

Passages for Part II

a. Julian of Norwich, *Shewings* (c.1423)

On tyme our good Lord seid, *Al thyng shal be wele*, and another tyme He seid, *Thu shalt sen thiself that al manner thyng shal be wele*. And in these two, the soule toke sundry understandyng. On was this: that He wil we wetyn that not only He takith hede to noble thyngs and to grete, but also to litil and to smale, to low and to simple, to on and to other. And so menyth He in that He seith, *Al manner thyngs shal be wele*. For He will we wetyn the leste thyng shal not be forgottyn. Another understandyng is this: that there be dedes evyl done in our syte and so grete harmes takyn, that it semyth to us that it were impossibil that ever it shuld cum to gode end, and upon this we loke sorowyng and morning therefore, so that we cannot restyn us in the blisful beholdyng of God as we shuld doe. And the cause is this, that the use of our reason is now so blynd, so low, and so symple, that we cannot know that hey, mervelous wisdam, the myte, and the goodness, of the blisful Trinite; and thus menyth He wher He seith, *Thou shalt se thiself that al maner thyng shal be wele*. As if He seid, "Take now hede faithfully and trostily, and at the last end thou shalt verily sen it in fulhede of joye." And thus in these same five words aforneid, *I may make al thyngs wele* etc., I understand a myty comforte of al the works of our Lord God that arn for to comen.

Ther is a dede the which the blisful Trinite shal don in the last day, as to my syte. And whan the dede shall be and how it shal be done, it is onknown of all creatures that are beneath Criste, and shal be, till whan it is don. And the cause He wil we know is for He wil we be the more esyd in our soule and pesid in love, levying the beholdyng of al tempests that myte lettyn us of trewth, enjoyeng in Hym. This is the grete dede ordeynyd of our Lord God from without begynnyng, treasured and hid in His blissid breast, only knowen to Hymself, be which dede He shal make al thyngs wele. For like as the blisful Trinite made al thyngs of nowte, ryte so the same blissid Trinite shal make wele al that is not wele.

And in this syte I mervelid gretely and beheld our feith, merveland thus: Our feith is growndid in Goddys word, and it longyth to our feith that we levyn that Goddys word shal be savid in al things. And one peynt of our feith is that many creatures shal be dampnyd - as Angells that fellyn out of Hevyn for pride which be now fendes, and man in herth that deyth oute of the feith of Holy Church, that is to say, thei that be ethen men, and also man that hath receyvid Christen-dam and livith uncristen life, and so deyth out of charite - all these shall bedampnyd to Helle without end, as Holy Church techyth me to belevyn.

And stonyng al this, methowte it was impossibil that al manner thyng should be wele as our Lord shewid in this tyme. And as to this I had no other answer in shewyng of our Lord God but this: *That is impossible to the is not impossible to Me. I shal save My worde in al things, and I shal make al thing wele*. Thus I was tawte by the grace of God that I should stedfasty hold me in the faith as I had afornehand understanden, and therewith that I should sadly levyn that al thyng shal be wele, as our Lord shewid in the same tyme. For this is the great dede that our Lord shal done, in which dede He shal save His word in al thing, and He shal make wele al that is not wele. And how it shal be don there is no creature benethe Criste that wot it, ne shal wetyn it, till it is don, as to the understandyng that I toke of our Lords menyng in this tyme.

b. John Milton, *Areopagitica* (1644)

Good and evil we know in the field of this world grow up together almost inseparably; and the knowledge of good is so involved and interwoven with the knowledge of evil, and in so many cunning resemblances hardly to be discerned, that those confused seeds which were imposed upon Psyche as an incessant labour to cull out, and sort asunder, were not more intermixed. It was from out the rind of one apple tasted, that the knowledge of good and evil, as two twins cleaving together, leaped forth into the world. And perhaps this is that doom which Adam fell into of knowing good and evil, that is to say of knowing good by evil. As therefore the state of man now is; what wisdom can there be to choose, what continence to forbear without the knowledge of evil? He that can apprehend and consider vice with all her baits and seeming pleasures, and yet abstain, and yet distinguish, and yet prefer that which is truly better, he is the true warfaring Christian.

c. Andrew Marvell, "To His Coy Mistress" (c.1650)

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

But at my back I always hear
Time's wingèd chariot hurrying near;

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

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

d. Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* (1850)

Pearl had not found the hour pass wearisomely while her mother sat talking with the clergyman. The great black forest — stern as it showed itself to those who brought the guilt and troubles of the world into its bosom — became the playmate of the lonely infant, as well as it knew how. Sombre as it was, it put on the kindest of its moods to welcome her. It offered her the partridge-berries, the growth of the preceding autumn, but ripening only in the spring, and now red as drops of blood upon the withered leaves. These Pearl gathered, and was pleased with their wild flavour. The small denizens of the wilderness hardly took pains to move out of her path. A partridge, indeed, with a brood of ten behind her, ran forward threateningly, but soon repented of her fierceness, and clucked to her young ones not to be afraid. A pigeon, alone on a low branch, allowed Pearl to come beneath, and uttered a sound as much of greeting as alarm. A squirrel, from the lofty depths of his domestic tree, chattered either in anger or merriment—for the squirrel is such a choleric and humorous little personage, that it is hard to distinguish between his moods—so he chattered at the child, and flung down a nut upon her head. It was a last year's nut, and already gnawed by his sharp tooth. A fox, startled from his sleep by her light footstep on the leaves, looked inquisitively at Pearl, as doubting whether it were better to steal off, or renew his nap on the same spot. A wolf, it is said — but here the tale has surely lapsed into the improbable — came up and smelt of Pearl's robe, and offered his savage head to be patted by her hand. The truth seems to be, however, that the mother-forest, and these wild things which it nourished, all recognised a kindred wilderness in the human child.

