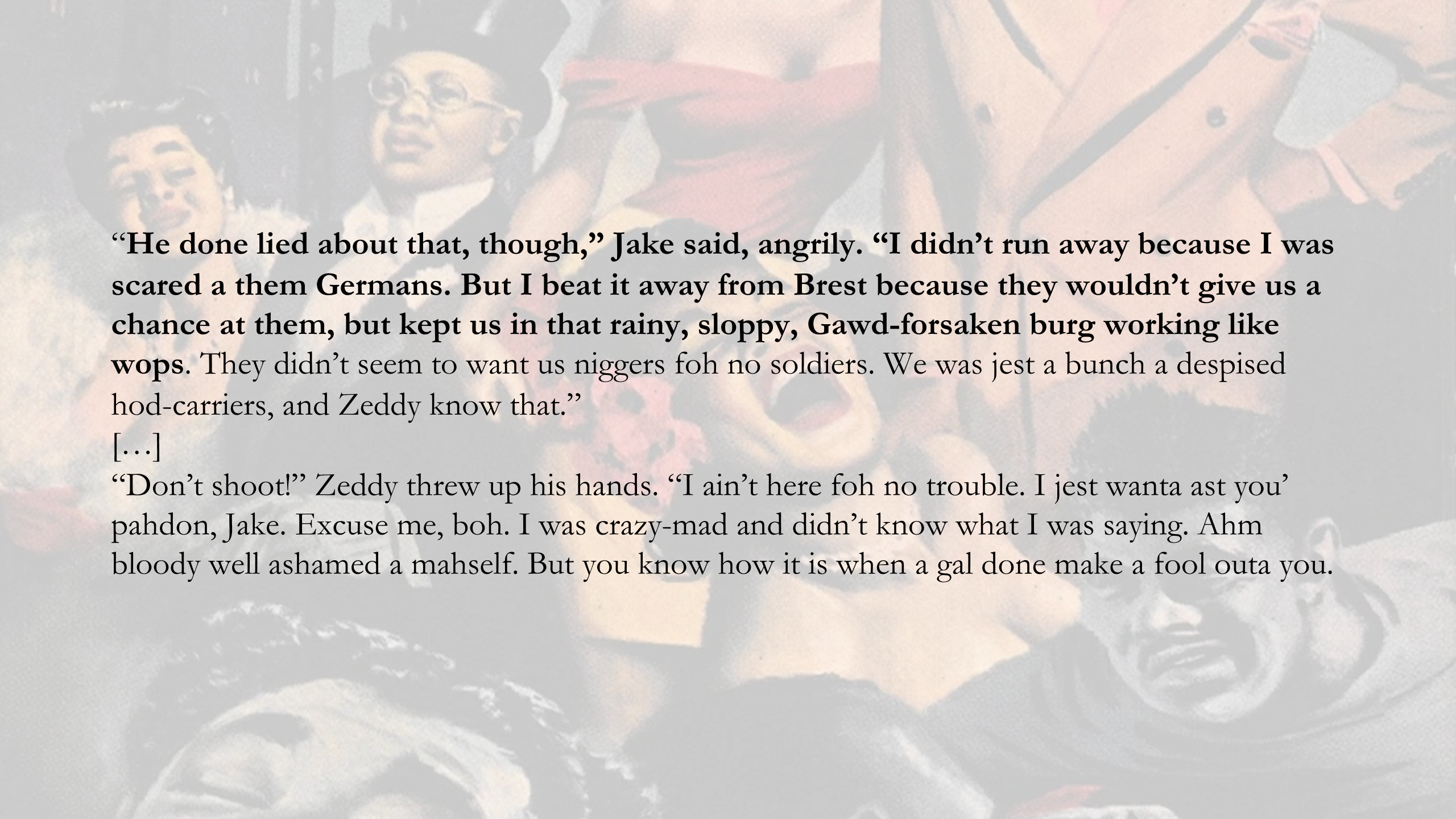


Zeddy looked Jake steadily in the face and said: **“You kain kill me, nigger, ef you wanta. You come gunning at me, but you didn’t go gunning after the Germans. Nosah! You was scared and runned away from the army.”**

Jake looked bewildered, sick. He was hurt now to his heart and he was dumb. The waiters and a few rough customers that the gun did not frighten away looked strangely at him. “Yes, mah boy,” continued Zeddy, “that’s what life is everytime. When youse good to a buddy, he steals you woman and pulls a gun on you. Tha’s what I get for prohceeding a slacker. A-llll right, boh, I was a good sucker, but—I ain’t got no reason to worry sence youse down in the white folks’ books.” And he ambled away.

Jake shuffled off by himself. Billy Biassc tried to say a decent word, but he waved him away.

**These miserable cock-fights, beastly, tigerish, bloody. They had always sickened, saddened, unmanned him.** The wild, shrieking mad woman that is sex seemed jeering at him. [...]



**“He done lied about that, though,”** Jake said, angrily. **“I didn’t run away because I was scared a them Germans. But I beat it away from Brest because they wouldn’t give us a chance at them, but kept us in that rainy, sloppy, Gawd-forsaken burg working like wops.** They didn’t seem to want us niggers foh no soldiers. We was jest a bunch a despised hod-carriers, and Zeddy know that.”

[...]

“Don’t shoot!” Zeddy threw up his hands. “I ain’t here foh no trouble. I jest wanta ast you’ pahdon, Jake. Excuse me, boh. I was crazy-mad and didn’t know what I was saying. Ahm bloody well ashamed a mahself. But you know how it is when a gal done make a fool outa you.



# African Americans at the turn of the century

## Booker T. Washington (1856-1915)

Born into slavery, Christian ((DuBois: “the great accommodator”)

Tuskegee Institute (1881)

*Up from Slavery* (1901)

### “Atlanta Compromise” (1895)

I would say: “Cast down your bucket where you are”[...]. Cast it down in agriculture, mechanics, in commerce, in domestic service, and in the professions. [...] Our greatest danger is that in the great leap from slavery to freedom we may overlook the fact that the masses of us are to live by the productions of our hands, and fail to keep in mind that we shall prosper in proportion as we learn to dignify and glorify common labour, and put brains and skill into the common occupations of life; [...] It is at the bottom of life we must begin, and not at the top. Nor should we permit our grievances to overshadow our opportunities.

The wisest among my race understand that the agitation of questions of social equality is the extremest folly, and that progress in the enjoyment of all the privileges that will come to us must be the result of severe and constant struggle rather than of artificial forcing,

## NAACP National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

To promote equality of rights and to eradicate caste or race prejudice among the citizens of the United States; to advance the interest of colored citizens; to secure for them impartial suffrage; and to increase their opportunities for securing justice in the courts, education for the children, employment according to their ability and complete equality before law.



# W.E.B. DuBois (1868-1963)

Born after slavery

Civil rights activist, Pan-Africanist, sociologist, educator, historian

1905 **Niagara Movement**, against the Atlanta Compromise

1909 **NAACP** (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People)

1910-1912 Member of the Socialist Party

1910 *The Crisis* the oldest black magazine in the world

*The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), essays:

“ the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color-line [...] I have sought here to sketch, in vague, uncertain outline, the spiritual world in which ten thousand thousand Americans live and strive. [...] Before each chapter, as now printed, stands a bar of the Sorrow Songs,—some echo of haunting melody from the only American music which welled up from black souls in the dark past. And, finally, need I add that I who speak here am bone of the bone and flesh of the flesh of them that live within the Veil?”

The “talented tenth” essay (1903): one in ten African American people has the ability to become a leader



# *The Souls of Black Folk*

I

## *Of Our Spiritual Strivings*

O water, voice of my heart, crying in the sand,  
All night long crying with a mournful cry,  
As I lie and listen, and cannot understand  
The voice of my heart in my side or the voice of the sea,  
O water, crying for rest, is it I, is it I?  
All night long the water is crying to me.

