

Must I then lose the world forever, that I had so loved? Was it all, the whole bright and various planet, where I had been so ardent about finding myself alive, only a passion peculiar to children, that I would outgrow even against my will?

### Suggestions for Discussion

1. What "hit" the author when she was sixteen?
2. How does the metaphor of the tunnel and her movement in it relate to the author's sense of self? How does it relate to her description of what follows?
3. What details of her attitudes and behavior tell you about Annie Dillard's experience of adolescence?
4. What evidence is brought forward that the author was "what they called a live wire"?
5. What does the author mean by being "transparent" to herself? How is that state contrasted with her being in her own way?
6. What images contribute to the reader's understanding of Dillard's sense of crisis?
7. In what sense is Dillard's final questioning a logical conclusion to what has preceded in her narrative?

### Suggestions for Writing

1. Recount some of your adolescent experiences and indicate how they related to your sense of self.
2. Draw a portrait of an adolescent you know by examining her/his attitudes and behavior.
3. Compare Dillard's experience of adolescence with that of other writers in this section.

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## Jack London

### What Life Means to Me

Jack London (1876–1916), American novelist and short-story writer, drew upon his extensive travels in such works as *The Call of the Wild* (1903) and his South Sea tales and developed social themes in such works as *The Iron Heel* (1907). Although London experienced the loss of many illusions about man's goodness and integrity, he retained his belief in human nobility and excellence.

I was born in the working-class. Early I discovered enthusiasm, ambition, and ideals; and to satisfy these became the problem of my child-life. My environment was crude and rough and raw. I had no outlook, but an uplook

rather. My place in society was at the bottom. Here life offered nothing but sordidness and wretchedness, both of the flesh and the spirit; for here flesh and spirit were alike starved and tormented.

Above me towered the colossal edifice of society, and to my mind the only way out was up. Into this edifice I early resolved to climb. Up above, men wore black clothes and boiled shirts, and women dressed in beautiful gowns. Also, there were good things to eat, and there was plenty to eat. This much for the flesh. Then there were the things of the spirit. Up above me, I knew, were unselfishnesses of the spirit, clean and noble thinking, keen intellectual living. I knew all this because I read "Seaside Library" novels, in which, with the exception of the villains and adventuresses, all men and women thought beautiful thoughts, spoke a beautiful tongue, and performed glorious deeds. In short, as I accepted the rising of the sun, I accepted that up above me was all that was fine and noble and gracious, all that gave decency and dignity to life, all that made life worth living and that remunerated one for his travail and misery.

But it is not particularly easy for one to climb up out of the working-class—especially if he is handicapped by the possession of ideals and illusions. I lived on a ranch in California, and I was hard put to find the ladder whereby to climb. I early inquired the rate of interest on invested money, and worried my child's brain into an understanding of the virtues and excellencies of that remarkable invention of man, compound interest. Further, I ascertained the current rates of wages for workers of all ages, and the cost of living. From all this data I concluded that if I began immediately and worked and saved until I was fifty years of age, I could then stop working and enter into participation in a fair portion of the delights and goodnesses that would then be open to me higher up in society. Of course, I resolutely determined not to marry, while I quite forgot to consider at all that great rock of disaster in the working-class world—sickness.

But the life that was in me demanded more than a meagre existence of scraping and scrimping. Also, at ten years of age, I became a newsboy on the streets of a city, and found myself with a changed uplook. All about me were still the same sordidness and wretchedness, and up above me was still the same paradise waiting to be gained; but the ladder whereby to climb was a different one. It was now the ladder of business. Why save my earnings and invest in government bonds, when, by buying two newspapers for five cents, with a turn of the wrist I could sell them for ten cents and double my capital? The business ladder was the ladder for me, and I had a vision of myself becoming a baldheaded and successful merchant prince.

Alas for visions! When I was sixteen I had already earned the title of "prince." But this title was given me by a gang of cut-throats and thieves, by whom I was called "The Prince of the Oyster Pirates." And at that time I had climbed the first rung of the business ladder. I was a capitalist. I owned a boat and a complete oyster-pirating outfit. I had begun to exploit my fellow-creatures. I had a crew of one man. As captain and owner I took two-thirds of the spoils, and gave the crew one-third, though the crew worked just as hard as I did and risked just as much his life and liberty.

This one rung was the height I climbed up the business ladder. One night I went on a raid amongst the Chinese fishermen. Ropes and nets were worth dollars and cents. It was robbery, I grant, but it was precisely the spirit of

capitalism. The capitalist takes away the possessions of his fellow-creatures by means of a rebate, or of a betrayal of trust, or by the purchase of senators and supreme-court judges. I was merely crude. That was the only difference. I used a gun.

But my crew that night was one of those inefficient against whom the capitalist is wont to fulminate, because, ~~forsooth~~ such inefficient increase expenses and reduce dividends. My crew did both. What of his carelessness: he set fire to the big mainsail and totally destroyed it. There weren't any dividends that night, and the Chinese fishermen were richer by the nets and ropes we did not get. I was bankrupt, unable just then to pay sixty-five dollars for a new mainsail. I left my boat at anchor and went off on a bay-pirate boat on a raid up the Sacramento River. While away on this trip, another gang of bay pirates raided my boat. They stole everything, even the anchors; and later on, when I recovered the drifting hulk, I sold it for twenty dollars. I had slipped back the one rung I had climbed, and never again did I attempt the business ladder.

From then on I was mercilessly exploited by other capitalists. I had the muscle, and they made money out of it while I made but a very indifferent living out of it. I was a sailor before the mast, a longshoreman, a roustabout; I worked in canneries, and factories, and laundries; I mowed lawns, and cleaned carpets, and washed windows. And I never got the full product of my toil. I looked at the daughter of the cannery owner, in her carriage, and knew that it was my muscle, in part, that helped drag along that carriage on its rubber tires. I looked at the son of the factory owner, going to college, and knew that it was my muscle that helped, in part, to pay for the wine and good fellowship he enjoyed.

But I did not resent this. It was all in the game. They were the strong. Very well, I was strong. I would carve my way to a place amongst them and make money out of the muscles of other men. I was not afraid of work. I loved hard work. I would pitch in and work harder than ever and eventually become a pillar of society.

And just then, as luck would have it, I found an employer that was of the same mind. I was willing to work, and he was more than willing that I should work. I thought I was learning a trade. In reality, I had displaced two men. I thought he was making an electrician out of me; as a matter of fact, he was making fifty dollars per month out of me. The two men I had displaced had received forty dollars each per month; I was doing the work of both for thirty dollars per month.

This employer worked me nearly to death. A man may love oysters, but too many oysters will disincline him toward that particular diet. And so with me. Too much work sickened me. I did not wish ever to see work again. I fled from work. I became a tramp, begging my way from door to door, wandering over the United States and sweating bloody sweats in slums and prisons.

I had been born in the working-class, and I was now, at the age of eighteen, beneath the point at which I had started. I was down in the cellar of society, down in the subterranean depths of misery about which it is neither nice nor proper to speak. I was in the pit, the abyss, the human cesspool, the shambles and charnel-house of our civilization. This is the part of the edifice of society that society chooses to ignore. Lack of space compels me here to

ignore it, and I shall say only that the things I there saw gave me a terrible scare.

I was scared into thinking. I saw the naked simplicities of the complicated civilization in which I lived. Life was a matter of food and shelter. In order to get food and shelter men sold things. The merchant sold shoes, the politician sold his manhood, and the representative of the people, with exceptions, of course, sold his trust; while nearly all sold their honor. Women, too, whether on the street or in the holy bond of wedlock, were prone to sell their flesh. All things were commodities, all people bought and sold. The one commodity that labor had to sell was muscle. The honor of labor had no price in the market-place. Labor had muscle, and muscle alone, to sell.

But there was a difference, a vital difference. Shoes and trust and honor had a way of renewing themselves. They were imperishable stocks. Muscle, on the other hand, did not renew. As the shoe merchant sold shoes, he continued to replenish his stock. But there was no way of replenishing the laborer's stock of muscle. The more he sold of his muscle, the less of it remained to him. It was his one commodity, and each day his stock of it diminished. In the end, if he did not die before, he sold out and put up his shutters. He was a muscle bankrupt, and nothing remained to him but to go down into the cellar of society and perish miserably.

I learned, further, that brain was likewise a commodity. It, too, was different from muscle. A brain seller was only at his prime when he was fifty or sixty years old, and his wares were fetching higher prices than ever. But a laborer was worked out or broken down at forty-five or fifty. I had been in the cellar of society, and I did not like the place as a habitation. The pipes and drains were unsanitary, and the air was bad to breathe. If I could not live on the parlor floor of society; I could, at any rate, have a try at the attic. It was true, the diet there was slim, but the air at least was pure. So I resolved to sell no more muscle, and to become a vender of brains.

Then began a frantic pursuit of knowledge. I returned to California and opened the books. While thus equipping myself to become a brain merchant, it was inevitable that I should delve into sociology. There I found, in a certain class of books, scientifically formulated, the simple sociological concepts I had already worked out for myself. Other and greater minds, before I was born, had worked out all that I had thought and a vast deal more. I discovered that I was a socialist.

The socialists were revolutionists, inasmuch as they struggled to overthrow the society of the present, and out of the material to build the society of the future. I, too, was a socialist and a revolutionist. I joined the groups of working-class and intellectual revolutionists, and for the first time came into intellectual living. Here I found keen-flashing intellects and brilliant wits; for here I met strong and alert-brained, withal horny-handed, members of the working-class; unfrocked preachers too wide in their Christianity for any congregation of Mammon-worshippers; professors broken on the wheel of university subservience to the ruling class and flung out because they were quick with knowledge which they strove to apply to the affairs of mankind.

Here I found, also, warm faith in the human, glowing idealism, sweetnesses of unselfishness, renunciation, and martyrdom—all the splendid, shining things of the spirit. Here life was clean, noble, and alive. Here life

rehabilitated itself, became wonderful and glorious; and I was glad to be alive. I was in touch with great souls who exalted flesh and spirit over dollars and cents, and to whom the thin wail of the starved slum child meant more than all the pomp and circumstance of commercial expansion and world empire. All about me were nobleness of purpose and heroism of effort, and my days and nights were sunshine and starshine, all fire and dew, with before my eyes, ever burning and blazing, the Holy Grail, Christ's own Grail, the warm human, long-suffering and maltreated, but to be rescued and saved at the last.

And I, poor foolish I, deemed all this to be a mere foretaste of the delights of living I should find higher above me in society. I had lost many illusions since the day I read "Seaside Library" novels on the California ranch. I was destined to lose many of the illusions I still retained.

As a brain merchant I was a success. Society opened its portals to me. I entered right in on the parlor floor, and my disillusionment proceeded rapidly. I sat down to dinner with the masters of society, and with the wives and daughters of the masters of society. The women were gowned beautifully, I admit; but to my naïve surprise I discovered that they were of the same clay as all the rest of the women I had known down below in the cellar. "The colonel's lady and Judy O'Grady were sisters under their skins"—and gowns.

It was not this, however, so much as their materialism, that shocked me. It is true, these beautifully gowned, beautiful women prattled sweet little ideals and dear little moralities; but in spite of their prattle the dominant key of the life they lived was materialistic. And they were so sentimentally selfish! They assisted in all kinds of sweet little charities, and informed one of the fact, while all the time the food they ate and the beautiful clothes they wore were bought out of dividends stained with the blood of child labor, and sweated labor, and of prostitution itself. When I mentioned such facts, expecting in my innocence that these sisters of Judy O'Grady would at once strip off their blood-dyed silks and jewels, they became excited and angry, and read me preachments about the lack of thrift, the drink, and the innate depravity that caused all the misery in society's cellar. When I mentioned that I couldn't quite see that it was the lack of thrift, the intemperance, and the depravity of a half-starved child of six that made it work twelve hours every night in a Southern cotton mill, these sisters of Judy O'Grady attacked my private life and called me an "agitator"—as though that, forsooth, settled the argument.

Nor did I fare better with the masters themselves. I had expected to find men who were clean, noble, and alive, whose ideals were clean, noble, and alive. I went about amongst the men who sat in the high places—the preachers, the politicians, the business men, the professors, and the editors. I ate meat with them, drank wine with them, autotomiled with them, and studied them. It is true, I found many that were clean and noble; but with rare exceptions, they were not *alive*. I do verily believe I could count the exceptions on the fingers of my two hands. Where they were not alive with rottenness, quick with unclean life, they were merely the unburied dead—clean and noble, like well-preserved mummies, but not alive. In this connection I may especially mention the professors I met, the men who live up to that decadent university ideal, "the passionless pursuit of passionless intelligence."

I met men who invoked the name of the Prince of Peace in their diatribes against war, and who put rifles in the hands of Pinkertons with which to shoot

down strikers in their own factories. I met men incoherent with indignation at the brutality of prize-fighting, and who, at the same time, were parties to the adulteration of food that killed each year more babies than even red-handed Herod had killed.

I talked in hotels and clubs and homes and Pullmans and steamer-chairs with captains of industry, and marvelled at how little travelled they were in the realm of intellect. On the other hand, I discovered that their intellect, in the business sense, was abnormally developed. Also, I discovered that their morality, where business was concerned, was nil.

This delicate, aristocratic-featured gentleman, was a dummy director and a tool of corporations that secretly robbed widows and orphans. This gentleman, who collected fine editions and was an especial patron of literature, paid blackmail to a heavy-jowled, black-browed boss of a municipal machine. This editor, who published patent medicine advertisements and did not dare print the truth in his paper about said patent medicines for fear of losing the advertising, called me a scoundrelly demagogue because I told him that his political economy was antiquated and that his biology was contemporaneous with Pliny.

This senator was the tool and the slave, the little puppet of a gross, uneducated machine boss; so was this governor and this supreme-court judge; and all three rode on railroad passes. This man, talking soberly and earnestly about the beauties of idealism and the goodness of God, had just betrayed his comrades in a business deal. This man, a pillar of the church and heavy contributor to foreign missions, worked his shop girls ten hours a day on a starvation wage and thereby directly encouraged prostitution. This man, who endowed chairs in universities, perjured himself in courts of law over a matter of dollars and cents. And this railroad magnate broke his word as a gentleman and a Christian when he granted a secret rebate to one of two captains of industry locked together in a struggle to the death.

It was the same everywhere, crime and betrayal, betrayal and crime—men who were alive, but who were neither clean nor noble, men who were clean and noble but who were not alive. Then there was a great, hopeless mass, neither noble nor alive, but merely clean. It did not sin positively nor deliberately; but it did sin passively and ignorantly by acquiescing in the current immorality and profiting by it. Had it been noble and alive it would not have been ignorant, and it would have refused to share in the profits of betrayal and crime.

I discovered that I did not like to live on the parlor floor of society. Intellectually I was bored. Morally and spiritually I was sickened. I remembered my intellectuals and idealists, my unfrocked preachers, broken professors, and clean-minded, class-conscious workingmen. I remembered my days and nights of sunshine and starshine, where life was all a wild sweet wonder, a spiritual paradise of unselfish adventure and ethical romance. And I saw before me, ever blazing and burning the Holy Grail.

So I went back to the working-class, in which I had been born and where I belonged. I care no longer to climb. The imposing edifice of society above my head holds no delights for me. It is the foundation of the edifice that interests me. There I am content to labor, crowbar in hand, shoulder to shoulder with intellectuals, idealists, and class-conscious workingmen, getting a solid pry now and again and setting the whole edifice rocking. Some day, when we get a few more hands and crowbars to work, we'll topple it over, along with all its rotten life and unburied dead, its monstrous selfishness and

sodden materialism. Then we'll cleanse the cellar and build a new habitation for mankind, in which there will be no parlor floor, in which all the rooms will be bright and airy, and where the air that is breathed will be clean, noble, and alive.

Such is my outlook. I look forward to a time when man shall progress upon something worthier and higher than his stomach, when there will be a finer incentive to impel men to action than the incentive of today, which is the incentive of the stomach. I retain my belief in the nobility and excellence of the human. I believe that spiritual sweetness and unselfishness will conquer the gross gluttony of today. And last of all, my faith is in the working-class. As some Frenchman has said, "The stairway of time is ever echoing with the wooden shoe going up, the polished boot descending."

