Angleški jezik – vaje

(PK1 AJ)

Ameriška književnost skozi zgodovino: izbor besedil

American Literature through History: A Reader

Nada Marija Grošelj

Filozofska fakulteta Univerze v Ljubljani

2021

Contents

Periods of American Literature...3

The Romantic Period: Nathaniel Hawthorne: Young Goodman Brown (1835)....12

The Romantic Period: Edgar Allan Poe: The Cask of Amontillado (1846)...........21

Bridging Romanticism and Realism: Emily Dickinson (fl. 1862)........................26

The Modernist Period: Thomas Stearns Eliot: Ash-Wednesday (1930)..............29

Southern Gothic: An Introduction..36

Southern Gothic: Truman Capote: Miriam (1945)..59

Southern Gothic: Flannery O'Connor: A Good Man Is Hard To Find (1953)........67

The Contemporary Period: Raymond Carver: They're Not Your Husband (1973)..80

Periods of American Literature

Source: https://www.britannica.com/list/periods-of-american-literature

WRITTEN BY
J.E. Luebering
J.E. Luebering is Executive Director of the Core Editorial Group at Encyclopaedia Britannica. He oversees the team of editors, writers, and researchers who create content for Britannica.com.

***

The history of American literature stretches across more than 400 years. It can be divided into five major periods, each of which has unique characteristics, notable authors, and representative works.

- ## The Colonial and Early National Period (17th century to 1830)

The first European settlers of North America wrote about their experiences starting in the 1600s. This was the earliest American literature: practical, straightforward, often derivative of literature in Great Britain, and focused on the future.

In its earliest days, during the 1600s, American literature consisted mostly of practical nonfiction written by British settlers who populated the colonies that would become the United States.

John Smith wrote histories of Virginia based on his experiences as an English explorer and a president of the Jamestown Colony. These histories, published in 1608 and 1624, are among the earliest works of American literature.

Nathaniel Ward and John Winthrop wrote books on religion, a topic of central concern in colonial America.

Anne Bradstreet's *The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung Up in America* (1650) may be the earliest collection of poetry written in and about America, although it was published in England.

A new era began when the United States declared its independence in 1776, and much new writing addressed the country's future. American poetry and fiction were largely modeled on what was being published overseas in Great Britain, and much of what American readers consumed also came from Great Britain.

The Federalist Papers (1787–88), by Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, shaped the political direction of the United States.

Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography*, which he wrote during the 1770s and '80s, told a quintessentially American life story.

Phillis Wheatley, an African woman enslaved in Boston, wrote the first African American book, *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* (1773). Philip Freneau was another notable poet of the era.

The first American novel, *The Power of Sympathy* by William Hill Brown, was published in 1789.

Olaudah Equiano's autobiography, *The Interesting Narrative* (1789), was among the earliest slave narratives and a forceful argument for abolition.

By the first decades of the 19th century, a truly American literature began to emerge. Though still derived from British literary tradition, the short stories and novels published from 1800 through the 1820s began to depict American society and explore the American landscape in an unprecedented manner.

Washington Irving published the collection of short stories and essays *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.* in 1819–20. It included "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" and "Rip Van Winkle," two of the earliest American short stories.

James Fenimore Cooper wrote novels of adventure about the frontiersman Natty Bumppo. These novels, called the Leatherstocking Tales (1823–41), depict his experiences in the American wilderness in both realistic and highly romanticized ways.

- ## The Romantic Period (1830 to 1870)

Romanticism is a way of thinking that values the individual over the group, the subjective over the objective, and a person's emotional experience over reason. It also values the wildness of nature over human-made order. Romanticism as a worldview took hold in western Europe in the late 18th century, and American writers embraced it in the early 19th century.

Edgar Allan Poe most vividly depicted, and inhabited, the role of the Romantic individual—a genius, often tormented and always struggling against convention—during the 1830s and up to his mysterious death in 1849.

Poe invented the modern detective story with "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841).

The poem "The Raven" (1845) is a gloomy depiction of lost love. Its eeriness is intensified by its meter and rhyme scheme.

The short stories "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839) and "The Cask of Amontillado" (1846) are gripping tales of horror.

In New England, several different groups of writers and thinkers emerged after 1830, each exploring the experiences of individuals in different segments of American society.

James Russell Lowell was among those who used humor and dialect in verse and prose to depict everyday life in the Northeast.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and Oliver Wendell Holmes were the most prominent of the upper-class Brahmins, who filtered their depiction of America through European models and sensibilities.

The Transcendentalists developed an elaborate philosophy that saw in all of creation a unified whole. Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote influential essays, while Henry David Thoreau wrote *Walden* (1854), an account of his life alone by Walden Pond. Margaret Fuller was editor of *The Dial*, an important Transcendentalist magazine.

Three men—Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, and Walt Whitman—began publishing novels, short stories, and poetry during the Romantic period that became some of the most-enduring works of American literature.

As a young man, Nathaniel Hawthorne published short stories, most notable among them the allegorical "Young Goodman Brown" (1835). In the 1840s he crossed paths with the Transcendentalists before he started writing his two most significant novels—*The Scarlet Letter* (1850) and *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851).

Herman Melville was one of Hawthorne's friends and neighbors. Hawthorne was also a strong influence on Melville's *Moby Dick* (1851), which was the culmination of Melville's early life of traveling and writing.

Walt Whitman wrote poetry that described his home, New York City. He refused the traditional constraints of rhyme and meter in favor of free verse in *Leaves of Grass* (1855), and his frankness in subject matter and tone repelled some critics. But the book, which went through many subsequent editions, became a landmark in American poetry, and it epitomized the ethos of the Romantic period.

During the 1850s, as the United States headed toward civil war, more and more stories by and about enslaved and free African Americans were written.

William Wells Brown published what is considered the first black American novel, *Clotel*, in 1853. He also wrote the first African American play to be published, *The Escape* (1858).

In 1859 Frances Ellen Watkins Harper and Harriet E. Wilson became the first black women to publish fiction in the United States.

Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, first published serially 1851–52, is credited with raising opposition in the North to slavery.

Emily Dickinson lived a life quite unlike other writers of the Romantic period: she lived largely in seclusion; only a handful of her poems were published before her death in 1886; and she was a woman working at a time when men dominated the literary scene. Yet her poems express a Romantic vision as clearly as Walt Whitman's or Edgar Allan Poe's. They are sharp-edged and emotionally intense. Five of her notable poems are

"I'm Nobody! Who are you?"

"Because I could not stop for Death –"

"My Life had stood – a Loaded Gun"

"A Bird, came down the Walk –"

"Safe in their Alabaster Chambers"

- ## Realism and Naturalism (1870 to 1910)

The human cost of the Civil War in the United States was immense: more than 2.3 million soldiers fought in the war, and perhaps as many as 851,000 people died in 1861–65. Walt Whitman claimed that "a great literature will…arise out of the era of those four years," and what emerged in the following decades was a literature that presented a detailed and unembellished vision of the world as it truly was. This was the essence of realism. Naturalism was an intensified form of realism. After the grim realities of a devastating war, they became writers' primary mode of expression.

Samuel Clemens was a typesetter, a journalist, a riverboat captain, and an itinerant laborer before he became, in 1863 at age 27, Mark Twain. He first used that name while reporting on politics in the Nevada Territory. It then appeared on the short story "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County," published in 1865, which catapulted him to national fame. Twain's story was a humorous tall tale, but its characters were realistic depictions of actual Americans. Twain deployed this combination of humor and realism throughout his writing. Some of his notable works include

Major novels: *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876), *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885)

Travel narratives: *The Innocents Abroad* (1869), *Roughing It* (1872), *Life on the Mississippi* (1883)

Short stories: "Jim Baker's Blue-Jay Yarn" (1880), "The Man that Corrupted Hadleyburg" (1899)

Naturalism, like realism, was a literary movement that drew inspiration from French authors of the 19th century who sought to document, through fiction, the reality that they saw around them, particularly among the middle and working classes living in cities.

Theodore Dreiser was foremost among American writers who embraced naturalism. His *Sister Carrie* (1900) is the most important American naturalist novel.

Maggie: A Girl of the Streets (1893) and *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895), by Stephen Crane, and *McTeague* (1899), *The Octopus* (1901), and *The Pit* (1903), by Frank Norris, are novels that vividly depict the reality of urban life, war, and capitalism.

Paul Laurence Dunbar was an African American writer who wrote poetry in black dialect—"Possum," "When de Co'n Pone's Hot"—that were popular with his white audience and gave them what they believed was reality for black Americans. Dunbar also wrote poems not in dialect—"We Wear the Mask," "Sympathy"—that exposed the reality of racism in America during Reconstruction and afterward.

Henry James shared the view of the realists and naturalists that literature ought to present reality, but his writing style and use of literary form sought to also create an aesthetic experience, not simply document truth. He was preoccupied with the clash in values between the United States and Europe. His writing shows features of both 19th-century realism and naturalism and 20th-century modernism. Some of his notable novels are

The American (1877)

The Portrait of a Lady (1881)

What Maisie Knew (1897)

The Wings of the Dove (1902)

The Golden Bowl (1904)

• The Modernist Period (1910 to 1945)

Advances in science and technology in Western countries rapidly intensified at the start of the 20th century and brought about a sense of unprecedented progress. The devastation of World War I and the Great Depression also caused widespread suffering in Europe and the United States. These contradictory impulses can be found swirling within modernism, a movement in the arts defined first and foremost as a radical break from the past. But this break was often an act of destruction, and it caused a loss of faith in traditional structures and beliefs. Despite, or perhaps because of, these contradictory impulses, the modernist period proved to be one of the richest and most productive in American literature.

A sense of disillusionment and loss pervades much American modernist fiction. That sense may be centered on specific individuals, or it may be directed toward American society or toward civilization generally. It may generate a nihilistic, destructive impulse, or it may express hope at the prospect of change.

F. Scott Fitzgerald skewered the American Dream in *The Great Gatsby* (1925).

Richard Wright exposed and attacked American racism in *Native Son* (1940).

Zora Neale Hurston told the story of a black woman's three marriages in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937).

Ernest Hemingway's early novels *The Sun Also Rises* (1926) and *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) articulated the disillusionment of the Lost Generation.

Willa Cather told hopeful stories of the American frontier, set mostly on the Great Plains, in *O Pioneers!* (1913) and *My Ántonia* (1918).

William Faulkner used stream-of-consciousness monologues and other formal techniques to break from past literary practice in *The Sound and the Fury* (1929).

John Steinbeck depicted the difficult lives of migrant workers in *Of Mice and Men* (1937) and *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939).

T.S. Eliot was an American by birth and, as of 1927, a British subject by choice. His fragmentary, multivoiced *The Waste Land* (1922) is the quintessential modernist poem, but his was not the dominant voice among American modernist poets.

Robert Frost and Carl Sandburg evocatively described the regions—New England and the Midwest, respectively—in which they lived.

The Harlem Renaissance produced a rich coterie of poets, among them Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, and Alice Dunbar Nelson.

Harriet Monroe founded *Poetry* magazine in Chicago in 1912 and made it the most important organ for poetry not just in the United States but for the English-speaking world.

During the 1920s Edna St. Vincent Millay, Marianne Moore, and E.E. Cummings expressed a spirit of revolution and experimentation in their poetry.

Drama came to prominence for the first time in the United States in the early 20th century. Playwrights drew inspiration from European theater but created plays that were uniquely and enduringly American.

Eugene O'Neill was the foremost American playwright of the period. His *Long Day's Journey into Night* (written 1939–41, performed 1956) was the high point of more than 20 years of creativity that began in 1920 with *Beyond the Horizon* and concluded with *The Iceman Cometh* (written 1939, performed 1946).

During the 1930s Lillian Hellman, Clifford Odets, and Langston Hughes wrote plays that exposed injustice in America.

Thornton Wilder presented a realistic (and enormously influential) vision of small-town America in *Our Town*, first produced in 1938.

- ## The Contemporary Period (1945 to present)

The United States, which emerged from World War II confident and economically strong, entered the Cold War in the late 1940s. This conflict with the Soviet Union shaped global politics for more than four decades, and the proxy wars and threat of nuclear annihilation that came to define it were just some of the influences shaping American literature during the second half of the 20th century. The 1950s and ’60s brought significant cultural shifts within the United States driven by the civil rights movement and the women’s movement. Prior to the last decades of the 20th century, American literature was largely the story of dead white men who had created Art and of living white men doing the same. By the turn of the 21st century, American literature had become a much more complex and inclusive story grounded on a wide-ranging body of past writings produced in the United States by people of different backgrounds and open to more Americans in the present day.

Literature written by African Americans during the contemporary period was shaped in many ways by Richard Wright, whose autobiography *Black Boy* was published in 1945. He left the United States for France after World War II, repulsed by the injustice and discrimination he faced as a black man in America; other black writers working from the 1950s through the 1970s also wrestled with the desires to escape an unjust society and to change it.

Ralph Ellison’s novel *Invisible Man* (1952) tells the story of an unnamed black man adrift in, and ignored by, America.

James Baldwin wrote essays, novels, and plays on race and sexuality throughout his life, but his first novel, *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953), was his most accomplished and influential.

Lorraine Hansberry’s *A Raisin in the Sun*, a play about the effects of racism in Chicago, was first performed in 1959.

Gwendolyn Brooks became, in 1950, the first African American poet to win a Pulitzer Prize.

The Black Arts movement was grounded in the tenets of black nationalism and sought to generate a uniquely black consciousness. The *Autobiography of Malcolm X* (1965), by Malcolm X and Alex Haley, is among its most-lasting literary expressions.

Toni Morrison’s first novel, *The Bluest Eye* (1970), launched a writing career that would put the lives of black women at its center. She received a Nobel Prize in 1993.

In the 1960s Alice Walker began writing novels, poetry, and short stories that reflected her involvement in the civil rights movement.

The American novel took on a dizzying number of forms after World War II. Realist, metafictional, postmodern, absurdist, autobiographical, short, long, fragmentary, feminist, stream of consciousness—these and dozens more labels can be applied to the vast output of American novelists. Little holds them together beyond their chronological proximity and engagement with contemporary American society. Among representative novels are

Norman Mailer: *The Naked and the Dead* (1948), *The Executioner's Song* (1979)

Vladimir Nabokov: *Lolita* (1955)

Jack Kerouac: *On the Road* (1957)

Thomas Pynchon: *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966)

Kurt Vonnegut: *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969)

Eudora Welty: *The Optimist's Daughter* (1972)

Philip Roth: *Portnoy's Complaint* (1969), *American Pastoral* (1997)

Ursula K. Le Guin: *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969)

Saul Bellow: *Humboldt's Gift* (1975)

Toni Morrison: *Song of Solomon* (1977), *Beloved* (1987)

Alice Walker: *The Color Purple* (1982)

Sandra Cisneros: *The House on Mango Street* (1983)

Jamaica Kincaid: *Annie John* (1984)

Maxine Hong Kingston: *Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book* (1989)

David Foster Wallace: *Infinite Jest* (1996)

Don DeLillo: *Underworld* (1997)

Ha Jin: *Waiting* (1999)

Jonathan Franzen: *The Corrections* (2001)

Junot Díaz: *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007)

Colson Whitehead: *The Underground Railroad* (2016)

The Beat movement was short-lived—starting and ending in the 1950s—but had a lasting influence on American poetry during the contemporary period. Allen Ginsberg's *Howl* (1956) pushed aside the formal, largely traditional poetic conventions that had come to dominate American poetry. Raucous, profane, and deeply moving, *Howl* reset Americans' expectations for poetry during the second half of the 20th century and beyond. Among the important poets of this period are Anne Sexton, Sylvia Plath, John Berryman, Donald Hall, Elizabeth Bishop, James Merrill, Nikki Giovanni, Robert Pinsky, Adrienne Rich, Rita Dove, Yusef Komunyakaa, W.S. Merwin, Tracy K. Smith.

In the early decades of the contemporary period, American drama was dominated by three men: Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, and Edward Albee. Miller's *Death of a Salesman* (1949) questioned the American Dream through the destruction of its main character, while Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947) and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1955) excavated his characters' dreams and frustrations. Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1962) rendered what might have been a benign domestic situation into something vicious and cruel. By the 1970s the face of American drama had begun to change, and it continued to diversify into the 21st century. Notable dramatists include David Mamet, Amiri Baraka, Sam Shepard, August Wilson, Ntozake Shange, Wendy Wasserstein, Tony Kushner, David Henry Hwang, Richard Greenberg, Suzan-Lori Parks.

The Romantic Period

Nathaniel Hawthorne: Young Goodman Brown (1835)

Source: http://www.columbia.edu/itc/english/f1124y-001/resources/Young_Goodman_Brown.pdf

A Question to Consider:
Is there a moral or message to the story of Young Goodman Brown? And if so, what is it?

Young Goodman Brown
By Nathaniel Hawthorne (1835)

Young Goodman Brown came forth at sunset into the street at Salem village; but put his head back, after crossing the threshold, to exchange a parting kiss with his young wife. And Faith, as the wife was aptly named, thrust her own pretty head into the street, letting the wind play with the pink ribbons of her cap while she called to Goodman Brown.

"Dearest heart," whispered she, softly and rather sadly, when her lips were close to his ear, "prithee put off your journey until sunrise and sleep in your own bed to-night. A lone woman is troubled with such dreams and such thoughts that she's afeard of herself sometimes. Pray tarry with me this night, dear husband, of all nights in the year."

"My love and my Faith," replied young Goodman Brown, "of all nights in the year, this one night must I tarry away from thee. My journey, as thou callest it, forth and back again, must needs be done 'twixt now and sunrise. What, my sweet, pretty wife, dost thou doubt me already, and we but three months married?"

"Then God bless you!" said Faith, with the pink ribbons; "and may you find all well when you come back."

"Amen!" cried Goodman Brown. "Say thy prayers, dear Faith, and go to bed at dusk, and no harm will come to thee."

So they parted; and the young man pursued his way until, being about to turn the corner by the meeting-house, he looked back and saw the head of Faith still peeping after him with a melancholy air, in spite of her pink ribbons.

"Poor little Faith!" thought he, for his heart smote him. "What a wretch am I to leave her on such an errand! She talks of dreams, too. Methought as she spoke there was trouble in her face, as if a dream had warned her what work is to be done tonight. But no, no; 't would kill her to think it. Well, she's a blessed angel on earth; and after this one night I'll cling to her skirts and follow her to heaven."

With this excellent resolve for the future, Goodman Brown felt himself justified in making more haste on his present evil purpose. He had taken a dreary road, darkened by all the gloomiest trees of the forest, which barely stood aside to let the narrow path creep through, and closed immediately behind. It was all as lonely as could be; and there is this peculiarity in such a solitude, that the traveller knows not who may be concealed by the innumerable trunks and the thick boughs overhead; so that with lonely footsteps he may yet be passing through an unseen multitude.

"There may be a devilish Indian behind every tree," said Goodman Brown to himself; and he glanced fearfully behind him as he added, "What if the devil himself should be at my very elbow!"

His head being turned back, he passed a crook of the road, and, looking forward again, beheld the figure of a man, in grave and decent attire, seated at the foot of an old tree. He arose at Goodman Brown's approach and walked onward side by side with him.

"You are late, Goodman Brown," said he. "The clock of the Old South was striking as I came through Boston, and that is full fifteen minutes agone."

"Faith kept me back a while," replied the young man, with a tremor in his voice, caused by the sudden appearance of his companion, though not wholly unexpected.

It was now deep dusk in the forest, and deepest in that part of it where these two were journeying. As nearly as could be discerned, the second traveller was about fifty years old, apparently in the same rank of life as Goodman Brown, and bearing a considerable resemblance to him, though perhaps more in expression than features. Still they might have been taken for father and son. And yet, though the elder person was as simply clad as the younger, and as simple in manner too, he had an indescribable air of one who knew the world, and who would not have felt abashed at the governor's dinner table or in King William's court, were it possible that his affairs should call him thither. But the only thing about him that could be fixed upon as remarkable was his staff, which bore the likeness of a great black snake, so curiously wrought that it might almost be seen to twist and wriggle itself like a living serpent. This, of course, must have been an ocular deception, assisted by the uncertain light.

"Come, Goodman Brown," cried his fellow-traveller, "this is a dull pace for the beginning of a journey. Take my staff, if you are so soon weary."

"Friend," said the other, exchanging his slow pace for a full stop, "having kept covenant by meeting thee here, it is my purpose now to return whence I came. I have scruples touching the matter thou wot'st of."

"Sayest thou so?" replied he of the serpent, smiling apart. "Let us walk on, nevertheless, reasoning as we go; and if I convince thee not thou shalt turn back. We are but a little way in the forest yet."

"Too far! too far!" exclaimed the goodman, unconsciously resuming his walk. "My father never went into the woods on such an errand, nor his father before him. We have been a race of honest men and good Christians since the days of the martyrs; and shall I be the first of the name of Brown that ever took this path and kept" --

"Such company, thou wouldst say," observed the elder person, interpreting his pause. "Well said, Goodman Brown! I have been as well acquainted with your family as with ever a one among the Puritans; and that's no trifle to say. I helped your grandfather, the constable, when he lashed the Quaker woman so smartly through the streets of Salem; and it was I that brought your father a pitch-pine knot, kindled at my own hearth, to set fire to an Indian village, in King Philip's war. They were my good friends, both; and many a pleasant walk have we had along this path, and returned merrily after midnight. I would fain be friends with you for their sake."

"If it be as thou sayest," replied Goodman Brown, "I marvel they never spoke of these matters; or, verily, I marvel not, seeing that the least rumor of the sort would have driven them from New England. We are a people of prayer, and good works to boot, and abide no such wickedness."

"Wickedness or not," said the traveller with the twisted staff, "I have a very general acquaintance here in New England. The deacons of many a church have drunk the communion wine with me; the selectmen of divers towns make me their chairman; and a majority of the Great and General Court are firm supporters of my interest. The governor and I, too -- But these are state secrets."

"Can this be so?" cried Goodman Brown, with a stare of amazement at his undisturbed companion. "Howbeit, I have nothing to do with the governor and council; they have their own ways, and are no rule for a simple husbandman like me. But, were I to go on with thee, how should I meet the eye of that good old man, our minister, at Salem village? Oh, his voice would make me tremble both Sabbath day and lecture day."

Thus far the elder traveller had listened with due gravity; but now burst into a fit of irrepressible mirth, shaking himself so violently that his snake-like staff actually seemed to wriggle in sympathy.

"Ha! ha! ha!" shouted he again and again; then composing himself, "Well, go on, Goodman Brown, go on; but, prithee, don't kill me with laughing."

"Well, then, to end the matter at once," said Goodman Brown, considerably nettled, "there is my wife, Faith. It would break her dear little heart; and I'd rather break my own."

"Nay, if that be the case," answered the other, "e'en go thy ways, Goodman Brown. I would not for twenty old women like the one hobbling before us that Faith should come to any harm."