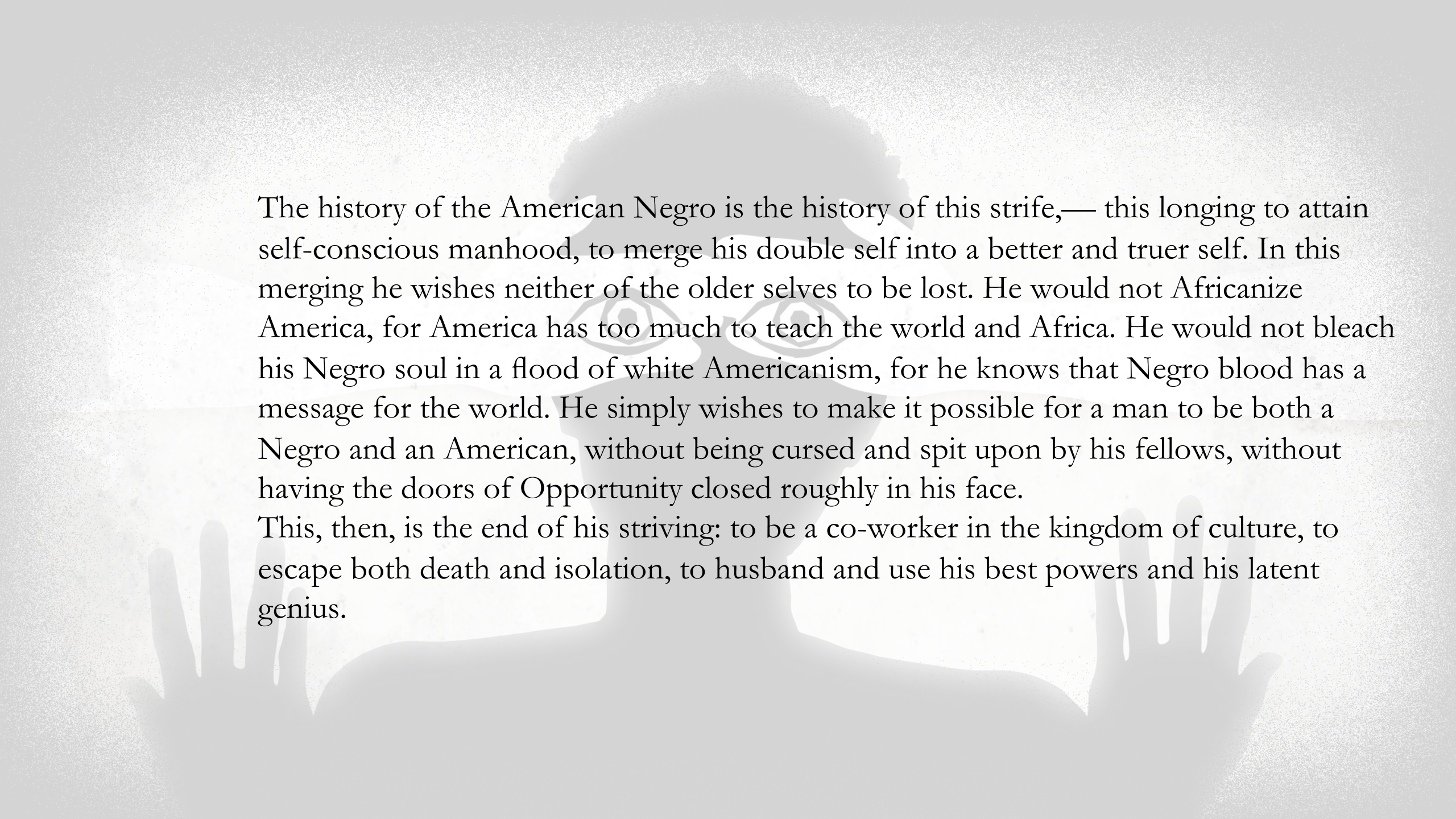
Unresting water, there shall never be rest  
Till the last moon droop and the last tide fail,  
And the fire of the end begin to burn in the west;  
And the heart shall be weary and wonder and cry like the sea,  
All life long crying without avail,  
As the water all night long is crying to me.

ARTHUR SYMONS.\*



[...] How does it feel to be a problem? [...] It is in the early days of rollicking boyhood that the revelation first bursts upon one, all in a day, as it were. I remember well when the shadow swept across me. [...] In a wee wooden school-house, something put it into the boys' and girls' heads to buy gorgeous visiting-cards—ten cents a package—and exchange. The exchange was merry, till one girl, a tall newcomer, refused my card,—refused it peremptorily, with a glance. Then it dawned upon me with a certain suddenness that I was different from the others [...]

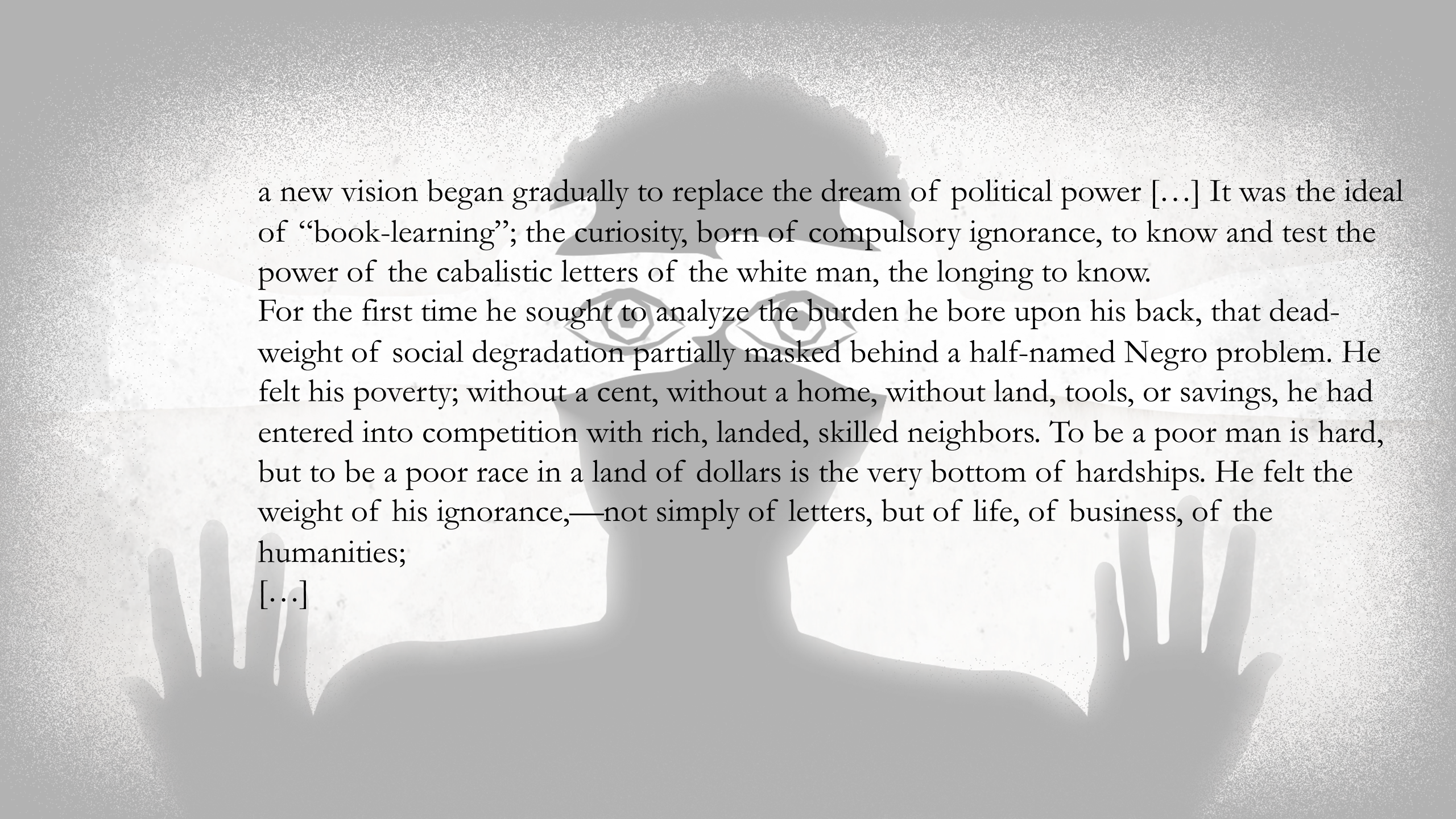
After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world,— a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness,— an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.



The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife,— this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face.

This, then, is the end of his striving: to be a co-worker in the kingdom of culture, to escape both death and isolation, to husband and use his best powers and his latent genius.