### Suggestions for Discussion

1. Discuss the adequacy of London's metaphor of "the colossal edifice of society" in present-day America.
2. Describe the several ways in which London attempted to attain "all that gave decency and dignity to life."
3. Compare eighteen-year-old London's perception of "the naked simplicities of the complicated civilization" in which he lived with that of your classmates.

### Suggestions for Writing

1. London has called this piece "What Life Means to Me." Describe in your own words what that is.
2. In a short paper recall an illusion you formerly had and describe the events that destroyed that illusion.

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## Joan Didion

### On Keeping a Notebook

Joan Didion (b. 1934), California-born, began her career when she won *Vogue's* Prix de Paris Award in her senior year of college. She later became an associate editor of *Vogue* and has written columns for *The Saturday Evening Post* and *Life*. Her novels *Run River* (1963); *Play It as It Lays* (1970); *A Book of Common Prayer* (1977); *Democracy* (1984); her collection of essays *Slouching Towards Bethlehem* (1969); and *The White Album* (1975) have established her as an important American writer. She and her husband, writer John Gregory Dunne, have collaborated on several screenplays. In keeping her notebook, as recounted in *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*, the author recounts not facts but feelings, "an indiscriminate and erratic assemblage with meaning only for its maker" and sometimes not for her.

It is a good idea, then, to keep in touch, and I suppose that keeping in touch is what notebooks are all about. And we are all on our own when it comes to keeping those lines open to ourselves: your notebook will never help me, nor mine you. "So what's new in the whiskey business?" What could that possibly mean to you? To me it means a blonde in a Pucci bathing suit sitting with a couple of fat men by the pool at the Beverly Hills Hotel. Another man approaches, and they all regard one another in silence for a while. "So what's new in the whiskey business?" one of the fat men finally says by way of welcome, and the blonde stands up, arches one foot and dips it in the pool, looking all the while at the cabaña where Baby Pignatari is talking on the telephone. That is all there is to that, except that several years later I saw the blonde coming out of Saks Fifth Avenue in New York with her California complexion and a voluminous mink coat. In the harsh wind that day she looked old and irrevocably tired to me, and even the skins in the mink coat were not worked the way they were doing them that year, not the way she would have wanted them done, and there is the point of the story. For a while after that I did not like to look in the mirror, and my eyes would skim the newspapers and pick out only the deaths, the cancer victims, the premature coronaries, the suicides, and I stopped riding the Lexington Avenue IRT because I noticed for the first time that all the strangers I had seen for years—the man with the seeing-eye dog, the spinster who read the classified pages every day, the fat girl who always got off with me at Grand Central—looked older than they once had.

It all comes back. Even that recipe for sauerkraut: even that brings it back. I was on Fire Island when I first made that sauerkraut, and it was raining, and we drank a lot of bourbon and ate the sauerkraut and went to bed at ten, and I listened to the rain and the Atlantic and felt safe. I made the sauerkraut again last night and it did not make me feel any safer, but that is, as they say, another story.

### Suggestions for Discussion

1. What rhetorical devices does the author use to bring her subject into focus? For example, she compares and contrasts two women in the bar and her daughter and herself.
2. What kinds of details are employed to explain the varied purposes of keeping a notebook?
3. How does the author explain the paradox "I imagine . . . that the notebook is about other people. But of course it is not."
4. Account for the adverbs and adjectives used in the statement "the common denominator of all we see is always, transparently, shamelessly, the implacable 'I.'"
5. How do the citations in the notebook contribute to the central thesis? To the tone? To the author's sense of self? To her writing?
6. Explain: "I have already lost touch with a couple of people I used to be. . . ."
7. T. S. Eliot uses the term *objective correlative* to describe the artist's faculty of achieving emotional impact "by finding a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events, which shall be the formula of that particular emotion such that when the external facts are given, the emotion is immediately evoked." How do the items in the notebook illustrate this theory?

## Suggestions for Writing

1. Keep a journal in which you record the events or thoughts of each day. What does it tell you about other people? about yourself?
2. Write an essay on Question 4 or 6 above.
3. Write an essay in which you interweave excerpts from your journal with commentary on them.

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## Vladimir Nabokov

### The Beginning of Consciousness

Vladimir Nabokov (1899–1977) was born in Russia and educated at Trinity College, Cambridge. He was a professor at Cornell University and a regular contributor to popular magazines. Among his works written in English are *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* (1941); *Invitation of a Small Evening* (1957); *Lolita* (1958); *Pale Fire* (1962); two collections of short stories, *Nabokov's Dozen* (1958) and *Nabokov's Quartet* (1966); *King, Queen, Knave* (1968); *Invitation of a Small Evening* (1969); and an autobiography, *Invitation of a Small Evening* (1951). Nabokov describes the awakening of his consciousness as a series of "spaced flashes with intervals between them gradually diminishing until bright blocks of perception are formed, affording memory a slippery hold." His sense of self and his awareness that his parents were his parents came after he had learned numbers and speech.

The cradle rocks above an abyss, and common sense tells us that our existence is but a brief crack of light between two eternities of darkness. Although the two are identical twins, man, as a rule, views the prenatal abyss with more calm than the one he is heading for (at some forty-five hundred heartbeats an hour). I know, however, of a young chronophobiac who experienced something like panic when looking for the first time at homemade movies that had been taken a few weeks before his birth. He saw a world that was practically unchanged—the same house, the same people—and then realized that he did not exist there at all and that nobody mourned his absence. He caught a glimpse of his mother waving from an upstairs window, and that unfamiliar gesture disturbed him, as if it were some mysterious farewell. But what particularly frightened him was the sight of a brand new baby carriage standing there on the porch, with the smug, encroaching air of a coffin; even that was empty, as if, in the reverse course of events, his very bones had disintegrated.

Such fancies are not foreign to young lives. Or, to put it otherwise, first and last things often tend to have an adolescent note—unless, possibly, they are directed by some venerable and rigid religion. Nature expects a full-grown man to accept the two black voids, fore and aft, as stolidly as he accepts the extraordinary visions in between. Imagination, the supreme delight

of the immortal and the immature, should be limited. In order to enjoy life, we should not enjoy it too much.

I rebel against this state of affairs. I feel the urge to take my rebellion outside and picket nature. Over and over again, my mind has made colossal efforts to distinguish the faintest of personal glimmers in the impersonal darkness on both sides of my life. That this darkness is caused merely by the walls of time separating me and by bruised fists from the free world of timelessness is a belief I gladly share with the most gaudily painted savage. I have journeyed back in thought—with thought hopelessly tapering off as I went—to remote regions where I groped for some secret outlet only to discover that the prison of time is spherical and without exits. Short of suicide, I have tried everything. I have doffed my identity in order to pass for a conventional spook and steal into realms that existed before I was conceived. I have mentally endured the degrading company of Victorian lady novelists and retired colonels who remembered having, in former lives, been slave messengers on a Roman road or sages under the willows of Lhasa. I have ransacked my oldest dreams for keys and clues—and let me say at once that I reject completely the vulgar, shabby, fundamentally medieval world of Freud, with its crankish quest for sexual symbols (something like searching for Baconian acrostics in Shakespeare's works) and its bitter little embryos spying, from their natural nooks, upon the love life of their parents.

Initially, I was unaware that time, so boundless at first blush, was a prison. In probing my childhood (which is the next best to probing one's eternity) I see the awakening of consciousness as a series of spaced flashes, with the intervals between them gradually diminishing until bright blocks of perception are formed, affording memory a slippery hold. I had learned numbers and speech more or less simultaneously at a very early date, but the inner knowledge that I was I and that my parents were my parents seems to have been established only later, when it was directly associated with my discovering their age in relation to mine. Judging by the strong sunlight that, when I think of that revelation, immediately invades my memory with lobed sun flecks through overlapping patterns of greenery, the occasion may have been my mother's birthday, in late summer, in the country, and I had asked questions and had assessed the answers I received. All this is as it should be according to the theory of recapitulation; the beginning of reflexive consciousness in the brain of our remotest ancestor must surely have coincided with the dawning of the sense of time.

Thus, when the newly disclosed, fresh and trim formula of my own age, four, was confronted with the parental formulas, thirty-three and twenty-seven, something happened to me. I was given a tremendously invigorating shock. As if subjected to a second baptism, on more divine lines than the Greek Catholic ducking undergone fifty months earlier by a howling, half-drowned half-Victor (my mother, through the half-closed door, behind which an old custom bade parents retreat, managed to correct the bungling arch-priest, Father Konstantin Vetvenitski), I felt myself plunged abruptly into a radiant and mobile medium that was none other than the pure element of time. One shared it—just as excited bathers share shining seawater—with creatures that were not oneself but that were joined to one by time's common flow, an environment quite different from the spatial world, which not only man but apes and butterflies can perceive. At that instant, I became acutely

aware that the twenty-seven-year-old being, in soft white and pink, holding my left hand, was my mother, and that the thirty-three-year-old being, in hard white and gold, holding my right hand, was my father. Between them, as they evenly progressed, I strutted, and trotted, and strutted again, from sun fleck to sun fleck, along the middle of a path, which I easily identify today with an alley of ornamental oakings in the park of our country estate, Vyra, in the former Province of St. Petersburg, Russia. Indeed, from my present ridge or remote, isolated, almost uninhabited time, I see my diminutive self as celebrating, on that August day 1903, the birth of sentient life. If my left-hand-holder and my right-hand-holder had both been present before in my vague infant world, they had been so under the mask of a tender incognito; but now my father's attire, the resplendent uniform of the Horse Guards, with that smooth golden swell of cuirass burning upon his chest and back, came out like the sun, and for several years afterward I remained keenly interested in the age of my parents and kept myself informed about it, like a nervous passenger asking the time in order to check a new watch.

My father, let it be noted, had served his term of military training long before I was born, so I suppose he had that day put on the trappings of his old regiment as a festive joke. To a joke, then, I owe my first gleam of complete consciousness—which again has recapitulatory implications, since the first creatures on earth to become aware of time were also the first creatures to smile.

### Suggestions for Discussion

1. How does the author convey the tone of the panic that can be aroused by contemplating the "prenatal abyss"?
2. By specific reference to the text, explain the author's statement that "first and last things often tend to have an adolescent note."
3. Identify all the phrases in this selection that grow out of the image of existence as a "brief crack of light between two eternities of darkness." How literal is this image intended to be? What overtones of experience and myth are there in the image?
4. At the end of the fourth paragraph Nabokov writes, "the beginning of reflexive consciousness in the brain of our remotest ancestor must surely have coincided with the dawning of the sense of time." By what logical process does he arrive at this conclusion? Is the process defensible? Is the conclusion trustworthy?

### Suggestions for Writing

1. Recall an incident in your childhood that marked a dramatic change in your concept of yourself or your parents, or your concept of the passage of time.
2. Discuss this paradox in relation to its context: "In order to enjoy life, we should not enjoy it too much."

brief analysis of the nature of your own thoughts, what experiences seem to precipitate them, what patterns seem to repeat themselves. What do you make of such repetitions?

2. Select one of the journal entries that most interests you and elaborate on it in the form of a short essay or narrative in which you attempt to give shape and unity to the earlier expression.
3. Make the lists suggested in Miller's essay and write a commentary on your discoveries.

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## Theodore Roethke

### Some Self-Analysis

Theodore Roethke (1908–1963), American poet, taught during the last years of his life at the University of Washington. *The Waking: Poems, 1933–1953* was the winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1953. He received the Bollingen Award for Poetry in 1958. A collected volume, *Words for the Wind*, appeared in 1958, and *The Far Field* was published posthumously in 1964. In this statement, written when he was an undergraduate, Roethke recounts his hopes for the writing course he is taking, assesses his strengths and limitations as a writer, and expresses his faith in himself.

I expect this course to open my eyes to story material, to unleash my too dormant imagination, to develop that quality utterly lacking in my nature—a sense of form. I do not expect to acquire much technique. I expect to be able to seize upon the significant, reject the trivial. I hope to acquire a greater love for humanity in all its forms.

I have long wondered just what my strength was as a writer. I am often filled with tremendous enthusiasm for a subject, yet my writing about it will seem a sorry attempt. Above all, I possess a driving sincerity,—that prime virtue of any creative worker. I write only what I believe to be the absolute truth,—even if I must ruin the theme in so doing. In this respect I feel far superior to those glib people in my classes who often garner better grades than I do. They are so often pitiful frauds,—artificial—insincere. They have a line that works. They do not write from the depths of their hearts. Nothing of theirs was ever born of pain. Many an incoherent yet sincere piece of writing has outlived the polished product.

I write only about people and things that I know thoroughly. Perhaps I have become a mere reporter, not a writer. Yet I feel that this is all my present abilities permit. I will open my eyes in my youth and store this raw, living material. Age may bring the fire that molds experience into artistry.

I have a genuine love of nature. It is not the least bit affected, but an integral and powerful part of my life. I know that Cooper is a fraud—that he doesn't give a true sense of the sublimity of American scenery. I know that Muir and Thoreau and Burroughs speak the truth.

I can sense the moods of nature almost instinctively. Ever since I could walk, I have spent as much time as I could in the open. A perception of nature—no matter how delicate, how subtle, how evanescent,—remains with me forever.

I am influenced too much, perhaps, by natural objects. I seem bound by the very room I'm in. I've associated so long with prosaic people that I've dwarfed myself spiritually. When I get alone under an open sky where man isn't too evident—then I'm tremendously exalted and a thousand vivid ideas and sweet visions flood my consciousness.

I think that I possess story material in abundance. I have had an unusual upbringing. I was let alone, thank God! My mother insisted upon two things,—that I strive for perfection in whatever I did and that I always try to be a gentleman. I played with Italians, with Russians, Poles, and the "sissies" on Michigan Avenue. I was carefully watched, yet allowed to follow my own inclinations. I have seen a good deal of life that would never have been revealed to an older person. Up to the time I came to college then I had seen humanity in diverse forms. Now I'm cramped and unhappy. I don't feel that these idiotic adolescents are worth writing about. In the summer, I turn animal and work for a few weeks in a factory. Then I'm happy.

My literary achievements have been insignificant. At fourteen, I made a speech which was translated into twenty-six languages and used as Red Cross propaganda. When I was younger, it seemed that everything I wrote was eminently successful. I always won a prize when I entered an essay contest. In college, I've been able to get only one "A" in four rhetoric courses. I feel this keenly. If I can't write, what can I do? I wonder.

When I was a freshman, I told Carleton Wells that I knew I could write whether he thought so or not. On my next theme he wrote "You can Write!" How I have cherished that praise!

It is bad form to talk about grades, I know. If I don't get an "A" in this course, it wouldn't be because I haven't tried. I've made a slow start. I'm going to spend Christmas vacation writing. A "B" symbolizes defeat to me. I've been beaten too often.

I do wish that we were allowed to keep our stories until we felt that we had worked them into the best possible form.

I do not have the divine urge to write. There seems to be something surging within,—a profound undercurrent of emotion. Yet there is none of that fertility of creation which distinguishes the real writer.

Nevertheless, I have faith in myself. I'm either going to be a good writer or a poor fool.

### Suggestions for Discussion

1. There are a number of paradoxical statements in Roethke's self-analysis, written when he was an undergraduate. Identify and explain.
2. Contrast Roethke's image of himself with what you imagine would be the view of his parents, his instructors, his contemporaries.

## Suggestions for Writing

1. Write a statement of your expectations in a course in composition following the format of Roethke's statement. Include an analysis of your strengths and weaknesses, formative influences, sense of present accomplishment, and hopes for the future.
2. In the light of his self-analysis, comment on a selection of Roethke's published poems.