As he spoke he pointed his staff at a female figure on the path, in whom Goodman Brown recognized a very pious and exemplary dame, who had taught him his catechism in youth, and was still his moral and spiritual adviser, jointly with the minister and Deacon Gookin.

"A marvel, truly, that Goody Cloyse should be so far in the wilderness at nightfall," said he. "But with your leave, friend, I shall take a cut through the woods until we have left this Christian woman behind. Being a stranger to you, she might ask whom I was consorting with and whither I was going."

"Be it so," said his fellow-traveller. "Betake you to the woods, and let me keep the path."

Accordingly the young man turned aside, but took care to watch his companion, who advanced softly along the road until he had come within a staff's length of the old dame. She, meanwhile, was making the best of her way, with singular speed for so aged a woman, and mumbling some indistinct words -- a prayer, doubtless -- as she went. The traveller put forth his staff and touched her withered neck with what seemed the serpent's tail.

"The devil!" screamed the pious old lady.

"Then Goody Cloyse knows her old friend?" observed the traveller, confronting her and leaning on his writhing stick.

"Ah, forsooth, and is it your worship indeed?" cried the good dame. "Yea, truly is it, and in the very image of my old gossip, Goodman Brown, the grandfather of the silly fellow that now is. But -- would your worship believe it? -- my broomstick hath strangely disappeared, stolen, as I suspect, by that unhanged witch, Goody Cory, and that, too, when I was all anointed with the juice of smallage, and cinquefoil, and wolf's bane" -- "Mingled with fine wheat and the fat of a new-born babe," said the shape of old Goodman Brown.

"Ah, your worship knows the recipe," cried the old lady, cackling aloud. "So, as I was saying, being all ready for the meeting, and no horse to ride on, I made up my mind to foot it; for they tell me there is a nice young man to be taken into communion to-night. But now your good worship will lend me your arm, and we shall be there in a twinkling.

"That can hardly be," answered her friend. "I may not spare you my arm, Goody Cloyse; but here is my staff, if you will."

So saying, he threw it down at her feet, where, perhaps, it assumed life, being one of the rods which its owner had formerly lent to the Egyptian magi. Of this fact, however, Goodman Brown could not take cognizance. He had cast up his eyes in astonishment, and, looking down again, beheld neither Goody Cloyse nor the serpentine staff, but his fellow-traveller alone, who waited for him as calmly as if nothing had happened.

"That old woman taught me my catechism," said the young man; and there was a world of meaning in this simple comment.

They continued to walk onward, while the elder traveller exhorted his companion to make good speed and persevere in the path, discoursing so aptly that his arguments seemed rather to spring up in the bosom of his auditor than to be suggested by himself. As they went, he plucked a branch of maple to serve for a walking stick, and began to strip it of the twigs and little boughs, which were wet with evening dew. The moment his fingers touched them they became strangely withered and dried up as with a week's sunshine. Thus the pair proceeded, at a good free pace, until suddenly, in a gloomy hollow of the road, Goodman Brown sat himself down on the stump of a tree and refused to go any farther.

"Friend," said he, stubbornly, "my mind is made up. Not another step will I budge on this errand. What if a wretched old woman do choose to go to the devil when I thought she was going to heaven: is that any reason why I should quit my dear Faith and go after her?"

"You will think better of this by and by," said his acquaintance, composedly. "Sit here and rest yourself a while; and when you feel like moving again, there is my staff to help you along."

Without more words, he threw his companion the maple stick, and was as speedily out of sight as if he had vanished into the deepening gloom. The young man sat a few moments by the roadside, applauding himself greatly, and thinking with how clear a conscience he should meet the minister in his morning walk, nor shrink from the eye of good old Deacon Gookin. And what calm sleep would be his that very night, which was to have been spent so wickedly, but so purely and sweetly now, in the arms of Faith! Amidst these pleasant and praiseworthy meditations, Goodman Brown heard the tramp of horses along the road, and deemed it advisable to conceal himself within the verge of the forest, conscious of the guilty purpose that had brought him thither, though now so happily turned from it.

On came the hoof tramps and the voices of the riders, two grave old voices, conversing soberly as they drew near. These mingled sounds appeared to pass along the road, within a few yards of the young man's hiding-place; but, owing doubtless to the depth of the gloom at that particular spot, neither the travellers nor their steeds were visible. Though their figures brushed the small boughs by the wayside, it could not be seen that they intercepted, even for a moment, the faint gleam from the strip of bright sky athwart which they must have passed. Goodman Brown alternately crouched and stood on tiptoe, pulling aside the branches and thrusting forth his head as far as he durst without discerning so much as a shadow. It vexed him the more, because he could have sworn, were such a thing possible, that he recognized the voices of the minister and Deacon Gookin, jogging along quietly, as they were wont to do, when bound to some ordination or ecclesiastical council. While yet within hearing, one of the riders stopped to pluck a switch.

"Of the two, reverend sir," said the voice like the deacon's, "I had rather miss an ordination dinner than to-night's meeting. They tell me that some of our community are to be here from Falmouth and beyond, and others from Connecticut and Rhode Island, besides several of the Indian powwows, who, after their fashion, know almost as much deviltry as the best of us. Moreover, there is a goodly young woman to be taken into communion."

"Mighty well, Deacon Gookin!" replied the solemn old tones of the minister. "Spur up, or we shall be late. Nothing can be done, you know, until I get on the ground."

The hoofs clattered again; and the voices, talking so strangely in the empty air, passed on through the forest, where no church had ever been gathered or solitary Christian prayed. Whither, then, could these holy men be journeying so deep into the heathen wilderness? Young Goodman Brown caught hold of a tree for support, being

ready to sink down on the ground, faint and overburdened with the heavy sickness of his heart. He looked up to the sky, doubting whether there really was a heaven above him. Yet there was the blue arch, and the stars brightening in it.

"With heaven above and Faith below, I will yet stand firm against the devil!" cried Goodman Brown.

While he still gazed upward into the deep arch of the firmament and had lifted his hands to pray, a cloud, though no wind was stirring, hurried across the zenith and hid the brightening stars. The blue sky was still visible, except directly overhead, where this black mass of cloud was sweeping swiftly northward. Aloft in the air, as if from the depths of the cloud, came a confused and doubtful sound of voices. Once the listener fancied that he could distinguish the accents of towns-people of his own, men and women, both pious and ungodly, many of whom he had met at the communion table, and had seen others rioting at the tavern. The next moment, so indistinct were the sounds, he doubted whether he had heard aught but the murmur of the old forest, whispering without a wind. Then came a stronger swell of those familiar tones, heard daily in the sunshine at Salem village, but never until now from a cloud of night There was one voice of a young woman, uttering lamentations, yet with an uncertain sorrow, and entreating for some favor, which, perhaps, it would grieve her to obtain; and all the unseen multitude, both saints and sinners, seemed to encourage her onward.

"Faith!" shouted Goodman Brown, in a voice of agony and desperation; and the echoes of the forest mocked him, crying, "Faith! Faith!" as if bewildered wretches were seeking her all through the wilderness.

The cry of grief, rage, and terror was yet piercing the night, when the unhappy husband held his breath for a response. There was a scream, drowned immediately in a louder murmur of voices, fading into far-off laughter, as the dark cloud swept away, leaving the clear and silent sky above Goodman Brown. But something fluttered lightly down through the air and caught on the branch of a tree. The young man seized it, and beheld a pink ribbon.

"My Faith is gone!" cried he, after one stupefied moment. "There is no good on earth; and sin is but a name. Come, devil; for to thee is this world given."

And, maddened with despair, so that he laughed loud and long, did Goodman Brown grasp his staff and set forth again, at such a rate that he seemed to fly along the forest path rather than to walk or run. The road grew wilder and drearier and more faintly traced, and vanished at length, leaving him in the heart of the dark wilderness, still rushing onward with the instinct that guides mortal man to evil. The whole forest was peopled with frightful sounds -- the creaking of the trees, the howling of wild beasts, and the yell of Indians; while sometimes the wind tolled like a distant church bell, and sometimes gave a broad roar around the traveller, as if all Nature were laughing him to scorn. But he was himself the chief horror of the scene, and shrank not from its other horrors.

"Ha! ha! ha!" roared Goodman Brown when the wind laughed at him.

"Let us hear which will laugh loudest. Think not to frighten me with your deviltry. Come witch, come wizard, come Indian powwow, come devil himself, and here comes Goodman Brown. You may as well fear him as he fear you."

In truth, all through the haunted forest there could be nothing more frightful than the figure of Goodman Brown. On he flew among the black pines, brandishing his staff with frenzied gestures, now giving vent to an inspiration of horrid blasphemy, and now shouting forth such laughter as set all the echoes of the forest laughing like demons

around him. The fiend in his own shape is less hideous than when he rages in the breast of man. Thus sped the demoniac on his course, until, quivering among the trees, he saw a red light before him, as when the felled trunks and branches of a clearing have been set on fire, and throw up their lurid blaze against the sky, at the hour of midnight. He paused, in a lull of the tempest that had driven him onward, and heard the swell of what seemed a hymn, rolling solemnly from a distance with the weight of many voices. He knew the tune; it was a familiar one in the choir of the village meeting-house. The verse died heavily away, and was lengthened by a chorus, not of human voices, but of all the sounds of the benighted wilderness pealing in awful harmony together. Goodman Brown cried out, and his cry was lost to his own ear by its unison with the cry of the desert.

In the interval of silence he stole forward until the light glared full upon his eyes. At one extremity of an open space, hemmed in by the dark wall of the forest, arose a rock, bearing some rude, natural resemblance either to an alter or a pulpit, and surrounded by four blazing pines, their tops aflame, their stems untouched, like candles at an evening meeting. The mass of foliage that had overgrown the summit of the rock was all on fire, blazing high into the night and fitfully illuminating the whole field. Each pendent twig and leafy festoon was in a blaze. As the red light arose and fell, a numerous congregation alternately shone forth, then disappeared in shadow, and again grew, as it were, out of the darkness, peopling the heart of the solitary woods at once.

"A grave and dark-clad company," quoth Goodman Brown.

In truth they were such. Among them, quivering to and fro between gloom and splendor, appeared faces that would be seen next day at the council board of the province, and others which, Sabbath after Sabbath, looked devoutly heavenward, and benignantly over the crowded pews, from the holiest pulpits in the land. Some affirm that the lady of the governor was there. At least there were high dames well known to her, and wives of honored husbands, and widows, a great multitude, and ancient maidens, all of excellent repute, and fair young girls, who trembled lest their mothers should espy them. Either the sudden gleams of light flashing over the obscure field bedazzled Goodman Brown, or he recognized a score of the church members of Salem village famous for their especial sanctity. Good old Deacon Gookin had arrived, and waited at the skirts of that venerable saint, his revered pastor. But, irreverently consorting with these grave, reputable, and pious people, these elders of the church, these chaste dames and dewy virgins, there were men of dissolute lives and women of spotted fame, wretches given over to all mean and filthy vice, and suspected even of horrid crimes. It was strange to see that the good shrank not from the wicked, nor were the sinners abashed by the saints. Scattered also among their pale-faced enemies were the Indian priests, or powwows, who had often scared their native forest with more hideous incantations than any known to English witchcraft.

"But where is Faith?" thought Goodman Brown; and, as hope came into his heart, he trembled.

Another verse of the hymn arose, a slow and mournful strain, such as the pious love, but joined to words which expressed all that our nature can conceive of sin, and darkly hinted at far more. Unfathomable to mere mortals is the lore of fiends. Verse after verse was sung; and still the chorus of the desert swelled between like the deepest tone of a mighty organ; and with the final peal of that dreadful anthem there came a sound, as if the roaring wind, the rushing streams, the howling beasts, and every other voice of the unconcerted wilderness were mingling and according with the voice of guilty man in homage to the prince of all. The four blazing pines threw up a loftier flame, and obscurely discovered shapes and

visages of horror on the smoke wreaths above the impious assembly. At the same moment the fire on the rock shot redly forth and formed a glowing arch above its base, where now appeared a figure. With reverence be it spoken, the figure bore no slight similitude, both in garb and manner, to some grave divine of the New England churches.

"Bring forth the converts!" cried a voice that echoed through the field and rolled into the forest.

At the word, Goodman Brown stepped forth from the shadow of the trees and approached the congregation, with whom he felt a loathful brotherhood by the sympathy of all that was wicked in his heart. He could have well-nigh sworn that the shape of his own dead father beckoned him to advance, looking downward from a smoke wreath, while a woman, with dim features of despair, threw out her hand to warn him back. Was it his mother? But he had no power to retreat one step, nor to resist, even in thought, when the minister and good old Deacon Gookin seized his arms and led him to the blazing rock. Thither came also the slender form of a veiled female, led between Goody Cloyse, that pious teacher of the catechism, and Martha Carrier, who had received the devil's promise to be queen of hell. A rampant hag was she. And there stood the proselytes beneath the canopy of fire.

"Welcome, my children," said the dark figure, "to the communion of your race. Ye have found thus young your nature and your destiny. My children, look behind you!"

They turned; and flashing forth, as it were, in a sheet of flame, the fiend worshippers were seen; the smile of welcome gleamed darkly on every visage.

"There," resumed the sable form, "are all whom ye have reverenced from youth. Ye deemed them holier than yourselves, and shrank from your own sin, contrasting it with their lives of righteousness and prayerful aspirations heavenward. Yet here are they all in my worshipping assembly. This night it shall be granted you to know their secret deeds: how hoary-bearded elders of the church have whispered wanton words to the young maids of their households; how many a woman, eager for widows' weeds, has given her husband a drink at bedtime and let him sleep his last sleep in her bosom; how beardless youths have made haste to inherit their fathers' wealth; and how fair damsels -- blush not, sweet ones -- have dug little graves in the garden, and bidden me, the sole guest to an infant's funeral. By the sympathy of your human hearts for sin ye shall scent out all the places -- whether in church, bedchamber, street, field, or forest -- where crime has been committed, and shall exult to behold the whole earth one stain of guilt, one mighty blood spot. Far more than this. It shall be yours to penetrate, in every bosom, the deep mystery of sin, the fountain of all wicked arts, and which inexhaustibly supplies more evil impulses than human power -- than my power at its utmost -- can make manifest in deeds. And now, my children, look upon each other."

They did so; and, by the blaze of the hell-kindled torches, the wretched man beheld his Faith, and the wife her husband, trembling before that unhallowed altar.

"Lo, there ye stand, my children," said the figure, in a deep and solemn tone, almost sad with its despairing awfulness, as if his once angelic nature could yet mourn for our miserable race. "Depending upon one another's hearts, ye had still hoped that virtue were not all a dream. Now are ye undeceived. Evil is the nature of mankind. Evil must be your only happiness. Welcome again, my children, to the communion of your race."

"Welcome," repeated the fiend worshippers, in one cry of despair and triumph.

And there they stood, the only pair, as it seemed, who were yet hesitating on the verge of wickedness in this dark world. A basin was hollowed, naturally, in the rock. Did it contain water, reddened by the lurid light? or was it blood? or, perchance, a liquid flame? Herein did the shape of evil dip his hand and prepare to lay the mark of baptism upon their foreheads, that they might be partakers of the mystery of sin, more conscious of the secret guilt of others, both in deed and thought, than they could now be of their own. The husband cast one look at his pale wife, and Faith at him. What polluted wretches would the next glance show them to each other, shuddering alike at what they disclosed and what they saw!

"Faith! Faith!" cried the husband, "look up to heaven, and resist the wicked one."

Whether Faith obeyed he knew not. Hardly had he spoken when he found himself amid calm night and solitude, listening to a roar of the wind which died heavily away through the forest. He staggered against the rock, and felt it chill and damp; while a hanging twig, that had been all on fire, besprinkled his cheek with the coldest dew.

The next morning young Goodman Brown came slowly into the street of Salem village, staring around him like a bewildered man. The good old minister was taking a walk along the graveyard to get an appetite for breakfast and meditate his sermon, and bestowed a blessing, as he passed, on Goodman Brown. He shrank from the venerable saint as if to avoid an anathema. Old Deacon Gookin was at domestic worship, and the holy words of his prayer were heard through the open window. "What God doth the wizard pray to?" quoth Goodman Brown. Goody Cloyse, that excellent old Christian, stood in the early sunshine at her own lattice, catechizing a little girl who had brought her a pint of morning's milk. Goodman Brown snatched away the child as from the grasp of the fiend himself. Turning the corner by the meeting-house, he spied the head of Faith, with the pink ribbons, gazing anxiously forth, and bursting into such joy at sight of him that she skipped along the street and almost kissed her husband before the whole village. But Goodman Brown looked sternly and sadly into her face, and passed on without a greeting.

Had Goodman Brown fallen asleep in the forest and only dreamed a wild dream of a witch-meeting?

Be it so if you will; but, alas! it was a dream of evil omen for young Goodman Brown. A stern, a sad, a darkly meditative, a distrustful, if not a desperate man did he become from the night of that fearful dream. On the Sabbath day, when the congregation were singing a holy psalm, he could not listen because an anthem of sin rushed loudly upon his ear and drowned all the blessed strain. When the minister spoke from the pulpit with power and fervid eloquence, and, with his hand on the open Bible, of the sacred truths of our religion, and of saint-like lives and triumphant deaths, and of future bliss or misery unutterable, then did Goodman Brown turn pale, dreading lest the roof should thunder down upon the gray blasphemer and his hearers. Often, waking suddenly at midnight, he shrank from the bosom of Faith; and at morning or eventide, when the family knelt down at prayer, he scowled and muttered to himself, and gazed sternly at his wife, and turned away. And when he had lived long, and was borne to his grave a hoary corpse, followed by Faith, an aged woman, and children and grandchildren, a goodly procession, besides neighbors not a few, they carved no hopeful verse upon his tombstone, for his dying hour was gloom.

The Romantic Period

Edgar Allan Poe: The Cask of Amontillado (1846)

Source: Edgar Allan Poe: *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*. London, New York: Penguin Random House, 1982.

A Question to Consider:
In which passage(s) does the narrator mention his servants, and what does his attitude toward them reveal about his attitude to, and view of, humanity?

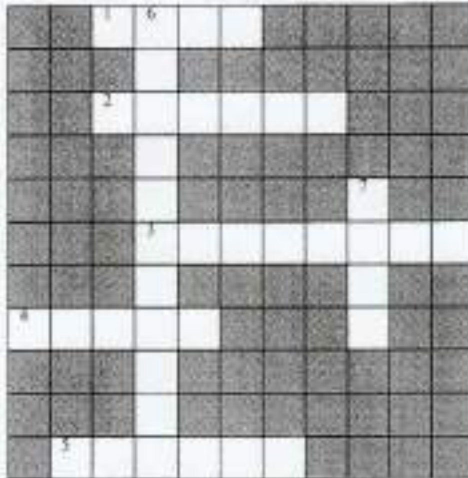
Fill out the crossword puzzle. The words matching the Slovene descriptions are given at the bottom in jumbled order.

ACROSS

1. Sod
2. Obleka dvornega norca
3. Nekaznovanost
4. Grobnica, klet
5. Zidarska žlica

DOWN

6. Vrsta vina
7. Cev; tu: vrsta vinskega soda



Words to be inserted: vault, amontillado, cask, pipe, impunity, trowel, motley.

THE CASK OF AMONTILLADO

THE thousand injuries of Fortunato I had borne as I best could; but when he ventured upon insult, I vowed revenge. You, who so well know the nature of my soul, will not suppose, however, that I gave utterance to a threat. *At length* I would be avenged; this was a point definitively settled—but the very definitiveness with which it was resolved, precluded the idea of risk. I must not only punish, but punish with impunity. A wrong is unredressed when retribution overtakes its redresser. It is equally unredressed when the avenger fails to make himself felt as such to him who has done the wrong.

It must be understood, that neither by word nor deed had I given Fortunato cause to doubt my good-will. I continued, as was my wont, to smile in his face, and he did not perceive that my smile *now* was at the thought of his immolation.

He had a weak point—this Fortunato—although in other regards he was a man to be respected and even feared. He prided himself on his connoisseurship in wine. Few Italians have the true virtuoso spirit. For the most part their enthusiasm is adopted to suit the time and opportunity—to practise imposture upon the British and Austrian *millionnaires*. In painting and gemmary Fortunato, like his countrymen, was a quack—but in the matter of old wines he was sincere. In this respect I did not differ from him materially: I was skilful in the Italian vintages myself, and bought largely whenever I could.

It was about dusk, one evening during the supreme madness of the carnival season, that I encountered my friend. He accosted me with excessive warmth, for he had been drinking much. The man wore motley. He had on a tight-fitting parti-striped dress, and his head was surmounted by the conical cap and bells. I was so pleased to see him, that I thought I should never have done wringing his hand.

I said to him: "My dear Fortunato, you are luckily met. How remarkably well you are looking to-day! But I have received a pipe of what passes for Amontillado, and I have my doubts."

"How?" said he, "Amontillado? A pipe? Impossible! And in the middle of the carnival!"

"I have my doubts," I replied; "and I was silly enough to pay the full Amontillado price without consulting you in the matter. You were not to be found, and I was fearful of losing a bargain."

"Amontillado!"

"I have my doubts."

"Amontillado!"

"And I must satisfy them."

"Amontillado!"

"As you are engaged, I am on my way to Luchesi. If any one has a critical turn, it is he. He will tell me——"

"Luchesi cannot tell Amontillado from Sherry."

"And yet some fools will have it that his taste is a match for your own."

"Come, let us go."

"Whither?"

"To your vaults."

"My friend, no; I will not impose upon your good nature. I perceive you have an engagement. Luchesi——"

"I have no engagement;—come."

"My friend, no. It is not the engagement, but the severe cold with which I perceive you are afflicted. The vaults are insufferably damp. They are encrusted with nitre."

"Let us go, nevertheless. The cold is merely nothing. Amontillado! You have been imposed upon. And as for Luchesi, he cannot distinguish Sherry from Amontillado."

Thus speaking, Fortunato possessed himself of my arm. Putting on a mask of black silk, and drawing a *roquelaire* closely about my person, I suffered him to hurry me to my palazzo.

There were no attendants at home; they had absconded to make merry in honor of the time. I had told them that I should not return until the morning, and had given them explicit orders not to stir from the house. These orders were sufficient, I well knew, to insure their immediate disappearance, one and all, as soon as my back was turned.

I took from their sconces two flambeaux, and giving one to Fortunato, bowed him through several suites of rooms to the archway that led into the vaults. I passed down a long and winding staircase, requesting him to be cautious as he followed. We came at length to the foot of the descent, and stood together on the damp ground of the catacombs of the Montresors.

The gait of my friend was unsteady, and the bells upon his cap jingled as he strode.

"The pipe?" said he.

"It is farther on," said I; "but observe the white web-work which gleams from these cavern walls."

He turned toward me, and looked into my eyes with two filmy orbs that distilled the rheum of intoxication.

"Nitre?" he asked, at length.

"Nitre," I replied. "How long have you had that cough?"