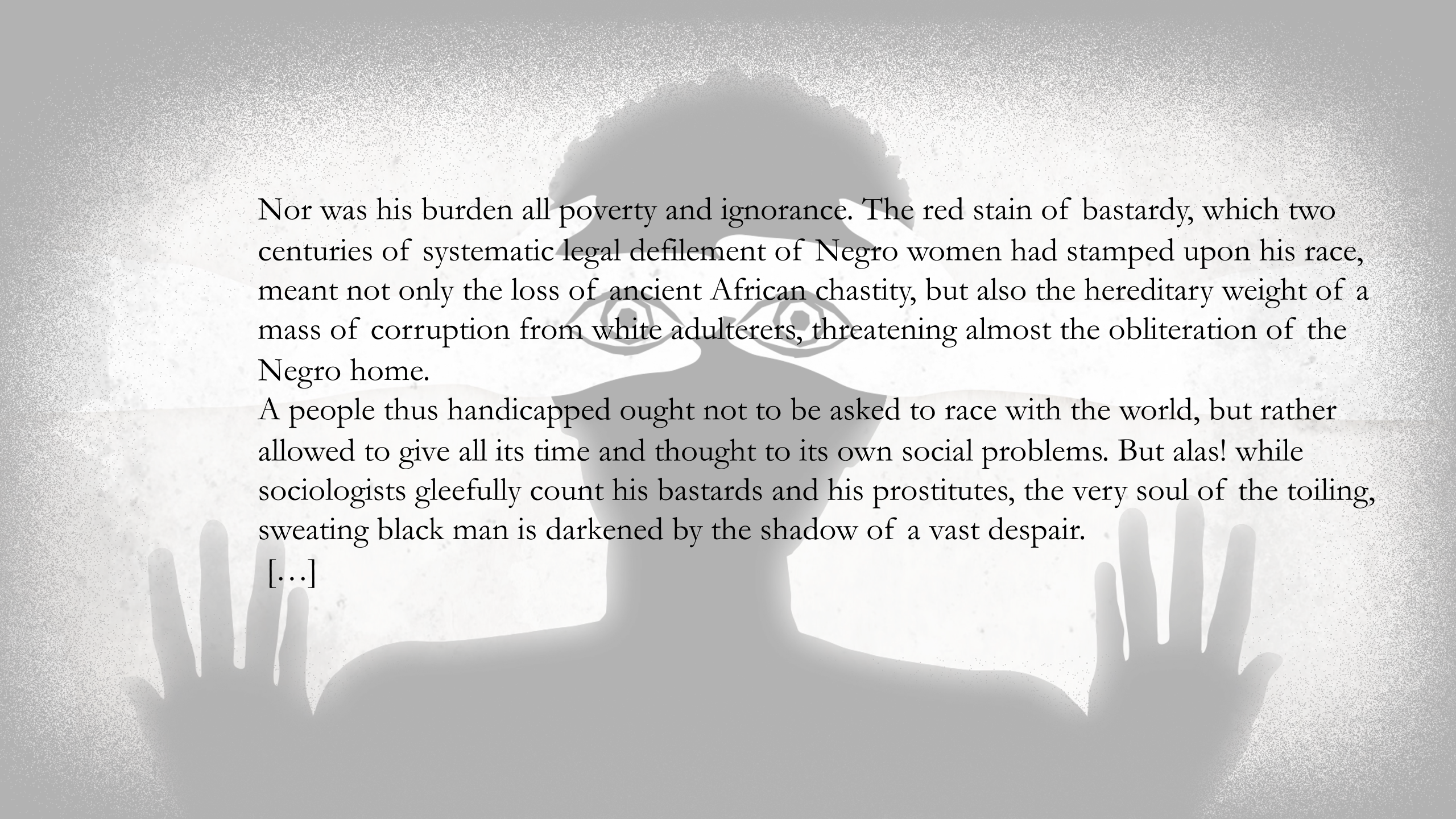
Away back in the days of bondage they thought to see in one divine event the end of all doubt and disappointment; few men ever worshipped Freedom with half such unquestioning faith as did the American Negro for two centuries. To him, so far as he thought and dreamed, slavery was indeed the sum of all villainies, the cause of all sorrow, the root of all prejudice; Emancipation was the key to a promised land of sweeter beauty than ever stretched before the eyes of wearied Israelites. [...] Years have passed away since then [...] The Nation has not yet found peace from its sins; the freedman has not yet found in freedom his promised land. [...] The first decade was merely a prolongation of the vain search for freedom [...] The holocaust of war, the terrors of the Ku-Klux Klan, the lies of carpet-baggers, the disorganization of industry, and the contradictory advice of friends and foes, left the bewildered serf with no new watchword beyond the old cry for freedom. As the time flew, however, he began to grasp a new idea. The ideal of liberty demanded for its attainment powerful means, and these the Fifteenth Amendment gave him. The ballot, which before he had looked upon as a visible sign of freedom, he now regarded as the chief means of gaining and perfecting the liberty with which war had partially endowed him. And why not? Had not votes made war and emancipated millions? Had not votes enfranchised the freedmen?



a new vision began gradually to replace the dream of political power [...] It was the ideal of “book-learning”; the curiosity, born of compulsory ignorance, to know and test the power of the cabalistic letters of the white man, the longing to know.

For the first time he sought to analyze the burden he bore upon his back, that dead-weight of social degradation partially masked behind a half-named Negro problem. He felt his poverty; without a cent, without a home, without land, tools, or savings, he had entered into competition with rich, landed, skilled neighbors. To be a poor man is hard, but to be a poor race in a land of dollars is the very bottom of hardships. He felt the weight of his ignorance,—not simply of letters, but of life, of business, of the humanities;

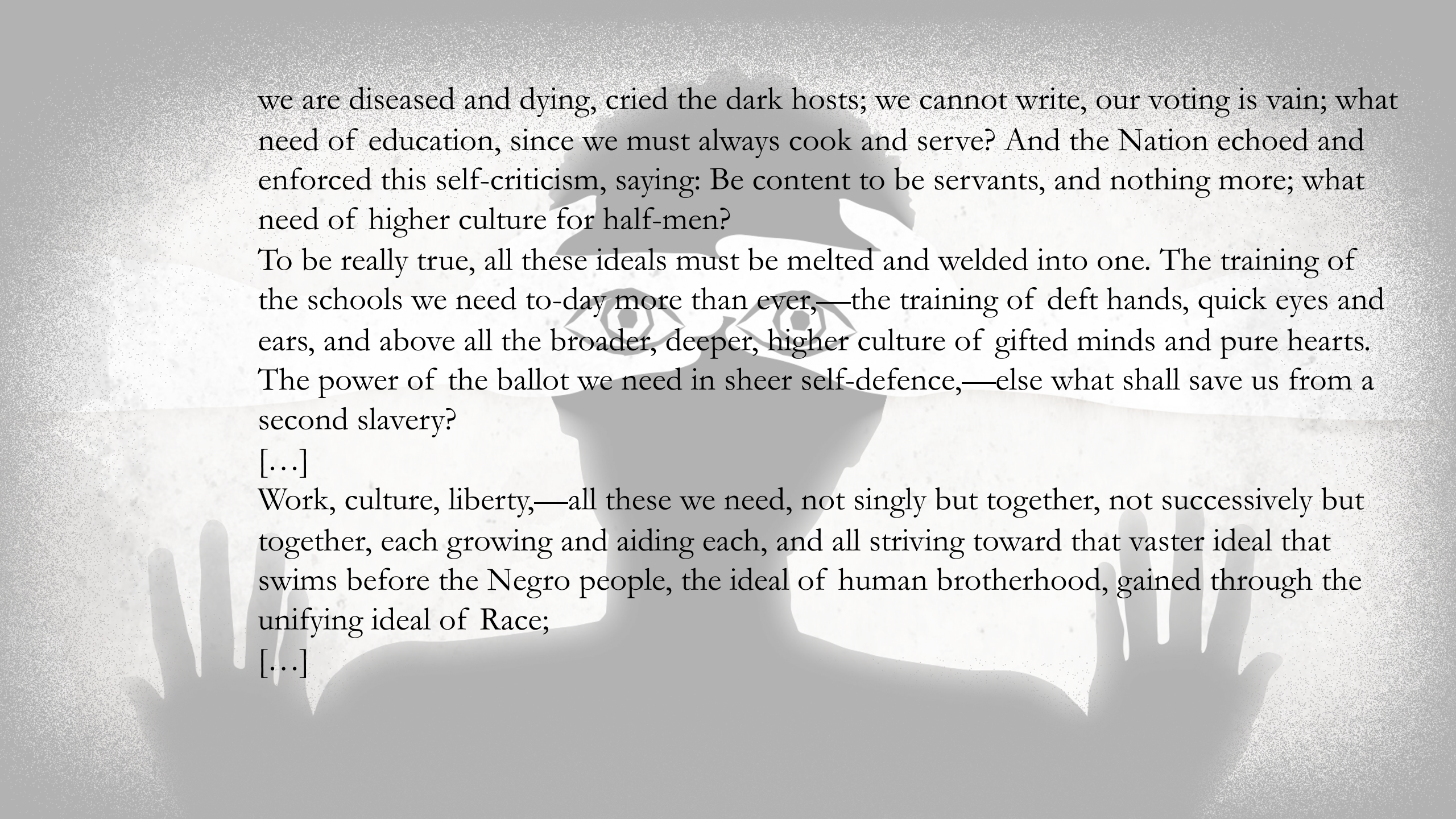
[...]



Nor was his burden all poverty and ignorance. The red stain of bastardy, which two centuries of systematic legal defilement of Negro women had stamped upon his race, meant not only the loss of ancient African chastity, but also the hereditary weight of a mass of corruption from white adulterers, threatening almost the obliteration of the Negro home.

A people thus handicapped ought not to be asked to race with the world, but rather allowed to give all its time and thought to its own social problems. But alas! while sociologists gleefully count his bastards and his prostitutes, the very soul of the toiling, sweating black man is darkened by the shadow of a vast despair.

[...]