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## Kim Chernin

### The Flesh and the Devil

Kim Chernin (b. 1940), a writer and an editor, was educated at the University of California at Berkeley, and Trinity College, Dublin. Through her ground-breaking work in the area of eating disorders, she has become a powerful voice in the feminist movement. In the 1980s she produced, to significant acclaim, six books: *The Obsession: Reflections on the Tyranny of Slenderness* (1981), *In My Mother's House* (1983), *The Hungry Self* (1985), *The Flame Bearers* (1986), *Reinventing Eve* (1987), and *Sex and Other Sacred Games* (1989). In this selection she relates American women's preoccupation with their bodies not to narcissism, but to self-rejection.

We know that every woman wants to be thin. Our images of womanhood are almost synonymous with thinness.

—Susie Orbach

. . . I must now be able to look at my ideal, this ideal of being thin, of being without a body, and to realize: "it is a fiction."

—Ellen West

When the body is hiding the complex, it then becomes our most immediate access to the problem.

—Marian Woodman

The locker room of the tennis club. Several exercise benches, two old-fashioned hair dryers, a mechanical bicycle, a treadmill, a reducing machine, a mirror, and a scale.

A tall woman enters, removes her towel; she throws it across a bench, faces herself squarely in the mirror, climbs on the scale, looks down.

A silence.

"I knew it," she mutters, turning to me. "I knew it."

And I think, before I answer, just how much I admire her, for this courage beyond my own, this daring to weigh herself daily in this way. And I sympathize. I know what she must be feeling. Not quite candidly, I say: "Up or down?" I am hoping to suggest that there might be people and cultures where gaining weight might not be considered a disaster. Places where women, stepping on scales, might be horrified to notice that they had reduced themselves. A mythical, almost unimaginable land.

"Two pounds," she says, ignoring my hint. "Two pounds." And then she turns, grabs the towel and swings out at her image in the mirror, smashing it violently, the towel spattering water over the glass. "Fat pig," she shouts at her image in the glass. "You fat, fat pig. . . ."

Later, I go to talk with this woman. Her name is Rachel and she becomes, as my work progresses, one of the choral voices that shape its vision.

Two girls come into the exercise room. They are perhaps ten or eleven years old, at that elongated stage when the skeletal structure seems to be winning its war against flesh. And these two are particularly skinny. They sit beneath the hair dryers for a moment, kicking their legs on the faded green upholstery; they run a few steps on the eternal treadmill, they wrap the rubber belt of the reducing machine around themselves and jiggle for a moment before it falls off. And then they go to the scale.

The taller one steps up, glances at herself in the mirror, looks down at the scale. She sighs, shaking her head. I see at once that this girl is imitating someone. The sigh, the headshake are theatrical, beyond her years. And so, too, is the little drama enacting itself in front of me. The other girl leans forward, eager to see for herself the troubling message imprinted upon the scale. But the older girl throws her hand over the secret. It is not to be revealed. And now the younger one, accepting this, steps up to confront the ultimate judgment. "Oh God," she says, this growing girl. "Oh God," with only a shade of imitation in her voice: "Would you believe it? I've gained five pounds."

These girls, too, become a part of my work. They enter, they perform their little scene again and again; it extends beyond them and in it I am finally able to behold something that would have remained hidden—for it does not express itself directly, although we feel its pressure almost every day of our lives. Something, unnamed as yet, struggling against our emergence into femininity. This is my first glimpse of it, out there. And the vision ripens.

I return to the sauna. Two women I have seen regularly at the club are sitting on the bench above me. One of them is very beautiful, the sort of woman Renoir would have admired. The other, who is probably in her late sixties, looks, in the twilight of this sweltering room, very much an adolescent. I have noticed her before, with her tan face, her white hair, her fashionable clothes, her slender hips and jaunty walk. But the effect has not been soothing. A woman of advancing age who looks like a boy.

"I've heard about that illness, anorexia nervosa," the plump one is saying, "and I keep looking around for someone who has it. I want to go sit next to her. I think to myself, maybe I'll catch it. . . ."

"Well," the other woman says to her, "I've felt the same way myself. One of my cousins used to throw food under the table when no one was looking.

## Suggestions for Writing

1. Write on one of these topics: a portrait of my father; imaginary parents.
2. Write a narrative in which a seemingly simple event effects a change in attitude.

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 Franz Kafka

## Letter to His Father

*Translated by Ernest Kaiser and Eithene Wilkins*

Franz Kafka (1883–1924), the German novelist who portrays alienated characters in an absurd world, made little mark during his life but is now considered a major modern writer. Many of his novels have been published posthumously, including *The Trial*, *The Castle*, and *Amerika*. In the letter, also published posthumously, the author in a legalistic manner indicts himself as well as his father in assessing responsibility for his, Kafka's, insecurity as a person.

## Dearest Father:

You asked me recently why I maintain that I am afraid of you. As usual, I was unable to think of any answer to your question, partly for the very reason that I am afraid of you, and partly because an explanation of the grounds for this fear would mean going into far more details than I could even approximately keep in mind while talking. And if I now try to give you an answer in writing, it will still be very incomplete, because even in writing this fear and its consequences hamper me in relation to you and because [anyway] the magnitude of the subject goes far beyond the scope of my memory and power of reasoning. . . .

Compare the two of us: I, to put it in a very much abbreviated form, a Löwy with a certain basis of Kafka, which, however, is not set in motion by the Kafka will to life, business, and conquest, but by a Löwyish spur that urges more secretly, more diffidently, and in another direction, and which often fails to work entirely. You, on the other hand, a true Kafka in strength, health, appetite, loudness of voice, eloquence, self-satisfaction, worldly dominance, endurance, presence of mind, knowledge of human nature, a certain way of doing things on a grand scale, of course with all the defects and weaknesses that go with all these advantages and into which your temperament and sometimes your hot temper drive you. . . .

However it was, we were so different and in our difference so dangerous to each other that, if anyone had tried to calculate in advance how I, the slowly developing child, and you, the full-grown man, would stand to each other, he could have assumed that you would simply trample me underfoot

so that nothing was left of me. Well, that didn't happen. Nothing alive can be calculated. But perhaps something worse happened. And in saying this I would all the time beg of you not to forget that I never, and not even for a single moment, believe any guilt to be on your side. The effect you had on me was the effect you could not help having. But you should stop considering it some particular malice on my part that I succumbed to that effect.

I was a timid child. For all that, I am sure I was also obstinate, as children are. I am sure that Mother spoiled me too, but I cannot believe I was particularly difficult to manage; I cannot believe that a kindly word, a quiet taking of me by the hand, a friendly look, could not have got me to do anything that was wanted of me. Now you are after all at bottom a kindly and softhearted person (what follows will not be in contradiction to this, I am speaking only of the impression you made on the child), but not every child has the endurance and fearlessness to go on searching until it comes to the kindness that lies beneath the surface. You can only treat a child in the way you yourself are constituted, with vigor, noise, and hot temper, and in this case this seemed to you, into the bargain, extremely suitable, because you wanted to bring me up to be a strong brave boy. . . .

There is only one episode in the early years of which I have a direct memory. You may remember it, too. Once in the night I kept on whimpering for water, not, I am certain, because I was thirsty, but probably partly to be annoying, partly to amuse myself. After several vigorous threats had failed to have any effect, you took me out of bed, carried me out onto the *pavlatche* and left me there alone for a while in my nightshirt, outside the shut door. I am not going to say that this was wrong—perhaps at that time there was really no other way of getting peace and quiet that night—but I mention it as typical of your methods of bringing up a child and their effect on me. I dare say I was quite obedient afterwards at that period, but it did me inner harm. What was for me a matter of course, that senseless asking for water, and the extraordinary terror of being carried outside were two things that I, my nature being what it was, could never properly connect with each other. Even years afterwards I suffered from the tormenting fancy that the huge man, my father, the ultimate authority, would come almost for no reason at all and take me out of bed in the night and carry me out onto the *pavlatche*, and that therefore I was such a mere nothing for him.

That then was only a small beginning, but this sense of nothingness that often dominates me (a feeling that is in another respect, admittedly, also a noble and fruitful one) comes largely from your influence. What I would have needed was a little encouragement, a little friendliness, a little keeping open of my road, instead of which you blocked it for me, though of course with the good intention of making me go another road. But I was not fit for that. You encouraged me, for instance, when I saluted and marched smartly, but I was no future soldier, or you encouraged me when I was able to eat heartily or even drink beer with my meals, or when I was able to repeat songs, singing what I had not understood, or prattle to you using your own favorite expressions, imitating you, but nothing of this had anything to do with my future. And it is characteristic that even today you really only encourage me in anything when you yourself are involved in it, when what is at stake is your sense of self-importance.

At that time, and at that time everywhere, I would have needed encouragement. I was, after all, depressed even by your mere physical presence. I remember, for instance, how we often undressed together in the same bathing hut. There was I, skinny, weakly, slight; you strong, tall, broad. Even inside the hut I felt myself a miserable specimen, and what's more, not only in your eyes but in the eyes of the whole world, for you were for me the measure of all things. But then when we went out of the bathing hut before the people, I with you holding my hand, a little skeleton, unsteady, barefoot on the boards, frightened of the water, incapable of copying your swimming strokes, which you, with the best of intentions, but actually to my profound humiliation, always kept on showing me, then I was frantic with desperation and all my bad experiences in all spheres at such moments fitted magnificently together.

In keeping with that, furthermore, was your intellectual domination. You had worked your way up so far alone, by your own energies, and as a result you had unbounded confidence in your opinion. For me as a child that was not yet so dazzling as later for the boy growing up. From your armchair you ruled the world. Your opinion was correct, every other was mad, wild, *meshugge*, not normal. With all this your self-confidence was so great that you had no need to be consistent at all and yet never ceased to be in the right. It did sometimes happen that you had no opinion whatsoever about a matter and as a result all opinions that were at all possible with respect to the matter were necessarily wrong, without exception. You were capable, for instance, of running down the Czechs, and then the Germans, and then the Jews, and what is more, not only selectively but in every respect, and finally nobody was left except yourself. For me you took on the enigmatic quality that all tyrants have whose rights are based on their person and not on reason. At least so it seemed to me.

Now where I was concerned you were in fact astonishingly often in the right, which was a matter of course in talk, for there was hardly ever any talk between us, but also in reality. Yet this too was nothing particularly incomprehensible; in all my thinking I was, after all, under the heavy pressure of your personality, even in that part of it—and particularly in that—which was not in accord with yours. All these thoughts, seemingly independent of you, were from the beginning loaded with the burden of your harsh and dogmatic judgments; it was almost impossible to endure this, and yet to work out one's thoughts with any measure of completeness and permanence. I am not here speaking of any sublime thoughts, but of every little enterprise in childhood. It was only necessary to be happy about something or other, to be filled with the thought of it, to come home and speak of it, and the answer was an ironical sigh, a shaking of the head, a tapping of the table with one finger: "Is that all you're so worked up about?" or "I wish I had your worries!" or "The things some people have time to think about!" or "What can you buy yourself with that?" or "What a song and dance about nothing!" Of course, you couldn't be expected to be enthusiastic about every childish, triviality, toiling and moiling as you used to. But that wasn't the point. The point was, rather, that you could not help always and on principle causing the child such disappointments, by virtue of your antagonistic nature, and further that this antagonism was ceaselessly intensified through accumulation of its material, that it finally became a matter of established habit even when for once you were of

the same opinion as myself, and that finally these disappointments of the child's were not disappointments in ordinary life but, since what it concerned was your person, which was the measure of all things; struck to the very core. Courage, resolution, confidence, delight in this and that, did not endure to the end when you were against whatever it was or even if your opposition was merely to be assumed; and it was to be assumed in almost everything I did. . . .

You have, I think, a gift for bringing up children: you could, I am sure, have been of use to a human being of your own kind with your methods; such a person would have seen the reasonableness of what you told him, would not have troubled about anything else, and would quietly have done things the way he was told. But for me a child everything you shouted at me was positively a heavenly commandment, I never forgot it, it remained for me the most important means of forming a judgment of the world, above all of forming a judgment of you yourself, and there you failed entirely. Since as a child I was together with you chiefly at meals, your teaching was to a large extent teaching about proper behavior at table. What was brought to the table had to be eaten up, there could be no discussion of the goodness of the food—but you yourself often found the food uneatable, called it "this swill," said "that brute" (the cook) had ruined it. Because in accordance with your strong appetite and your particular habit you ate everything fast, hot and in big mouthfuls, the child had to hurry, there was a somber silence at table, interrupted by admonitions: "Eat first, talk afterwards," or "faster, faster, faster," or "there you are, you see, I finished ages ago." Bones mustn't be cracked with the teeth, but you could. Vinegar must not be sipped noisily, but you could. The main thing was that the bread should be cut straight. But it didn't matter that you did it with a knife dripping with gravy. One had to take care that no scraps fell on the floor. In the end it was under your chair that there were most scraps. At table one wasn't allowed to do anything but eat, but you cleaned and cut your fingernails, sharpened pencils, cleaned your ears with the toothpick. Please, Father, understand me rightly: these would in themselves have been utterly insignificant details, they only became depressing for me because you, the man who was so tremendously the measure of all things for me, yourself did not keep the commandments you imposed on me. Hence the world was for me divided into three parts: into one in which I, the slave, lived under laws that had been invented only for me and which I could, I did not know why, never completely comply with; then into a second world, which was infinitely remote from mine, in which you lived, concerned with government, with the issuing of orders and with annoyance about their not being obeyed; and finally into a third world where everybody else lived happily and free from orders and from having to obey. I was continually in disgrace, either I obeyed your orders, and that was a disgrace, for they applied, after all, only to me, or I was defiant, and that was a disgrace too, for how could I presume to defy you, or I could not obey because, for instance, I had not your strength, your appetite, your skill, in spite of which you expected it of me as a matter of course; this was the greatest disgrace of all. What moved in this way was not the child's reflections, but his feelings. . . .

It was true that Mother was illimitably good to me, but all that was for me in relation to you, that is to say, in no good relation. Mother unconsciously played the part of a beater during a hunt. Even if your method of upbringing

might in some unlikely case have set me on my own feet by means of producing defiance, dislike, or even hate in me, Mother canceled that out again by kindness, by talking sensibly (in the maze and chaos of my childhood she was the very pattern of good sense and reasonableness), by pleading for me, and I was again driven back into your orbit, which I might perhaps otherwise have broken out of, to your advantage and to my own. Or it was so that no real reconciliation ever came about, that Mother merely shielded me from you in secret, secretly gave me something, or allowed me to do something, and then where you were concerned I was again the furtive creature, the cheat, the guilty one, who in his worthlessness could only pursue backstairs methods even to get the things he regarded as his right. Of course, I then became used to taking such courses also in quest of things to which, even in my own view, I had no right. This again meant an increase in the sense of guilt.

It is also true that you hardly ever really gave me a whipping. But the shouting, the way your face got red, the hasty undoing of the braces and the laying of them ready over the back of the chair, all that was almost worse for me. It is like when someone is going to be hanged. If he is really hanged, then he's dead and it's all over. But if he has to go through all the preliminaries to being hanged and only when the noose is dangling before his face is told of his reprieve, then he may suffer from it all his life long. Besides, from so many occasions when I had, as you clearly showed you thought, deserved to be beaten, when you were however gracious enough to let me off at the last moment, here again what accumulated was only a huge sense of guilt. On every side I was to blame, I was in debt to you.

You have always reproached me (and what is more either alone or in front of others, you having no feeling for the humiliation of this latter, your children's affairs always being public affairs) for living in peace and quiet, warmth, and abundance, lack for nothing, thanks to your hard work. I think here of remarks that must positively have worn grooves in my brain, like: "When I was only seven I had to push the barrow from village to village." "We all had to sleep in one room." "We were glad when we got potatoes." "For years I had open sores on my legs from not having enough clothes to wear in winter." "I was only a little boy when I was sent away to Pisek to go into business." "I got nothing from home, not even when I was in the army, even then I was sending money home." "But for all that, for all that—Father was always Father to me. Ah, nobody knows what that means these days! What do these children know of things? Nobody's been through that! Is there any child that understands such things today?" Under other conditions such stories might have been very educational, they might have been a way of encouraging one and strengthening one to endure similar torments and deprivations to those one's father had undergone. But that wasn't what you wanted at all; the situation had, after all, become quite different as a result of all your efforts, and there was no opportunity to distinguish oneself in the world as you had done. Such an opportunity would first of all have had to be created by violence and revolution, it would have meant breaking away from home (assuming one had had the resolution and strength to do so and that Mother wouldn't have worked against it; for her part, with other means). But all that was not what you wanted at all, that you termed ingratitude, extravagance, disobedience, treachery, madness. And so, while on the one hand you tempted me to it by means of example, story, and humiliation, on the other hand you forbade it with the utmost severity. . . .