"Ugh! ugh! ugh!—ugh! ugh! ugh!—ugh! ugh! ugh!—ugh! ugh! ugh!—ugh! ugh! ugh!"

My poor friend found it impossible to reply for many minutes.

"It is nothing," he said, at last.

"Come," I said, with decision, "we will go back; your health is precious. You are rich, respected, admired, beloved; you are happy, as once I was. You are a man to be missed. For me it is no matter. We will go back; you will be ill, and I cannot be responsible. Besides, there is Luchesi——"

"Enough," he said; "the cough is a mere nothing; it will not kill me. I shall not die of a cough."

"True—true," I replied; "and, indeed, I had no intention of alarming you unnecessarily; but you should use all proper caution. A draught of this Medoc will defend us from the damps."

Here I knocked off the neck a bottle which I drew from a long row of its fellows that lay upon the mould.

"Drink," I said, presenting him the wine.

He raised it to his lips with a leer. He paused and nodded to me familiarly, while his bells jingled.

"I drink," he said, "to the buried that repose around us."

"And I to your long life."

He again took my arm, and we proceeded.

"These vaults," he said, "are extensive."

"The Montresors," I replied, "were a great and numerous family."

"I forget your arms."

"A huge human foot d'or, in a field azure; the foot crushes a serpent rampant whose fangs are imbedded in the heel."

"And the motto?"

"*Nemo me impune lacessit.*"

"Good!" he said.

The wine sparkled in his eyes and the bells jingled. My own fancy grew warm with the Medoc. We had passed through walls of piled bones, with casks and puncheons intermingling, into the inmost recesses of the catacombs. I paused again, and this time I made bold to seize Fortunato by an arm above the elbow.

"The nitre!" I said; "see, it increases. It hangs like moss upon the vaults. We are below the river's bed. The drops of moisture trickle among the bones. Come, we will go back ere it is too late. Your cough——"

"It is nothing," he said; "let us go on. But first, another draught of the Medoc."

I broke and reached him a flagon of De Grâve. He emptied it at a breath. His eyes flashed with a fierce light. He laughed and threw the bottle upward with a gesticulation I did not understand.

I looked at him in surprise. He repeated the movement—a grotesque one.

"You do not comprehend?" he said.

"Not I," I replied.

"Then you are not of the brotherhood."

"How?"

"You are not of the masons."

"Yes, yes," I said; "yes, yes."

"You? Impossible! A mason?"

"A mason," I replied.

"A sign," he said.

"It is this," I answered, producing a trowel from beneath the folds of my *roquelaire*.

"You jest," he exclaimed, recoiling a few paces. "But let us proceed to the Amontillado."

"Be it so," I said, replacing the tool beneath the cloak, and again offering him my arm. He leaned upon it heavily. We continued our route in search of the Amontillado. We passed through a range of low arches, descended, passed on, and descending again, arrived at a deep crypt, in which the foulness of the air caused our flambeaux rather to glow than flame.

At the most remote end of the crypt there appeared another less spacious. Its walls had been lined with human remains, piled to the vault overhead, in the fashion of the great catacombs of Paris. Three sides of this interior crypt were still ornamented in this manner. From the fourth the bones had been thrown down, and lay promiscuously upon the earth, forming at one point a mound of some size. Within the wall thus exposed by the displacing of the bones, we perceived a still interior recess, in depth about four feet, in width three, in height six or seven. It seemed to have been constructed for no especial use within itself, but formed merely the interval between two of the colossal supports of the roof of the catacombs, and was backed by one of their circumscribing walls of solid granite.

It was in vain that Fortunato, uplifting his dull torch, endeavored to pry into the depth of the recess. Its termination the feeble light did not enable us to see.

"Proceed," I said; "herein is the Amontillado. As for Luchesi——"

"He is an ignoramus," interrupted my friend, as he stepped unsteadily forward, while I followed immediately at his heels. In an instant he had reached the extremity of the niche, and finding his progress arrested by the rock, stood stupidly bewildered. A moment more and I had fettered him to the granite. In its surface were two iron staples, distant from each other about two feet, horizontally. From one of these depended a short chain, from the other a padlock. Throwing the links about his waist, it

was but the work of a few seconds to secure it. He was too much astounded to resist. Withdrawing the key I stepped back from the recess.

"Pass your hand," I said, "over the wall; you cannot help feeling the nitre. Indeed it is *very* damp. Once more let me *implore* you to return. No? Then I must positively leave you. But I must first render you all the little attentions in my power."

"The Amontillado!" ejaculated my friend, not yet recovered from his astonishment.

"True," I replied; the "Amontillado."

As I said these words I busied myself among the pile of bones of which I have before spoken. Throwing them aside, I soon uncovered a quantity of building stone and mortar. With these materials and with the aid of my trowel, I began vigorously to wall up the entrance of the niche.

I hard scarcely laid the first tier of the masonry when I discovered that the intoxication of Fortunato had in a great measure worn off. The earliest indication I had of this was a low moaning cry from the depth of the recess. It was *not* the cry of a drunken man. There was then a long and obstinate silence. I laid the second tier, and the third, and the fourth; and then I heard the furious vibrations of the chain. The noise lasted for several minutes, during which, that I might hearken to it with the more satisfaction, I ceased my labors and sat down upon the bones. When at last the clanking subsided, I resumed the trowel, and finished without interruption the fifth, the sixth, and the seventh tier. The wall was now nearly upon a level with my breast. I again paused, and holding the flambeaux over the mason-work, threw a few feeble rays upon the figure within.

A succession of loud and shrill screams, bursting suddenly from the throat of the chained form, seemed to thrust me violently back. For a brief moment I hesitated—I trembled. Unsheathing my rapier, I began to grope with it about the recess; but the thought of an instant reassured me. I placed my hand upon the solid fabric of the catacombs, and felt satisfied. I reapproached the wall. I replied to the yells of him who clamored. I re-echoed—I aided—I surpassed them in volume and in strength. I did this, and the clamorer grew still.

It was now midnight, and my task was drawing to a close. I had completed the eighth, the ninth, and the tenth tier. I had finished a portion of the last and the eleventh; there remained but a single stone to be fitted and plastered in. I struggled with its weight; I placed it partially in its destined position. But now there came from out the niche a low laugh that erected the hairs upon my head. It was succeeded by a sad voice, which I had difficulty in recognizing as that of the noble Fortunato. The voice said—

"Ha! ha! ha!—he! he!—a very good joke indeed—an excellent jest.

We will have many a rich laugh about it at the palazzo—he! he! he!—over our wine—he! he! he!"

"The Amontillado!" I said.

"He! he! he!—he! he! he!—yes, the Amontillado. But is it not getting late? Will not they be awaiting us at the palazzo, the Lady Fortunato and the rest? Let us be gone."

"Yes," I said, "let us be gone."

"For the love of God, Montresor!"

"Yes," I said, "for the love of God!"

But to these words I hearkened in vain for a reply. I grew impatient. I called aloud:

"Fortunato!"

No answer. I called again:

"Fortunato!"

No answer still. I thrust a torch through the remaining aperture and let it fall within. There came forth in return only a jingling of the bells. My heart grew sick—on account of the dampness of the catacombs. I hastened to make an end of my labor. I forced the last stone into its position; I plastered it up. Against the new masonry I re-erected the old rampart of bones. For the half of a century no mortal has disturbed them. *In pace requiescat!*

Bridging Romanticism and Realism: Emily Dickinson (fl. 1862)

Standard edition: Emily Dickinson: *The Poems of Emily Dickinson: Reading Edition*. Ed. R. W. Franklin. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005.

A Question to Consider:
Which features of Emily Dickinson's poetry are reminiscent of Romanticism, and which presage Realism?

Emily Dickinson (1830–1886)

(1) 511

If you were coming in the Fall,
I'd brush the Summer by
With half a smile, and half a spurn,
As Housewives do, a Fly.

If I could see you in a year,
I'd wind the months in balls—
And put them each in separate Drawers,
For fear the numbers fuse—

If only Centuries delayed,
I'd count them on my Hand,
Subtracting, till my fingers dropped
Into Van Dieman's Land.[1]

If certain, when this life was out—
That yours and mine, should be
I'd toss it yonder, like a Rind,
And take Eternity—

But, now, uncertain of the length
Of this, that is between,
It goads me, like the Goblin Bee—
That will not state—its sting.

c. 1862 1890

(2) 324

Some keep the Sabbath going to
Church—
I keep it, staying at Home—
With a Bobolink for a Chorister—
And an Orchard, for a Dome—

Some keep the Sabbath in Surplice—
I just wear my Wings—
And instead of tolling the Bell, for Church,
Our little Sexton—sings.

God preaches, a noted Clergyman—
And the sermon is never long,
So instead of getting to Heaven, at last—
I'm going, all along.

c. 1860 1864

(3) 1540

As imperceptibly as Grief
The Summer lapsed away—
Too imperceptible at last
To seem like Perfidy—
A Quietness distilled
As Twilight long begun,
Or Nature spending with herself
Sequestered Afternoon—
The Dusk drew earlier in—
The Morning foreign shone—
A courteous, yet harrowing Grace,
As Guest, that would be gone—
And thus, without a Wing
Or service of a Keel
Our Summer made her light escape
Into the Beautiful.

c. 1865 1891

(4) 258

There's a certain Slant of light,
Winter Afternoons—
That oppresses, like the Heft
Of Cathedral Tunes—

Heavenly Hurt, it gives us—
We can find no scar,
But internal difference,
Where the Meanings, are—

None may teach it—Any—
'Tis the Seal Despair—
An imperial affliction
Sent us of the Air—

When it comes, the Landscape listens—
Shadows—hold their breath—
When it goes, 'tis like the Distance
On the look of Death—

c. 1861 1890

(5) 341

After great pain, a formal feeling comes—
The Nerves sit ceremonious, like
Tombs—
The stiff Heart questions was it He, that
bore,
And Yesterday, or Centuries before?

The Feet, mechanical, go round—
Of Ground, or Air, or Ought—
A Wooden way
Regardless grown,
A Quartz contentment, like a stone—

This is the Hour of Lead—
Remembered, if outlived,
As Freezing persons, recollect the Snow—
First—Chill—then Stupor—then the
letting go—

c. 1862 1929

(1)

570 How happy is the little Stone
That rambles in the Road alone,
And does'nt care about Careers
And Exigencies never fears -
Whose Coat of elemental Brown
A passing Universe put on,
And independent as the sun,
Associates or glows alone,
Fulfilling absolute Decree
In casual simplicity -

(1882)

(2)

14 Did the Harebell loose her girdle
To the lover Bee
Would the Bee the Harebell *hallow*
Much as formerly?

Did the "Paradise" - *persuaded* -
Yield her moat of pearl -
Would the Eden *be* an Eden,
Or the Earl - an *Earl?*

(1860)

(3)

17 She rose to His Requirement - dropt
The Playthings of Her Life

To take the honorable Work
Of Woman, and of Wife -

If ought She missed in Her new Day,
Of Amplitude, or Awe -
Or first Prospective - or the Gold
In using, wear away,

It lay unmentioned - as the Sea
Develope Pearl, and Weed,
But only to Himself - be known
The Fathoms they abide -

(1864)

(4)

267 Rearrange a "Wife's" Affection!
When they dislocate my Brain!
Amputate my freckled Bosom!
Make me bearded like a man!

Blush, my spirit, in thy Fastness -
Blush, my unacknowledged clay -
Seven years of troth have taught thee
More than Wifehood ever may!

Love that never leaped it's socket -
Trust intrenched in narrow pain -
Constancy thro' fire - awarded -
Anguish - bare of anodyne!

Burden - borne so far triumphant -
None suspect me of the crown,
For I wear the "Thorns" till *Sunset* -
Then - my Diadem put on.

Big my Secret but it's *bandaged* -
It will never get away
Till the Day it's Weary Keeper
Leads it through the Grave to thee.

(1861)

(5)

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

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

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

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

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

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

(1863)

The Modernist Period

Thomas Stearns Eliot: Ash-Wednesday (1930)

Text available online at: http://famouspoetsandpoems.com/poets/t__s__eliot/poems/15133

A Question to Consider:
What are the major themes of Eliot's long poem, and how do the many references to Dante's Divine Comedy fit in?

Thomas Stearns Eliot

Ash-Wednesday (1930)

I

Because I do not hope to turn again
Because I do not hope
Because I do not hope to turn
Desiring this man's gift and that man's scope
I no longer strive to strive towards such things
(Why should the agèd eagle stretch its wings?)
Why should I mourn
The vanished power of the usual reign?

Because I do not hope to know again
The infirm glory of the positive hour
Because I do not think
Because I know I shall not know
The one veritable transitory power
Because I cannot drink
There, where trees flower, and springs flow, for there is
nothing again

Because I know that time is always time
And place is always and only place
And what is actual is actual only for one time
And only for one place
I rejoice that things are as they are and
I renounce the blessèd face
And renounce the voice
Because I cannot hope to turn again
Consequently I rejoice, having to construct something
Upon which to rejoice

And pray to God to have mercy upon us
And I pray that I may forget
These matters that with myself I too much discuss
Too much explain
Because I do not hope to turn again
Let these words answer
For what is done, not to be done again
May the judgement not be too heavy upon us

Because these wings are no longer wings to fly
But merely vans to beat the air
The air which is now thoroughly small and dry
Smaller and dryer than the will
Teach us to care and not to care
Teach us to sit still.

Pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death
Pray for us now and at the hour of our death.

II

Lady, three white leopards sat under a juniper-tree
In the cool of the day, having fed to satiety
On my legs my heart my liver and that which had been
contained
In the hollow round of my skull. And God said
Shall these bones live? shall these
Bones live? And that which had been contained
In the bones (which were already dry) said chirping:
Because of the goodness of this Lady
And because of her loveliness, and because
She honours the Virgin in meditation,
We shine with brightness. And I who am here dissembled
Proffer my deeds to oblivion, and my love
To the posterity of the desert and the fruit of the gourd.
It is this which recovers
My guts the strings of my eyes and the indigestible portions
Which the leopards reject. The Lady is withdrawn
In a white gown, to contemplation, in a white gown.
Let the whiteness of bones atone to forgetfulness.
There is no life in them. As I am forgotten
And would be forgotten, so I would forget
Thus devoted, concentrated in purpose. And God said
Prophesy to the wind, to the wind only for only
The wind will listen. And the bones sang chirping
With the burden of the grasshopper, saying

Lady of silences
Calm and distressed
Torn and most whole

Rose of memory
Rose of forgetfulness
Exhausted and life-giving
Worried reposeful
The single Rose
Is now the Garden
Where all loves end
Terminate torment
Of love unsatisfied
The greater torment
Of love satisfied
End of the endless
Journey to no end
Conclusion of all that
Is inconclusible
Speech without word and
Word of no speech
Grace to the Mother
For the Garden
Where all love ends.

Under a juniper-tree the bones sang, scattered and shining
We are glad to be scattered, we did little good to each
other,
Under a tree in the cool of the day, with the blessing of
sand,
Forgetting themselves and each other, united
In the quiet of the desert. This is the land which ye
Shall divide by lot. And neither division nor unity
Matters. This is the land. We have our inheritance.

III

At the first turning of the second stair
I turned and saw below
The same shape twisted on the banister
Under the vapour in the fetid air
Struggling with the devil of the stairs who wears
The deceitful face of hope and of despair.

At the second turning of the second stair
I left them twisting, turning below;
There were no more faces and the stair was dark,
Damp, jaggèd, like an old man's mouth drivelling, beyond
repair,
Or the toothed gullet of an agèd shark.

At the first turning of the third stair
Was a slotted window bellied like the fig's fruit
And beyond the hawthorn blossom and a pasture scene
The broadbacked figure drest in blue and green
Enchanted the maytime with an antique flute.
Blown hair is sweet, brown hair over the mouth blown,
Lilac and brown hair;
Distraction, music of the flute, stops and steps of the mind
over the third stair,
Fading, fading; strength beyond hope and despair
Climbing the third stair.

Lord, I am not worthy
Lord, I am not worthy
but speak the word only.

IV

Who walked between the violet and the violet
Who walked between
The various ranks of varied green
Going in white and blue, in Mary's colour,
Talking of trivial things
In ignorance and in knowledge of eternal dolour
Who moved among the others as they walked,
Who then made strong the fountains and made fresh the
springs

Made cool the dry rock and made firm the sand
In blue of larkspur, blue of Mary's colour,
Sovegna vos

Here are the years that walk between, bearing
Away the fiddles and the flutes, restoring
One who moves in the time between sleep and waking,
wearing

White light folded, sheathed about her, folded.
The new years walk, restoring
Through a bright cloud of tears, the years, restoring
With a new verse the ancient rhyme. Redeem
The time. Redeem
The unread vision in the higher dream
While jewelled unicorns draw by the gilded hearse.

The silent sister veiled in white and blue
Between the yews, behind the garden god,

Whose flute is breathless, bent her head and signed but
spoke no word

But the fountain sprang up and the bird sang down
Redeem the time, redeem the dream
The token of the word unheard, unspoken

Till the wind shake a thousand whispers from the yew

And after this our exile

V

If the lost word is lost, if the spent word is spent
If the unheard, unspoken
Word is unspoken, unheard;
Still is the unspoken word, the Word unheard,
The Word without a word, the Word within
The world and for the world;
And the light shone in darkness and
Against the Word the unstilled world still whirled
About the centre of the silent Word.

O my people, what have I done unto thee.

Where shall the word be found, where will the word
Resound? Not here, there is not enough silence
Not on the sea or on the islands, not
On the mainland, in the desert or the rain land,
For those who walk in darkness
Both in the day time and in the night time
The right time and the right place are not here
No place of grace for those who avoid the face
No time to rejoice for those who walk among noise and
deny the voice

Will the veiled sister pray for
Those who walk in darkness, who chose thee and oppose
thee,
Those who are torn on the horn between season and season,
time and time, between
Hour and hour, word and word, power and power, those
who wait

In darkness? Will the veiled sister pray
For children at the gate
Who will not go away and cannot pray:
Pray for those who chose and oppose

O my people, what have I done unto thee.

Will the veiled sister between the slender
Yew trees pray for those who offend her
And are terrified and cannot surrender
And affirm before the world and deny between the rocks
In the last desert between the last blue rocks
The desert in the garden the garden in the desert
Of drouth, spitting from the mouth the withered apple-
seed.

O my people.

VI

Although I do not hope to turn again
Although I do not hope
Although I do not hope to turn

Wavering between the profit and the loss
In this brief transit where the dreams cross
The dreamcrossed twilight between birth and dying
(Bless me father) though I do not wish to wish these things
From the wide window towards the granite shore
The white sails still fly seaward, seaward flying
Unbroken wings

And the lost heart stiffens and rejoices
In the lost lilac and the lost sea voices
And the weak spirit quickens to rebel
For the bent golden-rod and the lost sea smell
Quickens to recover
The cry of quail and the whirling plover
And the blind eye creates
The empty forms between the ivory gates
And smell renews the salt savour of the sandy earth

This is the time of tension between dying and birth
The place of solitude where three dreams cross
Between blue rocks
But when the voices shaken from the yew-tree drift away
Let the other yew be shaken and reply.

*Blessèd sister, holy mother, spirit of the fountain, spirit of
the garden,*
Suffer us not to mock ourselves with falsehood
Teach us to care and not to care
Teach us to sit still
Even among these rocks,
Our peace in His will
And even among these rocks
Sister, mother
And spirit of the river, spirit of the sea,
Suffer me not to be separated

And let my cry come unto Thee.

Southern Gothic: An Introduction

Source:
https://oxfordre.com/literature/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190201098.001.0001/acrefore-9780190201098-e-304

Southern Gothic Literature

Thomas Ærvold Bjerre

https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190201098.013.304

Published online: 28 June 2017

Summary

Southern Gothic is a mode or genre prevalent in literature from the early 19th century to this day. Characteristics of Southern Gothic include the presence of irrational, horrific, and transgressive thoughts, desires, and impulses; grotesque characters; dark humor, and an overall angst-ridden sense of alienation. While related to both the English and American Gothic tradition, Southern Gothic is uniquely rooted in the South's tensions and aberrations. During the 20th century, Charles Crow has noted, the South became "the principal region of American Gothic" in literature. The Southern Gothic brings to light the extent to which the idyllic vision of the pastoral, agrarian South rests on massive repressions of the region's historical realities: slavery, racism, and patriarchy. Southern Gothic texts also mark a Freudian return of the repressed: the region's historical realities take concrete forms in the shape of ghosts that highlight all that has been unsaid in the official version of southern history. Because of its dark and controversial subject matter, literary scholars and critics initially sought to discredit the gothic on a national level. Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849) became the first Southern Gothic writer to fully explore the genre's potential. Many of his best-known poems and short stories, while not placed in a recognizable southern setting, display all the elements that would come to characterize Southern Gothic.

While Poe is a foundational figure in Southern Gothic, William Faulkner (1897–1962) arguably looms the largest. His fictional Yoknapatawpha County was home to the bitter Civil War defeat and the following social, racial, and economic ruptures in the lives of its people. These transformations, and the resulting anxieties felt by Chickasaw Indians, poor whites and blacks, and aristocratic families alike, mark Faulkner's work as deeply Gothic. On top of this, Faulkner's complex, modernist, labyrinthine language creates in readers a similarly Gothic sense of uncertainty and alienation. The

generation of southern writers after Faulkner continued the exploration of the clashes between Old and New South. Writers like Tennessee Williams (1911–1983), Carson McCullers (1917–1967), and Flannery O'Connor (1925–1964) drew on Gothic elements. O'Connor's work is particularly steeped in the grotesque, a subgenre of the Gothic. African American writers like Zora Neale Hurston (1891–1960) and Richard Wright have had their own unique perspective on the Southern Gothic and the repressed racial tensions at the heart of the genre. Southern Gothic also frames the bleak and jarringly violent stories by contemporary so-called Rough South writers, such as Cormac McCarthy, Barry Hannah, Dorothy Allison, William Gay, and Ron Rash. A sense of evil lurks in their stories and novels, sometimes taking on the shape of ghosts or living dead, ghouls who haunt the New Casino South and serve as symbolic reminders of the many unresolved issues still burdening the South to this day.