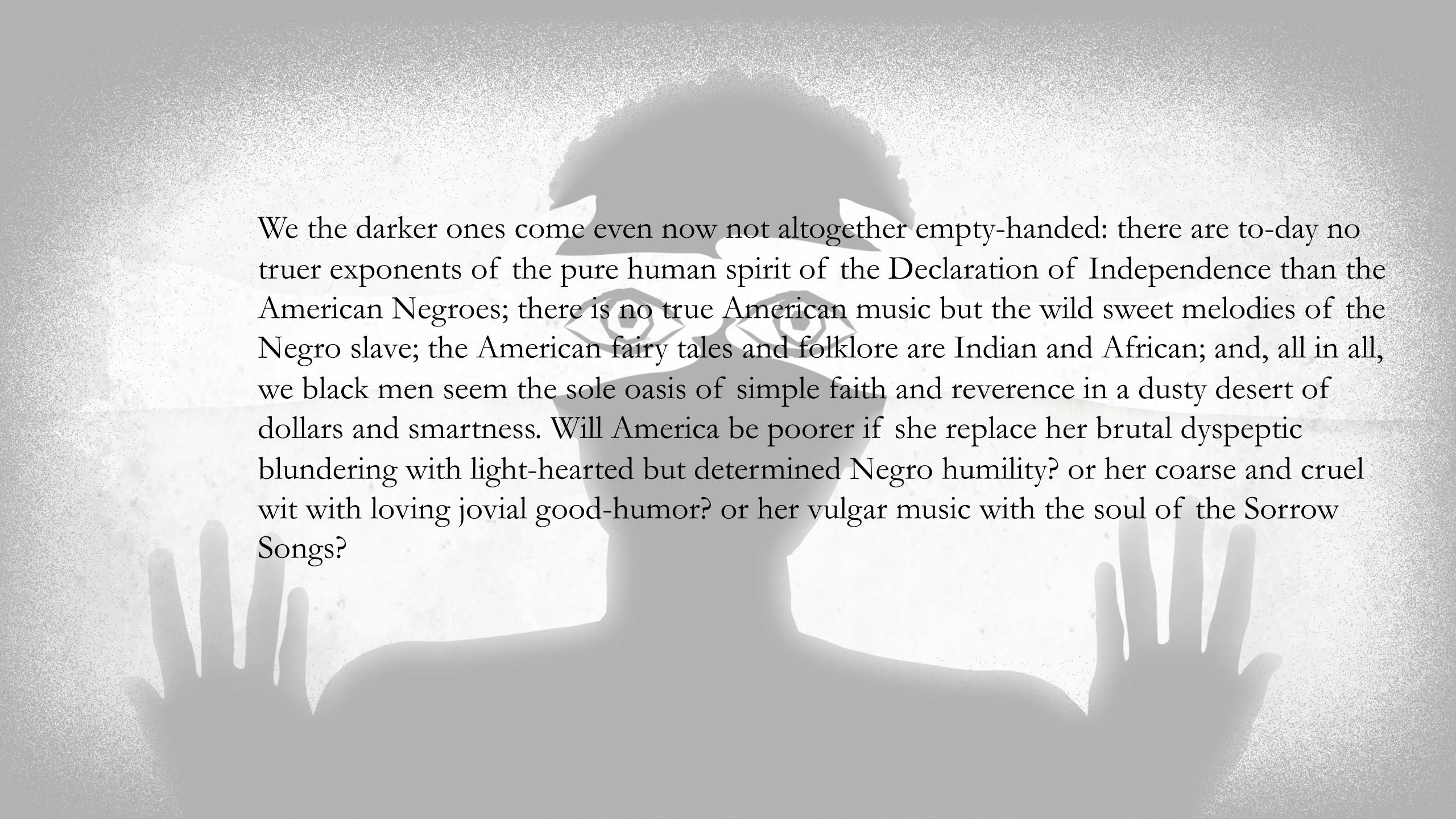
we are diseased and dying, cried the dark hosts; we cannot write, our voting is vain; what need of education, since we must always cook and serve? And the Nation echoed and enforced this self-criticism, saying: Be content to be servants, and nothing more; what need of higher culture for half-men?

To be really true, all these ideals must be melted and welded into one. The training of the schools we need to-day more than ever,—the training of deft hands, quick eyes and ears, and above all the broader, deeper, higher culture of gifted minds and pure hearts. The power of the ballot we need in sheer self-defence,—else what shall save us from a second slavery?

[...]

Work, culture, liberty,—all these we need, not singly but together, not successively but together, each growing and aiding each, and all striving toward that vaster ideal that swims before the Negro people, the ideal of human brotherhood, gained through the unifying ideal of Race;

[...]



We the darker ones come even now not altogether empty-handed: there are to-day no truer exponents of the pure human spirit of the Declaration of Independence than the American Negroes; there is no true American music but the wild sweet melodies of the Negro slave; the American fairy tales and folklore are Indian and African; and, all in all, we black men seem the sole oasis of simple faith and reverence in a dusty desert of dollars and smartness. Will America be poorer if she replace her brutal dyspeptic blundering with light-hearted but determined Negro humility? or her coarse and cruel wit with loving jovial good-humor? or her vulgar music with the soul of the Sorrow Songs?

# The Great Migration, 1916–1930

## 1910s - 1930s

20% rise in the African American population in the North (Chicago, Detroit, New York); Black people were employed after the shortage of workers due to the Immigration Act (1924), which stopped European migrants



## UNEMPLOYMENT, 1918–1930

Year	Percent of Civilian Labor Force
1918	1.4
1919	1.4
1920	5.2
1921	11.7
1922	6.7
1923	2.4
1924	5.0
1925	3.2
1926	1.8
1927	3.3
1928	4.2
1929	3.2
1930	8.7

*Note:* Data presented are in thousands of persons 14 years and over.  
*Source:* Kurian, *Datapedia of the United States, 1790–2000*, p. 75.

## PEOPLE LYNCHED IN THE UNITED STATES, 1918–1930

Year	Total	White	African American
1918	64	4	60
1919	83	7	76
1920	61	8	53
1921	64	5	59
1922	57	6	51
1923	33	4	29
1924	16	...	16
1925	17	...	17
1926	30	7	23
1927	16	...	16
1928	11	1	10
1929	10	3	7
1930	21	1	20

*Source:* U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States*, Washington, D.C.: Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1960, p. 422.

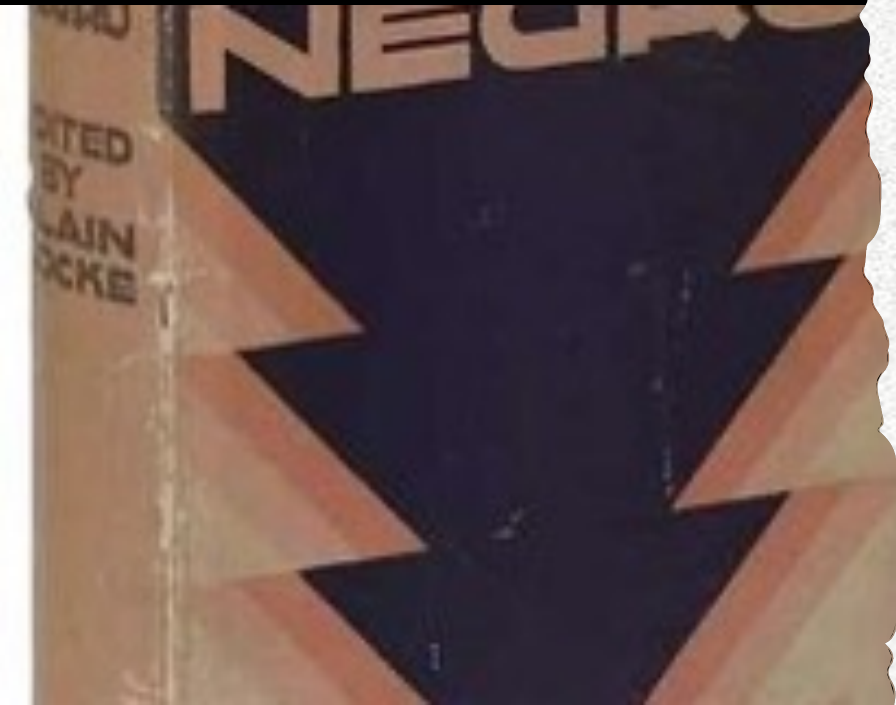


# Harlem Renaissance

1914 Universal Negro Improvement Association (black organization founded by Marcus Garvey)

1919 Racial riots → “If We Must Die” (Claude McKay)

**Alain Locke (1885-1954), *The New Negro* (1925)**, anthology of fiction, poems, essays on African / African American culture: Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Claude McKay, Jean Toomer