(Up to this point there is in this letter relatively little I have intentionally passed over in silence, but now and later I shall have to be silent on certain matters that it is still too hard for me to confess—to you and to myself. I say this in order that, if the picture as a whole should be somewhat blurred here and there, you should not believe that what is to blame is any lack of evidence; on the contrary, there is evidence that might well make the picture unbearably stark. It is not easy to strike a median position.) Here, it is enough to remind you of early days. I had lost my self-confidence where you were concerned, and in its place had developed a boundless sense of guilt. (In recollection of this boundlessness I once wrote of someone, accurately: "He is afraid the shame will outlive him, even.") I could not suddenly undergo a transformation when I came into the company of other people; on the contrary, with them I came to feel an even deeper sense of guilt, for, as I have already said, in their case I had to make good the wrongs done them by you in the business, wrongs in which I too had my share of responsibility. Besides, you always, of course, had some objection to make, frankly or covertly, to everyone I associated with, and for this too I had to beg his pardon. The mistrust that you tried to instill into me, at business and at home, towards most people (tell me of any single person who was of importance to me in my childhood whom you didn't at least once tear to shreds with your criticism), this mistrust, which oddly enough was no particular burden to you (the fact was that you were strong enough to bear it, and besides, it was in reality perhaps only a token of the autocrat), this mistrust, which for me as a little boy was nowhere confirmed in my own eyes, since I everywhere saw only people excellent beyond all hope of emulation, in me turned into mistrust of myself and into perpetual anxiety in relation to everything else. There, then, I was in general certain of not being able to escape from you.

### Suggestions for Discussion

Kafka gave this letter (from which you have only excerpts) to his mother, asking her to give it to his father. Understandably she never did so, but it was found among Kafka's unpublished manuscripts after his death. Although Kafka had asked his friend Max Brod to destroy all unpublished material, Brod did not comply with this request.

1. Study the legalistic manner in which Kafka indicts himself as well as his father. Assuming you were on a jury, evaluate the points for prosecution and defense of both father and son. What would be your final judgment as to responsibility for the boy's insecurity as a person?
2. Study the scenes through which Kafka dramatizes certain moments of special significance in his childhood. In spite of his attempt to be fair, by what means does he enlist sympathy with the child?
3. What seems to be the role of the mother? Why does the boy more closely identify with her and her family than with his father?

### Suggestions for Writing

1. Write about a significant moment in your childhood relationship with your parents. What effect may it have had on your self-image?
2. Write on the parents' image versus the child's.
3. Contrast this father with the one portrayed in E. E. Cummings's poem "My Father Moved Through Dooms of Love."

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## Adrienne Rich

### The Anger of a Child

Adrienne Rich (b.1929) has been an activist in the women's movement, and her attitudes are reflected in her poetry, literary criticism, and essays on patriarchy in our culture. Her publications include *A Change of World* (1951); *Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law* (1963); *The Will to Change* (1971); *Your Native Land, Your Life* (1986); *On Lies, Secrets and Silence: Selected Prose* (1979); and *Blood, Bread and Poetry* (1986). The following excerpt appears in her book *Of Woman Born* (1976). It reflects her ambivalence toward her parents and "old, smoldering patches of deep-burning anger."

It is hard to write about my mother. Whatever I do write, it is my story I am telling, my version of the past. If she were to tell her own story other landscapes would be revealed. But in my landscape or hers, there would be old, smoldering patches of deep-burning anger. Before her marriage, she had trained seriously for years both as a concert pianist and a composer. Born in a southern town, mothered by a strong, frustrated woman, she had won a scholarship to study with the director at the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore, and by teaching at girls' schools had earned her way to further study in New York, Paris, and Vienna. From the age of sixteen, she had been a young belle, who could have married at any time, but she also possessed unusual talent, determination, and independence for her time and place. She read—and reads—widely and wrote—as her journals from my childhood and her letters of today reveal—with grace and pungency.

She married my father after a ten years' engagement during which he finished his medical training and began to establish himself in academic medicine. Once married, she gave up the possibility of a concert career, though for some years she went on composing, and she is still a skilled and dedicated pianist. My father, brilliant, ambitious, possessed by his own drive, assumed that she would give her life over to the enhancement of his. She would manage his household with the formality and grace becoming to a medical professor's wife, though on a limited budget; she would "keep up" her music, though there was no question of letting her composing and practice conflict with her duties as a wife and mother. She was supposed to bear him two children, a boy and a girl. She had to keep her household books to the last penny—I still can see the big blue-gray ledgers, inscribed in her clear, strong hand; she marketed by streetcar, and later, when they could afford a car, she drove my father to and from his laboratory or lectures, often awaiting him for hours. She raised two children, and taught us all our lessons, including music. (Neither of us was sent to school until the fourth grade.) I am sure that she was made to feel responsible for all our imperfections.

My father, like the transcendentalist Bronson Alcott, believed that he (or rather, his wife) could raise children according to his unique moral and intellectual plan, thus proving to the world the values of enlightened, unorthodox

child-rearing. I believe that my mother, like Abigail Alcott, at first genuinely and enthusiastically embraced the experiment, and only later found that in carrying out my father's intense, perfectionist program, she was in conflict with her deep instincts as a mother. Like Abigail Alcott, too, she must have found that while ideas might be unfolded by her husband, their daily, hourly practice was going to be up to her. ("Mr. A. aids me in general principles, but nobody can aid me in the detail," she mourned. . . . Moreover her husband's views kept her constantly wondering if she were doing a good job. 'Am I doing what is right? Am I doing enough? Am I doing too much?'" The appearance of "temper" and "will" in Louisa, the second Alcott daughter, was blamed by her father on her inheritance from her mother.) Under the institution of motherhood, the mother is the first to blame if theory proves unworkable in practice, or if anything whatsoever goes wrong. But even earlier, my mother had failed at one part of the plan: she had not produced a son.

For years, I felt my mother had chosen my father over me, had sacrificed me to his needs and theories. When my first child was born, I was barely in communication with my parents. I had been fighting my father for my right to an emotional life and a selfhood beyond his needs and theories. We were all at a draw. Emerging from the fear, exhaustion, and alienation of my first childbirth, I could not admit even to myself that I wanted my mother, let alone tell her how much I wanted her. When she visited me in the hospital neither of us could uncoil the obscure lashings of feeling that darkened the room, the tangled thread running backward to where she had labored for three days to give birth to me, and I was not a son. Now, twenty-six years later, I lay in a contagious hospital with my allergy, my skin covered with a mysterious rash, my lips and eyelids swollen, my body bruised and sutured, and, in a cot beside my bed, slept the perfect, golden, male child I had brought forth. How could I have interpreted her feelings when I could not begin to decipher my own? My body had spoken all too eloquently, but it was, medically, just my body. I wanted her to mother me again, to hold my baby in her arms as she had once held me; but that baby was also a gauntlet flung down: *my son*. Part of me longed to offer him for her blessing; part of me wanted to hold him up as a badge of victory in our tragic, unnecessary rivalry as women.

But I was only at the beginning. I know now as I could not possibly know then, that among the tangle of feelings between us, in that crucial yet unreal meeting, was her guilt. Soon I would begin to understand the full weight and burden of maternal guilt, that daily, nightly, hourly, *Am I doing what is right? Am I doing enough? Am I doing too much?* The institution of motherhood finds all mothers more or less guilty of having failed their children; and my mother, in particular, had been expected to help create, according to my father's plan, a perfect daughter. This "perfect" daughter, though gratifyingly precocious, had early been given to tics and tantrums, had become permanently lame from arthritis at twenty-two; she had finally resisted her father's Victorian paternalism, his seductive charm and controlling cruelty, had married a divorced graduate student, had begun to write "modern," "obscure," "pessimistic" poetry, lacking the fluent sweetness of Tennyson, had had the final temerity to get pregnant and bring a living baby into the world. She had ceased to be the demure and precocious child or the poetic, seducible adolescent. Something, in my father's view, had gone terribly wrong. I can imagine

that whatever else my mother felt (and I know that part of her *was* mutely on my side) she also was made to feel blame. Beneath the "numbness" that she has since told me she experienced at that time, I can imagine the guilt of Everymother, because I have known it myself.

But I did not know it yet. And it is difficult for me to write of my mother now, because I have known it too well. I struggle to describe what it felt like to be her daughter, but I find myself divided, slipping under her skin; a part of me identified too much with her. I know deep reservoirs of anger toward her still exist: the anger of a four-year-old locked in the closet (my father's orders, but my mother carried them out) for childish misbehavior; the anger of a six-year-old kept too long at piano practice (again, at his insistence, but it was she who gave the lessons) till I developed a series of facial tics. (As a mother I know what a child's facial tic is—a lancet of guilt and pain running through one's own body.) And I still feel the anger of a daughter, pregnant, wanting my mother desperately and feeling she had gone over to the enemy.

And I know there must be deep reservoirs of anger in her; every mother has known overwhelming, unacceptable anger at her children. When I think of the conditions under which my mother became a mother, the impossible expectations, my father's distaste for pregnant women, his hatred of all that he could not control, my anger at her dissolves into grief and anger *for* her, and then dissolves back again into anger at her: the ancient, unpurged anger of the child.

My mother lives today as an independent woman, which she was always meant to be. She is a much-loved, much-admired grandmother, an explorer in new realms; she lives in the present and future, not the past. I no longer have fantasies—they are the unhealed child's fantasies, I think—of some infinitely healing conversation with her, in which we could show all our wounds, transcend the pain we have shared as mother and daughter, say everything at last. But in writing these pages, I am admitting, at least, how important her existence is and has been for me.

### Suggestions for Discussion

1. What is the tone of Rich's portrait of her father? With what details does it become apparent?
2. With what details does the author convey her anger at her mother?
3. How does the author feel about the relationship of her father and mother?
4. How did Rich recognize her mother's guilt?
5. Account for the author's ambivalence toward her mother.
6. The author concedes that she is writing her "version of the past" and that her mother might tell her story differently. Provide some of the details in the mother's story if told by her.

### Suggestions for Writing

1. Write on your views of enlightened child rearing.
2. Recall an episode in your childhood in which you felt anger at your parents.
3. Develop your version of the mother's story.

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## F. Scott Fitzgerald

### Dearest Scottie

F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896–1940) attended Princeton University but did not graduate. He accepted a commission in the army and when stationed at Camp Sheridan he met his future wife, Zelda, about whom he writes in this letter. He wrote copy in an advertising agency in New York while trying to succeed as a novelist. His best-known books are *This Side of Paradise* (1920), which draws upon his experiences at college; *The Beautiful and the Damned* (1922); *Tales of the Jazz Age* (1922); *The Great Gatsby* (1925); and *Tender Is the Night* (1934). The letter that follows reflects not only his disappointment in his daughter and his feeling of bitterness about his marriage but also conveys his sadness that his dream was aborted.

Dearest Scottie:

I don't think I will be writing letters many more years and I wish you would read this letter twice—bitter as it may seem. You will reject it now, but at a later period some of it may come back to you as truth. When I'm talking to you, you think of me as an older person, an "authority," and when I speak of my own youth what I say becomes unreal to you—for the young can't believe in the youth of their fathers. But perhaps this little bit will be understandable if I put it in writing.

When I was your age I lived with a great dream. The dream grew and I learned how to speak of it and make people listen. Then the dream divided one day when I decided to marry your mother after all, even though I knew she was spoiled and meant no good to me. I was sorry, immediately I had married her but, being patient in those days, made the best of it and got to love her in another way. You came along and for a long time we made quite a lot of happiness out of our lives. But I was a man divided—she wanted me to work too much for *her* and not enough for my dream. She realized too late that work was dignity, and the only dignity, and tried to atone for it by working herself, but it was too late and she broke and is broken forever.

It was too late also for me to recoup the damage—I had spent most of my resources, spiritual and material, on her, but I struggled on for five years till my health collapsed, and all I cared about was drink and forgetting.

The mistake I made was in marrying her. We belonged to different worlds—she might have been happy with a kind simple man in a southern garden. She didn't have the strength for the big stage—sometimes she pretended, and pretended beautifully, but she didn't have it. She was soft when she should have been hard, and hard when she should have been yielding. She never knew how to use her energy—she's passed that failing on to you.

For a long time I hated *her* mother for giving her nothing in the line of good habit—nothing but "getting by" and conceit. I never wanted to see again in this world women who were brought up as idlers. And one of my

To what end is the laying out of the embroidered Hair, embared Breasts; vermilion Cheeks, alluring looks, Fashion gates, and artful Countenances, effeminate intangling and insnaring Gestures, their Curls and Purls of proclaiming Petulancies, bolstered and laid out with such example and authority in these our days, as with Allowance and beseeeming Conveniency?

Doth the world wax barren through decrease of Generations, and become, like the Earth, less fruitful heretofore? Doth the Blood lose his Heat or do the Sunbeams become waterish and less fervent, than formerly they have been, that men should be thus inflamed and persuaded on to lust?

—Alex. Nicholes, *A Discourse of Marriage and Wiving*,  
1615.

April was a man. But he longed to be a woman. He longed for the stereotype, not to embrace, but to be. He wanted soft fabrics, jewels, furs, makeup, the love and protection of men. So he was impotent. He couldn't fancy women at all, although he did not particularly welcome homosexual addresses. He did not think of himself as a pervert, or even as a transvestite, but as a woman cruelly transmogrified into manhood. He tried to die, became a female impersonator, but eventually found a doctor in Casablanca who came up with a more acceptable alternative. He was to be castrated, and his penis used as the lining of a surgically constructed cleft, which would be a vagina. He would be infertile, but that has never affected the attribution of femininity. April returned to England, resplendent. Massive hormone treatment had eradicated his beard, and formed tiny breasts: he had grown his hair and bought feminine clothes during the time he had worked as an impersonator. He became a model, and began to illustrate the feminine stereotype as he was perfectly qualified to do, for he was elegant, voluptuous, beautifully groomed, and in love with his own image. On an ill-fated day he married the heir to a peerage, the Hon. Arthur Corbett, acting out the highest achievement of the feminine dream, and went to live with him in a villa in Marbella. The marriage was never consummated. April's incompetence as a woman is what we must expect from a castrate, but it is not so very different after all from the impotence of feminine women, who submit to sex without desire, with only the infantile pleasure of cuddling and affection, which is their favorite reward. As long as the feminine stereotype remains the definition of the female sex, April Ashley is a woman, regardless of the legal decision ensuing from her divorce. She is as much a casualty of the polarity of the sexes as we all are. Disgraced, unsexed April Ashley is our sister and our symbol.

### Suggestions for Discussion

1. How does the author develop the concept that "beauty is woman's scepter"? How does the long series of examples in the first paragraph contribute to purpose and tone?

2. What does the author mean by the stereotype? How does she develop and support her extended definition?
3. In what context does the author invoke the first person? How does its intrusion affect purpose and tone?
4. What purpose is served by the introduction of April Ashley? Do the last two sentences constitute an appropriate summation of what has gone before? Explain.

### Suggestion for Writing

Drawing on your own experience and observation, write an essay on stereotypes.

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## Natalie Rogers

### The Right to Be Me!

#### *Confronting Sex Role Expectations*

Natalie Rogers initiated with her father, Carl Rogers, residential workshops in the "Person-Centered Approach." She is a client-centered psychotherapist and works with both individuals and groups. She has developed training programs for women counselors and has led professional women's groups in many foreign countries. This chapter, from her book, *Emerging Woman*, suggests how the conditioning forces of family and society led to her "collusion" in a marriage that deprived her of a sense of worth.