From the Gothic to American Gothic to Southern Gothic

"Southern Gothic" is the label attached to a particular strain of literature from the American South. The style of writing has evolved from the American Gothic tradition, which again evolved from the English Gothic tradition. Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1765) is considered the first Gothic novel, and Ann Radcliffe is seen as a cofounder of the genre thanks to Gothic romances such as *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and *The Italian* (1797). Several scholars have attempted to categorize the Gothic: H. L. Malchow defines it not as a genre but a discourse, "a *language* of panic, of unreasoning anxiety."[1] David Punter points to the themes of paranoia, the barbaric, and taboo,[2] and Allan Lloyd-Smith states that the Gothic is "about the *return* of the past, of the repressed and denied, the buried secret that subverts and corrodes the present, whatever the culture does not want to know or admit, will not or dare not tell itself."[3] Specific definitions aside, Gothic literature generally challenged Enlightenment principles by giving voice to irrational, horrific, and transgressive thoughts, desires, and impulses, thereby conjuring an angst-ridden world of violence, sex, terror, and death. As Jerrold Hogle notes, since the 18th century, Gothic fiction has enabled readers to "address and disguise some of the most important desires, quandaries, and sources of anxiety, from the most internal and mental to the widely social and cultural."[4]

The Gothic finds its footing in the United States in the early 19th century. Charles Brockden Brown, the first professional American author, is credited with inventing the American Gothic novel with *Wieland* (1798). According to Eric Savoy, what makes Brown's novel stand out is the way in which it "resituate[s] 'history' in a pathologized return of the repressed whereby the present witnesses the unfolding and fulfillment of terrible destinies incipient in the American past."[5] Apart from Brockden Brown, scholars have found it difficult to pinpoint a foundational era or group of authors for the American Gothic. Indeed, Leslie Fiedler has argued that the American Gothic tradition is best understood as "a pathological symptom rather than a proper literary movement,"[6] and Teresa Goddu has noted "the difficulty of defining the genre in

national terms."[7] Some scholars have listed criteria in order to define the genre. Allan Lloyd Smith sees "four indigenous features" marking the American Gothic as distinct from the European version: "the frontier, the Puritan legacy, race, and political utopianism."[8] Yet others hesitate at using the term "genre" and talk instead of the Gothic as "a discursive field in which a metonymic national 'self' is undone by the return of its repressed Otherness."[9] What critics do seem to agree on, however, is the way in which American Gothic texts in general have challenged the American Dream narrative by consistently pointing out limitations and aberrations in the progressive belief in possibility and mobility. Eric Savoy points out the irony of the Gothic's predominance in American culture. In a nation whose master narrative is grounded in rationalism, progress, and egalitarianism, Savoy points to "the odd centrality of Gothic cultural production in the United States, where the past constantly inhabits the present, where progress generates an almost unbearable anxiety about its costs, and where an insatiable appetite for spectacles of grotesque violence is part of the texture of everyday life."[10]

Nowhere in the United States is the Gothic more present than in the South, which Allison Graham describes as a "repository of national repressions … the benighted area 'down there' whose exposure to the light is unfailingly horrifying and thrilling."[11] Flannery O'Connor famously declared that the so-called Southern school of literature conjured up "an image of Gothic monstrosities and the idea of a preoccupation with everything deformed and grotesque."[12] Add to this Benjamin Fisher's definition of the literary Gothic as something that evokes "anxieties, fears, terrors, often in tandem with violence, brutality, rampant sexual impulses, and death,"[13] and it becomes clear how the tradition of the Southern Gothic plays into already established ideas about the South as an "ill" region. This notion was established early on, as Charles Reagan Wilson has shown: the "deadly climate that nurtured diseases" and killed off early Jamestown settlers, and later colonists in Lowcountry North Carolina created an image of the South as "a death trap."[14] Centuries later, William Faulkner, arguably the greatest Southern Gothic writer, has one of his characters in *As I Lay Dying* (1930) echo this view of the South: "That's the one trouble with this country: everything, weather, all, hangs on too long. Like our rivers, our land: opaque, slow, violent; shaping and creating the life of man in its implacable and brooding image."[15] Another central figure of Southern Gothic, Tennessee Williams, continues in the same vein, when he writes that, "there is something in the region, something in the blood and culture, of the Southern state[s] that has somehow made them the center of this Gothic school of writers." These writers share "a sense, an intuition, of an underlying dreadfulness in modern experience."[16]

While related to both the English and American Gothic tradition, the Southern Gothic is uniquely rooted in the region's tensions and aberrations. The United States may not have had old castles in which writers could place their Gothic romances, but after the Civil War, the many often ruined or decaying plantations and mansions in the South became uncanny locations for Gothic stories about sins, secrets, and the "haunting

history" of the South.[17] And while Southern Gothic can be said to fulfill the criteria set out by scholars like Punter and Smith, increasingly, Gothic in an American context has come to connote the American South. During the 20th century, the South became "the principal region of American Gothic" in literature.[18] As Charles L. Crow points out, the term "Southern Gothic" "became so common in the modern period that each word came to evoke the other,"[19] as southern writers increasingly explored a region burdened with contradictory images. On the one hand, the colonial and antebellum South has been constructed as a pastoral idyll, an agrarian garden free of toil. On the other hand, the South has been seen as a repository for all of America's shortcomings: a region of sickness and backwardness symbolized by everything from yellow fever and hookworm disease to personal and societal violence.

Southern Gothic brings to light the extent to which the vision of the idyllic South rests on massive repressions of the region's historical realities: slavery, racism, and patriarchy. In this way, Southern Gothic texts mark a Freudian return of the repressed: the region's historical realities take concrete forms in the shape of ghosts or grotesque figures that highlight all that has been unsaid in the official version of southern history. Leslie Fiedler's claim that the "proper subject for American gothic is the black man, from whose shadow we have not yet emerged"[20] helps explain the propensity, the pull of the Gothic in southern literature. Its uncanny and haunted effects echo the old Gothic tradition but serve as a specific comment on southern life and customs.

The Southern Grotesque

A subgenre or additional aspect of Southern Gothic is the grotesque, also called Southern Grotesque. Scholars have long argued about the differences between the two terms, and many simply equate the two and use them interchangeably. As Charles Crow notes, the grotesque, "is a quality that overlaps with the Gothic, but neither is necessary or sufficient for the other."[21] Characters with physical deformities, so-called freaks, feature heavily in the Southern Grotesque. Often, their physical disfigurements—limps, wooden legs, cross-eyes, crippled limbs—serve as markers of a corrupt moral compass and point to the ways in which writers of Southern Gothic engage with the discrepancy between perceived, heteronormative normalcy and the repressed realities beneath that assumption. While deformed characters may be one of the most evident markers of Southern Gothic,[22] the grotesque has been credited with invoking everything from "horror and the uncanny" to "sadness, compassion or humour."[23] The apparent breadth of grotesque traits threatens to empty the term of any useful meaning. But what unites the many features of the grotesque as well as its effects is a disturbing juxtaposition of conflicting elements; a site of transgression that serves to challenge the normative status quo, which in the South has been particularly repressive when it comes to race, gender, and sexuality. This links the Southern Grotesque to Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the carnivalesque, which, among other things, functions as a strategy of transgression, resistance, and disruption.[24] This disruption that the grotesque produces is not of the "aberrant body," as Melissa Free argues, "but

of the social body that silences and condemns deviance."[25] Flannery O'Connor is perhaps the best example of a Southern Gothic writer who relies on the grotesque in her work. In her influential essay "Some Aspects of the Grotesque in Southern Fiction" (1969), O'Connor challenged the reductive generalization of the grotesque as a term and stressed how grotesque literature pointed toward a particular kind of realism:

In these grotesque works … the writer has made alive some experience which we are not accustomed to observe every day, or which the ordinary man may never experience in his ordinary life. We find that connections which we would expect in the customary kind of realism have been ignored, that there are strange skips and gaps which anyone trying to describe manners and customs would certainly not have left. Yet the characters have an inner coherence, if not always a coherence to their social framework. Their fictional qualities lean away from typical social patterns, toward mystery and the unexpected … It's not necessary to point out that the look of this fiction is going to be wild, that it is almost of necessity going to be violent and comic, because of the discrepancies that it seeks to combine.[26]

Rather than a sensationalist freak or horror show, grotesque literature cuts through the veil of civility, through decorum and oppressive normative fabrications to expose a harsh, confusing reality of contradictions, violence, and aberrations.

Early Southern Gothic

Early examples of Southern Gothic effects or elements can be found in playwright William Bulloch Maxwell (1787–1814), poets Edward Coote Pinkney (1802–1828) and Richard Henry Wilde (1789–1847), and novelist John Pendleton Kennedy (1795–1870). Kennedy's best-known novel, *Swallow Barn* (1835), often credited as a precursor of the plantation novel, features an overall Gothic landscape with a "Goblin Swamp" and a remote country house, which takes the place of the castles and mansions of the British Gothic. More overt Gothic elements are found in Kennedy's third novel *Rob of the Bowl* (1838), where a supposedly haunted chapel terrifies the locals with its nightly groans and rumbles.

The Southern Gothic finds more solid form in the works of William Gilmore Simms (1806–1870). Perhaps best known for his frontier-based adventure novels such as *The Yemassee* (1835) influenced by Sir Walter Scott, several of Simms's poems and novels rely on supernatural elements in his adaptation of Gothicism to specific southern locales. The aggressive title character of *Martin Faber* (1833) is a perverse Byronic figure, who confesses to murdering the innocent maiden Emily so he can marry the affluent Constance. *Castle Dismal* (1844) is a South Carolina ghost story that subverts traditional notions of marriage and domesticity—and features a narrator who spends a night in a haunted chamber of an old mansion. And *Woodcraft* (1854), the final of Simms's Revolutionary War novels features devilish British villains, and in the Widow Eveleigh, Simms creates a more sophisticated version of the "persecuted maidens and wives in European Gothics."[27]

Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849) became the first writer to fully explore the potential of the Southern Gothic. Many of Poe's best-known poems and short stories, while not placed in a recognizable southern setting, display all the elements that would come to characterize Southern Gothic: the decaying house (and the family within); men and women driven half-mad by unexplained anxieties; and transgressive racial and sexual subjects involving identity, incest, and necrophilia. It is hard to overestimate the influence of Poe and "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839), considered by many "the Ur-text of the Southern Gothic."[28] Featuring a decrepit mansion, characters sick in body and mind, a live burial in a cellar vault, and doppelgängers, the story is saturated by an "insufferable gloom,"[29] an overall Gothic mood that has led William Moss to declare that "on the ruins of the house of Usher, Poe lays the foundation of a Southern Gothic."[30]

In addition, Poe has been seen as a central figure of the Southern Gothic because of his treatment of race, what Eric Savoy calls his "profound meditation upon the cultural significance of 'blackness' in the white American mind."[31] Christopher Walsh attributes "Poe's value to the development of the Southern Gothic … to his ability to destabilize hierarchies of order and to critique the South's prevailing mythology and narrative."[32] An example of this is "The Black Cat" (1843), in which the narrator describes his plunge "into excess" when he is overcome by "the spirit of PERVERSENESS."[33] The story draws on classic staples of the Gothic: a perverse and murderous tyrant using atrocious violence against helpless victims, a live burial and a decaying corpse "clotted with gore,"[34] as well as the ruins of a burned-down house. But beneath the macabre surface is a more profound examination of the particularly southern sentimentalization of the relationship between master and slave.[35]

Discrediting the Southern Gothic

During the 20th century, the veneration for Poe increased steadily, and scholars recognized his indelible influence on the Southern Gothic. However, in his own time, most 19th-century literary scholars and critics did much to discredit Poe as well as the Gothic genre on a national level and to gloss over traces of the Gothic in works of canonical national writers like Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville. Consensus seemed to be that "Gothic was an inferior genre incapable of high seriousness and appealing only of readers of questionable tastes."[36] Poe was initially exorcized from the national literary canon and relegated to the confines of the nation's benighted "other": the South. But scholars and critics of southern literature were not too impressed with the Gothic elements either. In fact, the term "Southern Gothic," referring to a subgenre or school of writers, was initially coined in 1935 by novelist Ellen Glasgow, who used the term to criticize what she called "the inflamed rabble of impulses in the contemporary Southern novel."[37] Erskine Caldwell, William Faulkner, and other New Southern writers, she asserted, displayed a disturbing tendency of "aimless violence" and "fantastic nightmares."[38] In the same year, in an article titled "The Horrible South," Gerald Johnson claimed that T. S. Stribling, Thomas Wolfe, William Faulkner, and

Erskine Caldwell had established "a certain reputation for Southern writing." He labeled them "the merchants of death, hell and the grave … the horror-mongers in chief."[39] Likewise, in *New Republic's* 1952 review of Flannery O'Connor's *Wise Blood*, Isaac Rosenfeld complained about the author's focus on degeneracy in "an insane world, peopled by monsters and submen."[40] Attitudes like this made Tennessee Williams scoff at the "disparaging critics … some of the most eminent book critics" as well as "publishers, distributors, not to mention the reading public" whose "major line of attack" is that the Southern Gothic is "*dreadful*."[41] Indeed, many writers of pulp fiction have relied heavily on the clichéd conception of the South as violent, backwards, and degenerate—and found a large number of readers in the process. But proletarian (and Gothic) writers like Erskine Caldwell and Carson McCullers, whose literary qualities are no longer deemed spurious, were often marginalized by the Agrarians. In the 1930s, the accepted view of poor whites was that they "did not exist; or, if they did, they existed outside of 'civilization.' They were irredeemably 'other,' marking the outer limits of the culture." For many of the Agrarians, Richard Gray notes, "to write of the 'unknown people' of the Southern countryside was not to write as a Southerner; it was doubtful if it was even to write as an American."[42] It was not only white writers who were excluded from the canon. Michael Kreyling notes how the Agrarians and their "disciples in the 1940s and 1950s" obstructed "the inclusion of black writers," like Richard Wright.[43]

William Faulkner

Despite Poe's status as a foundational figure in Southern Gothic, William Faulkner is widely considered the most important and influential writer working in the vein of the Southern Gothic.

Faulkner's dense and complex fictional Yoknapatawpha County was home to the bitter Civil War defeat and the following social, racial, and economic ruptures in the lives of its people. These transformations, and the resulting anxieties felt by Chickasaw Indians, poor whites and blacks, and aristocratic families alike, mark Faulkner's work as deeply Gothic. In fact, his oft-quoted line, "The past is never dead. It's not even past,"[44] which has come to serve as a clichéd definition of Faulkner's works, is also a definition of the Gothic. The clash between Old South and New South takes on a Gothic hue in which the suppressed sins of slavery, patriarchy, and class strife bubble to the surface in uncanny ways. And all this takes place in a landscape of swamps, deep woods, and decaying plantations. Add to this the complex, modernist, labyrinthine language of Faulkner's works, which create in readers a similarly Gothic sense of uncertainty and alienation, an impression that, as Fred Botting says, "there is no exit from the darkly illuminating labyrinth of language."[45]

Much of Faulkner's work, novels as well as short stories, belongs in the Southern Gothic category. The often anthologized "A Rose for Emily" (1930) is perhaps the clearest example of Faulkner's southern Gothicism. The story, narrated from a plural point of

view by inhabitants of the small town, tells of the spinster Emily Grierson, who after her father's death scandalizes the community when she takes up with the northern carpetbagger Homer Barron. When Homer disappears shortly after Emily has purchased arsenic, rumors abound in town. Decades later, after living a reclusive life, Emily dies. When the townspeople break open the door to an upstairs room, they discover a man's "fleshless" corpse on the bed, the remains of him "rotted beneath what was left of the nightshirt."[46] Next to the corpse is a pillow, with "the indentation of a head" and "a long strand of iron-gray hair."[47] The story's themes of necrophilia, sin, and secrecy mark it as obviously Gothic, yet Richard Gray argues that it also "offers an unerring insight into repression and the revenge of the repressed." Emily's actions should be seen as "a perverse reaction to the pressures of a stiflingly patriarchal society," the way she has been "reduced, by the gaze of her neighbours and the narrative, to object status, a figure to patronise and pity … The extremity of her actions is," he argues, "ultimately, a measure of the extremity of her condition, the degree of her imprisonment."[48]

Other examples of Faulkner's southern Gothicism can be found in many of his greatest novels. *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) traces the downfall of the Compson family, one of Faulkner's many "failed dynasties of the old ascendancy … all unwitting builders of haunted houses."[49] The novel's first three sections are narrated by the three Compson sons—the mentally handicapped Benjy, the brooding Quentin, and the malicious and patriarchal Jason—while the fourth and final section has the black maid Dilsey as the central character. This makes for a fragmented and unreliable story in the center of which is the Compson daughter, Caddy—the obsession of all three brothers, "both victim and perpetrator … [a] Gothic heroine" who "escapes her haunted mansion at a terrible price."[50] Quentin is haunted and obsessed with his failure to protect his sister's virginity. His oppressive sense of guilt eventually drives him to suicide. *As I Lay Dying* (1930) features variations of the vengeful spirit and live burial themes as well as emotionally unstable characters, all supported by an overall sense of confusion and fragmentation brought on by the rapidly shifting narrators. *Sanctuary* (1931), Faulkner's most sensational and scandalous novel, features a controversial rape scene where the debutante Temple Drake is penetrated with a corncob by the sadistic and impotent villain Popeye. Though initially scorned by critics, *Sanctuary* has more recently been re-examined in light of its mirror structure and also "revalued as symbolic of the rape of southern womanhood by outside forces."[51] *Light in August* (1932) has been read as "an exemplary of the traditional gothic tale of mystery, horror, and violence in America."[52] It is a novel fueled by a sense of alienation and otherness, and features marginalized characters attempting but failing to make human connections. Joe Christmas, a black man passing as white, is accused of sleeping with and murdering a white woman. After escaping from jail, he is castrated and killed. The novel's Gothicism is significantly southern in its exploration of religious zeal, sex, and racism, including violent lynchings and the pervasive fear of miscegenation.

Many critics and scholars seem to agree that *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936) is "one of the great Southern Gothic novels" and, according to Richard Gray, Faulkner's "greatest and

most seamlessly gothic narrative."[53] Several scholars have noted the influence of Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher." At Harvard, Quentin Compson tries to explain the South to his Canadian roommate, Shreve. He relies on stories told to him, by people who were told by someone else, most circling around the powerful figure of Thomas Sutpen, "*a demon, a villain*."[54] The resulting story becomes an "interpretive act of the imagination," and the various chroniclers "exaggerate fact into myth and transform history into legend."[55] Thomas Sutpen emerges as an elusive but tragic figure. As a poor boy he was turned away at the door of a plantation house by a black servant. This made him vow never to be put in that position again. He is determined to build his own plantation, complete with land, slaves, a family, and the hope of a male heir. This is Sutpen's design, and *Absalom, Absalom!* patches together his ruthless determination to fulfill it. From Sutpen's rejection of his mixed race wife and son in the West Indies to his creation of Sutpen's Hundred and his calculating marriage to Ellen Coldfield, to the return of his rejected son, and the eventual tragedy, the novel is a complex web of race, gender, pride, shame, sin, and the repressive burdens of the past.

Southern Gothic after Faulkner

Even though Eudora Welty (1909–2001) herself rejected being labeled a Gothic writer, she is nevertheless considered a transitional figure in the Southern Gothic from Faulkner to more contemporary writers. Some scholars, such as Ruth D. Weston, have argued that Welty should not be placed in the Southern Gothic category. In her study *Gothic Traditions and Narrative Techniques in the Fiction of Eudora Welty* (1994), Weston distinguishes between the traditional (English) "upper case" Gothic, which she characterizes as "'escape' fiction," and then a "core of gothic (lower case) materials—plots, settings, characters, image patterns, and vocabulary." [56] It is this latter patchwork that Welty draws on, according to Weston. She claims that Welty's "earliest and most basic use of gothic convention is in her landscapes,"[57] especially the history-haunted Natchez Trace, which is an ideal setting for Gothic themes of enclosure and escape. More recently, however, scholars have challenged Weston's reluctance to place Welty firmly in the Southern Gothic tradition and have relied on feminist theory to elucidate how Welty employed Gothic settings and characters to stress the ways in which mythic southern narratives have silenced and repressed Others. In *A Curtain of Green* (1941), Susan V. Donaldson argues, Welty writes forth "a full-fledged carnival of gothic and grotesque heroines running amok, resistant to placement in traditional plots and roles."[58]

Where Eudora Welty did much to distance herself from being called a Gothic writer, Flannery O'Connor (1925–1964) is perhaps the best-known practitioner of the Southern Grotesque. Her many stories and her two novels are packed with an abundance of Gothic motifs, summarized by Chad Rohman as "monstrous misfits, devils and demonic figures, perpetrators and victims, doubles and *doppelgängers*, freaks and the deformed, madness and mad acts, ghosts and kindly spirits, and physical and spiritual isolation."[59] Marked by "an aesthetic of extremes"[60] characteristic

of the grotesque, O'Connor's world is infused with a sense of "mystery and the unexpected," as she notes in her essay on the grotesque.[61] Grounded in her Catholic faith, her view of life as "essentially mysterious" results in her belief that in order to capture that life as realistically as possible, her fiction is necessarily "going to be wild … violent and comic, because of the discrepancies it seeks to combine."[62]

Good examples of both the Gothic and grotesque features of O'Connor's work are found in two of her most canonized short stories. In "Good Country People" (1955), the nihilistic and pseudo-intellectual Hulga still lives at home at the age of thirty-two. She has a "weak heart," a wooden leg, and a doctoral degree in philosophy. When a "sincere and genuine" nineteen-year-old Bible salesman turns up at the house, Hulga decides to demonstrate her superiority by seducing him. But he turns out to be a conman who seduces her, only to steal her wooden leg and leave her stranded in a barn loft. "You ain't so smart," he tells her before leaving, "I been believing in nothing ever since I was born!"[63] And in "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" (1955), a family road trip takes a shocking, violent turn when the characters come upon the escaped convict The Misfit. When the grandmother announces his identity, The Misfit orders the family killed. After killing the grandmother himself, he observes that, "She would of been a good woman … if it had been somebody there to shoot her every minute of her life."[64] Both stories feature shocking endings meant to jar readers. As O'Connor noted of her own writing, to make stories work, "what is needed is an action that is totally unexpected, yet totally believable, and … for me, this is always an action which indicates that grace has been offered. And frequently it is an action in which the devil has been the unwilling instrument of grace."[65] It is in the climax of her stories and novels that the characters—and readers—get a brief glimpse of the mystery O'Connor alludes to, of the possibility of redemption or salvation. But as the stories show, redemption often comes at a terrible price. Hulga is stripped of her superciliousness and forced to face reality by a larcenous Bible salesman, but one who is described with Christ-like imagery on the last page: a "blue figure struggling successfully over the green speckled lake."[66] In a more extreme version, the grandmother in "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" is also a character who sees herself as morally superior. Yet faced with annihilation, she tells her killer, "Why you're one of my babies. You're one of my own children!"[67]

O'Connor's two novels are both explorations of religious fundamentalism in the Deep South. In *Wise Blood* (1952), World War II veteran Hazel Motes returns to his Tennessee home to find it decaying and decrepit. Having lost his faith during the war, he takes to the city of Taulkinham, intent on spreading his atheist doctrine in his Church Without Christ. Yet he feels haunted by Christ and by gothic nightmares of being buried alive. Spiraling ever downwards, Motes ends up killing his competitor and doppelganger Solace Layfield, before a final act of self-degradation—and possible salvation—in which he blinds himself, puts shards of glass in his shoes, and wraps barbed wire around his torso. *The Violent Bear It Away* (1960) is a dark tale of fourteen-year-old Francis Tarwater, who has been raised to be a prophet by his great-uncle, the self-declared backwoods prophet Mason Tarwater. When Mason dies, Francis moves to the city to

find his secular uncle Rayber and his mentally deficient son Bishop. Francis was brought up believing his mission was to baptize Bishop. In the ensuing struggle, O'Connor exposes both religious fundamentalism and a world based on supercilious facts as inherently faulty.