—  
**Alain Locke**

## **“The New Negro”**

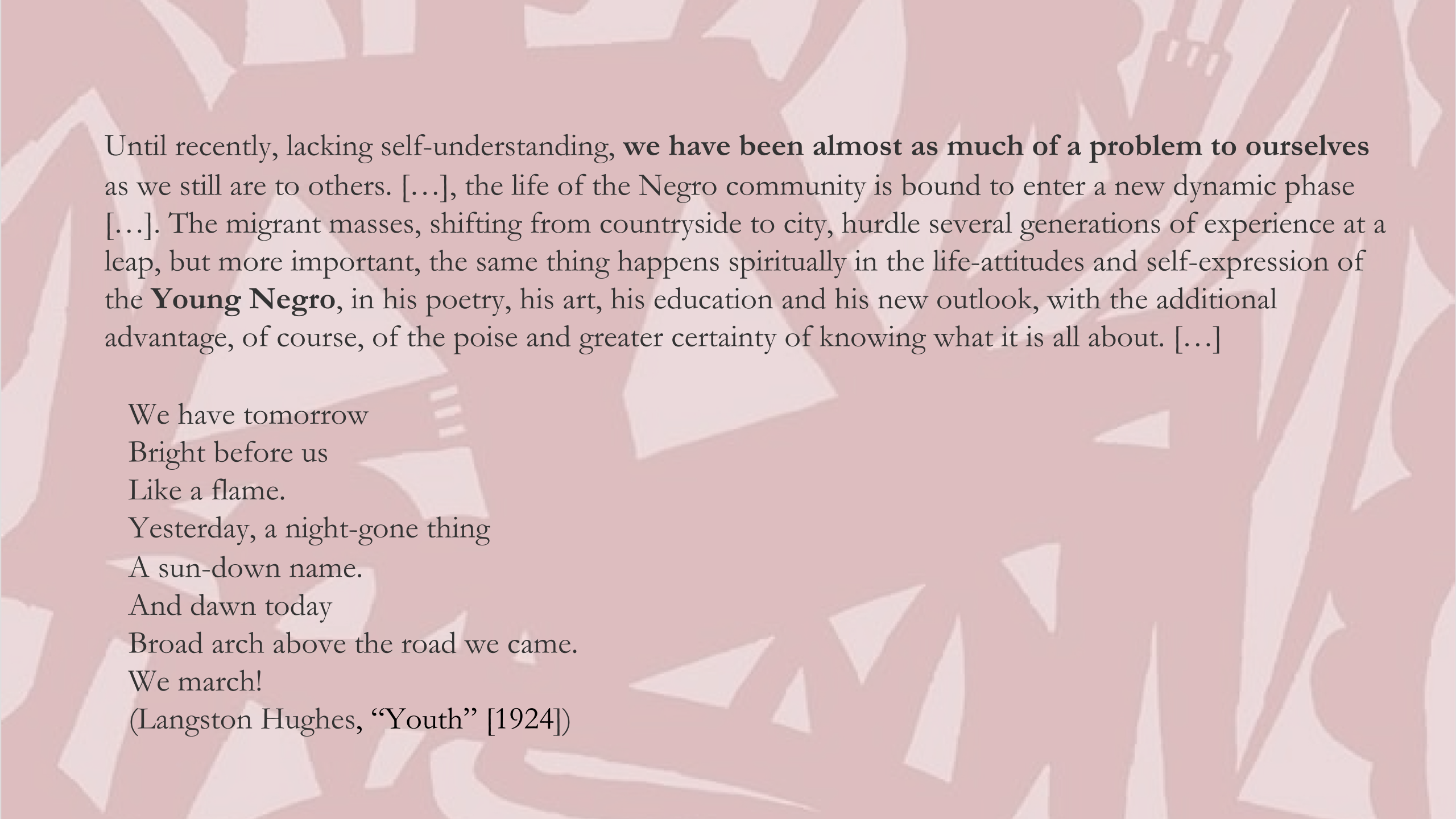
The Old Negro, we must remember, was a creature of moral debate and historical controversy. [...] The Negro himself has contributed his share to this through a sort of **protective social mimicry forced upon him** by the adverse circumstances of dependence. So for generations in the mind of America, the Negro has been more of a formula than a human being[...].

His shadow, so to speak, has been more real to him than his personality. [...] Similarly the mind of the Negro seems suddenly to have slipped from under the tyranny of social intimidation and to be shaking off the psychology of imitation and implied inferiority. By shedding the old chrysalis of the Negro problem we are achieving something like a spiritual emancipation.

# THE NEW NEGRO AN INTERPRETATION

ALAIN LOCKE





Until recently, lacking self-understanding, **we have been almost as much of a problem to ourselves** as we still are to others. [...], the life of the Negro community is bound to enter a new dynamic phase [...]. The migrant masses, shifting from countryside to city, hurdle several generations of experience at a leap, but more important, the same thing happens spiritually in the life-attitudes and self-expression of the **Young Negro**, in his poetry, his art, his education and his new outlook, with the additional advantage, of course, of the poise and greater certainty of knowing what it is all about. [...]

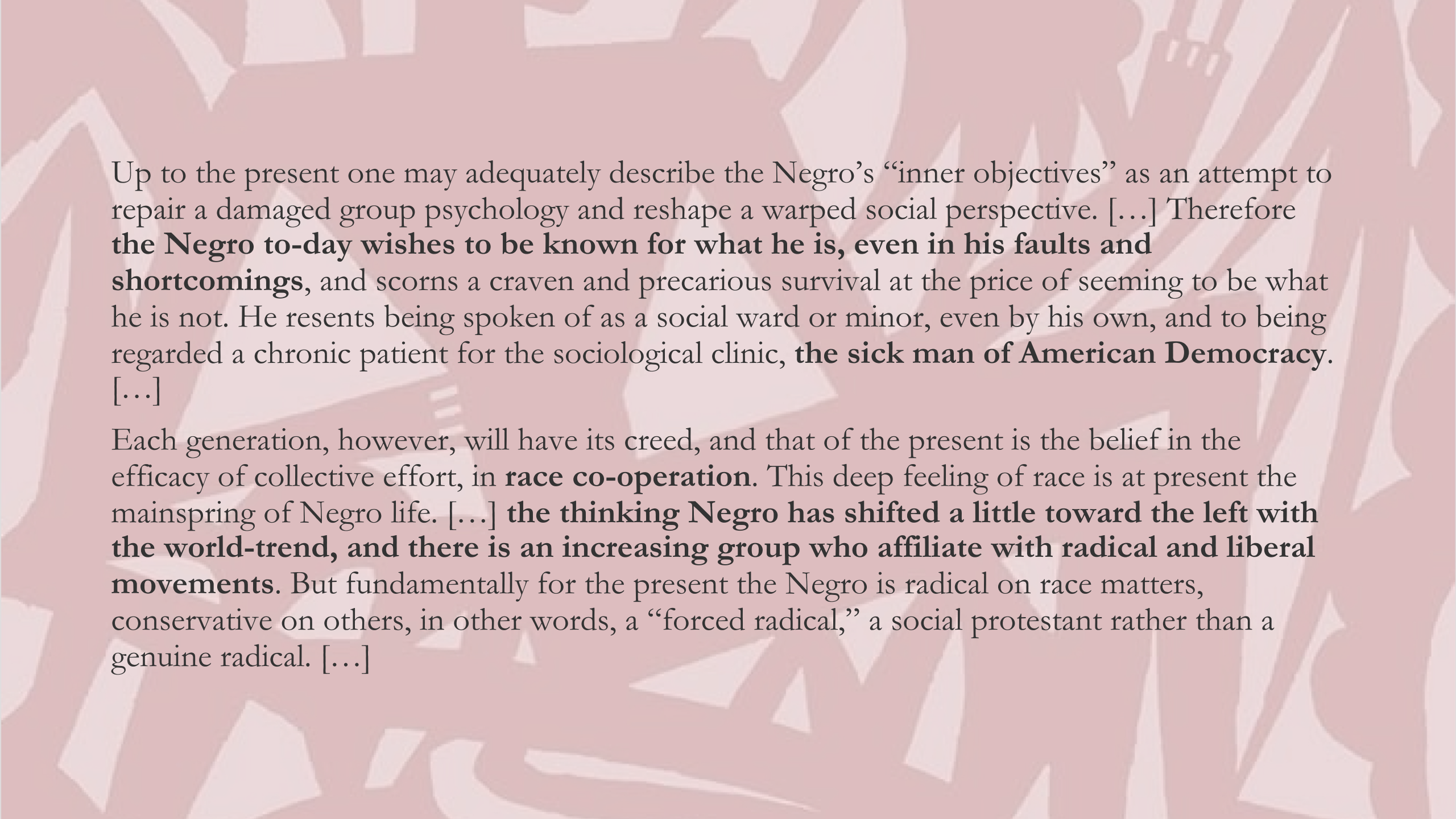
We have tomorrow  
Bright before us  
Like a flame.  
Yesterday, a night-gone thing  
A sun-down name.  
And dawn today  
Broad arch above the road we came.  
We march!