I have spent some time trying to discover how I came to be the woman I am. How much of what I am was set by cultural role expectations? What, in my childhood, adolescence, and adult life was prescribed for me? How much freedom do I have to *choose* my role? What is it I want? In order to understand the role expectations placed on me, I have looked for those people and incidents which have influenced my attitudes toward myself.

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### Metaphors of Childhood

As I look back on my girlhood, I see myself in a sailboat. It is a small, tubby boat my father had built in our garage. Mother made the sails—their division of labor. We were proud of the stability of the "Snark" even though it was not the sleek racing boat that others sailed on the lake.

"Come on Nat, want to join me for a sail?" My brother takes the initiative. "See if you can put up the jib, I'll rig the mainsail. You can hold the tiller while I shove off. . . . Okay, good girl, get to the jib and pull the sheets in. The jib

will pull us around. . . . There we go, swell—we can relax now. When I get us away from this tricky shore wind I'll let you take the tiller."

As the wind fills the mainsail and I pull tight the jib to keep it from luffing, I feel proud. I hope I'm doing it right. As we heel in the wind I let it out a little; and, looking to the captain, I ask, "Is this okay?"

"Well, you could let it out a little further," comes the knowledgeable reply. I tidy the boat, coiling the ropes, looping the end through the coil, and hanging it neatly on the cleat. As we gain full speed, the wind strokes my face and excitement wells inside me. I look at my brother with question in my eyes, "Now?"

"Okay, you can take the tiller, but take it easy, the gusts come up suddenly."

As we switch places the boat levels off, I pull in the mainsail, hold the tiller tight, and heel us until the deck is cutting the lake.

"You've got it too tight! We'll go faster if you let it out," comes the advice.

I know this is true, but I enjoy the risky feeling of balancing on the edge. I slice the water, bracing my feet against the cockpit, leaning hard against the rope. A storm cloud appears. My brother announces that he is taking us in. I relinquish my seat feeling secure in his presence.

The memory of sailing in the boat with my father and brother is a simple, joyful recollection. Being the crew for one or two men skippers while Mom was on the shore making lunch became a significant metaphor in my development as a female. I was proud to be a good crew: I knew how to keep the boat shipshape to the requirements of the captains. As crew, I was pleasing the men in my life, getting their praise for doing what was expected of me. It was exciting to be a part of their action. I didn't have to take command of the boat—I liked that feeling of being protected from the full responsibility, yet being part of the excitement. I used to think, "Too bad for you, Mom, you're not out here with the adventure of making the boat heel, or of racing toward home before the squall comes up." I must have felt proud to be included with the men and somewhat disdainful of the woman left on shore, yet glad that she was there with the warm soup when we got back.

It doesn't take an analyst to see that I was being well trained for my role as a woman. I wanted to please the men I loved, to take part in their more exciting world, to take the tiller only on occasion (to take responsibility for the direction of others only occasionally), and with their approval and guidance. Mother's life was necessary and appreciated—but not as exciting. There was, and still is, an element in me that says, "I'll be more adventurous than you." Though I was appreciated, loved, and included, the expectation seemed to be that I would not be capable of being captain of a ship. I would ask for a turn at the tiller with full knowledge that I could only be second best. They (the men) had the *real* understanding of how things worked.

As a girl, I was being subtly trained to believe:

Men take the major responsibility for leadership and direction in life. They are to have control.

Women are to be helpers toward the destination that men choose. A good helper is pleasing, serving, accommodating.

Men have the real knowledge and understanding; women ask them for the truth.

Women get their "goodies" (self-esteem) by being praised and adored for being all of the above!

These were all an unspoken part of my growing up, and I never thought to question this role. It is only recently, in the process of writing these pages and leading women's groups, that I have come to realize what such training did to limit the scope of my personal horizons.

I am now aware that the seeds of some of my present anger started germinating in childhood, as my parents and brother acted out the roles society demanded of them.

Looking at a favorite snapshot of me and my older brother, I see us standing on the back porch—he with his arm protectively around my shoulders. The expression on my face says I am enjoying cuddling under his wing. What a comforting role, this! And to this day, when a man puts his arm around me with the "I'll take care of you" stance, I yield to that longing. But I *now* know I can allow myself to be temporarily protected as long as it is not my role in *life*.

As a model for being a wife and mother, my mother set very high standards. She was nurturing and supportive, always there to do things for us, feed us, and take care of us. She cooked, cleaned, did the laundry, took care of our needs for love, discipline, schooling, and play. My father worked long hours in a clinic for disturbed children and wrote at night. She was taking care to see that he had the time to do his important work and would not need to be bothered with the mundane things in life. Although she had interests of her own, the message from mother was that "Children and husband come first, my own needs come last." We prospered under this in many ways, but at what cost to her? This model played some havoc with me. When it came to my own marriage, I took on that same model without questioning whether it was right for me.

The words "career woman" were pejorative in our home. They meant being cold, unfeminine, unmotherly, competitive, and aggressive. It was a wife's role to be emotionally supportive, to do everything possible to promote her husband's ideas and profession. Of course, in those days, I never consciously thought about what my parents were to each other or what impressions it left on me. I saw them peacefully discussing issues. I saw them caring and touching each other. I observed the division of labor and the feeling of who was dealing with the "world" and who was taking care of "home." Later I acted on what I had learned without being aware of it.

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### Marriage: Collusion of Two Members for the Benefit of One

The night before my wedding, like the picture of the sailboat, is a clear memory.

I can't sleep, naturally. I'm too excited. It's hard to believe tomorrow is the day I've dreamed of for so long. Marriage, to the one I will always love—my heart feels large, warm, and tender.

Amazing I have no doubts or fears. Some brides do, I know. I just want to give and be loved and share our lives. I wonder, wonder what our life will be like now that we are sealing it forever? Sounds delicious. I'm so happy I could burst!

I remember the choices I *thought* I had when I graduated from college. "If I don't find a man to marry I'll go on to graduate school to become a psychologist." It seemed like a very lonely possible second choice. It never occurred to me I could do both. Nor did anyone expect me to do both.

In retrospect, what I did to myself and how my husband colluded with me in the state of matrimony is incredible. I wrote to him, before marriage, that I thought he was better at most things than I, and that I looked forward to "living my life for him." When I read this "love" letter twenty years later, I set a match to it instantly. As I did so, I realized that I had been asking him to be the graduate student, the psychologist, the political activist, the thinker, and doer, when that is what I wanted for myself. I *married* one instead of *becoming* one.

The fact that I was at least as good as my husband-to-be in all areas—in human relations, in intellectual ability, in the "how to fix it" department, in life experience of being independent and responsible for myself—was somehow forgotten as I entered into a commitment to be a wife. To this day, I don't know whether my feelings of self-worth were really that low or whether I was responding to the powerful pressures of what a good wife is supposed to be. Apparently, being second best was one of my definitions of love.

I had applied to graduate school at Harvard (where he had already been accepted). I was told I wouldn't be accepted unless I was a full-time student. In this same letter to my fiancé, I wrote, "It will take at least half-time to take care of you." This was said without malice or resentment. It was what I expected of myself. The concept that we might share equally in educational opportunities and in taking care of each other never occurred to either of us. Instead, I edited, typed, helped organize his papers, occasionally went with him to classes to take his notes, or to the library to assist him in research. He was proud of all that I did, giving me praise—apparently I enjoyed and needed this approval. It kept me doing the second-class work throughout our marriage. I don't ever remember wondering why I wasn't going to classes and writing papers for myself. No one else asked why either.

Why should a man question what this role does to a woman? His ego and his work benefit greatly from this system. I was quite content with my role. I seemed to go to any length to get praise and approval. It was making a gourmet casserole, or the most original hors d'oeuvre, or running an efficient and tasteful house—that kept me going. Not that there is anything inherently wrong with any of those achievements. But what was happening to my *brain*? Except for the times that I was helping him think through the data for his books, or the decisions he had to make, or how to teach his class, I was not developing my own ability to think. I was hiding behind his ideas. He was using my thoughts in his work (without giving me credit).

I seldom said, "This is my opinion," or "Those are the dilemmas in the world as I view them." My identity as a thinking person, capable of sifting information, analyzing, and coming to conclusions, was given over to him. I believe I was acting out what was expected of me by my family, my husband, and society, without questioning any of it.

And yet, what a contrast to the person I had started to become before my marriage. In college I was quite a strong, independent-thinking young woman. At a woman's college I was turned on by new ideas, by testing my own intelligence. Delving into philosophy, religion, and literature, I ques-

tioned my own beliefs, or lack of them, searching for my place in the universe. (In a coed high school I had known well the need to act less intelligent than I was in order to be attractive to the boys.) Now I thrived on the personal attention of the professors—women and men—who wanted to hear about my philosophical struggles. I was valued for my ability to think and enjoyed the intellectual sparring with adults; and, since there were no men in the classes, I did not hold myself back intellectually. When I married, apparently I took off my thinking cap.

One part of the marriage myth that did not disappoint me was motherhood. I truly enjoyed being a mother and put a lot of my creative energy and intelligence into being with my children. I treasured being with my daughters while they were young. I experienced them as important persons from the day they responded to my love with a smile—and that was the day they were born! (No doctor will ever convince me those smiles were due to “gas bubbles.”)

Playing with my children was fun. For hours I'd sit on the floor building blocks, crayoning, watching, encouraging, and chatting while they discovered how to hammer down the peg or build a tower. Their discoveries were exciting to me.

When I pushed Janet in the stroller to the park, I was happy to be alone with her. Some mothers sat together on a bench more interested in each other than their kids—which puzzled me.

When the girls were older, I created Sunday art-time where materials and possible projects with paint, collage, and clay were available to all of us at the kitchen table. As a family we enjoyed our playtimes together.

However, I resented having to be the sole disciplinarian of the family, and this was the one issue in our marriage that I assertively fought about. As bedtime approached, father and daughters would be happily engaged in story telling. Fine! Except that usually there was no ending to it unless I put my foot down. It was like having a fourth child—since I had to convince him to close the books or end the tale, as well. My request for shared responsibility for the disciplining was not heard. In the various parent groups I have run, this is one of the biggest complaints on the part of mothers: not being able to get fathers to share in the necessary task of setting appropriate limits for the children and consistently following them through. My husband preferred the role of playmate to the kids when they were young, rather than accept his share of the disciplining. I felt like the ogre.

If I were to relive my married life, I would still choose to spend most of my time, for those twelve to fifteen years, being a mother. It is one of the most enjoyable careers I can imagine. But I would also have a different attitude about my rights to time off and sharing of household responsibilities. I would not feel guilty when I took time for myself to read, write, study, or be with others.

By a subtle process which many women will recognize, I began to lose my identity in the marriage. His friends and colleagues became my friends. His career became my motivation. I protected and promoted his time and space to work. The telephone rang constantly—for him. Our system was that I would answer it, screen the call as to its immediate importance, and interrupt his writing or thinking only if absolutely necessary. I was a competent receptionist—but who protected any time for me?

Those were the days I would be introduced as Mrs. ———. The first question asked me was, "What does your husband do?" And I'd be discussing his involvements for hours. It occurred to me one week when he was out of town that I didn't really know who I was when he was gone. My identity was defined by his presence. Who was I and what did I believe in when he was away?

He was torn about leaving me to go on this speaking tour. Having him gone for a week is a totally new experience. Is it possible that except for my three trips to the hospital to give birth, we have not been apart one night in eight years? I think it is true. I have such mixed feelings—I'm glad to have a few evenings to myself after the kids are in bed, and yet I don't feel I am all here. Part of me walked out the door and got in that taxi.

Having S. here alone for supper was a nice experience. She didn't seem to think anything was strange, but as we sat eating leftover pot roast (the kids had eaten) and talking about life—her thoughts and mine—I realized I didn't *have* many thoughts of my own. Or do I? I'm just not used to saying them. I'm not sure my opinions or knowledge have validity any more. I feel I depend on my husband's interpretation or answers for everything (outside of the house and children). S. seemed interested in my opinions—she certainly has hers!

This gives me some new insights. I need to do something about me. If I don't talk about him and his work, or my kids and their life, what *do* I talk about? More importantly, what do I think about if I'm not thinking of them?

Once I recognized how symbiotic we were, it became important to me to re-establish my own areas of interest. I decided to go back to school in the field of psychology. The encouragement of Abe Maslow helped me gain courage to become a student. (I already felt I was too old and stale to compete at age thirty.) I had also gained support from my father over the years to publish my psychological writing ("Play Therapy at Home," 1957: *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*, Winter).<sup>\*</sup> Today, as I counsel women, I often hear their sense of isolation and lack of self-worth as they toy with the idea of further education. I know how important supportive individuals can be at that time.

I had adopted the notion that a man's work is always more important than a woman's. Therefore, when I started graduate school, I took one course a semester, feeling somewhat guilty as I rushed off to school while my husband babysat. He made me feel this was something he was "giving" me, for which I should be grateful. It didn't occur to me (or to him) that I was entitled to further education. Neither of us imagined that my work was important as work, or that my ideas might contribute just as much to the world as his.

The ultimate in thinking "His work is more important than mine" was captured in a rather humorous event. I was nine months' pregnant and close to delivery. My husband, on leaving for work, reminded me what a very important day this was in his career. "Don't have the baby today," he said. A fetus doesn't seem to have the same accommodating personality as a wife, so I did have the baby that day. When I called to let him know his important day was going to be interrupted by me and our child, I apologized rather than acknowledged that my work of the day was *more* important than his.

<sup>\*</sup>Also published in Clark Moustakas' book, *Psychotherapy with Children, The Living Relationship*. It appears in the chapter, "Parents as Therapists."

When I look at our photo album I see pictures of a loving honeymoon in Europe with our tiny English car, hikes and picnics with the kids, birthday celebrations and travels. There is warmth in our faces, radiance and laughter in the children. Together. As many hours of as many days as possible, together. We shared our lives focusing on the world and the children. Bedtime stories, Saturday walks, family art projects on Sundays. Together we built a nest, a house out of which each of us could fly, only to return to its safety and warmth.

My wings seem to be broken or is it a cage I am in? Each time I go out for a test flight and come back, I awake the next day, my wings hurting. Am I so afraid to fly? Or is the male bird in this nest putting holes in my wings when I'm not aware of it? He says, "Go, I am proud to see you fly!" Yet the nest feels cold when I return. I ache.

Is he aware that every time I test out an idea or opinion at the dinner table he either puts it down, pushes it aside, or talks on endlessly until I am lost in the fog? I lose my sense of self.

Or does he realize that when I come home after class or writing my thesis that there is hostility in the air? Or pouting?

. . . and a year later:

What is wrong with me? Every day I drive to pick up Janet at the end of the MTA line as she comes home from high school. And every day I get on the highway and miss the exit! It seems dangerous that I can't keep my mind on the road. Then I turn around to go back to the exit and discover I've passed it again! Where was my mind? Why do I think of death all the time? Why? When I love my kids, I have a nice home, I have a husband who loves me (we never argue), I have security. Why am I in this awful funk?

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### Who Am I?

To the outside world the image of our marriage was of two handsome people doing exciting things. Inside, I was lonely and unhappy, and blamed it totally on myself. I would look at the trees silhouetted against the orange sky of the setting sun and say to myself, "I know that is an exquisite scene and in years past I would *feel* it. Now I am dead inside."

Women, I find, tend to blame the failure of marriage on themselves. As the carriers of the emotional condition of a relationship, they feel they are to blame if something goes wrong.

It is apparent to me now that I was unaware of my needs and feelings and had little ability to express my resentments or demand rights for myself.

Today, I can also see that part of my depression was caused by society's role expectation—my feelings of inadequacy were built into the system. This system we have created produces second-class citizenship for women and causes much pain.

My emotional pain found vent in constant fantasies of flight, of packing my bags and leaving without saying good-bye to anyone since I couldn't understand—to say nothing of trying to explain to the children I loved—why I felt I had to go. My other fantasy was the peace of total oblivion or nonexistence.

This eventually worked its way into many specific fantasies of death, with all the attached guilt feelings for even thinking of leaving the people who loved me.