Like O'Connor, the stories and novels of Carson McCullers (born Lula Carson Smith, 1917–1967) are steeped in the grotesque. An abundance of "freaks" fill the pages: dwarfs, giants, cross-dressers, homosexuals, and deaf-mutes. In *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* (1940), the life of adolescent tomboy Mick clashes with the deaf-mute John Singer, an isolated and alienated misfit, whom the other characters nonetheless confide in, perhaps—as Melissa Free notes—because "he recognizes and affirms their own differences, which they feel but cannot name as queer."[68] Much like McCullers herself, Mick rejects established gender roles, and her rejection makes her an outsider in the small, isolated Georgia town and propels the narrative toward themes of sex, gender fluidity, and alienation. *The Ballad of the Sad Café* (1951), also set in an isolated Georgia community, features the hunchback Lymon, who shows up on Miss Amelia's doorstep, claiming to be her cousin. Amid the community's increasing rumors of scandal, Miss Amelia settles down with Lymon and opens a café. But the return of her ex-husband brings violence and eventual isolation and alienation. Both novels are also grotesque in the way the so-called outsiders demand readers' sympathy, and McCullers points to the failures at the heart of the society that seeks to repress its Others. This is also the case in McCullers' other novels, such as *The Member of the Wedding* (1946) and *Clock Without Hands* (1961).

American theater of the 1940s and 1950s was infused with a heavy dose of Southern Gothic sensibility thanks to the plays of Tennessee Williams (1911–1983). Characters with varying degrees of illness populate his works, and his own sexual orientation, socially unacceptable at the time, found its way into plays such as *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1955), in which Brick, who is gay, struggles with his unhappy marriage and with his dying but domineering father, Big Daddy. In other plays, such as *The Glass Menagerie* (1944), *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947), and *Sweet Bird of Youth* (1959), Williams created Gothic spaces of boundary crossings as well as other familiar tropes of the Southern Gothic, such as disintegrating southern families, alienation, loneliness, alcoholism, and physical and psychological violence. Rather than a mere freakshow, Williams uses the characters in his plays to question the notion of normalcy and to explore the discrepancies between private and public selves. His plays, as Stephen Matterson argues, point to the performative aspects of all our lives, but perhaps especially those lived in the South, a region that in Williams's plays is presented as an incongruous site of Romantic myth and urban, modern reality.[69] The struggle of his characters to come to terms with the discrepancy comes off as essentially heroic, embodied best, perhaps, in Blanche DuBois from *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947): the southern belle trapped in the modern world.

While he worked in many genres, Truman Capote (1924–1984) is often placed in the school of Southern Gothic writers. *Other Voices, Other Rooms* (1948) relies on obvious

elements of Southern Gothic, from its secluded, decaying mansion at Skull's Landing to scenes of pedophilia and violence, as well as characters drawn from the grotesque vein of Southern Gothic: a crossdresser, a mute quadriplegic, and a dwarf. Capote's childhood friend Harper Lee (1926–2016) wrote perhaps the most widely read and most-loved Southern Gothic of the 20th century. The Pulitzer Prize-winning *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960) is told by the tomboy Scout and draws on Gothic traits to examine boundaries of race, class, and gender in the 1930s South. Gothic elements include the children's fear of the mysterious neighbor Boo Radley, as well as a rabid dog, and a Halloween night in which fear of the supernatural pales in the face of the violent, alcoholic, and racist Bob Ewell, who attacks Scout and her brother Jem with a knife.

Southern Gothic and African Americans

African Americans have long had their own unique perspective on Southern Gothic and the repressed racial tensions at the heart of the genre. In *Playing in the Dark* (1992), Toni Morrison examines the ways in which early white writers of the American Gothic used the black slave body as a site onto which was projected the various shortcomings, failures, and repressed desires of the white American psyche. This resulted in the construction of what Morrison calls "an American Africanism—a fabricated brew of darkness, otherness, alarm, and desire that is uniquely American."[70] In other words, blacks became monstrous Others who haunted the Southern Gothic and American culture at large. It is this otherness that African American writers have challenged. Richard Wright eerily sums up the very real Gothic aura of the African American experience in *12 Million Black Voices* (1941): "We black men and women in America today, as we look back upon scenes of rapine, sacrifice, and death, seem to be children of a devilish aberration, descendants of an interval of nightmare in history, fledglings of a period of amnesia on the part of men who once dreamed a great dream and forgot."[71] Certainly, if Southern Gothic, as Maisha Wester contends, "can be understood as a genre that is aware of the impossibility of escaping racial haunting,"[72] then slave narratives, such as Charles Ball's *Fifty Years in Chains* (1859), William Craft's Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom (1860), and Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) in essence initiated a unique and often overlooked African American variation on the Southern Gothic.

Modern African American writers also adopted the Gothic conventions, in the process exchanging the genre's more supernatural aspects with more realistic features "founded on actual lives often lived in the Gothic manner, that is indeed terrifying."[73] The starkest example of this is Richard Wright, whose texts confront the horrors of white racism head-on with an unflinching eye. Wright's work marks a reversal of Gothic tropes, one in which whiteness takes on uncanny and horrific hues. In his essay "The Ethics of Living Jim Crow," Wright describes lying in bed as a young boy, delirious, and fearful of the "monstrous white faces … leering" at him above his bed.[74]

The notion of "double consciousness" presented by W. E. B. Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) runs through much of African American Gothic. An early example of this is Jean Toomer's *Cane* (1923), in which the theme of miscegenation and the figure of the mulatto take on Gothic hues. Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952) opens with a nod to both Du Bois and the Gothic: "I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe … When [people] approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination—indeed, everything and anything except me."[75] The novel moves from the small-town South to New York, but in each location the horrors and monsters inherent in the Gothic turn out to be too real and too human for the novel's black protagonist, who feels increasingly entrapped and imprisoned. Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) stays on southern ground, in Florida, and is ripe with Gothic scenes and imagery: Janie, the protagonist, is forced to shoot and kill her rabies-infected husband after he tries to shoot her. And the hurricane that sweeps over the Everglades and turns Lake Okeechobee into a "monstropolous beast"[76] is a recurrent Gothic trope. The African American version of (Southern) Gothic has found its zenith in Toni Morrison. While not a southerner, Morrison still employs Southern Gothic in her seminal novel *Beloved* (1987), a text that takes place mostly in Ohio but is haunted by traumatic events that occurred in the South. *Beloved* is a novel ripe for "sophisticated psychoanalytical and postmodernist or poststructuralist readings which focus on the treatment of fragmented subjectivities and how language strains to record (and is perhaps incapable) of documenting the horrors at the heart of the [Gothic] novel."[77] Continuing in the vein of Morrison, in *A Visitation of Spirits* (1989) Randall Kenan's strategy is to treat as uncanny *not* the ghosts from the past and all the repressed markers of racism and slavery that they bring to the surface but rather the white institutions that constructed blacks as others.[78]

Contemporary Southern Gothic

Cormac McCarthy is arguably the most critically acclaimed contemporary practitioner of the Southern Gothic. McCarthy began his literary career with four dark and deeply violent novels set in Appalachian Tennessee: *The Orchard Keeper* (1965), *Outer Dark* (1968), *Child of God* (1973), and *Suttree* (1979). All four novels owe a debt to the tradition of the Southern Gothic especially that of William Faulkner and Flannery O'Connor. But Robert Brinkmeyer also sees McCarthy's "gothic imagination" as "haunted by a frightening vision of destruction and waste" that is "simultaneously pre- and post-human."[79] At the same time, as Lydia Cooper asserts, McCarthy's "horror-drenched and heavily allegorical aesthetic style" is combined "with historically rooted commentary on social ills, such as issues of race, class, urbanization, and industrialization, to bring into focus repressed social anxieties."[80] *Child of God* shows perhaps the strongest influence of O'Connor's grotesque take on the Southern Gothic. The necrophiliac mass-murderer Lester Ballard is "an extreme contemporary rendering of the gothic villain."[81] The story follows Ballard's exiled subterranean existence and his

downward spiral into murderer and necrophiliac and finally to a primal, animal-like state. McCarthy's initial description of Ballard as "a child of God much like yourself perhaps"[82] invites an unnerving sense of identification with this "reduced, grotesque, and monstrous aberration of humanity."[83]

After decades of western-themed novels, McCarthy returned to the Southern Gothic with *The Road* (2006). The Pulitzer Prize-winning novel is a post-apocalyptic story set in an unspecified southern location. A father and his son traverse a barren wasteland of corpses and marauding bands of cannibals to reach the ocean. Both shockingly violent and contemplative, Jay Ellis reads *The Road* as "haunted both by Old Southern slavery guilt, and by anxiety over New Southern consumption."[84]

Cormac McCarthy has been linked to a so-called Rough South tradition, also referred to as "Grit Lit." The writers placed under these headings all borrow various elements of Southern Gothic to support their bleak portrayals of the American South in which violence plays a crucial part. While the group of writers is predominantly white and male, a few women like Dorothy Allison have also been placed in the Rough South category. Allison's *Bastard out of Carolina* (1992) certainly draws on Gothic elements to expose the ways in which patriarchy has repressed women's voices that challenged the mythic southern narrative. In many of the stories and novels by male Rough South writers, such as Barry Hannah, Larry Brown, William Gay, Tom Franklin, and Ron Rash, the antagonists are violent men of seemingly pure evil, men driven by incredible bloodthirst who will stop at nothing to satisfy their deadly desires. Invoking the Gothic tradition, these villains may take on the shape of ghosts, witches, or living dead, as in Gay's *The Long Home* (1999) or Rash's *One Foot in Eden* (2002), but apart from the obvious sensationalism provided by these killers, the writers use the villains symbolically in order to point out inherent problems in today's (post-)South. Hannah's *Yonder Stands Your Orphan* (2001) takes place in the contemporary Mississippi Delta, which is depicted as a rotten and degenerate place, a landscape in physical and moral decay, where casino musicians, "although mistaken for the living by their audiences, *were* actually dead. Ghouls howling for egress from their tombs,"[85] and where zombies wait behind the counters of the countless pawnshops, "quite obviously dead and led by someone beyond."[86] In this rotten South, the land is also a catalogue of past horrors. The Confederate and Union dead resting in the ground have been joined by other victims of horrible crimes:

Scores of corpses rested below the lakes, oxbows, river ways and bayous of these parts, not counting the skeletons of Grant's infantry. The country was built to hide those dead by foul deed, it sucked at them. Back to the flood of 1927, lynchings, gun and knife duels were common stories here. Muddy water made a fine lost tomb.[87]

The resurfacing of two dead bodies buried in the bayou unleashes a violent rampage perpetrated by the novel's villain. In true Gothic fashion, the return of the repressed past brings forth guilt, responsibility, and a grotesque display of violence.[88]

Hannah's zombies are part of a larger tradition in Southern Gothic. As the editors of *Undead Souths* point out, the South has been—and continues to be—home to a "pervading presence of diverse forms of undeadness—racial, ethnic, political, economic, historical."[89] Using Robert Kirkman's comic book series *The Walking Dead* (2003–) as an endpoint, Jay Ellis traces the "zombie narrative" of southern culture from its beginnings in 1929 and sees it as "a reemergent memory of slavery" and an "expression of wider xenophobic fears of the other" as well as an expression of gender fears.[90] But he also points to zombies as "global citizens," made southern by way of Haiti, of slavery and Jim Crow laws,[91] thereby making the zombie a prominent figure in New Southern studies.

The Southern Gothic remains undead, its territory broader and more inclusive than ever before. While few southern writers are content to work solely in the Southern Gothic vein, many nonetheless tap into the sharp divisions that make up their region, the beautiful pastoral Arcadia and the grotesque deformities that rise to the surface both literally and figuratively. The attempt to come to terms with this chasm—or to expose its cracks and fissures—remains a potent and relevant vehicle driving a substantial body of southern literature today.

Discussion of the Literature

Scholarship on the Southern Gothic has seen a dramatic rise in the 21st century, both in volume, scope, and acceptance. Yet there is still a sparsity of monographs covering the full spectrum of Southern Gothic. Instead, various chapters and articles about specific writers of Southern Gothic are spread out over monographs and anthologies dedicated to American literature, Gothic literature, American Gothic literature, Southern literature, or specific southern writers. Therefore, the history of Southern Gothic scholarship begins with more general works and slowly becomes more specific.

Leslie Fiedler is widely recognized as "the first critic to discuss the American gothic's peculiarity and to recognize its social impulse."[92] He did so in his influential *Love and Death in the American Novel* (1960), where he acknowledged that the Gothic has "continued to seem vulgar and contrived" but argues that "it is the gothic form that has been most fruitful in the hands of our best writers."[93] American fiction, he insists, *is* "a gothic fiction … a literature of darkness and the grotesque in a land of light and affirmation."[94] Among the southern writers discussed at length by Fiedler are Simms, Poe, and Faulkner, and Fiedler ends his study by pointing to Elizabeth Spencer, Flannery O'Connor, and "such talented female fictionists as Katherine Anne Porter, Eudora Welty, and Carson McCullers" as writers who expand Faulkner's "vision of the South as a world of gothic terror disguised as historical fact" into a "living tradition."[95] While Fiedler paved the way for a scholarly interest in the Gothic, that interest was made possible by a "renewed interest in psychoanalysis and Marxism, theoretical modes that have since been used extensively and effectively in interpretations of the Gothic in many forms."[96] Thus, Irving Malin's *New American*

Gothic (1962) examined contemporary writers, including such central figures of the Southern Gothic as Flannery O'Connor, Truman Capote, and Carson McCullers.

The renewed academic interest in the American Gothic spilled over into southern studies and led to monographs focusing on Gothic elements in specific southern writers. But scholars still struggled with the legitimacy of the genre. So while G. R. Thompson in *Poe's Fiction: Romantic Irony in the Gothic Tales* (1973) sets out to rehabilitate Poe "by equally New Critical and History of Ideas standards," ultimately, he asserts, "the Gothic is a set of devalued ingredients, not really essential to American writing at Poe's time."[97] And Elizabeth M. Kerr, who relies heavily on Fiedler's work in her *William Faulkner's Gothic Domain* (1979), begins her study by almost apologizing for writing on a topic "scorned by critics as subliterary, sentimental 'formula' fiction" that has "pejorative connotations."[98] However, concurrently with literature's turn toward postmodernism and, increasingly, poststructuralism, Southern Gothic became increasingly fertile ground for scholars imbued with theoretical tools from Julia Kristeva, Jacques Lacan, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Judith Butler, and others. Patricia Yaeger's *Dirt and Desire: Reconstructing Southern Women's Writing, 1930–1990* (2000) is a prime example of this new movement, as is Tara McPherson's *Reconstructing Dixie: Race, Gender, and Nostalgia in the Imagined South* (2003). Both monographs, while not specific studies of the Southern Gothic, nevertheless focus on the instability of some of the central categories that have been used to build narratives and counter-narratives of the South: race and gender. And they draw on postmodern and poststructuralist theory to revisit and, indeed, reconstruct given assumptions about the South and canonical works of southern literature.

Fiedler pointed to the link between the Gothic and America's troubled racial history, and in *The Heroic Ideal in American Literature* (1971), Theodore L. Gross argued that modern African American writers used elements of Southern Gothic in more realistic ways to point to the horrors of racism. Maisha L. Wester and other 21st-century scholars have examined slave narratives as the inception of African American Gothic and shown how, to late 20th-century African American writers, the Gothic is "a tool capable of expressing the complexity of black experience in America."[99] Wester is but one of many contemporary scholars who are re-examining and re-evaluating aspects of Southern Gothic in canonical writers, but also drastically expanding the canon in ways that correlate with the so-called New Southern studies. Houston Baker and Dana Nelson defined New Southern studies as a school that "welcomes the complication of old borders and terrains, wishes to construct and survey a new scholarly map of 'The South.'"[100] As the title of the anthology *Look Away: The US South in New World Studies* suggests, the editors envision a "liminal south, one that troubles essentialist narratives *both* of global-southern decline *and* of global-northern national or regional unity, of American or Southern exceptionalism."[101]

Scholars working in this vein have embraced a postcolonial and transnational approach in the rethinking of the South and its literature. In fact, the 21st century has been a tumultuous era of change and re-examination within southern studies. Traditional and

monolithic themes such as race, place, and past are being re-examined, challenged, revised, and injected with newer approaches and topics such as trauma theory and queer studies. This has opened up previously overlooked, repressed, and neglected spaces, peoples, and subjects, so that today, scholars are exploring the presence or absence of Southern Gothic's relation to indigenous groups, queers, the Caribbean and Latin America, and vampires, to name a few. *Southern Gothic Literature* (2013), edited by Jay Ellis, includes a chapter on "Southern Gothic poetry," a genre much overlooked in traditional studies of the Southern Gothic. But where Ellis's anthology focuses on well-established writers, Toni Morrison being the newest, a good example of the sprawling richness of current scholarship in the Southern Gothic is presented in the anthology *Undead Souths: The Gothic and Beyond in Southern Literature and Culture* (2015). Among the many topics covered are "Haitian zombie mythology in Herman Melville's depiction of chattel and wage slaveries" as well as "diasporic transplantations in the surreal fiction of the Irish-born, Trinidadian author Shani Mootoo."[102] As these examples make clear, and as the editors of *Undead Souths* note, the most recent scholarship on the Southern Gothic is a far cry from "the now-threadbare tropes of '*the* Southern Gothic'—singular and capitalized—as if both the region ('Southern') and the genre ('Gothic') are readily identifiable, monolithic entities."[103] And judging from the recent outpour of scholarship and academic conferences dedicated to the Southern Gothic, the discussion about this particular genre does not seem to be waning anytime soon.

Further Reading

- Anderson, Eric Gary, Taylor Hagood, and Daniel Cross Turner, eds. *Undead Souths: The Gothic and Beyond in Southern Literature and Culture*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2015.
- Castillo Street, Susan, and Charles L. Crow, eds. *The Palgrave Handbook of the Southern Gothic*. New York: Palgrave, 2016.
- Crow, Charles L. *History of the Gothic: American Gothic*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009.
- Crow, Charles L. *A Companion to American Gothic*. Edited by Charles L. Crow. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013.
- Ellis, Jay, ed. *Critical Insights: Southern Gothic Literature*. Ipswich, MA: Salem, 2013.
- Fiedler, Leslie. *Love and Death in the American Novel*. 1960; repr. Normal, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 1997.
- Frank, Frederick S. *Through the Pale Door: A Guide to and through the American Gothic*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1990.
- Frye, Steven. *Understanding Cormac McCarthy*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2009.

- Goddu, Teresa. *Gothic America: Narrative, History, and Nation*. New York: Columbia University Pres, 1997.
- Gray, Richard. *Southern Aberrations: Writers of the American South and the Problems of Regionalism*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000.
- Hogle, Jerrold E., ed. *The Cambridge Companion to the Modern Gothic*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Kerr, Elizabeth M. *William Faulkner's Gothic Domain*. Port Washington, NY: Kennikat, 1979.
- Lloyd-Smith, Allan. "Nineteenth-Century American Gothic." In *A New Companion to the Gothic*. Edited by David Punter, 163–175. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.
- Lloyd-Smith, Alan. *American Gothic Fiction: An Introduction*. New York: Continuum, 2004.
- Martin, Robert K., and Eric Savoy, eds. *American Gothic: New Interventions in a National Narrative*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1998.
- Wester, Maisha L. *African American Gothic: Screams from Shadowed Places*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.
- Weston, Ruth D. *Gothic Traditions and Narrative Techniques in the Fiction of Eudora Welty*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994.

Notes

- 1. H. L. Malchow, *Gothic Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), 4.
- 2. David Punter, *The Literature of Terror: Volume 1, The Gothic Tradition*, 2d ed. (New York: Routledge, 1996).
- 3. Alan Lloyd-Smith, *American Gothic Fiction: An Introduction* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 1.
- 4. Jerrold E. Hogle "Introduction," in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, ed. Jerrold E. Hogle (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 4.
- 5. Eric Savoy, "The Rise of the American Gothic," in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, ed. Jerrold E. Hogle (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 174.
- 6. Leslie Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel* (Normal, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 1997), 135.
- 7. Teresa Goddu, *Gothic America: Narrative, History, and Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 3.
- 8. Allan Lloyd-Smith, "Nineteenth-Century American Gothic," in *A New Companion to the Gothic*, ed. David Punter (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 163.

- 9. Robert K. Martin and Eric Savoy, “Introduction,” in *American Gothic: New Interventions in a National Narrative*, ed. Robert K. Martin and Eric Savoy (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1998), vii.
- 10. Savoy, “The Rise,” 167.
- 11. Allison Graham, “The South in Popular Culture,” in *A Companion to the Literature and Culture of the American South*, ed. Richard Gray and Owen Robinson (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 349.
- 12. Flannery O’Connor, “The Fiction Writer and His Country,” in *Mystery and Manners: Occasional Prose*, ed. Sally and Robert Fitzgerald (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2000), 28.
- 13. Benjamin F. Fisher IV, “Southern Gothic,” in *The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, vol. 9: Literature, ed. M. Thomas Inge (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 145.
- 14. Charles Reagan Wilson, “Myth, Manners, and Memory,” in *The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture, vol. 4: Myth, Manners, and Memory*, ed. Charles Reagan Wilson (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 1.
- 15. William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying* (1930; repr., New York: Vintage, 1990), 45.
- 16. Tennessee Williams, *Where I Live: Selected Essays*, ed. Christine R. Day and Bob Woods (New York: New Directions, 1978), 42.
- 17. William Moss, “Fall of the House, from Poe to Percy: The Evolution of an Enduring Gothic Convention,” in *A Companion to American Gothic*, ed. Charles L. Crow (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 179.
- 18. Charles L. Crow, *History of the Gothic: American Gothic* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009), 124.
- 19. Ibid., 134.
- 20. Fiedler, *Love*, 397.
- 21. Crow, *History of the Gothic*, 129.
- 22. Bridget M. Marshall, “Defining Southern Gothic,” in *Critical Insights: Southern Gothic Literature*, ed. Jay Ellis (Ipswich, MA: Salem, 2013), 13.
- 23. Crow, *History of the Gothic*, 129.
- 24. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (1968; repr., Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).
- 25. Melissa Free, “Relegation and Rebellion: The Queer, the Grotesque, and the Silent in the Fiction of Carson McCullers,” *Studies in the Novel* 40.4 (Winter 2008): 429.
- 26. Flannery O’Connor, “Some Aspects of the Grotesque in Southern Fiction,” in *Mystery and Manners: Occasional Prose*, ed. Sally Fitzgerald and Robert Fitzgerald (1969; repr., New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000), 40–43.
- 27. Fisher IV, “Southern Gothic,” 148
- 28. Castillo Street and Crow, “Introduction,” 3.