e. Theodore Dreiser, *Sister Carrie* (1900)

Among the forces which sweep and play throughout the universe, untutored man is but a wisp in the wind. Our civilisation is still in a middle stage, scarcely beast, in that it is no longer wholly guided by instinct; scarcely human, in that it is not yet wholly guided by reason. On the tiger no responsibility rests. We see him aligned by nature with the forces of life--he is born into their keeping and without thought he is protected. We see man far removed from the lairs of the jungles, his innate instincts dulled by too near an approach to free-will, his free-will not sufficiently developed to replace his instincts and afford him perfect guidance. He is becoming too wise to hearken always to instincts and desires; he is still too weak to always prevail against them. As a beast, the forces of life aligned him with them; as a man, he has not yet wholly learned to align himself with the forces. In this intermediate stage he wavers--neither drawn in harmony with nature by his instincts nor yet wisely putting himself into harmony by his own free-will. He is even as a wisp in the wind, moved by every breath of passion, acting now by his will and now by his instincts, erring with one, only to retrieve by the other, falling by one, only to rise by the other--a creature of incalculable variability. We have the consolation of knowing that evolution is ever in action, that the ideal is a light that cannot fail. He will not forever balance thus between good and evil. When this jangle of free-will and instinct shall have been adjusted, when perfect understanding has given the former the power to replace the latter entirely, man will no longer vary. The needle of understanding will yet point steadfast and unwavering to the distant pole of truth.

f. Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (1927)

What is the meaning of life? That was all – a simple question; one that tended to close in on one with years. The great revelation had never come. The great revelation perhaps never did come. Instead there were little daily miracles illuminations, matches struck unexpectedly in the dark; here was one. This that and the other; herself and Charles Tansley and the breaking wave; Mrs.

Ramsay bringing them together; Mrs. Ramsay saying, “Life stand still here”; making of the moment something permanent (as in another sphere Lily herself tried to make of the moment something permanent) - this was the nature of a revelation. In the midst of chaos there was shape....

g. James Baldwin, “Sonny’s Blues” (1957)

Then they all gathered around Sonny and Sonny played. Every now and again one of them seemed to say, amen. Sonny's fingers filled the air with life, his life. But that life contained so many others. And Sonny went all the way back, he really began with the spare, flat statement of the opening phrase of the song. Then he began to make it his. It was very beautiful because it wasn't hurried and it was no longer a lament. I seemed to hear with what burning he had made it his, and what burning we had yet to make it ours, how we could cease lamenting. Freedom lurked around us and I understood, at last, that he could help us to be free if we would listen, that he would never be free until we did. Yet, there was no battle in his face now, I heard what he had gone through, and would continue to go through until he came to rest in earth. He had made it his: that long line, of which we knew only Mama and Daddy. And he was giving it back, as everything must be given back, so that, passing through death, it can live forever. I saw my mother's face again, and felt, for the first time, how the stones of the road she had walked on must have bruised her feet. I saw the moonlit road where my father's brother died. And it brought something else back to me, and carried me past it, I saw my little girl again and felt Isabel's tears again, and I felt my own tears begin to rise. And I was yet aware that this was only a moment, that the world waited outside, as hungry as a tiger, and that trouble stretched above us, longer than the sky.

h. Shani Mootoo, *Out on Main Street & Other Stories* (1993)

I used to think I was a Hindu *par excellence* until I come up here and see real flesh and blood Indian from India. Up here, I learning ‘bout all kind a custom and food and music and clothes dat we never see or hear ‘bout in good ole Trinidad. Is de next best thing to going to India in truth, oui! But Indian store clerk on Main Street doh have no patience with us, especially when we talking English to dem. Yu ask dem a question in English and dey insist on giving de answer in Hindi or Punjabi or Urdu or Gujurati. How I suppose to know de difference even! And den dey look at yuh disdainful disdainful – like yuh disloyal, like yuh is a traitor.

But yuh know, it have one other reason I real reluctant to go Main Street. Yuh see, Janet pretty fuh so! And I doh like de way men does look at she, as if because she wearing jeans and T-shirt and high-heel shoe and make-up and have long hair loose and flying about like she is a walking-talking shampoo ad, dat she easy. And de women always looking at she beady eye, like she loose and going to thief dey man. Dat kind a thing always make me want to put mih arm round she waist like, she is my woman, take yuh eyes off she! and shock de false teeth right out dey mouth. And den is a whole other story when dey see me with mih crew cut and mih blue jeans tuck inside mih jim-boots. Walking next to Janet, who so femme dat she redundant, tend to make me look like a gender dey forget to classify. Before going Main Street I does parade in front de mirror practicing a jiggly-wiggly kind a walk. But if I ain’t walking like a strong-man monkey I doh exactly feel right and I always revert back to mih true colors. De men dem does look at me like if dey is exactly what I need a taste of to cure me good and proper. I could see dey eyes watching Janet and me, dey face growing dark as dey imagining all kind a situation and position. And de women dem embarrass fuh so to watch me in mih eye, like dey fraid I will jump up and try to kiss dem, or make a pass at dem. Yuh know, sometimes I wonder if I ain’t mad enough to do it just for a little bacchanal, nah!