It was a bright sunny New England Sunday, but I could *feel* nothing. My husband and children were home. Life seemed normal, whatever that meant. There were no fights or hassles. Inside I was so empty and numb. I remember telling my husband and children that I was going to take the car for the day—to be alone. (An unusual event for me.) Without knowing where I was going or why, I started driving. I remember stopping as I went on a country road, not to do anything, just to turn around. Back to what? Away from what? I was confused, groggy, didn't know. I saw a Turnpike sign and followed it. Started West with no destination, no inkling if I would return. Tears rolled down my face as I was driving. It was as though the dam broke loose—I could barely see—yet there was no pain. My foot got heavy on the accelerator. I pushed it to ninety. "My God, why doesn't a cop stop me?" I thought. Part of me was hoping that someone would see me speeding and report me. Another part of me wanted to hit the railing on the next curve. Three hours went by without stopping—the tears kept flowing. As my foot got tired from pressing the accelerator, I exited on to a country road. I came to a halt in front of a pond with a marshy bottom and cat-tails. I sat for how long? An hour or two wondering if I could drive me and the car into the pond to an end. Wondering what was wrong with me, feeling blank.

As I began to experience my mortality, my choice—to end my life or to live—I finally felt the pain. I sobbed and sobbed. This time with feeling. Feeling of potential loss of my children and their potential loss of me. Love and guilt. Who would help me understand me? Who would care? Who would see beyond the reserved, collected, smooth exterior? Who would see beyond the pretty face and graceful body? My loneliness was profound. I felt alienated from myself, from the ones I loved, and the world. I felt completely vulnerable. If anyone ever knew what I had just been through, would they forgive me? Would I forgive myself? As I sat in the car staring at the muck of the pond which mirrored my internal state, I looked at my own death, and took the first step back to myself.

Finding some paper to scribble on, I wrote a note to a psychiatrist colleague: "Would you help me? I think I'm destroying our marriage." (Notice where I put the blame.)

When I returned home, I found my husband and daughters having a quiet, creative Sunday with art materials—something I had always initiated for the family. It was eerie to see them carry on with my project, as though I were already dead—as though at some level they knew what had happened to me that day. I said to myself, "Yes, they could go on without me. My husband would take on those duties and characteristics which are mine, and life would continue in my absence." It was sobering. Rather than have them ask me questions about my day, I went to a movie. By morning, life had returned to normal; or so we pretended.

That timid note to the psychiatrist was a muted scream. If I had told the truth, I would have said, "I feel like I am being swallowed up alive,—there is nothing left of me and I would just as soon disappear into the mist as to be devoured by this relationship."

It was a big step for me to say, "I'm hurting—I need help." I knew people needed me, but I didn't know that I needed people. With help, I began to work my way out of the bottom of the well by finding my own strengths and

voicing some of my needs. What I needed was room to change, and support in my experiments and learnings. I needed to be myself instead of all those things *expected of me*. Eventually, I went to a five-day workshop without my husband or children. My mother encouraged me in taking this step. She thought it would be an enriching experience for me, and offered to take care of my children and husband in my absence. It was the first time I had been on my own since my marriage thirteen years earlier. I was amazed when people responded to me as a warm, intelligent, caring human being with my own identity. People were relating to *me*—not as wife, not as mother, but just plain me. It was like coming out from under the deep shade of a tree where others could only vaguely see me, into the bright sunlight, where I stood in full view. Both the warmth and the exposure seemed risky and exhilarating.

I think the process by which a woman loses her identity in marriage is well expressed in an article by a *man*, Joel Roache, in *Ms.* magazine. He took care of the home while his wife had a turn at her career. He describes very clearly his initial joy in doing the job well. However as time went on, the demands of the job left no time for himself, and his transformation from a self-assured individual to an angry, unsympathetic second-class citizen was complete. He says, "I was getting my sense of fulfillment, of self-esteem, through *her*, while she was getting it through her work. I was a full-fledged house-husband."

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### Marriage in Crisis

During the next few years, our marriage was in "an identity crisis" as Margaret Mead defines it: "For years the wife, always alert and attentive to the immediate needs of her family for food and comfort, clothes and transportation, play and rest, seldom has a thought of herself alone. Then one day she begins to look more carefully at . . . what it means to become a person with goals of one's own, as distinguished from a total commitment to homemaking. But such a crisis is not—or need not become—a catastrophe. It is also a signal that the partners are ready, if they can but find their way, for a new stage of living together. They are ready, if each is willing for the other to grow as a person, to broaden and deepen what they have to share."

We tried, during this period, to understand what each other's needs were. We had long talks and went to our first marriage counselor. Unfortunately, she listened to my verbal husband delve into his childhood years while I sat in mute pain as the scenario of our relationship was re-enacted in her presence, without her recognizing my silent agony. Today, when I counsel couples, I am acutely aware of "equal time for each" and of the poignant non-verbal messages being sent. There I was, in the counselor's office, listening, as usual, while the talk went on.

I made efforts to establish my new feelings of selfhood within the marriage relationship. I was certainly gaining a sense of myself outside of the relationship. But the ways my husband maintained control and created dependence were numerous. As I started to earn a couple of thousand dollars a year, I was excited by my new sense of self-worth; and I "asked" my husband if I

might put the money in an account of my own to spend on special gifts from me to our family, such as family vacations. He said "No." In this instance, I am not sure whether my husband was blind to my need to feel good about my small earning power, or whether he wanted to maintain control of the family purse. Now I wonder, why did I *give away my power* by "asking"? I could have told him what I planned to do with the money. By training and role expectation, women frequently hand the power to men without realizing it.

At one point, I said I wanted to buy my own car—that is, to shop, evaluate, bargain, and make a decision. Distasteful though it was, I took it for a challenge. Somehow, at the last minute, my spouse went out and made the final choice, negotiated the final deal, and proudly brought the car home to me. This took away my sense of power and exemplified his inability to understand my need to relearn the self-sufficiency I had when I was twenty.

We tried getting help with another family therapist. This time I made various attempts at getting myself heard. When I interrupted, I was told "You are not polite, you're intrusive, you are not listening!" When I shouted that I had to speak, I was told, "You are angry."

It was fortunate for me these sessions were tape-recorded. I could document for myself that he used three quarters of each hour. Instead of feeling crazy, I felt validated.

My feelings of being trapped and cornered led me to rage and tears. While thus being gagged, I was simultaneously told that I was beautiful, talented, sensual, and that he loved and wanted me. By putting me on such a pedestal, he was keeping me in my place (another familiar place for many women).

I finally realized what should have been apparent years before: my husband liked the marriage relationship when I was living my life through and for him. He couldn't hear what a real toll this situation had taken on me. I was told I was selfish for wanting more for myself. How many women have heard they are selfish when they don't give of themselves 100% of the time? I was being driven crazy by a double message: his *words* were "develop your own interests, your own selfhood." Yet his *actions* and nonverbal communications were punishing me for being interested in my own life and effective at what I was doing.

Wanting more for myself was extremely threatening to my husband and our marriage system, which in turn made him more controlling and intimidating. The end of our marriage occurred when I found my anger at his trying to keep me in the one-down position. It was incredible to discover, within myself and within him, that what was once a deep and sensitive love and caring could turn to such distrust, contempt, and hate. I had never experienced rage before. I was shocked—since I am a mild-tempered, trusting person—to find I can be provoked to distrust and violent anger. A lot of my hostile feelings toward this particular man were provoked by the ways he dealt with me. Some of my angry feelings were aimed at society for creating such an unequal world.

My anger gave me the energy—a life-saving force, I'd say—to pull out of the relationship. Our divorce, in my opinion, was a product of our inability or unwillingness to work ourselves out of an unequal situation. The person who has a "good deal" in any system is going to be reluctant to change. I chose the only road to psychic survival.

Some marriages make it through the identity crises. Some do not. In my present counseling practice, I am keenly sensitive to women and men who are growing to new selfhood, and how this shakes up established patterns in a relationship.

### Suggestions for Discussion

1. How does the sailing episode relate to the author's feeling that she was being well trained for her role as a woman?
2. What message did Rogers receive regarding the proper role of wife and mother?
3. What was the nature of the author's collusion with her husband? How did it affect her sense of self?
4. How do the diary entries reinforce the author's point of view?
5. Discuss some of the ironies in Rogers's description of her life with her husband.
6. What insights did the author gain from the therapy and the workshop?
7. What events precipitated the "identity crisis" in Rogers's marriage and ultimately led to her divorce?

### Suggestions for Writing

1. Select one of the questions the author asks herself and reflect on it with references to your experience.
2. Discuss your attitude toward the italicized statements that Rogers was being subtly trained to believe.
3. Discuss double messages that you have received from your family or from society at large.

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## Carolyn Heilbrun

### *Androgyny*

Carolyn Heilbrun (b. 1926) was professor of English literature at Columbia University. She has written *Toward a Recognition of Androgyny* (1973), from which the following selection is taken; *Writing a Woman's Life* (1988); and *Hamlet's Mother and Other Women* (1990), as well as a number of articles and reviews; a history of the Garnetts (a literary family); and a study of Christopher Isherwood. Under the name Amanda Cross, she has written a number of mystery novels. *Androgyny* defines a condition in which there are no assigned roles for men and women, but rather a full range of experience is open to both sexes.

responded to one who inquired about her tiredness with ungrammatical profundity: "My feets is tired, but my soul is rested." They will be young high school and college students, young ministers of the gospel and a host of the elders, courageously and nonviolently sitting in at lunch counters and willingly going to jail for conscience sake. One day the South will know that when these disinherited children of God sat down at lunch counters they were in reality standing up for the best in the American dream and the most sacred values in our Judeo-Christian heritage, and thus carrying our whole nation back to great wells of democracy which were dug deep by the founding fathers in the formulation of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence.

Never before have I written a letter this long (or should I say a book?). I'm afraid that it is much too long to take your precious time. I can assure you that it would have been much shorter if I had been writing from a comfortable desk, but what else is there to do when you are alone for days in the dull monotony of a narrow jail cell other than write long letters, think strange thoughts, and pray long prayers?

If I have said anything in this letter that is an overstatement of the truth and is indicative of an unreasonable impatience, I beg you to forgive me. If I have said anything in this letter that is an understatement of the truth and is indicative of my having a patience that makes me patient with anything less than brotherhood, I beg God to forgive me.

I hope this letter finds you strong in the faith. I also hope that circumstances will soon make it possible for me to meet each of you, not as an integrationist or a civil rights leader, but as a fellow clergyman and a Christian brother. Let us all hope that the dark clouds of racial prejudice will soon pass away and the deep fog of misunderstanding will be lifted from our fear-drenched communities and in some not too distant tomorrow the radiant stars of love and brotherhood will shine over our great nation with all of their scintillating beauty.

Yours for the cause of  
Peace and Brotherhood

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

### Suggestions for Discussion

1. What is the rhetorical tone of King's letter? How does he achieve that tone? List and explain a half-dozen examples.
2. How does King deal with the eight clergymen's accusation that the demonstrators are "outsiders"?
3. In the letter King refers to a number of enemies of integration; for example, Eugene "Bull" Connor, Albert Bantwell, Ross R. Barnett, George C. Wallace, and Laurie Pritchett. Identify these people and explain their role in the fight against integration.
4. How does King answer the charge that his actions, though peaceful, are dangerous because they lead to violence?
5. What are King's objections to the white churches' response to the fight for integration? What are his objections to white moderates?

### Suggestions for Writing

1. Write an essay in which you comment on King's statement: "I submit that an individual who breaks a law that conscience tells him is unjust, and willingly accept

the penalty by staying in jail to arouse the conscience of the community over its injustice, is in reality expressing the very highest respect for the law."

2. Write a paper in which you explain King's use of the examples of Nazi Germany and Communist-controlled Hungary to defend his fight for civil rights.
3. Write a paper in which you agree or disagree with King's assessment of white moderates. Give explicit examples to support your position.
4. King calls his movement a viable alternative to black complacency, or acceptance of the status quo, and to the militant opposition of the black nationalists. Write a paper evaluating his assessment.
5. Write a paper in which you evaluate the civil rights movement of King's day in terms of the present. To what extent did his movement succeed? Fail?

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## William Faulkner

### Nobel Prize Award Speech

William Faulkner (1897–1962) lived most of his life in Oxford, Mississippi. After a year at the university of his native state, he joined the Royal Canadian Air Force, eager to participate in World War I. His novels set in his imaginary Yoknapatawpha County include *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), *Light in August* (1932), *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936), and *The Hamlet* (1940). In his speech accepting the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1949, he states his belief in the significance and dignity of humankind and the need for the writer to reassert the universal truths of "love and honor and pity and pride and compassion and sacrifice."

I feel that this award was not made to me as a man but to my work—a life's work in the agony and sweat of the human spirit, not for glory and least of all for profit, but to create out of the materials of the human spirit something which did not exist before. So this award is only mine in trust. It will not be difficult to find a dedication for the money part of it commensurate with the purpose and significance of its origin. But I would like to do the same with the acclaim too, by using this moment as a pinnacle from which I might be listened to by the young men and women already dedicated to the same anguish and travail, among whom is already that one who will some day stand here where I am standing.

Our tragedy today is a general and universal physical fear so long sustained by now that we can even bear it. There are no longer problems of the spirit. There is only the question: When will I be blown up? Because of this, the young man or woman writing today has forgotten the problems of the human heart in conflict with itself which alone can make good writing because only that is worth writing about, worth the agony and the sweat.

He must learn them again. He must teach himself that the basest of all things is to be afraid; and, teaching himself that, forget it forever, leaving no room in his workshop for anything but the old verities and truths of the heart, the old universal truths lacking which any story is ephemeral and doomed—love and honor and pity and pride and compassion and sacrifice. Until he does so, he labors under a curse. He writes not of love but of lust, of defeats in which nobody loses anything of value, of victories without hope and, worst of all, without pity or compassion. His griefs grieve on no universal bones, leaving no scars. He writes not of the heart but of the glands.

Until he relearns these things, he will write as though he stood alone and watched the end of man. I decline to accept the end of man. It is easy enough to say that man is immortal simply because he will endure; that when the last ding-dong of doom has clanged and faded from the last worthless rock hanging tideless in the last red and dying evening, that even then there will still be one more sound: that of his puny inexhaustible voice, still talking. I refuse to accept this. I believe that man will not merely endure: he will prevail. He is immortal, not because he alone among creatures has an inexhaustible voice but because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance. The poet's, the writer's, duty is to write about these things. It is his privilege to help man endure by lifting his heart, by reminding him of the courage and honor and hope and pride and compassion and pity and sacrifice which have been the glory of his past. The poet's voice need not merely be the record of man, it can be one of the props, the pillars to help him endure and prevail.

### Suggestions for Discussion

1. Do you agree with Faulkner's optimistic statement about man's ability to "endure and prevail"? Explain.
2. Do you think Faulkner's speech too brief for a major occasion such as the Nobel Prize Awards? Explain your answer.
3. Discuss whether or not man still lives in that state of general and universal physical fear to which Faulkner refers.

### Suggestions for Writing

1. Summarize your own opinions about man's ability to survive the challenges of the next hundred years.
2. Prepare a formal speech in which you accept an international prize for literature or some other accomplishment.

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# Harriet Jacobs

## The Women

Harriet Jacobs (1818–1896) describes the effects of Nat Turner's Rebellion in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861). The following selection, from *Black Slave Narratives*, pinpoints with simple clarity the moral dilemmas that face a young female slave caught between her owner's desires and his wife's jealousy.

I would ten thousand times rather that my children should be the half-starved paupers of Ireland than to be the most pampered among the slaves of America. I would rather drudge out my life on a cotton plantation, till the grave opened to give me rest, than to live with an unprincipled master and a jealous mistress. The felon's home in a penitentiary is preferable. He may repent, and turn from the error of his ways, and so find peace, but it is not so with a favorite slave. She is not allowed to have any pride of character. It is deemed a crime in her to wish to be virtuous.

