

QUARTERLY PRESS REVIEW

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QUARTERLY PRESS REVIEW

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A Legendary Criminal

by *Konrad Muller*

'What was your offence?'

'Receiving stolen property.'

'And who is with you?'

'I have one girl, seven, one girl, five, one boy, nine, and one boy, three years old.'

'Where are your other children?'

'I have two sons gone to Sydney to settle there as gentlemen, John, aged twenty-one, and Moses, eighteen.'

'And where is your husband?'

'My husband I believe has gone to America.'

'And who is your husband?'

Silence.

'Is he not Ikey Solomon of whom so much lately has been heard?'

In this city of ghosts I used often to see him, walking the streets, climbing the hills, an elderly man, erect and whippet-thin, with a grizzled beard, slippers and a long greatcoat. A tramp and yet not quite a tramp, he had a de ant dignity and an indifference to others as if

he moved through a world of his own. I christened him Ikey and found his presence on the streets talismanic. Then I had an unexpected encounter with him. It was a gloomy Monday morning, as though the world were lit by a few dim lamps, when there was a knock on my door and I was surprised to discover the man I called Ikey waiting outside. In his hands he had a package. He told me in a distinctly patrician voice that it had been delivered to the wrong address. 'Here' he announced, handing it to me, 'I have done the due diligence'.

I thanked him, but he lingered in the doorway, reluctant to re-enter the rain.

He didn't look the best, either. His face was as pale as the day, he smelled slightly of claret and there was a cut on the side of his head. 'Do you mind if I have a cup of coffee?' he inquired. I invited him in and there heard how he'd been going all weekend and had come home to find himself locked out by his 'African mistress' and my mail in his letterbox. He then asked me what I did and I replied that was a complicated question. He laughed and said, 'I can seen you're a cool fellow, Konrad.' And it was while we were talking that I confessed to him that I used to see him on the streets and privately called him Ikey after the inspiration for Dicken's Fagin.

'I know who he is,' he assured me. 'And he's buried down the hill in the old Hobart Jewish cemetery. You ought to look him up'.

I made him another coffee. He left when the rain lifted.

The real Ikey Solomon was born in Houndsditch around the year 1785. Now largely forgotten in the city of his birth, the so-called Prince of Fences was sensationalised in his day as the most notorious London criminal since Jonathan Wild. Pamphlets then hawked on London's streets give some sense of his piquancy. The title page of one concoction of fact and steamy fantasy reads, 'ONLY CORRECT EDITION! The Life and Exploits of IKEY SOLOMON, Swindler, Forger, Fencer, and BROTHEL-KEEPER' and promises, 'Accounts of Flash and Dress Houses, Flash Girls And Coves on the Watch, Now on the Town: With Instructions How to Guard against Hypocritical Villains And the Lures of Abandoned Females'. Even fifty years after his death, the receipt of stolen goods at a fixed price by item was a transaction still known in London as 'an Ikey'. It was Ikey's celebrated trial at the Old Bailey in the summer of 1830 that appears to have piqued the interest of the young Charles Dickens, and (besides his Jewish-ness) is the central fact behind the now standard identification of Ikey as the model for the monstrous Fagin. However, it is the contrast between fact and fiction that yields the richer vein.

The Fagin we know and love was an avaricious old skeleton, with yellow fingers, matted red hair and a repulsive leer; Ikey, by contrast, was tall, dark, and

possibly handsome. Fagin dressed in greasy tattered garments; Ikey wore the apparel of a successful businessman. Fagin was a work of crime in minor key, lifting 'wallets and wipes' through his troupe of child pickpockets; Ikey was the greatest London receiver of his day – there are stories of entire warehouses of stolen goods being bought by him, and The Times reported he walked the streets of London with a thousand quid in his side-pocket for on-the-spot purchases, including of the watches he especially prized. But it is in the dominant motif of their respective lives that the greatest discrepancy emerges. For Isaac Solomon's central act was not one of midnight avarice, but rather one of love.