- 29. Edgar Allan Poe, “The Fall of the House of Usher,” in *The Fall of the House of Usher and Other Writings*, ed. David Galloway (New York: Penguin Classics, 1986), 138.
- 30. Moss, “Fall of the House,” 179.
- 31. Savoy, “The Rise,” 182.
- 32. Christopher J. Walsh, “‘Dark Legacy’: Gothic Ruptures in Southern Literature,” in *Critical Insights: Southern Gothic Literature*, ed. Jay Ellis (Ipswich, MA: Salem, 2013), 25.
- 33. Edgar Allan Poe, “The Black Cat,” in *The Fall of the House of Usher and Other Writings*, ed. David Galloway (New York: Penguin Classics, 1986), 322.
- 34. Ibid., 329.
- 35. Lesley Ginsberg, “Slavery and the Gothic Horror of Poe’s ‘The Black Cat,’” in *American Gothic: New Interventions in a National Narrative*, ed. Robert K. Martin and Eric Savoy (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1998), 99.
- 36. Frederick S. Frank, *Through the Pale Door: A Guide to and through the American Gothic* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), x.
- 37. Ellen Glasgow, “Heroes and Monsters,” *The Saturday Review*, May 4, 1953, 3.
- 38. Ibid.
- 39. Gerald Johnson, “The Horrible South,” *The Virginia Quarterly Review* 11.2 (April 1935): 44.
- 40. Isaac Rosenfeld, “To Win by Default,” *New Republic*, July 7, 1952, 19.
- 41. Williams, *Where I Live*, 41–42, 42.
- 42. Richard Gray, *Southern Aberrations: Writers of the American South and the Problems of Regionalism* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000), 160, 161.
- 43. Michael Kreyling, *Inventing Southern Literature* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1998), 78.
- 44. William Faulkner, *Requiem for a Nun* (1951; repr., New York: Vintage, 2011), 73.
- 45. Fred Botting, *Gothic* (London: Routledge, 1995), 9.
- 46. William Faulkner, “A Rose for Emily,” *Collected Stories* (1950; repr., New York: Vintage International, 1995), 130.
- 47. Ibid.
- 48. Richard Gray, “Inside the Dark House: William Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!* and Southern Gothic,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of the Southern Gothic*, ed. Susan Castillo Street and Charles L. Crow (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 23.
- 49. Crow, *History of the Gothic*, 124.
- 50. Ibid., 126.
- 51. Fisher IV, “Southern Gothic,” 149.
- 52. David R. Jarraway, “The Gothic Import of Faulkner’s ‘Black Son’ in *Light in August*,” in *American Gothic: New Interventions in a National Narrative*, ed. Robert K. Martin and Eric Savoy (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1998), 57.

- 53. Gray, “Inside the Dark House,” 21, 22.
- 54. William Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936; repr., London: Vintage, 1995), 169.
- 55. Lynn Gartrell Levins, *Faulkner’s Heroic Design: The Yoknapatawpha Novels* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1976), 7–8.
- 56. Ruth D. Weston, *Gothic Traditions and Narrative Techniques in the Fiction of Eudora Welty* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994), 1–2.
- 57. Ibid., 3.
- 58. Suzanne V. Donaldson, “Making a Spectacle: Welty, Faulkner, and Southern Gothic,” *Mississippi Quarterly* 50.4 (Fall 1997): 583.
- 59. Chad Rohman, “Awful Mystery: Flannery O’Connor as Gothic Artist,” in *A Companion to American Gothic*, ed. Charles L. Crow (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 280.
- 60. Susan Castillo, “Flannery O’Connor,” in *A Companion to The Literature and Culture of the American South*, ed. Richard Gray and Owen Robinson (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 488.
- 61. O’Connor, “Some Aspects of the Grotesque,” 40.
- 62. Ibid., 41, 43.
- 63. Flannery O’Connor, “Good Country People,” in *The Complete Stories* (1971; repr., New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997), 276, 282, 291.
- 64. Flannery O’Connor, “A Good Man is Hard to Find,” in *The Complete Stories* (1971; repr., New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997), 133.
- 65. Flannery O’Connor, “On Her Own Work,” in *Mystery and Manners: Occasional Prose*, ed. Sally and Robert Fitzgerald (1969; repr., New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000), 118.
- 66. O’Connor, “Good Country People,” 291.
- 67. O’Connor, “A Good Man Is Hard to Find,” 132.
- 68. Free, “Relegation and Rebellion,” 426.
- 69. Stephen Matterson, “‘The Room Must Evoke Some Ghosts’: Tennessee Williams,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of the Southern Gothic*, ed. Susan Castillo Street and Charles L. Crow (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 382–383.
- 70. Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (New York: Vintage, 1992), 38.
- 71. Richard Wright, *12 Million Black Voices* (1941; repr., New York: Basic Books, 2008), 35.
- 72. Maisha L. Wester, *African American Gothic: Screams from Shadowed Places* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 25.
- 73. Theodore L. Gross, *The Heroic Ideal in American Literature* (New York: Free Press, 1971), 184.
- 74. Richard Wright, “The Ethics of Living Jim Crow,” in *Uncle Tom’s Children* (1940; repr., New York: Harper Perennial, 2008), 3.
- 75. Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (1952; repr., New York: Vintage, 1995), 3.

- 76. Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937; repr., New York: Perennial Classics, 1997), 161.
- 77. Walsh, "Dark Legacy," 23.
- 78. Wester, *African American Gothic*, 29.
- 79. Robert H. Brinkmeyer Jr., "A Long View of History: Cormac McCarthy's Gothic Vision," in *The Palgrave Handbook of the Southern Gothic*, ed. Susan Castillo Street and Charles L. Crow (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 175.
- 80. Lydia R. Cooper, "McCarthy, Tennessee, and the Southern Gothic," in *The Cambridge Companion to Cormac McCarthy*, ed. Steven Frye (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 41.
- 81. Frye, *Understanding*, 44.
- 82. Cormac McCarthy, *Child of God* (1973; repr., New York: Vintage International, 1993), 4.
- 83. Frye, *Understanding*, 39
- 84. Jay Ellis, "*The Road* beyond Zombies of the New South," in *Critical Insights: Southern Gothic Literature*, ed. Jay Ellis (Ipswich, MA: Salem, 2013), 50.
- 85. Barry Hannah, *Yonder Stands Your Orphan* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2001), 37–38.
- 86. Ibid., 175.
- 87. Ibid., 20–21.
- 88. Thomas Ærvold Bjerre, "Southern Evil, Southern Violence: Gothic Residues in the Works of William Gay, Barry Hannah, and Cormac McCarthy," in *The Scourges of the South: Essays on the Sickly South in History, Literature, and Popular Culture*, ed. Thomas Ærvold Bjerre and Beata Zawadka (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2014), 84.
- 89. Eric Gary Anderson et al., "Introduction," *Undead Souths: The Gothic and Beyond in Southern Literature and Culture* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2015), 1.
- 90. Jay Ellis, "On Southern Gothic Literature," in *Critical Insights: Southern Gothic Literature*, ed. Jay Ellis (Ipswich, MA: Salem, 2013), xxi.
- 91. Ibid., xviii.
- 92. Goddu, *Gothic America*, 9.
- 93. Fiedler, *Love*, 28.
- 94. Ibid., 29.
- 95. Ibid., 475.
- 96. Jerrold E. Hogle, "The Progress of Theory and the Study of the American Gothic," in *A Companion to American Gothic*, ed. Charles L. Crow (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 5.
- 97. Ibid.
- 98. Kerr, *William Faulkner's*, 3.
- 99. Wester, *African American Gothic*, 257.

- 100. Houston Baker and Dana Nelson, “Preface: Violence, The Body, and ‘The South,’” *American Literature* 73.2 (June 2001): 243.
- 101. Jon Smith and Deborah Cohn, “Introduction: Uncanny Hybridities,” *Look Away!: The U.S. South in New World Studies*, ed. Jon Smith and Deborah Cohn (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 13.
- 102. Anderson et al., “Introduction,” 2.
- 103. Ibid., 7.

Southern Gothic

Truman Capote: Miriam (1945)

Source: Truman Capote: *The Grass Harp; and A Tree of Night and Other Stories*. New York : The New American Library, 1961.

A Question to Consider:
Do you think that Miriam is real or just a figment of Mrs Miller's imagination?
Give reasons for your answer.

Miriam

For several years, Mrs. H. T. Miller had lived alone in a pleasant apartment (two rooms with kitchenette) in a remodeled brownstone near the East River. She was a widow: Mr. H. T. Miller had left a reasonable amount of insurance. Her interests were narrow, she had no friends to speak of, and she rarely journeyed farther than the corner grocery. The other people in the house never seemed to notice her: her clothes were matter-of-fact, her hair iron-gray, clipped and casually waved; she did not use cosmetics, her features were plain and inconspicuous, and on her last birthday she was sixty-one. Her activities were seldom spontaneous: she kept the two rooms immaculate, smoked an occasional cigarette, prepared her own meals and tended a canary.

Then she met Miriam. It was snowing that night. Mrs. Miller had finished drying the supper dishes and was thumbing through an afternoon paper when she saw an advertisement of a picture playing at a neighborhood theater. The title sounded good, so she struggled into her beaver coat, laced her galoshes and left the apartment, leaving one light burning in the foyer: she found nothing more disturbing than a sensation of darkness.

The snow was fine, falling gently, not yet making an im-

pression on the pavement. The wind from the river cut only at street crossings. Mrs. Miller hurried, her head bowed, oblivious as a mole burrowing a blind path. She stopped at a drugstore and bought a package of peppermints.

A long line stretched in front of the box office; she took her place at the end. There would be (a tired voice groaned) a short wait for all seats. Mrs. Miller rummaged in her leather handbag till she collected exactly the correct change for admission. The line seemed to be taking its own time and, looking around for some distraction, she suddenly became conscious of a little girl standing under the edge of the marquee.

Her hair was the longest and strangest Mrs. Miller had ever seen: absolutely silver-white, like an albino's. It flowed waist-length in smooth, loose lines. She was thin and fragilely constructed. There was a simple, special elegance in the way she stood with her thumbs in the pockets of a tailored plum-velvet coat.

Mrs. Miller felt oddly excited, and when the little girl glanced toward her, she smiled warmly. The little girl walked over and said, "Would you care to do me a favor?"

"I'd be glad to, if I can," said Mrs. Miller.

"Oh, it's quite easy. I merely want you to buy a ticket for me; they won't let me in otherwise. Here, I have the money." And gracefully she handed Mrs. Miller two dimes and a nickel.

They went into the theater together. An usherette directed them to a lounge; in twenty minutes the picture would be over.

"I feel just like a genuine criminal," said Mrs. Miller gaily, as she sat down. "I mean that sort of thing's against the law, isn't it? I do hope I haven't done the wrong thing. Your mother knows where you are, dear? I mean she does, doesn't she?"

The little girl said nothing. She unbuttoned her coat and folded it across her lap. Her dress underneath was prim and dark blue. A gold chain dangled about her neck, and her fingers, sensitive and musical-looking, toyed with it. Examining her more attentively, Mrs. Miller decided the truly distinctive feature was not her hair, but her eyes; they were hazel, steady, lacking any childlike quality whatsoever and, because of their size, seemed to consume her small face.

Mrs. Miller offered a peppermint. "What's your name, dear?"

"Miriam," she said, as though, in some curious way, it were information already familiar.

"Why, isn't that funny—my name's Miriam, too. And it's not

a terribly common name either. Now, don't tell me your last name's Miller!"

"Just Miriam."

"But isn't that funny?"

"Moderately," said Miriam, and rolled the peppermint on her tongue.

Mrs. Miller flushed and shifted uncomfortably. "You have such a large vocabulary for such a little girl."

"Do I?"

"Well, yes," said Mrs. Miller, hastily changing the topic to: "Do you like the movies?"

"I really wouldn't know," said Miriam. "I've never been before."

Women began filling the lounge; the rumble of the newsreel bombs exploded in the distance. Mrs. Miller rose, tucking her purse under her arm. "I guess I'd better be running now if I want to get a seat," she said. "It was nice to have met you."

Miriam nodded ever so slightly.

It snowed all week. Wheels and footsteps moved soundlessly on the street, as if the business of living continued secretly behind a pale but impenetrable curtain. In the falling quiet there was no sky or earth, only snow lifting in the wind, frosting the window glass, chilling the rooms, deadening and hushing the city. At all hours it was necessary to keep a lamp lighted, and Mrs. Miller lost track of the days: Friday was no different from Saturday and on Sunday she went to the grocery: closed, of course.

That evening she scrambled eggs and fixed a bowl of tomato soup. Then, after putting on a flannel robe and cold-creaming her face, she propped herself up in bed with a hot-water bottle under her feet. She was reading the *Times* when the doorbell rang. At first she thought it must be a mistake and whoever it was would go away. But it rang and rang and settled to a persistent buzz. She looked at the clock: a little after eleven; it did not seem possible, she was always asleep by ten.

Climbing out of bed, she trotted barefoot across the living room. "I'm coming, please be patient." The latch was caught; she turned it this way and that way and the bell never paused an instant. "Stop it," she cried. The bolt gave way and she opened the door an inch. "What in heaven's name?"

"Hello," said Miriam.

"Oh . . . why, hello," said Mrs. Miller, stepping hesitantly into the hall. "You're that little girl."

"I thought you'd never answer, but I kept my finger on the button; I knew you were home. Aren't you glad to see me?"

Mrs. Miller did not know what to say. Miriam, she saw, wore the same plum-velvet coat and now she had also a beret to match; her white hair was braided in two shining plaits and looped at the ends with enormous white ribbons.

"Since I've waited so long, you could at least let me in," she said.

"It's awfully late. . . ."

Miriam regarded her blankly. "What difference does that make? Let me in. It's cold out here and I have on a silk dress." Then, with a gentle gesture, she urged Mrs. Miller aside and passed into the apartment.

She dropped her coat and beret on a chair. She was indeed wearing a silk dress. White silk. White silk in February. The skirt was beautifully pleated and the sleeves long; it made a faint rustle as she strolled about the room. "I like your place," she said. "I like the rug, blue's my favorite color." She touched a paper rose in a vase on the coffee table. "Imitation," she commented wanly. "How sad. Aren't imitations sad?" She seated herself on the sofa, daintily spreading her skirt.

"What do you want?" asked Mrs. Miller.

"Sit down," said Miriam. "It makes me nervous to see people stand."

Mrs. Miller sank to a hassock. "What do you want?" she repeated.

"You know, I don't think you're glad I came."

For a second time Mrs. Miller was without an answer; her hand motioned vaguely. Miriam giggled and pressed back on a mound of chintz pillows. Mrs. Miller observed that the girl was less pale than she remembered; her cheeks were flushed.

"How did you know where I lived?"

Miriam frowned. "That's no question at all. What's your name? What's mine?"

"But I'm not listed in the phone book."

"Oh, let's talk about something else."

Mrs. Miller said, "Your mother must be insane to let a child like you wander around at all hours of the night—and in such ridiculous clothes. She must be out of her mind."

Miriam got up and moved to a corner where a covered bird cage hung from a ceiling chain. She peeked beneath the cover. "It's a canary," she said. "Would you mind if I woke him? I'd like to hear him sing."

"Leave Tommy alone," said Mrs. Miller, anxiously. "Don't you dare wake him."

"Certainly," said Miriam. "But I don't see why I can't hear him sing." And then, "Have you anything to eat? I'm starving! Even milk and a jam sandwich would be fine."

"Look," said Mrs. Miller, rising from the hassock, "look—if I make some nice sandwiches will you be a good child and run along home? It's past midnight, I'm sure."

"It's snowing," reproached Miriam. "And cold and dark."

"Well, you shouldn't have come here to begin with," said Mrs. Miller, struggling to control her voice. "I can't help the weather. If you want anything to eat you'll have to promise to leave."

Miriam brushed a braid against her cheek. Her eyes were thoughtful, as if weighing the proposition. She turned toward the bird cage. "Very well," she said, "I promise."

How old is she? Ten? Eleven? Mrs. Miller, in the kitchen, unsealed a jar of strawberry preserves and cut four slices of bread. She poured a glass of milk and paused to light a cigarette. *And why has she come?* Her hand shook as she held the match, fascinated, till it burned her finger. The canary was singing; singing as he did in the morning and at no other time. "Miriam," she called. "Miriam, I told you not to disturb Tommy." There was no answer. She called again; all she heard was the canary. She inhaled the cigarette and discovered she had lighted the cork-tip end and—oh, really, she mustn't lose her temper.

She carried the food in on a tray and set it on the coffee table. She saw first that the bird cage still wore its night cover. And Tommy was singing. It gave her a queer sensation. And no one was in the room. Mrs. Miller went through an alcove leading to her bedroom; at the door she caught her breath.

"What are you doing?" she asked.

Miriam glanced up and in her eyes there was a look that was not ordinary. She was standing by the bureau, a jewel case opened before her. For a minute she studied Mrs. Miller, forcing their eyes to meet, and she smiled. "There's nothing good here," she said. "But I like this." Her hand held a cameo brooch. "It's charming."

"Suppose—perhaps you'd better put it back," said Mrs.

Miller, feeling suddenly the need of some support. She leaned against the door frame; her head was unbearably heavy; a pressure weighted the rhythm of her heartbeat. The light seemed to flutter defectively. "Please, child—a gift from my husband . . ."

"But it's beautiful and I want it," said Miriam. *"Give it to me."*

As she stood, striving to shape a sentence which would somehow save the brooch, it came to Mrs. Miller there was no one to whom she might turn; she was alone; a fact that had not been among her thoughts for a long time. Its sheer emphasis was stunning. But here in her own room in the hushed snow-city were evidences she could not ignore or, she knew with startling clarity, resist.

Miriam ate ravenously, and when the sandwiches and milk were gone, her fingers made cobweb movements over the plate, gathering crumbs. The cameo gleamed on her blouse, the blonde profile like a trick reflection of its wearer. "That was very nice," she sighed, "though now an almond cake or a cherry would be ideal. Sweets are lovely, don't you think?"

Mrs. Miller was perched precariously on the hassock, smoking a cigarette. Her hair net had slipped lopsided and loose strands straggled down her face. Her eyes were stupidly concentrated on nothing and her cheeks were mottled in red patches, as though a fierce slap had left permanent marks.

"Is there a candy—a cake?"

Mrs. Miller tapped ash on the rug. Her head swayed slightly as she tried to focus her eyes. "You promised to leave if I made the sandwiches," she said.

"Dear me, did I?"

"It was a promise and I'm tired and I don't feel well at all."

"Mustn't fret," said Miriam. "I'm only teasing."

She picked up her coat, slung it over her arm, and arranged her beret in front of a mirror. Presently she bent close to Mrs. Miller and whispered, "Kiss me good night."

"Please—I'd rather not," said Mrs. Miller.

Miriam lifted a shoulder, arched an eyebrow. "As you like," she said, and went directly to the coffee table, seized the vase containing the paper roses, carried it to where the hard surface of the floor lay bare, and hurled it downward. Glass sprayed in all directions and she stamped her foot on the bouquet.

Then slowly she walked to the door, but before closing it she looked back at Mrs. Miller with a slyly innocent curiosity.

Mrs. Miller spent the next day in bed, rising once to feed the canary and drink a cup of tea; she took her temperature and had none, yet her dreams were feverishly agitated; their unbalanced mood lingered even as she lay staring wide-eyed at the ceiling. One dream threaded through the others like an elusively mysterious theme in a complicated symphony, and the scenes it depicted were sharply outlined, as though sketched by a hand of gifted intensity: a small girl, wearing a bridal gown and a wreath of leaves, led a gray procession down a mountain path, and among them there was unusual silence till a woman at the rear asked, "Where is she taking us?" "No one knows," said an old man marching in front. "But isn't she pretty?" volunteered a third voice. "Isn't she like a frost flower . . . so shining and white?"

Tuesday morning she woke up feeling better; harsh slats of sunlight, slanting through Venetian blinds, shed a disrupting light on her unwholesome fancies. She opened the window to discover a thawed, mild-as-spring day; a sweep of clean new clouds crumpled against a vastly blue, out-of-season sky; and across the low line of roof-tops she could see the river and smoke curving from tug-boat stacks in a warm wind. A great silver truck plowed the snow-banked street, its machine sound humming in the air.

After straightening the apartment, she went to the grocer's, cashed a check and continued to Schrafft's where she ate breakfast and chatted happily with the waitress. Oh, it was a wonderful day—more like a holiday—and it would be so foolish to go home.

She boarded a Lexington Avenue bus and rode up to Eighty-sixth Street; it was here that she had decided to do a little shopping.

She had no idea what she wanted or needed, but she idled along, intent only upon the passers-by, brisk and preoccupied, who gave her a disturbing sense of separateness.

It was while waiting at the corner of Third Avenue that she saw the man: an old man, bowlegged and stooped under an armload of bulging packages; he wore a shabby brown coat and a checkered cap. Suddenly she realized they were exchanging a smile: there was nothing friendly about this smile, it was

merely two cold flickers of recognition. But she was certain she had never seen him before.

He was standing next to an El pillar, and as she crossed the street he turned and followed. He kept quite close; from the corner of her eye she watched his reflection wavering on the shopwindows.

Then in the middle of the block she stopped and faced him. He stopped also and cocked his head, grinning. But what could she say? Do? Here, in broad daylight, on Eighty-sixth Street? It was useless and, despising her own helplessness, she quickened her steps.

Now Second Avenue is a dismal street, made from scraps and ends; part cobblestone, part asphalt, part cement; and its atmosphere of desertion is permanent. Mrs. Miller walked five blocks without meeting anyone, and all the while the steady crunch of his footfalls in the snow stayed near. And when she came to a florist's shop, the sound was still with her. She hurried inside and watched through the glass door as the old man passed; he kept his eyes straight ahead and didn't slow his pace, but he did one strange, telling thing: he tipped his cap.

"Six white ones, did you say?" asked the florist. "Yes," she told him, "white roses." From there she went to a glassware store and selected a vase, presumably a replacement for the one Miriam had broken, though the price was intolerable and the vase itself (she thought) grotesquely vulgar. But a series of unaccountable purchases had begun, as if by prearranged plan: a plan of which she had not the least knowledge or control.

She bought a bag of glazed cherries, and at a place called the Knickerbocker Bakery she paid forty cents for six almond cakes.

Within the last hour the weather had turned cold again; like blurred lenses, winter clouds cast a shade over the sun, and the skeleton of an early dusk colored the sky; a damp mist mixed with the wind and the voices of a few children who romped high on mountains of gutter snow seemed lonely and cheerless. Soon the first flake fell, and when Mrs. Miller reached the brownstone house, snow was falling in a swift screen and foot tracks vanished as they were printed.