(Langston Hughes, “Youth” [1924])

[...] The day of “aunties,” “uncles” and “mammies” is equally gone. **Uncle Tom and Sambo** have passed on, and even the “Colonel” and “George” play barnstorm rôles from which they escape with relief when the public spotlight is off. [...] that shifting of the Negro population which has made the Negro problem no longer exclusively or even predominantly Southern. [...] Then the trend of migration has not only been toward the North and the Central Midwest, **but city-ward and to the great centers of industry**[...] **In the very process of being transplanted, the Negro is becoming transformed.** [...] The wash and rush of this human tide on the beach line of the northern city centers is to be explained primarily in terms of a new vision of opportunity, of social and economic freedom [...] **Take Harlem as an instance of this.** Here in Manhattan is not merely the largest Negro community in the world, but the first concentration in history of so many diverse elements of Negro life. **It has attracted the African, the West Indian, the Negro American; has brought together the Negro of the North and the Negro of the South; the man from the city and the man from the town and village; the peasant, the student, the business man, the professional man, artist, poet, musician, adventurer and worker, preacher and criminal, exploiter and social outcast.** [...] So what began in terms of segregation becomes more and more, as its elements mix and react, the laboratory of a great race-welding. [...] In Harlem, Negro life is seizing upon its first chances for group expression and self-determination. [...] Harlem has the same rôle to play for the New Negro as Dublin has had for the New Ireland or Prague for the New Czechoslovakia.

Harlem, I grant you, isn't typical—but it is significant, it is prophetic. [...] The challenge of the new intellectuals among them is clear enough—the **“race radicals” and realists who have broken with the old epoch of philanthropic guidance, sentimental appeal and protest.** [...] The Negro too, for his part, has idols of the tribe to smash. If on the one hand the white man has erred in making the Negro appear to be that which would excuse or extenuate his treatment of him, the Negro, in turn, has too often unnecessarily excused himself because of the way he has been treated. [...] There is a growing realization that in social effort the co-operative basis must supplant long-distance philanthropy, and that the only safeguard for mass relations in the future must be provided in the carefully maintained contacts of the enlightened minorities of both race groups. [...] Subtly the conditions that are molding a New Negro are molding a new American attitude.

However, this new phase of things is delicate; it will call for less charity but more justice; less help, but infinitely closer understanding. [...] The Negro to-day is inevitably moving forward under the control largely of his own objectives. What are these objectives? Those of his outer life are happily already well and finally formulated, for **they are none other than the ideals of American institutions and democracy.** Those of his inner life are yet in process of formation, for the new psychology at present is more of a consensus of feeling than of opinion, of attitude rather than of program. Still some points seem to have crystallized.



Up to the present one may adequately describe the Negro's "inner objectives" as an attempt to repair a damaged group psychology and reshape a warped social perspective. [...] Therefore **the Negro to-day wishes to be known for what he is, even in his faults and shortcomings**, and scorns a craven and precarious survival at the price of seeming to be what he is not. He resents being spoken of as a social ward or minor, even by his own, and to being regarded a chronic patient for the sociological clinic, **the sick man of American Democracy**. [...]

Each generation, however, will have its creed, and that of the present is the belief in the efficacy of collective effort, in **race co-operation**. This deep feeling of race is at present the mainspring of Negro life. [...] **the thinking Negro has shifted a little toward the left with the world-trend, and there is an increasing group who affiliate with radical and liberal movements**. But fundamentally for the present the Negro is radical on race matters, conservative on others, in other words, a "forced radical," a social protestant rather than a genuine radical. [...]

The Negro mind reaches out as yet to **nothing but American wants, American ideas**. But this forced attempt to build his Americanism on race values is a unique social experiment, and its ultimate success is **impossible except through the fullest sharing of American culture and institutions**. [...] So the choice is not between one way for the Negro and another way for the rest, but between American institutions frustrated on the one hand and American ideals progressively fulfilled and realized on the other.

[...] We wish our race pride to be a healthier, more positive achievement than a feeling based upon a realization of the shortcomings of others. But all paths toward the attainment of a sound social attitude have been difficult; only a relatively few enlightened minds have been able as the phrase puts it “to rise above” prejudice. [...] It must be increasingly recognized that the Negro has already made very substantial contributions, not only in his folk-art, music especially, which has always found appreciation, but in larger, though humbler and less acknowledged ways. For generations the Negro **has been the peasant matrix of that section of America which has most undervalued him, and here he has contributed not only materially in labor and in social patience, but spiritually as well. The South has unconsciously absorbed the gift of his folk-temperament.** In less than half a generation it will be easier to recognize this, but the fact remains that a leaven of humor, sentiment, imagination and tropic nonchalance has gone into the making of the South from a humble, unacknowledged source. [...]



From 1924: *Opportunity* devoted an issue to black writers  
... to 1929: stock market crash / resulting economic  
Great Depression

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**Jazz music:** Brass (trumpets, trombones and saxophones) and woodwind instruments; complex chords, syncopated rhythms, improvised solos

1926: Carl Van Vechten, *Nigger Heaven* (novel about Harlem) → “Negro Vogue”

***FIRE!!*** literary magazine, young black writers

**Themes:** marginality, alienation, folk material, the blues tradition, relationship with the white

# Alain Locke, *Negro Youth Speaks*

The Younger Generation comes, bringing its gifts. They are the first fruits of the Negro Renaissance. **Youth speaks, and the voice of the New Negro is heard.** [...] Here we have Negro youth, with arresting visions and vibrant prophecies; **forecasting** in the mirror of art what we must see and recognize in the streets of reality tomorrow, **foretelling** in new notes and accents the maturing speech of full racial utterance.

Primarily, of course, it is youth that speaks in the voice of Negro youth, but the overtones are distinctive; Negro youth speaks out of an unique experience and with a particular representativeness. [...] Our poets have now stopped speaking for the Negro – they speak as Negroes. Where formerly they spoke to others and tried to interpret, they now speak to their own and try to express. They have stopped posing, being nearer the attainment of poise.

The younger generation has thus achieved an objective attitude toward life. **Race for them is but an idiom of experience, a sort of added enriching adventure and discipline,** giving subtler overtones to life, making it more beautiful and interesting, even if more poignantly so. So experienced, it affords a deepening rather than a narrowing of social vision. The artistic problem of the Young Negro **has not been so much that of acquiring the outer mastery of form and technique as that of achieving an inner mastery of mood and spirit.** [...]

But America listens – perhaps in curiosity at first; later, we may be sure, in understanding. But – a moment of patience. [...] These constitute a new generation not because of years only, but because of **a new esthetic and a new philosophy of life**. [...] They are thoroughly modern, some of them ultra-modern, and Negro thoughts now wear the uniform of the age.

Through their work, these younger artists have declared for a **lustly vigorous realism**; the same that is molding contemporary American letters, but their achievement of it, as it has been doubly difficult, is doubly significant. The elder generation of Negro writers expressed itself in **cautious moralism and guarded idealizations**; the trammels of Puritanism were on its mind because the repressions of prejudice were heavy on its heart. They felt art must fight social battles and compensate social wrongs; “Be representative”: put the better foot foremost, was the underlying mood. Just as with the Irish Renaissance, there were the riots and controversies over Synge’s folk plays and other frank realisms of the younger school, so we are having and will have turbulent discussion and dissatisfaction with the stories, plays and poems of the younger Negro group. But writers like Rudolph Fisher, Zora Hurston, Jean Toomer, Eric Walrond, Willis Richardson, and Langston Hughes take their material objectively with detached artistic vision; they have no thought of their racy folk types as typical of anything but themselves or of their being taken or mistaken as racially representative. [...]

The newer motive, then, in being racial is to be so purely for the sake of art. Nowhere is this more apparent, or more justified than in the increasing tendency to **evolve from the racial substance something technically distinctive**, something that as an idiom of style may become a contribution to the general resources of art. In flavor of language, **flow of phrase, accent of rhythm in prose, verse and music, color and tone of imagery, idiom and timbre of emotion and symbolism**, it is the ambition and promise of Negro artists to make a distinctive contribution. [...]

There is in all the marriage of a fresh emotional endowment with the finest niceties of art. [...] **Not all the new art is in the field of pure art values. There is poetry of sturdy social protest, and fiction of calm, dispassionate social analysis.** But reason and realism have cured us of sentimentality: instead of the wail and appeal, there is challenge and indictment. Satire is just beneath the surface of our latest prose, and tonic irony has come into our poetic wells. [...]

Already enough progress has been made in this direction so that it is no longer true that the Negro mind is too engulfed in its own social dilemmas for control of the necessary perspective of art, or too depressed to attain the full horizons of self and social criticism. Indeed, by the evidence and promise of the cultured few, we are at last spiritually free, and offer through art an emancipating vision to America.

# Langston Hughes (1926)

## *The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain*

One of the most promising of the young Negro poets said to me once, **“I want to be a poet—not a Negro poet,”** meaning, I believe, **“I want to write like a white poet”**; meaning subconsciously, **“I would like to be a white poet”**; meaning behind that, **“I would like to be white.”** [...] I doubted then that, with his desire to run away spiritually from his race, this boy would ever be a great poet. But this is the mountain standing in the way of any true Negro art in America—this urge within the race toward whiteness, the desire to pour racial individuality into the mold of American standardization, and to be as little Negro and as much American as possible.