The broad lines of Ikey's ascent can be quickly traced:

The family was part of the eighteenth-century migration of poor Ashkenazim from the ghettos of Europe into the rookeries of London. The seamy purlieus of Whitechapel and Spitalfields were his nurseries of crime. At nine, he is launched onto the streets, a lemon-seller with sharp eyes, who runs with pickpockets, most often as a scout. At twenty-five, a late bloomer, he receives his first conviction, for the theft of a wallet, and graduates to the hulks. By this time, he is married to Ann Julian, whose father, like Ikey's own, plies the receiver's trade. After four years locked up on the Medway, Ikey is released and returns

to set up shop as a 'jeweller' near Petticoat Lane. His house, though, has many cavities and locked doors; and Ikey soon emerges as one of the most astute assessors of stolen goods in London.

Business grows.

He now consorts with such colourful personalities as the expert house-breaker, Gompertz Alexander, and the celebrated pugilist, Abraham Belaxos. Eventually there is a raid and Ikey does a runner and then is invisible for eleven months, until one spring morning an officer from the Lambeth Street Police Station somehow spots him walking in the sunlight down New North Road in Islington. Extraordinarily, he is apprehended.

Ikey was charged on thirteen counts. But this was just the warm up. For, on the day of his bail hearing, as the escorting hackney coach slowly rolled back to Newgate, Ikey executed a remarkable escape – jumping out the door and disappearing into an orchestrated throng. The turnkeys, one called Mr Smart, had, it seemed, been bribed and drugged; and the coach-driver was none other than Ikey's father-in-law, Moses Julian. Ikey was soon spirited away to what seemed his natural destination, America, or more specifically, the Bowery in New York. But that alternative life never happened. Because, roused by the newspapers, the London constabulary went to work on the clan. First Ikey's father, Henry, was convicted for theft. Then, a stolen watch was found ticking under the floorboards of

the family home. His wife, Ann, the mother of six (possibly framed by Ikey's brother Benjamin – the story gets complicated), was sentenced to fourteen years transportation. And now the incredible act follows. A fugitive from justice, facing capital charges, Ikey packs up in New York and boards a vessel for Van Diemen's Land. He is sailing into an open prison. Many months later, after the inevitable arrest, he explains: 'My reason for leaving America for Hobart Town', he affirmed quite simply, 'was solely to gain the society of an affectionate wife'.

There is a very short account of Ikey's reunion with his wife. An eyewitness who knew him from London (Hobart was crawling with underworld associates) saw a man in the neighbour's yard where Ann Solomon was assigned as a servant, and, as she put it, 'Mrs Solomon was brushing his clothes'.

'Is that not Ikey Solomon?' a second convict asked, and she replied, 'I rather suspect it is'.

Faced with such outrageousness, the local authorities were uncertain how to proceed. Had Ikey Solomon been acquitted? What should be done? They sought advice from London. In the meantime, Ikey set up shop in the heart of Hobart using 'portable property' his elder sons had arrived with from London. The younger children were retrieved from an orphanage and the family briefly reunited (although Ann was targeted again and sent with her head shaven to the

'Female Factory' for a time). Ships to London then took six months, and then it was the wheels of government, then the return voyage. But when instructions finally arrived they were the predictable: Send him back.

Unlike Fagin who was hanged, Ikey was treated with remarkable leniency. He was never charged with escaping lawful custody, and at his trial, where, in the words of one pamphleteer, 'every avenue was thronged almost to suffocation', he was acquitted on all capital counts of 'burglarious breaking and entering'. He was found guilty only of two fairly minor felonies, the receipt of '14 stolen watch movements' and 'twelve pieces of Valencia.' He would be returned to Van Diemen's Land.

But now the inevitable decline comes. Back in the penal colony, Ikey was in and out of various gaols and did not see his family for five years. Cracks began to appear, including in Ikey's agitated mind. Locked up at Port Arthur, that place of beauty and horror, he heard whispers Ann was dallying with a younger man. When, at last he was released and they met in the winter of 1835, accusations followed, denied by her and the children. 'My father called my mother all the words that he could lay his tongue to,' said a son, David. A daughter, Nancy, declared, 'My mother was so ill she could not turn in bed'. There were rancorous exchanges, especially with these middle children, loyal to their mother, who had suffered most from her arrest

and his absence and their own confinement. At one point, David seized his father by the neck and threw him in the street, with the words: 'There you old bugger, lie there'. The magistrates became involved.