The white roses were arranged decoratively in the vase. The glazed cherries shone on a ceramic plate. The almond cakes, dusted with sugar, awaited a hand. The canary fluttered on its swing and picked at a bar of seed.

At precisely five the doorbell rang. Mrs. Miller *knew* who it was. The hem of her housecoat trailed as she crossed the floor. "Is that you?" she called.

"Naturally," said Miriam, the word resounding shrilly from the hall. "Open this door."

"Go away," said Mrs. Miller.

"Please hurry . . . I have a heavy package."

"Go away," said Mrs. Miller. She returned to the living room, lighted a cigarette, sat down and calmly listened to the buzzer; on and on and on. "You might as well leave. I have no intention of letting you in."

Shortly the bell stopped. For possibly ten minutes Mrs. Miller did not move. Then, hearing no sound, she concluded Miriam had gone. She tiptoed to the door and opened it a sliver; Miriam was half-reclining atop a cardboard box with a beautiful French doll cradled in her arms.

"Really, I thought you were never coming," she said peevishly. "Here, help me get this in, it's awfully heavy."

It was not spell-like compulsion that Mrs. Miller felt, but rather a curious passivity; she brought in the box, Miriam the doll. Miriam curled up on the sofa, not troubling to remove her coat or beret, and watched disinterestedly as Mrs. Miller dropped the box and stood trembling, trying to catch her breath.

"Thank you," she said. In the daylight she looked pinched and drawn, her hair less luminous. The French doll she was loving wore an exquisite powdered wig and its idiot glass eyes sought solace in Miriam's. "I have a surprise," she continued. "Look into my box."

Kneeling, Mrs. Miller parted the flaps and lifted out another doll; then a blue dress which she recalled as the one Miriam had worn that first night at the theater; and of the remainder she said, "It's all clothes. Why?"

"Because I've come to live with you," said Miriam, twisting a cherry stem. "Wasn't it nice of you to buy me the cherries . . . ?"

"But you can't! For God's sake go away—go away and leave me alone!"

". . . and the roses and the almond cakes? How really wonderfully generous. You know, these cherries are delicious. The last place I lived was with an old man; he was terribly poor and we never had good things to eat. But I think I'll be happy here." She paused to snuggle her doll closer. "Now, if you'll just show me where to put my things . . ."

Mrs. Miller's face dissolved into a mask of ugly red lines; she began to cry, and it was an unnatural, tearless sort of weeping, as though, not having wept for a long time, she had forgotten how. Carefully she edged backward till she touched the door.

She fumbled through the hall and down the stairs to a landing below. She pounded frantically on the door of the first apartment she came to; a short, red-headed man answered and she pushed past him. "Say, what the hell is this?" he said. "Anything wrong, lover?" asked a young woman who appeared from the kitchen, drying her hands. And it was to her that Mrs. Miller turned.

"Listen," she cried, "I'm ashamed behaving this way but—well, I'm Mrs. H. T. Miller and I live upstairs and . . ." She pressed her hands over her face. "It sounds so absurd. . . ."

The woman guided her to a chair, while the man excitedly rattled pocket change. "Yeah?"

"I live upstairs and there's a little girl visiting me, and I suppose that I'm afraid of her. She won't leave and I can't make her and—she's going to do something terrible. She's already stolen my cameo, but she's about to do something worse—something terrible!"

The man asked, "Is she a relative, huh?"

Mrs. Miller shook her head. "I don't know who she is. Her name's Miriam, but I don't know for certain who she is."

"You gotta calm down, honey," said the woman, stroking Mrs. Miller's arm. "Harry here'll tend to this kid. Go on, lover." And Mrs. Miller said, "The door's open—5A."

After the man left, the woman brought a towel and bathed Mrs. Miller's face. "You're very kind," Mrs. Miller said. "I'm sorry to act like such a fool, only this wicked child. . . ."

"Sure, honey," consoled the woman. "Now, you better take it easy."

Mrs. Miller rested her head in the crook of her arm; she was quiet enough to be asleep. The woman turned a radio dial; a piano and a husky voice filled the silence and the woman, tapping her foot, kept excellent time. "Maybe we oughta go up too," she said.

"I don't want to see her again. I don't want to be anywhere near her."

"Uh huh, but what you shoulda done, you shoulda called a cop."

Presently they heard the man on the stairs. He strode into the room frowning and scratching the back of his neck. "Nobody there," he said, honestly embarrassed. "She musta beat it."

"Harry, you're a jerk," announced the woman. "We been sitting here the whole time and we woulda seen . . ." she stopped abruptly, for the man's glance was sharp.

"I looked all over," he said, "and there just ain't nobody there. Nobody, understand?"

"Tell me," said Mrs. Miller, rising, "tell me, did you see a large box? Or a doll?"

"No, ma'am, I didn't."

And the woman, as if delivering a verdict, said, "Well, for cryin out loud. . . ."

Mrs. Miller entered her apartment softly; she walked to the center of the room and stood quite still. No, in a sense it had not changed: the roses, the cakes, and the cherries were in place. But this was an empty room, emptier than if the furnishings and familiars were not present, lifeless and petrified as a funeral parlor. The sofa loomed before her with a new strangeness: its vacancy had a meaning that would have been less penetrating and terrible had Miriam been curled on it. She gazed fixedly at the space where she remembered setting the box and, for a moment, the hassock spun desperately. And she looked through the window; surely the river was real, surely snow was falling—but then, one could not be certain witness to anything: Miriam, so vividly *there*—and yet, where was she? Where, where?

As though moving in a dream, she sank to a chair. The room was losing shape; it was dark and getting darker and there was nothing to be done about it; she could not lift her hand to light a lamp.

Suddenly, closing her eyes, she felt an upward surge, like a diver emerging from some deeper, greener depth. In times of terror or immense distress, there are moments when the mind waits, as though for a revelation, while a skein of calm is woven over thought; it is like a sleep, or a supernatural trance; and during this lull one is aware of a force of quiet reasoning: well, what if she had never really known a girl named Miriam? that she had been foolishly frightened on the street? In the end, like everything else, it was of no importance. For the only thing she had lost to Miriam was her identity, but now she knew she

had found again the person who lived in this room, who cooked her own meals, who owned a canary, who was someone she could trust and believe in: Mrs. H. T. Miller.

Listening in contentment, she became aware of a double sound: a bureau drawer opening and closing; she seemed to hear it long after completion—opening and closing. Then gradually, the harshness of it was replaced by the murmur of a silk dress and this, delicately faint, was moving nearer and swelling in intensity till the walls trembled with the vibration and the room was caving under a wave of whispers. Mrs. Miller stiffened and opened her eyes to a dull, direct stare.

"Hello," said Miriam.

Southern Gothic

Flannery O'Connor: A Good Man Is Hard to Find

Source:
https://www.boyd.k12.ky.us/userfiles/447/classes/28660/a%20good%20man%20is%20hard%20to%20find.pdf

A Question to Consider:
Select two occurrences of the phrase 'a good man' in this story, and compare its meaning in the two passages.

A GOOD MAN IS HARD TO FIND
AND OTHER STORIES

by Flannery O'Connor

A GOOD MAN IS HARD TO FIND

THE GRANDMOTHER didn't want to go to Florida. She wanted to visit some of her connections in east Tennessee and she was seizing at every chance to change Bailey's mind. Bailey was the son she lived with, her only boy. He was sitting on the edge of his chair at the table, bent over the orange sports section of the *Journal*. "Now look here, Bailey," she said, "see here, read this," and she stood with one hand on her thin hip and the other rattling the newspaper at his bald head. "Here this fellow that calls himself The Misfit is aloose from the Federal Pen and headed toward Florida and you read here what it says he did to these people. Just you read it. I wouldn't take my children in any direction with a criminal like that aloose in it. I couldn't answer to my conscience if I did."

Bailey didn't look up from his reading so she wheeled around then and faced the children's mother, a young woman in slacks, whose face was as broad and innocent as a cabbage and was tied around with a green head-kerchief that had two points on the top like rabbit's ears. She was sitting on the sofa, feeding the baby his apricots out of a jar. "The children have been to Florida before," the old lady said. "You all ought to take them somewhere else for a change so they would see different parts of the world and be broad. They never have been to east Tennessee."

The children's mother didn't seem to hear her but the eight-year-old boy, John Wesley, a stocky child with glasses, said, "If you don't want to go to Florida, why dontcha stay at home?" He and the little girl, June Star, were reading the funny papers on the floor.

"She wouldn't stay at home to be queen for a day," June Star said without raising her yellow head.

"Yes and what would you do if this fellow, The Misfit, caught you?" the grandmother asked.

"I'd smack his face," John Wesley said.

"She wouldn't stay at home for a million bucks," June Star said. "Afraid she'd miss something. She has to go everywhere we go."

"All right, Miss," the grandmother said. "Just remember that the next time you want me to curl your hair."

June Star said her hair was naturally curly.

The next morning the grandmother was the first one in the car, ready to go. She had her big black valise that looked like the head of a hippopotamus in one corner, and underneath it she was hiding a basket with Pitty Sing, the cat, in it. She didn't intend for the cat to be left alone in the house for three days because he would miss her too much and she was afraid he might brush against one of the gas burners and

accidentally asphyxiate himself. Her son, Bailey, didn't like to arrive at a motel with a cat.

She sat in the middle of the back seat with John Wesley and June Star on either side of her. Bailey and the children's mother and the baby sat in front and they left Atlanta at eight forty-five with the mileage on the car at 55890. The grandmother wrote this down because she thought it would be interesting to say how many miles they had been when they got back. It took them twenty minutes to reach the outskirts of the city.

The old lady settled herself comfortably, removing her white cotton gloves and putting them up with her purse on the shelf in front of the back window. The children's mother still had on slacks and still had her head tied up in a green kerchief, but the grandmother had on a navy blue straw sailor hat with a bunch of white violets on the brim and a navy blue dress with a small white dot in the print. Her collars and cuffs were white organdy trimmed with lace and at her neckline she had pinned a purple spray of cloth violets containing a sachet. In case of an accident, anyone seeing her dead on the highway would know at once that she was a lady.

She said she thought it was going to be a good day for driving, neither too hot nor too cold, and she cautioned Bailey that the speed limit was fifty-five miles an hour and that the patrolmen hid themselves behind billboards and small clumps of trees and sped out after you before you had a chance to slow down. She pointed out interesting details of the scenery: Stone Mountain; the blue granite that in some places came up to both sides of the highway; the brilliant red clay banks slightly streaked with purple; and the various crops that made rows of green lace-work on the ground. The trees were full of silver-white sunlight and the meanest of them sparkled. The children were reading comic magazines and their mother had gone back to sleep.

"Let's go through Georgia fast so we won't have to look at it much," John Wesley said.

"If I were a little boy," said the grandmother, "I wouldn't talk about my native state that way. Tennessee has the mountains and Georgia has the hills."

"Tennessee is just a hillbilly dumping ground," John Wesley said, "and Georgia is a lousy state too."

"You said it," June Star said.

"In my time," said the grandmother, folding her thin veined fingers, "children were more respectful of their native states and their parents and everything else. People did right then. Oh look at the cute little pickaninny!" she said and pointed to a Negro child standing in the door of a shack. "Wouldn't that make a picture, now?" she asked and they all turned and looked at the little Negro out of the back window. He waved.

"He didn't have any britches on," June Star said.

"He probably didn't have any," the grandmother explained. "Little niggers in the country don't have things like we do. If I could paint, I'd paint that picture," she said.

The children exchanged comic books.

The grandmother offered to hold the baby and the children's mother passed him over the front seat to her. She set him on her knee and bounced him and told him

about the things they were passing. She rolled her eyes and screwed up her mouth and stuck her leathery thin face into his smooth bland one. Occasionally he gave her a faraway smile. They passed a large cotton field with five or six graves fenced in the middle of it, like a small island. "Look at the graveyard!" the grandmother said, pointing it out. "That was the old family burying ground. That belonged to the plantation."

"Where's the plantation?" John Wesley asked.

"Gone With the Wind," said the grandmother. "Ha. Ha."

When the children finished all the comic books they had brought, they opened the lunch and ate it. The grandmother ate a peanut butter sandwich and an olive and would not let the children throw the box and the paper napkins out the window. When there was nothing else to do they played a game by choosing a cloud and making the other two guess what shape it suggested. John Wesley took one the shape of a cow and June Star guessed a cow and John Wesley said, no, an automobile, and June Star said he didn't play fair, and they began to slap each other over the grandmother.

The grandmother said she would tell them a story if they would keep quiet. When she told a story, she rolled her eyes and waved her head and was very dramatic. She said once when she was a maiden lady she had been courted by a Mr. Edgar Atkins Teagarden from Jasper, Georgia. She said he was a very good-looking man and a gentleman and that he brought her a watermelon every Saturday afternoon with his initials cut in it, E. A. T. Well, one Saturday, she said, Mr. Teagarden brought the watermelon and there was nobody at home and he left it on the front porch and returned in his buggy to Jasper, but she never got the watermelon, she said, because a nigger boy ate it when he saw the initials, E. A. T.! This story tickled John Wesley's funny bone and he giggled and giggled but June Star didn't think it was any good. She said she wouldn't marry a man that just brought her a watermelon on Saturday. The grandmother said she would have done well to marry Mr. Teagarden because he was a gentleman and had bought Coca-Cola stock when it first came out and that he had died only a few years ago, a very wealthy man.

They stopped at The Tower for barbecued sandwiches. The Tower was a part stucco and part wood filling station and dance hall set in a clearing outside of Timothy. A fat man named Red Sammy Butts ran it and there were signs stuck here and there on the building and for miles up and down the highway saying, TRY RED SAMMY'S FAMOUS BARBECUE. NONE LIKE FAMOUS RED SAMMY'S! RED SAM! THE FAT BOY WITH THE HAPPY LAUGH. A VETERAN! RED SAMMY'S YOUR MAN!

Red Sammy was lying on the bare ground outside The Tower with his head under a truck while a gray monkey about a foot high, chained to a small chinaberry tree, chattered nearby. The monkey sprang back into the tree and got on the highest limb as soon as he saw the children jump out of the car and run toward him.

Inside, The Tower was a long dark room with a counter at one end and tables at the other and dancing space in the middle. They all sat down at a board table next to the nickelodeon and Red Sam's wife, a tall burnt-brown woman with hair and eyes lighter than her skin, came and took their order. The children's mother put a dime in the machine and played "The Tennessee Waltz," and the grandmother said that tune always

made her want to dance. She asked Bailey if he would like to dance but he only glared at her. He didn't have a naturally sunny disposition like she did and trips made him nervous. The grandmother's brown eyes were very bright. She swayed her head from side to side and pretended she was dancing in her chair. June Star said play something she could tap to so the children's mother put in another dime and played a fast number and June Star stepped out onto the dance floor and did her tap routine.

"Ain't she cute?" Red Sam's wife said, leaning over the counter. "Would you like to come be my little girl?"

"No I certainly wouldn't," June Star said. "I wouldn't live in a broken-down place like this for a million bucks!" and she ran back to the table.

"Ain't she cute?" the woman repeated, stretching her mouth politely.

"Arn't you ashamed?" hissed the grandmother.

Red Sam came in and told his wife to quit lounging on the counter and hurry up with these people's order. His khaki trousers reached just to his hip bones and his stomach hung over them like a sack of meal swaying under his shirt. He came over and sat down at a table nearby and let out a combination sigh and yodel. "You can't win," he said. "You can't win," and he wiped his sweating red face off with a gray handkerchief. "These days you don't know who to trust," he said. "Ain't that the truth?"

"People are certainly not nice like they used to be," said the grandmother.

"Two fellers come in here last week," Red Sammy said, "driving a Chrysler. It was a old beat-up car but it was a good one and these boys looked all right to me. Said they worked at the mill and you know I let them fellers charge the gas they bought? Now why did I do that?"

"Because you're a good man!" the grandmother said at once.

"Yes'm, I suppose so," Red Sam said as if he were struck with this answer.

His wife brought the orders, carrying the five plates all at once without a tray, two in each hand and one balanced on her arm. "It isn't a soul in this green world of God's that you can trust," she said. "And I don't count nobody out of that, not nobody," she repeated, looking at Red Sammy.

"Did you read about that criminal. The Misfit, that's escaped?" asked the grandmother.

"I wouldn't be a bit surprised if he didn't attact this place right here," said the woman. "If he hears about it being here, I wouldn't be none surprised to see him. If he hears it's two cent in the cash register, I wouldn't be a tall surprised if he . . ."

"That'll do," Red Sam said. "Go bring these people their Co'-Colas," and the woman went off to get the rest of the order.

"A good man is hard to find," Red Sammy said. "Everything is getting terrible. I remember the day you could go off and leave your screen door unlatched. Not no more."

He and the grandmother discussed better times. The old lady said that in her opinion Europe was entirely to blame for the way things were now. She said the way Europe acted you would think we were made of money and Red Sam said it was no use talking about it, she was exactly right. The children ran outside into the white sunlight

and looked at the monkey in the lacy chinaberry tree. He was busy catching fleas on himself and biting each one carefully between his teeth as if it were a delicacy.

They drove off again into the hot afternoon. The grandmother took cat naps and woke up every few minutes with her own snoring. Outside of Toombsboro she woke up and recalled an old plantation that she had visited in this neighborhood once when she was a young lady. She said the house had six white columns across the front and that there was an avenue of oaks leading up to it and two little wooden trellis arbors on either side in front where you sat down with your suitor after a stroll in the garden. She recalled exactly which road to turn off to get to it. She knew that Bailey would not be willing to lose any time looking at an old house, but the more she talked about it, the more she wanted to see it once again and find out if the little twin arbors were still standing. "There was a secret panel in this house," she said craftily, not telling the truth but wishing that she were, "and the story went that all the family silver was hidden in it when Sherman came through but it was never found . . ."

"Hey!" John Wesley said. "Let's go see it! We'll find it! We'll poke all the woodwork and find it! Who lives there? Where do you turn off at? Hey Pop, can't we turn off there?"

"We never have seen a house with a secret panel!" June Star shrieked.

"Let's go to the house with the secret panel! Hey Pop, can't we go see the house with the secret panel!"

"It's not far from here, I know," the grandmother said. "It wouldn't take over twenty minutes."

Bailey was looking straight ahead. His jaw was as rigid as a horseshoe. "No," he said.

The children began to yell and scream that they wanted to see the house with the secret panel. John Wesley kicked the back of the front seat and June Star hung over her mother's shoulder and whined desperately into her ear that they never had any fun even on their vacation, that they could never do what THEY wanted to do. The baby began to scream and John Wesley kicked the back of the seat so hard that his father could feel the blows in his kidney.

"All right!" he shouted and drew the car to a stop at the side of the road. "Will you all shut up? Will you all just shut up for one second? If you don't shut up, we won't go anywhere."

"It would be very educational for them," the grandmother murmured.

"All right," Bailey said, "but get this: this is the only time we're going to stop for anything like this. This is the one and only time."

"The dirt road that you have to turn down is about a mile back," the grandmother directed. "I marked it when we passed."

"A dirt road," Bailey groaned.

After they had turned around and were headed toward the dirt road, the grandmother recalled other points about the house, the beautiful glass over the front doorway and the candle-lamp in the hall. John Wesley said that the secret panel was probably in the fireplace.

"You can't go inside this house," Bailey said. "You don't know who lives there."

"While you all talk to the people in front, I'll run around behind and get in a window," John Wesley suggested.

"We'll all stay in the car," his mother said.

They turned onto the dirt road and the car raced roughly along in a swirl of pink dust. The grandmother recalled the times when there were no paved roads and thirty miles was a day's journey. The dirt road was hilly and there were sudden washes in it and sharp curves on dangerous embankments. All at once they would be on a hill, looking down over the blue tops of trees for miles around, then the next minute, they would be in a red depression with the dust-coated trees looking down on them.

"This place had better turn up in a minute," Bailey said, "or I'm going to turn around."

The road looked as if no one had traveled on it in months.

"It's not much farther," the grandmother said and just as she said it, a horrible thought came to her. The thought was so embarrassing that she turned red in the face and her eyes dilated and her feet jumped up, upsetting her valise in the corner. The instant the valise moved, the newspaper top she had over the basket under it rose with a snarl and Pitty Sing, the cat, sprang onto Bailey's shoulder.

The children were thrown to the floor and their mother, clutching the baby, was thrown out the door onto the ground; the old lady was thrown into the front seat. The car turned over once and landed right-side-up in a gulch off the side of the road. Bailey remained in the driver's seat with the cat--gray-striped with a broad white face and an orange nose--clinging to his neck like a caterpillar.

As soon as the children saw they could move their arms and legs, they scrambled out of the car, shouting, "We've had an ACCIDENT!" The grandmother was curled up under the dashboard, hoping she was injured so that Bailey's wrath would not come down on her all at once. The horrible thought she had had before the accident was that the house she had remembered so vividly was not in Georgia but in Tennessee.

Bailey removed the cat from his neck with both hands and flung it out the window against the side of a pine tree. Then he got out of the car and started looking for the children's mother. She was sitting against the side of the red gutted ditch, holding the screaming baby, but she only had a cut down her face and a broken shoulder. "We've had an ACCIDENT!" the children screamed in a frenzy of delight.

"But nobody's killed," June Star said with disappointment as the grandmother limped out of the car, her hat still pinned to her head but the broken front brim standing up at a jaunty angle and the violet spray hanging off the side. They all sat down in the ditch, except the children, to recover from the shock. They were all shaking.

"Maybe a car will come along," said the children's mother hoarsely.

"I believe I have injured an organ," said the grandmother, pressing her side, but no one answered her. Bailey's teeth were clattering. He had on a yellow sport shirt with bright blue parrots designed in it and his face was as yellow as the shirt. The grandmother decided that she would not mention that the house was in Tennessee.

The road was about ten feet above and they could see only the tops of the trees on the other side of it. Behind the ditch they were sitting in there were more woods, tall

and dark and deep. In a few minutes they saw a car some distance away on top of a hill, coming slowly as if the occupants were watching them. The grandmother stood up and waved both arms dramatically to attract their attention. The car continued to come on slowly, disappeared around a bend and appeared again, moving even slower, on top of the hill they had gone over. It was a big black battered hearse-like automobile. There were three men in it.

It came to a stop just over them and for some minutes, the driver looked down with a steady expressionless gaze to where they were sitting, and didn't speak. Then he turned his head and muttered something to the other two and they got out. One was a fat boy in black trousers and a red sweat shirt with a silver stallion embossed on the front of it. He moved around on the right side of them and stood staring, his mouth partly open in a kind of loose grin. The other had on khaki pants and a blue striped coat and a gray hat pulled down very low, hiding most of his face. He came around slowly on the left side. Neither spoke.