Mrs. Flint possessed the key to her husband's character before I was born. She might have used this knowledge to counsel and to screen the young and the innocent among her slaves; but for them she had no sympathy. They were the objects of her constant suspicion and malevolence. She watched her husband with unceasing vigilance; but he was well practiced in means to evade it. What he could not find opportunity to say in words he manifested in signs. He invented more than were ever thought of in a deaf and dumb asylum. I let them pass, as if I did not understand what he meant; and many were the curses and threats bestowed on me for my stupidity. One day he caught me teaching myself to write. He frowned, as if he was not well pleased; but I suppose he came to the conclusion that such an accomplishment might help to advance his favorite scheme. Before long, notes were often slipped into my hand. I would return them, saying, "I can't read them, sir." "Can't you?" he replied; "then I must read them to you." He always finished the reading by asking, "Do you understand?" Sometimes he would complain of the heat of the tea room, and order his supper to be placed on a small table in the piazza. He would seat himself there with a well-satisfied smile, and tell me to stand by and brush away the flies. He would eat very slowly, pausing between the mouthfuls. These intervals were employed in describing the happiness I was so foolishly throwing away, and in threatening me with the penalty that finally awaited my stubborn disobedience. He boasted much of the forbearance he had exercised toward me, and reminded me that there was a limit to his patience. When I succeeded in avoiding opportunities for him to talk to me at home, I was ordered to come to his office, to do some errand. When there, I was obliged to stand and listen to such language as he saw fit to address to me. Sometimes I so openly expressed my contempt for him that he would become violently enraged, and I wondered why he did not strike me. Circumstanced as he was, he probably

what they had got out of it, and their answers showed that they had seen nothing but a fine, fair fight. When I laughed, they asked me what I, the D.S., had seen that was so much more profound.

I said that I had seen two highly trained, well-educated Masters of Arts and Doctors of Philosophy disagreeing upon every essential point of thought and knowledge. They had all there was of the sciences; and yet they could not find any knowledge upon which they could base an acceptable conclusion. They had no test of knowledge; they didn't know what is and what is not. And they have no test of right and wrong; they have no basis for even an ethics.

Well, and what of it? They asked me that, and that I did not answer. I was stunned by the discovery that it was philosophically true, in a most literal sense, that nothing is known; that it is precisely the foundation that is lacking for science; that all we call knowledge rested upon assumptions which the scientists did not all accept; and that, likewise, there is no scientific reason for saying, for example, that stealing is wrong. In brief: there was no scientific basis for an ethics. No wonder men said one thing and did another; no wonder they could settle nothing either in life or in the academies.

I could hardly believe this. Maybe these professors, whom I greatly respected, did not know it all. I read the books over again with a fresh eye, with a real interest, and I could see that, as in history, so in other branches of knowledge, everything was in the air. And I was glad of it. Rebel though I was, I had got the religion of scholarship and science; I was in awe of the authorities in the academic world. It was a release to feel my worship cool and pass. But I could not be sure. I must go elsewhere, see and hear other professors, men these California professors quoted and looked up to as their high priests. I decided to go as a student to Europe when I was through Berkeley, and I would start with the German universities.

My father listened to my plan, and he was disappointed. He had hoped I would succeed him in his business; it was for that that he was staying in it. When I said that, whatever I might do, I would never go into business, he said, rather sadly, that he would sell out his interest and retire. And he did soon after our talk. But he wanted me to stay home and, to keep me, offered to buy an interest in a certain San Francisco daily paper. He had evidently had this in mind for some time. I had always done some writing, verse at the poetical age of puberty, then a novel which my mother alone treasured. Journalism was the business for a boy who liked to write, he thought, and he said I had often spoken of a newspaper as my ambition. No doubt I had in the intervals between my campaigns as Napoleon. But no more. I was now going to be a scientist, a philosopher. He sighed; he thought it over, and with the approval of my mother, who was for every sort of education, he gave his consent.

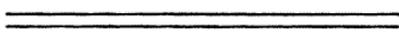
### Suggestions for Discussion

1. The first part of this reminiscence tells us about Steffens's carefree days as a student at Berkeley in the late nineteenth century. How does he describe student life? What was the main interest of most students at the university?
2. Why did Steffens fail to get ahead in athletics while achieving great success as a drillmaster? Why did military drill appeal to him?

3. What was Steffens's attitude toward money while he was a student? Why did he gamble? Explain how he learned to be a successful gambler. Explain why he gave up gambling.
4. Why was Steffens disappointed in his fraternity?
5. Explain the significance of the incident of the stealing of Dr. Bonte's chickens. Why is it included in this section?
6. What is the major difference between the first and second parts of the reminiscence?
7. How does Steffens get interested in the study of history? What determines his decision to continue his education in Germany?
8. Why were most of the students whom Steffens knew attending Berkeley? Does he respect their reasons? What does he think is the real reason for education?
9. How would you describe Steffens during his student days? Was he likeable? Explain your answer.

### Suggestions for Writing

1. Using Steffens as a model, write an essay in which you attempt to summarize most of your classmates' reasons for going to college. Try to develop a questionnaire in which you sample opinion so that you have information to summarize. Write an opinion of the reasons you discover.
2. College life differs greatly from one institution to another. Write an essay in which you compare college life at your own college or university with that of another. You may wish to ask someone much older than yourself how his or her college life differed from yours. You may wish to contrast your own experiences with those of Steffens.



## Malcolm X

### A Homemade Education

Malcolm X (1925–1965), who became a Muslim while serving a prison sentence, was an early minister of the Nation of Islam's mosque in New York. Before his assassination, he was a spiritual leader, writer, lecturer, and political activist who worked for worldwide African-American unity and equality. The following selection is taken from his powerful *Autobiography of Malcolm X* (1965).

It was because of my letters that I happened to stumble upon starting to acquire some kind of a homemade education.

I became increasingly frustrated at not being able to express what I wanted to convey in letters that I wrote, especially those to Mr. Elijah Mu-

hammad. In the street, I had been the most articulate hustler out there—I had commanded attention when I said something. But now, trying to write simple English, I not only wasn't articulate, I wasn't even functional. How would I sound writing in slang, the way I would say it, something such as, "Look, daddy, let me pull your coat about a cat, Elijah Muhammad—"

Many who today hear me somewhere in person, or on television, or those who read something I've said, will think I went to school far beyond the eighth grade. This impression is due entirely to my prison studies.

It had really begun back in the Charlestown Prison, when Bimbi first made me feel envy of his stock of knowledge. Bimbi had always taken charge of any conversations he was in, and I had tried to emulate him. But every book I picked up had few sentences which didn't contain anywhere from one to nearly all of the words that might as well have been in Chinese. When I just skipped those words, of course, I really ended up with little idea of what the book said. So I had come to the Norfolk Prison Colony still going through only book-reading motions. Pretty soon, I would have quit even these motions, unless I had received the motivation that I did.

I saw that the best thing I could do was get hold of a dictionary—to study, to learn some words. I was lucky enough to reason also that I should try to improve my penmanship. It was sad. I couldn't even write in a straight line. It was both ideas together that moved me to request a dictionary along with some tablets and pencils from the Norfolk Prison Colony school.

I spent two days just riffling uncertainly through the dictionary's pages. I'd never realized so many words existed! I didn't know *which* words I needed to learn. Finally, just to start some kind of action, I began copying.

In my slow, painstaking, ragged handwriting, I copied into my tablet everything printed on that first page, down to the punctuation marks.

I believe it took me a day. Then, aloud, I read back, to myself, everything I'd written on the tablet. Over and over, aloud, to myself, I read my own handwriting.

I woke up the next morning, thinking about those words—immensely proud to realize that not only had I written so much at one time, but I'd written words that I never knew were in the world. Moreover, with a little effort, I also could remember what many of these words meant. I reviewed the words whose meanings I didn't remember. Funny thing, from the dictionary first page right now, that "aardvark" springs to my mind. The dictionary had a picture of it, a long-tailed, long-eared, burrowing African mammal, which lives off termites caught by sticking out its tongue as an anteater does for ants.

I was so fascinated that I went on—I copied the dictionary's next page. And the same experience came when I studied that. With every succeeding page, I also learned of people and places and events from history. Actually the dictionary is like a miniature encyclopedia. Finally the dictionary's A section had filled a whole tablet—and I went on into the B's. That was the way I started copying what eventually became the entire dictionary. It went a lot faster after so much practice helped me to pick up handwriting speed. Between what I wrote in my tablet, and writing letters, during the rest of my time in prison I would guess I wrote a million words.

I suppose it was inevitable that as my word-base broadened, I could for the first time pick up a book and read and now begin to understand what the

book was saying. Anyone who has read a great deal can imagine the new world that opened. Let me tell you something: from then until I left that prison, in every free moment I had, if I was not reading in the library, I was reading on my bunk. You couldn't have gotten me out of books with a wedge. Between Mr. Muhammad's teachings, my correspondence, my visitors—usually Ella and Reginald—and my reading of books, months passed without my even thinking about being imprisoned. In fact, up to then, I never had been so truly free in my life.

The Norfolk Prison Colony's library was in the school building. A variety of classes was taught there by instructors who came from such places as Harvard and Boston universities. The weekly debates between inmate teams were also held in the school building. You would be astonished to know how worked up convict debaters and audiences would get over subjects like "Should Babies Be Fed Milk?"

Available on the prison library's shelves were books on just about every general subject. Much of the big private collection that Parkhurst had willed to the prison was still in crates and boxes in the back of the library—thousands of old books. Some of them looked ancient: covers faded; old-time parchment-looking binding. Parkhurst, I've mentioned, seemed to have been principally interested in history and religion. He had the money and the special interest to have a lot of books that you wouldn't have in general circulation. Any college library would have been lucky to get that collection.

As you can imagine, especially in a prison where there was heavy emphasis on rehabilitation, an inmate was smiled upon if he demonstrated an unusually intense interest in books. There was a sizable number of well-read inmates, especially the popular debaters. Some were said by many to be practically walking encyclopedias. They were almost celebrities. No university would ask any student to devour literature as I did when this new world opened to me, of being able to read and *understand*.

I read more in my room than in the library itself. An inmate who was known to read a lot could check out more than the permitted maximum number of books. I preferred reading in the total isolation of my own room.

When I had progressed to really serious reading, every night at about ten P.M. I would be outraged with the "lights out." It always seemed to catch me right in the middle of something engrossing.

Fortunately, right outside my door was a corridor light that cast a glow into my room. The glow was enough to read by, once my eyes adjusted to it. So when "lights out" came, I would sit on the floor where I could continue reading in that glow.

At one-hour intervals the night guards paced past every room. Each time I heard the approaching footsteps, I jumped into bed and feigned sleep. And as soon as the guard passed, I got back out of bed onto the floor area of that light-glow, where I would read for another fifty-eight minutes—until the guard approached again. That went on until three or four every morning. Three or four hours of sleep a night was enough for me. Often in the years in the streets I had slept less than that.

The teachings of Mr. Muhammad stressed how history had been "whitened"—when white men had written history books, the black man simply had been left out. Mr. Muhammad couldn't have said anything that would have struck me much harder. I had never forgotten how when my class, me

and all of those whites, had studied seventh-grade United States history back in Mason, the history of the Negro had been covered in one paragraph, and the teacher had gotten a big laugh with his joke, "Negroes' feet are so big that when they walk, they leave a hole in the ground."

This is one reason why Mr. Muhammad's teachings spread so swiftly all over the United States, among *all* Negroes, whether or not they became followers of Mr. Muhammad. The teachings ring true—to every Negro. You can hardly show me a black adult in America—or a white one, for that matter—who knows from the history books anything like the truth about the black man's role. In my own case, once I heard of the "glorious history of the black man," I took special pains to hunt in the library for books that would inform me on details about black history.

I can remember accurately the very first set of books that really impressed me. I have since bought that set of books and I have it at home for my children to read as they grow up. It's called *Wonders of the World*. It's full of pictures of archaeological finds, statues that depict, usually, non-European people.

I found books like Will Durant's *Story of Civilization*. I read H. G. Wells' *Outline of History*. *Souls of Black Folk* by W. E. B. Du Bois gave me a glimpse into the black people's history before they came to this country. Carter G. Woodson's *Negro History* opened my eyes about black empires before the black slave was brought to the United States, and the early Negro struggles for freedom.

J. A. Rogers' three volumes of *Sex and Race* told about race-mixing before Christ's time; about Aesop being a black man who told fables; about Egypt's Pharaohs; about the great Coptic Christian Empires; about Ethiopia, the earth's oldest continuous black civilization, as China is the oldest continuous civilization.

Mr. Muhammad's teaching about how the white man had been created led me to *Findings in Genetics* by Gregor Mendel. (The dictionary's G section was where I had learned what "genetics" meant.) I really studied this book by the Austrian monk. Reading it over and over, especially certain sections, helped me to understand that if you started with a black man, a white man could be produced; but starting with a white man, you never could produce a black man—because the white chromosome is recessive. And since no one disputes that there was but one Original Man, the conclusion is clear.

During the last year or so, in the *New York Times*, Arnold Toynbee used the word "bleached" in describing the white man. (His words were: "White [i.e., bleached] human beings of North European origin. . . .") Toynbee also referred to the European geographic area as only a peninsula of Asia. He said there is no such thing as Europe. And if you look at the globe, you will see for yourself that America is only an extension of Asia. (But at the same time Toynbee is among those who have helped to bleach history. He won't write that again. Every day now, the truth is coming to light.)

I never will forget how shocked I was when I began reading about slavery's total horror. It made such an impact upon me that it later became one of my favorite subjects when I became a minister of Mr. Muhammad's. The world's most monstrous crime, the sin and the blood on the white man's hands, are almost impossible to believe. Books like the one by Frederick Olmstead opened my eyes to the horrors suffered when the slave was landed

in the United States. The European woman, Fannie Kimball, who had married a Southern white slaveowner, described how human beings were degraded. Of course I read *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In fact, I believe that's the only novel I have ever read since I started serious reading.

Parkhurst's collection also contained some bound pamphlets of the Abolitionist Anti-Slavery Society of New England. I read descriptions of atrocities, saw those illustrations of black slave women tied up and flogged with whips; of black mothers watching their babies being dragged off, never to be seen by their mothers again; of dogs after slaves, and of the fugitive slave catchers, evil white men with whips and clubs and chains and guns. I read about the slave preacher Nat Turner, who put the fear of God into the white slavemaster. Nat Turner wasn't going around preaching pie-in-the-sky and "nonviolent" freedom for the black man. There in Virginia one night in 1831, Nat and seven other slaves started out at his master's home and through the night they went from one plantation "big house" to the next, killing, until by the next morning 57 white people were dead and Nat had about 70 slaves following him. White people, terrified for their lives, fled from their homes, locked themselves up in public buildings, hid in the woods, and some even left the state. A small army of soldiers took two months to catch and hang Nat Turner. Somewhere I have read where Nat Turner's example is said to have inspired John Brown to invade Virginia and attack Harper's Ferry nearly thirty years later, with thirteen white men and five Negroes.

I read Herodotus, "the father of History," or, rather, I read about him. And I read the histories of various nations, which opened my eyes gradually, then wider and wider, to how the whole world's white men had indeed acted like devils, pillaging and raping and bleeding and draining the whole world's non-white people. I remember, for instance, books such as Will Durant's *The Story of Oriental Civilization*, and Mahatma Gandhi's accounts of the struggle to drive the British out of India.

Book after book showed me how the white man had brought upon the world's black, brown, red, and yellow peoples every variety of the sufferings of exploitation. I saw how since the sixteenth century, the so-called "Christian trader" white man began to ply the seas in his lust for Asian and African empires, and plunder, and power. I read, I saw, how the white man never has gone among the non-white peoples bearing the Cross in the true manner and spirit of Christ's teachings—meek, humble, and Christlike.

I perceived, as I read, how the collective white man had been actually nothing but a piratical opportunist who used Faustian machinations to make his own Christianity his initial wedge in criminal conquests. First, always "religiously," he branded "heathen" and "pagan" labels upon ancient non-white cultures and civilizations. The stage thus set, he then turned upon his non-white victims his weapons of war.