But let us look at the immediate background of this young poet. His family is of what I suppose one would call the Negro middle class [...]. **A frequent phrase from the father is, “Look how well a white man does things.”** And so the word white comes to be unconsciously a symbol of all virtues. It holds for the children beauty, morality, and money. The whisper of “I want to be white” runs silently through their minds. [...] He is never taught to see that beauty. He is taught rather not to see it, or if he does, to be ashamed of it when it is not according to Caucasian patterns.

For racial culture the home of a self-styled “high-class” Negro has nothing better to offer. Instead there will perhaps be more aping of things white than in a less cultured or less wealthy home. The father is perhaps a doctor, lawyer, landowner, or politician. [...] And **they themselves draw a color line**. In the North they go to white theaters and white movies. And in the South they have at least two cars and house “like white folks.”[...]

But then there are **the low-down folks, the so-called common element**, and they are the majority—may the Lord be praised! [...] And perhaps these common people will give to the world its truly great Negro artist, the one who is not afraid to be himself. Whereas the better-class Negro would tell the artist what to do, the people at least let him alone when he does appear. And they are not ashamed of him—if they know he exists at all. And they accept what beauty is their own without question.[...]

A prominent Negro clubwoman in Philadelphia paid eleven dollars to hear Raquel Meller sing Andalusian popular songs. But she told me a few weeks before she would not think of going to hear “that woman,” Clara Smith, a great black artist, sing Negro folksongs.[...]

**The road for the serious black artist, then, who would produce a racial art is most certainly rocky and the mountain is high.** Until recently he received almost no encouragement for his work from either white or colored people. The fine novels of Chesnut go out of print with neither race noticing their passing. [...]

The present vogue in things Negro, although it may do as much harm as good for the budding colored artist, has at least done this: it has brought him forcibly to the attention of his own people among whom for so long, unless the other race had noticed him beforehand, he was a prophet with little honor. [...]

**The Negro artist works against an undertow of sharp criticism and misunderstanding from his own group and unintentional bribes from the whites.** “O, be respectable, write about nice people, show how good we are,” say the Negroes. “Be stereotyped, don’t go too far, don’t shatter our illusions about you, don’t amuse us too seriously. **We will pay you,” say the whites.** [...]

**Most of my own poems are racial in theme and treatment,** derived from the life I know. In many of them I try to grasp and hold some of the meanings and rhythms of jazz. I am as sincere as I know how to be in these poems and yet after every reading I answer questions like these from my own people: **Do you think Negroes should always write about Negroes?** I wish you wouldn’t read some of your poems to white folks. How do you find anything interesting in a place like a cabaret? Why do you write about black people? You aren’t black. What makes you do so many jazz poems?

But jazz to me is one of the inherent expressions of Negro life in America: the eternal tom-tom beating in the Negro soul [...]. Yet the Philadelphia clubwoman is ashamed to say that her race created it and she does not like me to write about it. **The old subconscious “white is best” runs through her mind.** [...] But, to my mind, it is the duty of the **younger Negro artist**, if he accepts any duties at all from outsiders, to change through the force of his art that old whispering “I want to be white,” hidden in the aspirations of his people, to **“Why should I want to be white? I am a Negro—and beautiful!”**

**So I am ashamed for the black poet who says, “I want to be a poet, not a Negro poet,”** as though his own racial world were not as interesting as any other world.[...] We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express **our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame.** If white people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, it doesn't matter. We know we are **beautiful.** And **ugly** too. The tom-tom cries and the tom-tom laughs. If colored people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, their displeasure doesn't matter either. We build our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know how, and we stand on top of the mountain, free within ourselves.



**Nella Larsen**

**Chicago, 1891**

**New York, 1964**

Danish mother and West Indian father

1907 leaves Chicago

Studied at Fisk University (black college in Nashville, TN)

During the journey from Chicago to Nashville she experienced segregation: after crossing the Ohio River “there was a general shift of seating, and Larsen was introduced to the Jim Crow car”

Children’s librarian, then nurse (Brooklyn hospital)

1928 *Quicksand*

1929 *Passing*

1930 Guggenheim Fellowship (first Black woman )



**19<sup>th</sup> century** “tragic mulatto”: *The Quadroons* and *Clotel*

**Passing:** a black person disguises as a white person so as to escape racial segregation and discrimination

**1920** Census dropped the category “mulatto”: every American had to be “one thing or the other,” black or white

Charles S. Johnson, sociologist, calculated that **355,000** blacks had passed **between 1900 and 1920**

*Fiction:*

1893 Kate Chopin, “**Désirée’s Baby**”

1912 James Weldon Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (published anonymously)

1961 John Howard Griffin, *Black Like Me*

2000 Philip Roth, *The Human Stain*

# PASSING

NELLA  
LARSEN

A  
NEW NOVEL  
BY THE AUTHOR OF  
"QUICKSAND"



ALFRED A KNOFF  
PUBLISHER, NEW YORK

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*Passing* is the story of two childhood friends, Clare Kendry and Irene Redfield, between Chicago and Harlem. The two women, both in a position to pass as white and both married to white men, are caught up in a relationship of dependence and attraction to each other.


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**Ch. 1.2.** Again she looked up, and for a moment her brown eyes **politely returned the stare of the other's black ones, which never for an instant fell** or wavered. Irene made a little mental shrug. Oh well, let her look! She tried to treat the woman and her watching with indifference, but she couldn't. All her efforts to ignore her, it, were futile. She stole another glance. Still looking. What strange languorous eyes she had!

And gradually there rose in Irene a small inner disturbance, odious and hatefully familiar. She laughed softly, but her eyes flashed.

Did that woman, could that woman, somehow know that here before her very eyes on the roof of the Drayton sat a Negro?

Absurd! Impossible! White people were so stupid about such things for all that they usually asserted that they were able to tell; and by the most ridiculous means, finger-nails, palms of hands, shapes of ears, teeth, and other equally silly rot. **They always took her for an Italian, a Spaniard, a Mexican, or a gipsy. Never, when she was alone, had they even remotely seemed to suspect that she was a Negro.** No, the woman sitting there staring at her couldn't possibly know.



Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” (*Screen*, 16: 3, 1975, pp. 803-16).

The spectator occupies the masculine subject position, and the woman on screen is his object of desire. As the negative opposite to the positive norm, the one who “lacks” something according to Freud’s theories, woman is represented in a constant relationship of subordination to the hegemonic agent/observer - the male character.

**Ch. 1.2.** The truth was, she was curious. There were things that she wanted to ask Clare Kendry. She wished to find out about **this hazardous business of “passing,”** this breaking away from all that was familiar and friendly to take one’s chance in another environment, not entirely strange, perhaps, but certainly not entirely friendly. What, for example, one did about background, **how one accounted for oneself.** And how one felt when one came into contact with other Negroes. But she couldn’t. She was unable to think of a single question that in its context or its phrasing was not too frankly curious, if not actually impertinent.

As if aware of her desire and her hesitation, Clare remarked, thoughtfully: “You know, ’Rene, I’ve often wondered why more coloured girls, girls like you and Margaret Hammer and Esther Dawson and—oh, lots of others—never ‘passed’ over. It’s such a frightfully easy thing to do. If one’s the type, all that’s needed is a little nerve.”

“What about background? Family, I mean. **Surely you can’t just drop down on people from nowhere** and expect them to receive you with open arms, can you?”

“Almost,” Clare asserted. “You’d be surprised, ’Rene, **how much easier that is with white people than with us.** Maybe because there are so many more of them, or maybe because they are secure and so don’t have to bother. I’ve never quite decided.”

Irene was inclined to be incredulous. “You mean that you didn’t have to explain where you came from? It seems impossible.”

Clare cast a glance of repressed amusement across the table at her. “As a matter of fact, I didn’t. Though I suppose under any other circumstances I might have had to provide some plausible tale to account for myself. I’ve a good imagination, so I’m sure I could have done it quite creditably, and credibly. But it wasn’t necessary. There were my aunts, you see, respectable and authentic enough for anything or anybody.”

“I see. They were ‘passing’ too.”

“No. They weren’t. They were white.” [...]

She looked up with a pointed and appealing effect, and, evidently finding the sympathetic expression on Irene’s face sufficient answer, went on. “**The aunts were queer. For all their Bibles and praying and ranting about honesty, they didn’t want anyone to know that their darling brother had seduced—ruined, they called it—a Negro girl.** They could excuse the ruin, but they couldn’t forgive the tar-brush. They forbade me to mention Negroes to the neighbours, or even to mention the south side. You may be sure that I didn’t. I’ll bet they were good and sorry afterwards.”

She laughed and the ringing bells in her laugh had a hard metallic sound.

“When the chance to get away came, that omission was of great value to me. When Jack, a schoolboy acquaintance of some people in the neighbourhood, turned up from South America with untold gold, there was no one to tell him that I was coloured, and many to tell him about the severity and the religiousness of Aunt Grace and Aunt Edna. You can guess the rest.

## deserters like me

1.3. [Clare] After taking up her own glass she informed them: “No, I have no boys and I don’t think I’ll ever have any. I’m afraid. **I nearly died of terror the whole nine months before Margery was born for fear that she might be dark.** Thank goodness, she turned out all right. But I’ll never risk it again. Never! The strain is simply too—too hellish.”