The driver got out of the car and stood by the side of it, looking down at them. He was an older man than the other two. His hair was just beginning to gray and he wore silver-rimmed spectacles that gave him a scholarly look. He had a long creased face and didn't have on any shirt or undershirt. He had on blue jeans that were too tight for him and was holding a black hat and a gun. The two boys also had guns.

"We've had an ACCIDENT!" the children screamed.

The grandmother had the peculiar feeling that the bespectacled man was someone she knew. His face was as familiar to her as if she had known him all her life but she could not recall who he was. He moved away from the car and began to come down the embankment, placing his feet carefully so that he wouldn't slip. He had on tan and white shoes and no socks, and his ankles were red and thin. "Good afternoon," he said. "I see you all had you a little spill."

"We turned over twice!" said the grandmother.

"Oncet," he corrected. "We seen it happen. Try their car and see will it run, Hiram," he said quietly to the boy with the gray hat.

"What you got that gun for?" John Wesley asked. "Whatcha gonna do with that gun?"

"Lady," the man said to the children's mother, "would you mind calling them children to sit down by you? Children make me nervous. I want all you all to sit down right together there where you're at."

"What are you telling US what to do for?" June Star asked.

Behind them the line of woods gaped like a dark open mouth. "Come here," said their mother.

"Look here now," Bailey began suddenly, "we're in a predicament! We're in . . ."

The grandmother shrieked. She scrambled to her feet and stood staring. "You're The Misfit!" she said. "I recognized you at once!"

"Yes'm," the man said, smiling slightly as if he were pleased in spite of himself to be known, "but it would have been better for all of you, lady, if you hadn't of reckernized me."

Bailey turned his head sharply and said something to his mother that shocked even the children. The old lady began to cry and The Misfit reddened.

"Lady," he said, "don't you get upset. Sometimes a man says things he don't mean. I don't reckon he meant to talk to you thataway."

"You wouldn't shoot a lady, would you?" the grandmother said and removed a clean handkerchief from her cuff and began to slap at her eyes with it.

The Misfit pointed the toe of his shoe into the ground and made a little hole and then covered it up again. "I would hate to have to," he said.

"Listen," the grandmother almost screamed, "I know you're a good man. You don't look a bit like you have common blood. I know you must come from nice people!"

"Yes mam," he said, "finest people in the world." When he smiled he showed a row of strong white teeth. "God never made a finer woman than my mother and my daddy's heart was pure gold," he said. The boy with the red sweat shirt had come around behind them and was standing with his gun at his hip. The Misfit squatted down on the ground. "Watch them children, Bobby Lee," he said. "You know they make me nervous." He looked at the six of them huddled together in front of him and he seemed to be embarrassed as if he couldn't think of anything to say. "Ain't a cloud in the sky," he remarked, looking up at it. "Don't see no sun but don't see no cloud neither."

"Yes, it's a beautiful day," said the grandmother. "Listen," she said, "you shouldn't call yourself The Misfit because I know you're a good man at heart. I can just look at you and tell."

"Hush!" Bailey yelled. "Hush! Everybody shut up and let me handle this!" He was squatting in the position of a runner about to sprint forward but he didn't move.

"I pre-chate that, lady," The Misfit said and drew a little circle in the ground with the butt of his gun.

"It'll take a half a hour to fix this here car," Hiram called, looking over the raised hood of it.

"Well, first you and Bobby Lee get him and that little boy to step over yonder with you," The Misfit said, pointing to Bailey and John Wesley. "The boys want to ast you something," he said to Bailey. "Would you mind stepping back in them woods there with them?"

"Listen," Bailey began, "we're in a terrible predicament! Nobody realizes what this is," and his voice cracked. His eyes were as blue and intense as the parrots in his shirt and he remained perfectly still.

The grandmother reached up to adjust her hat brim as if she were going to the woods with him but it came off in her hand. She stood staring at it and after a second she let it fall on the ground. Hiram pulled Bailey up by the arm as if he were assisting an old man. John Wesley caught hold of his father's hand and Bobby Lee followed. They went off toward the woods and just as they reached the dark edge, Bailey turned and supporting himself against a gray naked pine trunk, he shouted, "I'll be back in a minute, Mamma, wait on me!"

"Come back this instant!" his mother shrilled but they all disappeared into the woods.

"Bailey Boy!" the grandmother called in a tragic voice but she found she was looking at The Misfit squatting on the ground in front of her. "I just know you're a good man," she said desperately. "You're not a bit common!"

"Nome, I ain't a good man," The Misfit said after a second as if he had considered her statement carefully, "but I ain't the worst in the world neither. My daddy said I was a different breed of dog from my brothers and sisters. 'You know,' Daddy said, 'it's some that can live their whole life out without asking about it and it's others has to know why it is, and this boy is one of the latters. He's going to be into everything!' " He put on his black hat and looked up suddenly and then away deep into the woods as if he were embarrassed again. "I'm sorry I don't have on a shirt before you ladies," he said, hunching his shoulders slightly. "We buried our clothes that we had on when we escaped and we're just making do until we can get better. We borrowed these from some folks we met," he explained.

"That's perfectly all right," the grandmother said. "Maybe Bailey has an extra shirt in his suitcase."

"I'll look and see terrectly," The Misfit said.

"Where are they taking him?" the children's mother screamed.

"Daddy was a card himself," The Misfit said. "You couldn't put anything over on him. He never got in trouble with the Authorities though. Just had the knack of handling them."

"You could be honest too if you'd only try," said the grandmother. "Think how wonderful it would be to settle down and live a comfortable life and not have to think about somebody chasing you all the time."

The Misfit kept scratching in the ground with the butt of his gun as if he were thinking about it. "Yes'm, somebody is always after you," he murmured.

The grandmother noticed how thin his shoulder blades were just behind his hat because she was standing up looking down on him. "Do you ever pray?" she asked.

He shook his head. All she saw was the black hat wiggle between his shoulder blades. "Nome," he said.

There was a pistol shot from the woods, followed closely by another. Then silence. The old lady's head jerked around. She could hear the wind move through the tree tops like a long satisfied insuck of breath. "Bailey Boy!" she called.

"I was a gospel singer for a while," The Misfit said. "I been most everything. Been in the arm service, both land and sea, at home and abroad, been twict married, been an undertaker, been with the railroads, plowed Mother Earth, been in a tornado, seen a man burnt alive oncet," and he looked up at the children's mother and the little girl who were sitting close together, their faces white and their eyes glassy; "I even seen a woman flogged," he said.

"Pray, pray," the grandmother began, "pray, pray . . ."

"I never was a bad boy that I remember of," The Misfit said in an almost dreamy voice, "but somewheres along the line I done something wrong and got sent to the penitentiary. I was buried alive," and he looked up and held her attention to him by a steady stare.

"That's when you should have started to pray," she said. "What did you do to get sent to the penitentiary that first time?"

"Turn to the right, it was a wall," The Misfit said, looking up again at the cloudless sky. "Turn to the left, it was a wall. Look up it was a ceiling, look down it was a floor. I forget what I done, lady. I set there and set there, trying to remember what it was I done and I ain't recalled it to this day. Oncet in a while, I would think it was coming to me, but it never come."

"Maybe they put you in by mistake." the old lady said vaguely.

"Nome," he said. "It wasn't no mistake. They had the papers on me."

"You must have stolen something," she said.

The Misfit sneered slightly. "Nobody had nothing I wanted," he said. "It was a head-doctor at the penitentiary said what I had done was kill my daddy but I known that for a lie. My daddy died in nineteen ought nineteen of the epidemic flu and I never had a thing to do with it. He was buried in the Mount Hopewell Baptist churchyard and you can go there and see for yourself."

"If you would pray," the old lady said, "Jesus would help you."

"That's right," The Misfit said.

"Well then, why don't you pray?" she asked trembling with delight suddenly.

"I don't want no hep," he said. "I'm doing all right by myself."

Bobby Lee and Hiram came ambling back from the woods. Bobby Lee was dragging a yellow shirt with bright blue parrots in it.

"Thow me that shirt, Bobby Lee," The Misfit said. The shirt came flying at him and landed on his shoulder and he put it on. The grandmother couldn't name what the shirt reminded her of. "No, lady," The Misfit said while he was buttoning it up, "I found out the crime don't matter. You can do one thing or you can do another, kill a man or take a tire off his car, because sooner or later you're going to forget what it was you done and just be punished for it."

The children's mother had begun to make heaving noises as if she couldn't get her breath. "Lady," he asked, "would you and that little girl like to step off yonder with Bobby Lee and Hiram and join your husband?"

"Yes, thank you," the mother said faintly. Her left arm dangled helplessly and she was holding the baby, who had gone to sleep, in the other. "Hep that lady up, Hiram," The Misfit said as she struggled to climb out of the ditch, "and Bobby Lee, you hold onto that little girl's hand."

"I don't want to hold hands with him," June Star said. "He reminds me of a pig."

The fat boy blushed and laughed and caught her by the arm and pulled her off into the woods after Hiram and her mother.

Alone with The Misfit, the grandmother found that she had lost her voice. There was not a cloud in the sky nor any sun. There was nothing around her but woods. She wanted to tell him that he must pray. She opened and closed her mouth several times before anything came out. Finally she found herself saying, "Jesus. Jesus," meaning, Jesus will help you, but the way she was saying it, it sounded as if she might be cursing.

"Yes'm," The Misfit said as if he agreed. "Jesus thown everything off balance. It was the same case with Him as with me except He hadn't committed any crime and they could prove I had committed one because they had the papers on me. Of course," he said, "they never shown me my papers. That's why I sign myself now. I said long ago, you get you a signature and sign everything you do and keep a copy of it. Then you'll know what you done and you can hold up the crime to the punishment and see do they match and in the end you'll have something to prove you ain't been treated right. I call myself The Misfit," he said, "because I can't make what all I done wrong fit what all I gone through in punishment."

There was a piercing scream from the woods, followed closely by a pistol report. "Does it seem right to you, lady, that one is punished a heap and another ain't punished at all?"

"Jesus!" the old lady cried. "You've got good blood! I know you wouldn't shoot a lady! I know you come from nice people! Pray! Jesus, you ought not to shoot a lady. I'll give you all the money I've got!"

"Lady," The Misfit said, looking beyond her far into the woods, "there never was a body that give the undertaker a tip."

There were two more pistol reports and the grandmother raised her head like a parched old turkey hen crying for water and called, "Bailey Boy, Bailey Boy!" as if her heart would break.

"Jesus was the only One that ever raised the dead," The Misfit continued, "and He shouldn't have done it. He thown everything off balance. If He did what He said, then it's nothing for you to do but thow away everything and follow Him, and if He didn't, then it's nothing for you to do but enjoy the few minutes you got left the best way you can--by killing somebody or burning down his house or doing some other meanness to him. No pleasure but meanness," he said and his voice had become almost a snarl.

"Maybe He didn't raise the dead," the old lady mumbled, not knowing what she was saying and feeling so dizzy that she sank down in the ditch with her legs twisted under her.

"I wasn't there so I can't say He didn't," The Misfit said. "I wisht I had of been there," he said, hitting the ground with his fist. "It ain't right I wasn't there because if I had of been there I would of known. Listen lady," he said in a high voice, "if I had of been there I would of known and I wouldn't be like I am now." His voice seemed about to crack and the grandmother's head cleared for an instant. She saw the man's face twisted close to her own as if he were going to cry and she murmured, "Why you're one of my babies. You're one of my own children!" She reached out and touched him on the shoulder. The Misfit sprang back as if a snake had bitten him and shot her three times through the chest. Then he put his gun down on the ground and took off his glasses and began to clean them.

Hiram and Bobby Lee returned from the woods and stood over the ditch, looking down at the grandmother who half sat and half lay in a puddle of blood with her legs crossed under her like a child's and her face smiling up at the cloudless sky.

Without his glasses, The Misfit's eyes were red-rimmed and pale and defenseless-looking. "Take her off and thow her where you thown the others," he said, picking up the cat that was rubbing itself against his leg.

"She was a talker, wasn't she?" Bobby Lee said, sliding down the ditch with a yodel.

"She would of been a good woman," The Misfit said, "if it had been somebody there to shoot her every minute of her life."

"Some fun!" Bobby Lee said.

"Shut up, Bobby Lee," The Misfit said. "It's no real pleasure in life."

The Contemporary Period

Raymond Carver: They're Not Your Husband (1973)

Source: https://idoc.pub/documents/they-are-not-your-husband-raymond-carver-pnxkzmj6gy4v

A Question to Consider:
Discuss some instances of the 'minimalistic' writing style in Carver's short story.

THEY'RE NOT YOUR HUSBAND

Earl Ober was between jobs as a salesman but Doreen, his wife, had gone to work nights as a waitress at a twenty-four hour coffee shop at the edge of town.

One night when he was drinking Earl decided to stop by the coffee shop and have something to eat. He wanted to see where she worked, and there was always the chance he could order something on the house.

He sat at the counter and studied the menu.

"What are you doing here?" Doreen said when she walked up. She handed over an order to the cook. "What are you going to order, Earl?" she said then. "You sure the kids are okay?"

"They're fine," he said. "I'll have coffee and one of those Number Two sandwiches."

She wrote it down.

"Any chance of, you know?" he said to her and winked.

"No," she said. "Don't talk to me now, I'm busy."

Earl drank his coffee and waited for the sandwich. Two men in business suits, their ties undone and their collars open, sat down next to him and asked for coffee.

As Doreen walked away with the coffee pot one of the men said to the other, "Look at the ass on that, will you? I don't believe it."

The other man laughed. "I've seen better," he said.

"That's what I mean," the man said. "But some people like fat women."

"Not me," the other man said.

"I don't either," the man said. "That's what I was saying."

Doreen put the sandwich in front of Earl. Around the sandwich there were French fries, some cole slaw, and a dill pickle.

"Anything else?" she said. "A glass of milk?"

He didn't say anything. He shook his head when she kept standing there.

"I'll get you more coffee," she said.

She returned with the pot and poured coffee for him and for the two men. Then she picked up a dish and turned to get some ice cream. She reached down into the container and with the dipper began to scoop vanilla ice cream. The white skirt tightened against her hips and crawled up her legs, exposing the lower part of her girdle, the backs of her fleshy thighs, and several dark, broken veins behind her knees.

She reached down into the container and with the dipper began to scoop vanilla ice cream.

The two men sitting beside Earl exchanged looks. One of them raised his eyebrows. The other man grinned and kept looking at Doreen over his cup.

She spread chocolate syrup over the ice cream. As she began to shake the can of whipping cream Earl got up, leaving his food, and headed for the door. He heard her call his name, but he kept going.

He checked on the children and then went to the other bedroom and took off his clothes. He pulled the covers up, closed his eyes, and allowed himself to think about the incident. The humiliation started in his face, the forehead and cheeks, and worked down into his shoulders and on into his stomach and legs. He opened his eyes and rolled his head back and forth on the pillow. Then he turned on his side and fell asleep. He didn't even recall her getting into bed later that night.

The next morning, after she had sent the children off to school, she came in the bedroom and raised the shade. He was already awake.

"Look at your self in the mirror," he said.

"What?" she said. "What are you talking about?"

Just look at yourself in the mirror for a minute," he said.

"What am I supposed to see?" she said, but she looked in the mirror over the dresser and pushed the hair away from her shoulders.

"Well?" he said.

"Well, what?" she said.

"I hate to say anything, but I think you'd better consider going on a diet. I mean it, I'm serious. I think you could stand to lose a few pounds. Don't get mad," he said.

"What are you saying?" she asked.

"Just what I said. I think you could stand to lose a few pounds. A few pounds anyway," he added.

"You never said anything before," she said. She raised her nightgown over her hips and turned to look at her stomach in the mirror.

"I never felt it was a problem before," he said. He tried to pick his words. He started to tell her about the cracks he'd heard the night before, but decided to save that for now. He could always bring that up later if she needed more convincing.

The nightgown still gathered around her waist, she turned her back to the mirror and looked over her shoulder. She raised one buttock in her hand and let it drop.

He closed his eyes. "Maybe I'm all wet," he said.

"I guess I could afford to lose. But it'd be hard," she said.

"You're right, it won't be easy," he said. "That's so true. But I'll help."

"Maybe you're right," she said. She dropped her nightgown and looked at him.

Later that morning they talked about diets. She had always been curious about the protein diets, the vegetable-only diets, the grapefruit juice diets. But they decided they didn't have the money to buy enough steaks and other lean meats that the protein diet called for. Besides, as he pointed out, it'd be hard on him and the children if she ate steak every night in front of them. She said she didn't care for all that many vegetables either, so she shouldn't think seriously about a vegetable diet. And since she didn't like grapefruit juice that much, she didn't see how she could drink the required glass of that before each meal.

"Go ahead then, forget it," he said.

"No, you're right," she said. "I'll do something."

"What about exercises?" he said. "They'd help."

"No thanks. I'm getting all the exercise I need down there," she said.

"Just quit eating," he suggested then. "For a few days anyway."

"All right," she said after a minute. "I'll try. For a few days, as you say. I'll give it a try. You've convinced me."

"I'm a closer," he said.

He figured up the balance in their checking account, then drove to a discount department store and bought a bathroom scale. He looked the clerk over as she rang up the sale.

At home he had Doreen take off all her clothes and get on the scale. He frowned when he saw the dark veins behind her knees, and he ran his finger the length of one vein that extended up her thigh.

"What are you doing?" she asked.

"Nothing," he said.

He looked at the scale and wrote the figure down on a piece of paper. "All right," he said. "All right."

The next day he was gone for most of the afternoon on an interview. The employer, a heavy-set man who limped as he showed Earl around the plumbing fixtures in the warehouse, asked if he were free to travel. He had many out-of-town accounts, he said.

"You bet your life I'm free," Earl said.

The man nodded without saying anything.

Earl kept smiling.

He could hear the television before he opened the door to the house. The children didn't look up as he walked through the living room. In the kitchen, Doreen, dressed for work, was eating scrambled eggs and bacon.

"What are you doing?" Earl yelled.

She reddened but continued to chew the food, cheeks puffed, until she spit everything into a napkin. "I couldn't help myself," she said.

"Slob," he said. "*Go ahead, eat. Go on.*" He went to the bedroom, closed the door, and lay on the covers. He could still hear the television. He put his hands behind his head and stared at the ceiling. In a few minutes she opened the door.

"I'm going to try again," she said.

"Okay," he said.

Two mornings later she called him into the bathroom. "Look," she said.

He read the scale. He opened a drawer and took out the paper and read the scale again while she continued to grin.

"Three-quarters of a pound," she said.

"It's something." He patted her hip.

He read the classifieds. He went to the State Employment office. Every three or four days he drove someplace for an interview, and at night he counted her tips. He smoothed out the dollar bills on the table and stacked the nickels, dimes, and quarters in piles of one dollar. Each morning he put her on the scale.

In two weeks she had lost three and a half pounds.

"I pick," she said. "I starve myself all day, and then I pick at work. It adds up."

He looked at her.

But a week later she had lost five pounds. The week after that, nine and a half pounds altogether. Her clothes were loose on her. She had to cut into the rent money to buy a new uniform.

"People are saying things at work," she said to him.

"What kind of things?" he said.

"That I'm too pale, for one thing," she said. "That I don't look like myself. They're afraid I'm losing too much weight."

"What's wrong with losing weight?" he said. "Don't pay any attention to them. Tell them to mind their own business. They're not your husband, are they? You don't live with them."

"I have to work with them," she said.

"That's right," he said. "But even so."

Each morning he followed her into the bathroom and waited while she stepped on the scale. He got down on his knees with a pencil and the sheet of paper. The paper was covered with dates, days of the week, and numbers. He read the number on the scale, consulted the paper, and either nodded his head or pursed his lips.

She spent more time in bed now. She went back to bed after the children had left for school, and she napped in the afternoons before going to work. He helped around the house, watched television, and let her sleep. He did all the shopping, and once in a while he went on an interview.

One night he put the children to bed, turned off the television, and decided to go for a few drinks. Shortly after midnight he left

the bar and drove to the coffee shop.

He sat at the counter and waited. When she saw him she said, "Is everything all right at home?"

He nodded.

He took his time ordering. He kept looking at her as she moved up and down behind the counter. He finally ordered a cheeseburger. She gave the order to the cook and went to wait on someone else.

Another waitress came by with a coffee pot and filled his cup.

"Who's your friend?" he said to the waitress and nodded at his wife.

"Her name is Doreen," the waitress said.

"She looks a lot different somehow than the last time I was in here," he said.

"I wouldn't know," the waitress said.

He ate the cheeseburger and drank the coffee. People kept sitting down and getting up at the counter. His wife waited on most of the people at the counter, though now and then the other waitress came along to take an order. He watched his wife and listened carefully to see if he could overhear any comments about her. Twice he had to leave his place to go to the bathroom. Each time he wondered if he might have missed hearing something while he was gone. When he came back the second time, he found his cup missing and someone in his place.

He sat down at the end of the counter next to an older man in a striped shirt.

"What do you want?" Doreen said to Earl when she saw him again. "Shouldn't you be home?"

"Give me some coffee," he said.

The man next to him was reading the first edition of the morning paper. He looked up and watched Doreen pour Earl a cup of coffee. He glanced at her as she walked away, then went back to his newspaper.

Earl sipped his coffee and waited for the man to say something. He watched the man out of the corner of his eye. The man had finished eating and his plate was pushed to the side. The man lit a cigarette, folded the newspaper in front of him, and continued to read.

In a minute Doreen came by and removed the dirty plate and poured the man more coffee. She didn't look at Earl.

"What do you think of that?" Earl said to the man, nodding at Doreen as she moved down the counter. "Don't you think that's something special?"

The man next to him looked up, surprised. He looked at Doreen and then at Earl, and went back to his newspaper.

"Well, what do you think?" Earl went on. "I'm asking. Does it look good or not? Tell me."

The man rattled his paper.

When Doreen started down the counter again, Earl nudged the man's shoulder and said, "I'm telling you something, listen. Look at the legs. But just wait. Could I have a small chocolate sundae?" he said to Doreen.

She stopped in front of him and let out her breath. Then she turned and picked up a dish and the ice cream dipper. She leaned over the freezer, reached down and began to turn the dipper in the ice cream.

Earl looked at the man next to him and winked as Doreen's skirt traveled up her thighs. At that minute his eyes caught the eyes of the other waitress. The man next to him put the newspaper under his arm and reached into his pocket.

The other waitress came straight to Doreen. "Who is this man?" she said.

"Who?" Doreen said and looked around with the ice cream dish in her hand.

"Him," the other waitress said and nodded at Earl. "Who is he anyway?"

Earl put on his best smile. He held it, and it broadened until he felt his face pulling out of shape.

But the other waitress was frowning at him, and Doreen began to shake her head slowly. The man next to Earl had put some change beside his cup and stood up, but he also waited to hear the answer. They all stared at Earl.

"He's my husband," Doreen said at last, shrugging. She looked at Earl and waited, and then she put the unfinished chocolate sundae in front of him and reached for the coffee pot.