I read how, entering India—half a *billion* deeply religious brown people—the British white man, by 1759, through promises, trickery and manipulations, controlled much of India through Great Britain's East India Company. The parasitical British administration kept tentacles out to half of the subcontinent. In 1857, some of the desperate people of India finally mutinied—and, excepting the African slave trade, nowhere has history recorded any more unnecessary bestial and ruthless human carnage than the British suppression of the non-white Indian people.

Over 115 million African blacks—close to the 1930s population of the United States—were murdered or enslaved during the slave trade. And I read how when the slave market was glutted, the cannibalistic white powers of Europe next carved up, as their colonies, the richest areas of the black continent. And Europe's chancelleries for the next century played a chess game of naked exploitation and power from Cape Horn to Cairo.

Ten guards and the warden couldn't have torn me out of those books. Not even Elijah Muhammad could have been more eloquent than those books were in providing indisputable proof that the collective white man had acted like a devil in virtually every contact he had with the world's collective non-white man. I listen today to the radio, and watch television, and read the headlines about the collective white man's fear and tension concerning China. When the white man professes ignorance about why the Chinese hate him so, my mind can't help flashing back to what I read, there in prison, about how the blood forebears of this same white man raped China at a time when China was trusting and helpless. Those original white "Christian traders" sent into China millions of pounds of opium. By 1839, so many of the Chinese were addicts that China's desperate government destroyed twenty thousand chests of opium. The first Opium War was promptly declared by the white man. Imagine! Declaring *war* upon someone who objects to being narcotized! The Chinese were severely beaten, with Chinese-invented gunpowder.

The Treaty of Nanking made China pay the British white man for the destroyed opium: forced open China's major ports to British trade; forced China to abandon Hong Kong; fixed China's import tariffs so low that cheap British articles soon flooded in, maiming China's industrial development.

After a second Opium War, the Tientsin Treaties legalized the ravaging opium trade, legalized a British-French-American control of China's customs. China tried delaying that Treaty's ratification; Peking was looted and burned.

"Kill the foreign white devils!" was the 1901 Chinese war cry in the Boxer Rebellion. Losing again, this time the Chinese were driven from Peking's choicest areas. The vicious, arrogant white man put up the famous signs, "Chinese and dogs not allowed."

Red China after World War II closed its doors to the Western white world. Massive Chinese agricultural, scientific, and industrial efforts are described in a book that *Life* magazine recently published. Some observers inside Red China have reported that the world never has known such a hate-white campaign as is now going on in this non-white country where, present birthrates continuing, in fifty more years Chinese will be half the earth's population. And it seems that some Chinese chickens will soon come home to roost, with China's recent successful nuclear tests.

Let us face reality. We can see in the United Nations a new world order being shaped, along color lines—an alliance among the non-white nations. America's U.N. Ambassador Adlai Stevenson complained not long ago that in the United Nations "a skin game" was being played. He was right. He was facing reality. A "skin game" is being played. But Ambassador Stevenson sounded like Jesse James accusing the marshal of carrying a gun. Because who in the world's history ever has played a worse "skin game" than the white man?

Mr. Muhammad, to whom I was writing daily, had no idea of what a new world had opened up to me through my efforts to document his teachings in books.

When I discovered philosophy, I tried to touch all the landmarks of philosophical development. Gradually, I read most of the old philosophers, Occidental and Oriental. The Oriental philosophers were the ones I came to prefer; finally, my impression was that most Occidental philosophy had largely been borrowed from the Oriental thinkers. Socrates, for instance, traveled in Egypt. Some sources even say that Socrates was initiated into some of the Egyptian mysteries. Obviously Socrates got some of his wisdom among the East's wise men.

I have often reflected upon the new vistas that reading opened to me. I knew right there in prison that reading had changed forever the course of my life. As I see it today, the ability to read awoke inside me some long dormant craving to be mentally alive. I certainly wasn't seeking any degree, the way a college confers a status symbol upon its students. My homemade education gave me, with every additional book that I read, a little bit more sensitivity to the deafness, dumbness, and blindness that was afflicting the black race in America. Not long ago, an English writer telephoned me from London, asking questions. One was, "What's your alma mater?" I told him, "Books." You will never catch me with a free fifteen minutes in which I'm not studying something I feel might be able to help the black man.

Yesterday I spoke in London, and both ways on the plane across the Atlantic I was studying a document about how the United Nations proposes to insure the human rights of the oppressed minorities of the world. The American black man is the world's most shameful case of minority oppression. What makes the black man think of himself as only an internal United States issue is just a catch-phrase, two words, "civil rights." How is the black man going to get "civil rights" before first he wins his *human* rights? If the American black man will start thinking about his *human* rights, and then start thinking of himself as part of one of the world's great peoples, he will see he has a case for the United Nations.

I can't think of a better case! Four hundred years of black blood and sweat invested here in America, and the white man still has the black man begging for what every immigrant fresh off the ship can take for granted the minute he walks down the gangplank.

But I'm digressing. I told the Englishman that my alma mater was books, a good library. Every time I catch a plane, I have with me a book that I want to read—and that's a lot of books these days. If I weren't out here every day battling the white man, I could spend the rest of my life reading, just satisfying my curiosity—because you can hardly mention anything I'm not curious about. I don't think anybody ever got more out of going to prison than I did. In fact, prison enabled me to study far more intensively than I would have if my life had gone differently and I had attended some college. I imagine that one of the biggest troubles with colleges is there are too many distractions, too much panty-raiding, fraternities, and boola-boola and all of that. Where else but in a prison could I have attacked my ignorance by being able to study intensely sometimes as much as fifteen hours a day?

### Suggestions for Discussion

1. Discuss the significance of the title "A Homemade Education."
2. Explain how Malcolm X used his dictionary to improve his education.

3. Discuss his observation that "the ability to read awoke inside me some long dormant craving to be mentally alive."
4. Comment on his assertion that his "alma mater was books."
5. What details help make clear his passion for learning?

### Suggestions for Writing

1. Compare and contrast "A Homemade Education" with another section of Malcolm X's *Autobiography*.
2. Write about one or more books that have played an important role in shaping your thinking, attitudes, and behavior.

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## Maya Angelou

### Graduation

Maya Angelou (b. 1928) was born in Stamps, Arkansas, to a childhood of poverty and pain. She has been a dancer and an actress, a coordinator of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, a television writer and producer, and a poet. She is best known for her autobiographical works, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1970), from which "Graduation" is taken, and *The Heart of a Woman* (1981). Her poem, "On the Pulse of Morning," delivered at the inauguration of President Bill Clinton, was published in 1992. In "Graduation" Angelou captures the pain of racial discrimination, but reaffirms the power of the black community to survive.

The children in Stamps trembled visibly with anticipation. Some adults were excited too, but to be certain the whole young population had come down with graduation epidemic. Large classes were graduating from both the grammar school and the high school. Even those who were years removed from their own day of glorious release were anxious to help with preparations as a kind of dry run. The junior students who were moving into the vacating classes' chairs were tradition-bound to show their talents for leadership and management. They strutted through the school and around the campus exerting pressure on the lower grades. Their authority was so new that occasionally if they pressed a little too hard it had to be overlooked. After all, next term was coming, and it never hurt a sixth-grader to have a play sister in the eighth grade, or a tenth-year student to be able to call a twelfth-grader Bubba. So all was endured in a spirit of shared understanding. But the graduating classes themselves were the nobility. Like travelers with exotic destinations on their minds, the graduates were remarkably forgetful. They came to school without their books, or tablets or even pencils. Volunteers fell over

themselves to secure replacements for the missing equipment. When accepted, the willing workers might or might not be thanked, and it was of no importance to the pregraduation rites. Even teachers were respectful of the now quiet and aging seniors, and tended to speak to them, if not as equals, as beings only slightly lower than themselves. After tests were returned and grades given, the student body, which acted like an extended family, knew who did well, who excelled, and what piteous ones had failed.

Unlike the white high school, Lafayette County Training School distinguished itself by having neither lawn, nor hedges, nor tennis court, nor climbing ivy. Its two buildings (main classrooms, the grade school and home economics) were set on a dirt hill with no fence to limit either its boundaries or those of bordering farms. There was a large expanse to the left of the school which was used alternately as a baseball diamond or a basketball court. Rusty hoops on the swaying poles represented the permanent recreational equipment, although bats and balls could be borrowed from the P.E. teacher if the borrower was qualified and if the diamond wasn't occupied.

Over this rocky area relieved by a few shady tall persimmon trees the graduating class walked. The girls often held hands and no longer bothered to speak to the lower students. There was a sadness about them, as if this old world was not their home and they were bound for higher ground. The boys, on the other hand, had become more friendly, more outgoing. A decided change from the closed attitude they projected while studying for finals. Now they seemed not ready to give up the old school, the familiar paths and classrooms. Only a small percentage would be continuing on to college—one of the South's A & M (agricultural and mechanical) schools, which trained Negro youths to be carpenters, farmers, handymen, masons, maids, cooks and baby nurses. Their future rode heavily on their shoulders, and blinded them to the collective joy that had pervaded the lives of the boys and girls in the grammar school graduating class.

Parents who could afford it had ordered new shoes and ready-made clothes for themselves from Sears, Roebuck or Montgomery Ward. They also engaged the best seamstresses to make the floating graduating dresses and to cut down secondhand pants which would be pressed to a military slickness for the important event.

Oh, it was important, all right. Whitefolks would attend the ceremony, and two or three would speak of God and home, and the Southern way of life, and Mrs. Parsons, the principal's wife, would play the graduation march while the lower-grade graduates paraded down the aisles and took their seats below the platform. The high school seniors would wait in empty classrooms to make their dramatic entrance.

In the Store I was the person of the moment. The birthday girl. The center. Bailey had graduated the year before, although to do so he had had to forfeit all pleasures to make up for his time lost in Baton Rouge.

My class was wearing butter-yellow piqué dresses, and Momma launched out on mine. She smocked the yoke into tiny crisscrossing puckers, then shirred the rest of the bodice. Her dark fingers ducked in and out of the lemony cloth as she embroidered raised daisies around the hem. Before she considered herself finished she had added a crocheted cuff on the puff sleeves, and a pointy crocheted collar.

## Suggestions for Writing

1. Use an example from your own experience to show that you may not understand until later what or how much you have learned from the experience.
2. Describe an encounter with a colorful, interesting person.

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## Margo Kaufman

### Who's Educated? Who Knows?

Margo Kaufman, the New York journalist, explores what it means to be an educated person in the 1990s.

What is an educated person? Someone who watches public television voluntarily and cites *The Atlantic* magazine and *Harper's* instead of *People* and *Us*? Is it someone who breaks into Tennyson at odd moments or programs a computer in machine language?

Confucius believed that the educated person knows "the ordinances of Heaven," "the rules of propriety" and the "force of words." But some people envision a walking course catalogue. Dr. H. Keith H. Brodie, president of Duke University, suggested that the all-knowing should know "something of history and literature; of the rules and laws of the universe; of human laws, government and behavior, and something of art—how to understand and respect the play of imagination, and how to be enriched and kept whole by it."

Of course, while such a smartypants would do very well on a game show like "Jeopardy," he or she might be judged lacking by someone with different priorities—which is just about everyone, since in high-minded circles nobody agrees on what educated people should know.

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### This Is Serious!

There does seem to be consensus that this is no laughing matter; even the most amusing turn solemn if not downright ponderous when the subject is broached. Take Bertice Berry, a former university professor who is now a stand-up comic. "I'd have to include curriculums from a diverse group of people, whether they won the battle or not," Ms. Berry said. "Works of women, Native Americans, Hispanics and African-Americans. And they'd probably take precedence over the dead white men."

At least the well-schooled dead white men. "An educated person is often an idiot," said the comedian Jackie Mason. "Having a lot of information doesn't mean you know how to deal with the reality of making intelligent adjustments in terms of real life and society. An educated person should be

the kind of person who understands how to deal with people, with his job and with his family." Not surprisingly, Mr. Mason says that by his standards he is "one of the most educated people who ever lived." But then, people often define education in self-flattering terms.

"It's someone who always wants to learn more," said the Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Wendy Wasserstein. "Someone who questions. Someone who thinks he doesn't know anything yet." Does she consider herself educated? "I still need to learn more, too," Ms. Wasserstein said.

Marjorie David, a Los Angeles writer-producer who says she was overeducated at Harvard and Columbia, suggested this definition: "It's the ability to critically assess material. People who can't put information in a context respond to the most superficial things. When they watch TV and are told to buy soap they buy it. But an education teaches you to assess the soap pitch." And to be suspicious of any product described as "feminine" or "all natural" or pitched by an old coot who looks as if he stepped out of a Norman Rockwell painting.

John Callahan, the syndicated cartoonist whose latest collection is titled "Do What He Says! He's Crazy!!!" declared that an educated person "knows what a cat wants for dinner" and "can read George Bush's lips." Sha-ri Pendleton, better known as Blaze on the television program "American Gladiators," felt that the educated man or woman combines the "insight of Dr. David Viscott," a radio psychologist, "the intelligence of a Nobel Peace Prize winner and the drive of Michael Jackson."

Pendleton, whose speciality is playing a female Little John in a high altitude, high-technology version of his encounter with Robin Hood on the log, said she "aspires to possess all these qualities."

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### English and Calculus?

Back in academia, Steven B. Simple, president of the University of Southern California, said that for an American, "To be educated means proficiency in English and the second major language of our time, calculus." Mastery of English entails not just reading billboards and making oneself understood in supermarkets, but having a full understanding of the literature past and present and the ability to communicate, to serve people."

As for calculus, a subject that has led many a math phobic to a university without distribution requirements, "it has become the *lingua franca* of science and technology," said Mr. Simple, a professor of electrical engineering. Fortunately, it is still not a big icebreaker at parties.

Hanna H. Gray, president of the University of Chicago, offered what could be a recipe for the arts. The main ingredients are "the capacity for independent thought, a sense of relationship between different options, a sense of history, respect for evidence and a sense of how to define and approach important questions."

L. Jay Oliva, president of New York University, seasoned the soup with "strength of character, ethical behavior, understanding one's role in society as an active participant and feeling that helping other people is one of the most instructive and beneficial things you can do."

Lloyd Richards, professor emeritus at the Yale School of Drama, threw in "wit, wisdom, tolerance and the ability and willingness to share."

Experts ascribe the variety of definitions to the complexity of the subject. "There's no way either temporally or spatially of limiting what it means to be educated," said George Rupp, president of Rice University. "Knowledge is continually escalating, and spatially we don't have any easy limits to set around what we need to know."

Mr. Rupp pointed out that 1,000 years ago, a person who grew up in Christian Europe needed to understand the traditions of biblical and Greek culture to be considered educated. "Today we ask, 'Do we have to know about Buddhism, the history of Japan prior to Westernization and all the ranges of experience the Chinese have?' And there are exactly the same kinds of questions in social sciences and natural sciences."

Luckily for those of us who never heard of Gondwanaland, fractals or semiotics, Samuel Johnson postulated that knowledge is of two kinds—that which you know and that which you know how to find.

More than 2,000 years ago, Plato wrote that "The sum and substance of education is the right training, which effectively leads the soul of the child at play onto the love of the calling in which he will have to be perfect when he is a man."

By this definition, Steve Smith, director of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Clown College, is a sage. "You need the vision to know the world doesn't revolve around your ego," Mr. Smith said, "and in our case, juggling, magic, pantomime and how to ride a unicycle."

### Suggestions for Discussion

1. Analyze three or four of the definitions of an educated person introduced by Kaufman.
2. Discuss the distinction between having knowledge and knowing how to use it.

### Suggestions for Writing

1. What does it mean to you to be an educated person? Give examples.
2. To what extent has the concept of an educated person changed in your lifetime?

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## Woody Allen

### My Speech to the Graduates

Woody Allen (b. 1935) is an American actor, filmmaker, and writer, best known for such outstanding films as *Annie Hall* (1977), *Interiors* (1978), *Manhattan* (1979), *Zelig* (1983), *Alice* (1990), and *Manhattan Murder Mystery* (1993). His humorous essays have appeared in *The New Yorker* and in the collections *Getting Even* (1971), *Without Feathers* (1975), *The Floating Lightbulb* (1981), and