[...]

At that reply Clare turned on Irene her seductive caressing smile and remarked a little scoffingly: “I do think that coloured people—we—are too silly about some things. After all, the thing’s not important to Irene or hundreds of others. Not awfully, even to you, Gertrude. **It’s only deserters like me** who have to be afraid of freaks of the nature.

# John Bellew

1.3. “**Hello, Nig,**” was his greeting to Clare. [...] In Clare’s eyes, as she presented her husband, was a queer gleam, a jeer, it might be. Irene couldn’t define it. The mechanical professions that attend an introduction over, she inquired: “**Did you hear what Jack called me?**”

“Yes,” Gertrude answered, laughing with a dutiful eagerness.

Irene didn’t speak. Her gaze remained level on Clare’s smiling face. The black eyes fluttered down.

“Tell them, dear, why you call me that.”

The man chuckled, crinkling up his eyes, not, Irene was compelled to acknowledge, unpleasantly. He explained: “Well, you see, it’s like this. When we were first married, she was as white as—as—well as white as a lily. But I declare she’s gettin’ darker and darker. **I tell her if she don’t look out, she’ll wake up one of these days and find she’s turned into a nigger.**” [...]

Clare handed her husband his tea and laid her hand on his arm with an affectionate little gesture.

Speaking with confidence as well as with amusement, she said: “My goodness, Jack! **What difference would it make** if, after all these years, you were to find out that I was one or two per cent coloured?”

Bellew put out his hand in a repudiating fling, definite and final. “Oh, no, Nig,” he declared, “nothing like that with me. **I know you’re no nigger, so it’s all right. You can get as black as you please as far as I’m concerned, since I know you’re no nigger.** I draw the line at that. No niggers in my family. Never have been and never will be.”

An on-looker, Irene reflected, would have thought it a most congenial tea-party, all smiles and jokes and hilarious laughter. She said humorously: "So you dislike Negroes, Mr. Bellew?" But her amusement was at her thought, rather than her words.

John Bellew gave a short denying laugh. **"You got me wrong there, Mrs. Redfield. Nothing like that at all. I don't dislike them, I hate them. And so does Nig, for all she's trying to turn into one.** She wouldn't have a nigger maid around her for love nor money. Not that I'd want her to. They give me the creeps. The black scrimy devils."

This wasn't funny. Had Bellew, Irene inquired, ever known any Negroes? The defensive tone of her voice brought another start from the uncomfortable Gertrude, and, for all her appearance of serenity, a quick apprehensive look from Clare.

Bellew answered: "Thank the Lord, no! And never expect to! But I know people who've known them, better than they know their black selves. **And I read in the papers about them. Always robbing and killing people. And,**" he added darkly, "worse."

From Gertrude's direction came a queer little suppressed sound, a snort or a giggle. Irene couldn't tell which. There was a brief silence, during which she feared that her self control was about to prove too frail a bridge to support her mounting anger and indignation. She had a leaping desire to shout at the man beside her: "And you're sitting here surrounded by three black devils, drinking tea."



# Harlem

2.2. This, Irene told her, was the year **1927** in the city of **New York**, and hundreds of white people of Hugh Wentworth's type came to affairs in Harlem, more all the time. So many that Brian had said: "Pretty soon the coloured people won't be allowed in at all, or will have to sit in Jim Crowed sections."

**"What do they come for?"**

**"Same reason you're here, to see Negroes."**

**"But why?"**

"Various motives," Irene explained. "A few purely and frankly to enjoy themselves. Others to get material to turn into shekels. More, to gaze on these great and near great while they gaze on the Negroes."

Clare clapped her hands. "'Rene, suppose I come too! It sounds terribly interesting and amusing. And I don't see why I shouldn't."

Irene, who was regarding her through narrowed eyelids, had the same thought that she had had two years ago on the roof of the Drayton, that Clare Kendry was just a shade too good-looking. Her tone was on the edge of irony as she said: "You mean because so many other white people go?"

A pale rose-colour came into Clare's ivory cheeks. She lifted a hand in protest. "Don't be silly! Certainly not! I mean that in a crowd of that kind I shouldn't be noticed." [...]

But Clare, it was plain, had shut away reason as well as caution. She shook her head. "I can't, I can't," she said. "I would if I could, but I can't. You don't know, **you can't realize how I want to see Negroes, to be with them again, to talk with them, to hear them laugh.**"

**3.2.** She drew a quick, sharp breath. And for a long time sat staring down at the hands in her lap. Strange, she had not before realized how easily she could put Clare out of her life! She had only to tell John Bellew that his wife—No. Not that! But if he should somehow learn of these Harlem visits — Why should she hesitate? Why spare Clare?

But she shrank away from the idea of telling that man, Clare Kendry's white husband, anything that would lead him to suspect that his wife was a Negro. Nor could she write it, or telephone it, or tell it to someone else who would tell him.

She was caught between two allegiances, different, yet the same. Herself. Her race. Race! The thing that bound and suffocated her. Whatever steps she took, or if she took none at all, something would be crushed. A person or the race. Clare, herself, or the race. Or, it might be, all three. Nothing, she imagined, was ever more completely sardonic.

Sitting alone in the quiet living-room in the pleasant firelight, **Irene Redfield wished, for the first time in her life, that she had not been born a Negro.** For the first time she suffered and rebelled because she was unable to disregard the burden of race. It was, she cried silently, enough to suffer as a woman, an individual, on one's own account, without having to suffer for the race as well. It was a brutality, and undeserved. Surely, no other people so cursed as Ham's dark children.

# lynching

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After the boys had gone up to their own floor, Irene said suavely: "I do wish, Brian, that you wouldn't talk about lynching before Ted and Junior. It was really inexcusable for you to bring up a thing like that at dinner. There'll be time enough for them to learn about such horrible things when they're older." [...]

"[...] What was the use of our trying to keep them from learning the word 'nigger' and its connotation? They found out, didn't they? And how? Because somebody called Junior a dirty nigger."

"Just the same you're not to talk to them about the race problem. I won't have it."

They glared at each other.

"I tell you, Irene, they've got to know these things, and it might as well be now as later."

"They do not!" she insisted, forcing back the tears of anger that were threatening to fall.

Brian growled: "I can't understand how anybody as intelligent as you like to think you are can show evidences of such stupidity." He looked at her in a puzzled harassed way.

"Stupid!" she cried. "Is it stupid to want my children to be happy?" Her lips were quivering.

"At the expense of proper preparation for life and their future happiness, yes. And I'd feel I hadn't done my duty by them if I didn't give them some inkling of what's before them. It's the least I can do. I wanted to get them out of this hellish place years ago. You wouldn't let me. I gave up the idea, because you objected. Don't expect me to give up everything."

## “The party began gaily”

3.4. They had just found seats when the door-bell rang and Felise called over to him to go and answer it.

In the next moment Irene heard his voice in the hall, carelessly polite: “Your wife? Sorry. I’m afraid you’re wrong. Perhaps next—”

Then the roar of John Bellew’s voice above all the other noises of the room: “I’m *not* wrong! I’ve been to the Redfields and I know she’s with them. You’d better stand out of my way and save yourself trouble in the end.”

“What is it, Dave?” Felise ran out to the door.

And so did Brian. Irene heard him saying: “I’m Redfield. What the devil’s the matter with you?”

But Bellew didn’t heed him. He pushed past them all into the room and strode towards Clare. They all looked at her as she got up from her chair, backing a little from his approach.

**“So you’re a nigger, a damned dirty nigger!” His voice was a snarl and a moan, an expression of rage and of pain. [...]**

What happened next, Irene Redfield never afterwards allowed herself to remember. Never clearly. One moment Clare had been there, a vital glowing thing, like a flame of red and gold. The next she was gone.

There was a gasp of horror, and above it a sound not quite human, like a beast in agony. **“Nig! My God! Nig!”**

A frenzied rush of feet down long flights of stairs. The slamming of distant doors. Voices. Irene stayed behind. She sat down and remained quite still, staring at a ridiculous Japanese print on the wall across the room.

Gone! The soft white face, the bright hair, the disturbing scarlet mouth, the dreaming eyes, the caressing smile, the whole torturing loveliness that had been Clare Kendry. That beauty that had torn at Irene’s placid life.

Gone! The mocking daring, the gallantry of her pose, the ringing bells of her laughter. Irene wasn’t sorry. She was amazed, incredulous almost.

What would the others think? **That Clare had fallen? That she had deliberately leaned backward? Certainly one or the other. Not—**

But she mustn’t, she warned herself, think of that. She was too tired, and too shocked. And, indeed, both were true. She was utterly weary, and she was violently staggered. But her thoughts reeled on. If only she could be as free of mental as she was of bodily vigour; could only put from her memory the vision of her hand on Clare’s arm!

**“It was an accident, a terrible accident,”** she muttered fiercely. *“It was.”*