In all this, the tale has mutated beyond Dickens into something darker. There were reconciliations with the family and further ruptures. In the end, Ikey obtained his full freedom and ran a small cigar shop in central Hobart before dying in 1850, and being buried, as I had been told, in the old Jewish Cemetery, the eighth to be buried there.

The old Jewish burial ground indeed once lay down the hill from my door. But the last parcel of land, I discovered, had been bulldozed for a development quite recently. Going there I saw a security shop had been established in the vicinity, advertising locks, alarms, safes and CCTV cameras. I didn't suppose that Ikey could still be there?

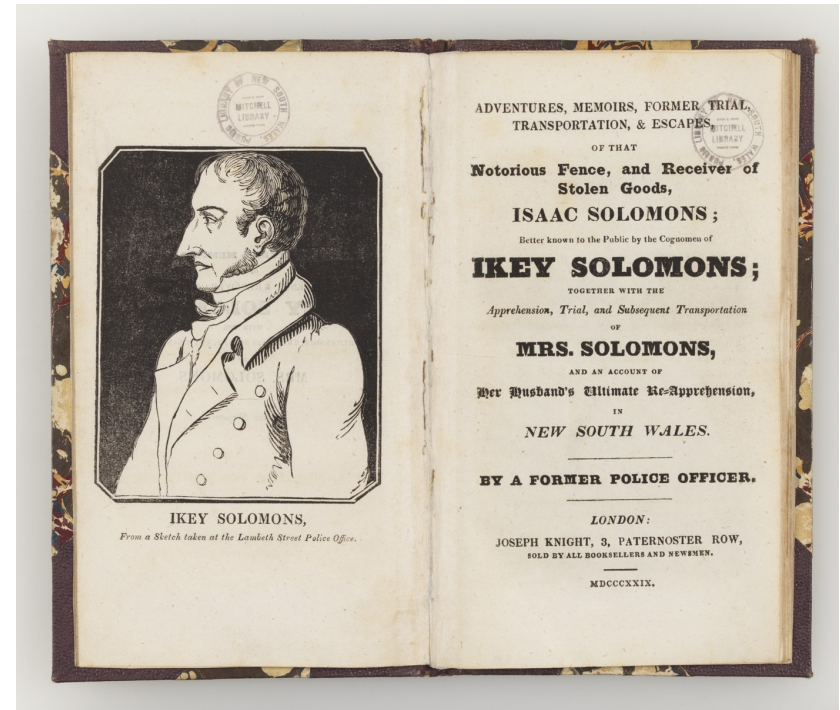
I arranged a visit to the Hobart Synagogue. It is the oldest place of Jewish worship in Australia and was founded in the 1840s by a small community of several hundred Jews, many of whom, like Ikey, were Londoners sent into exile 'beyond the seas'. Ikey was a member of that first congregation. The synagogue itself is a small jewel of colonial architecture now buried in the city, the work of a convict draftsman with no formal training, neo-Egyptian in design. Here I met the keeper of the keys, a Mordechai O'Brien, and he let me in to

see the cedar-wood interiors and the winter light coming in through the superb trapezoid windows. He told me the community was very small. There was no rabbi. Of the original population of largely London Jews most left for the vaster opportunities of Sydney or Melbourne or the faith lapsed.

I explained to Mordechai my interest. He confessed that Ikey was viewed with mixed feelings by the community. I said I thought he had a few redeeming qualities. Mordechai then informed me that all the material from the old Jewish burial ground had been relocated to the Hobart General Cemetery on the Derwent estuary. Ikey's family had a little money. There would have been a headstone, he thought. But he couldn't say whether any trace remained.

As a final step I went to the Cemetery overlooking the mackerel-coloured waters of the Derwent sliding down to the sea. There inside a low wall of sandstone I found a small patch of ground dedicated to the relocated remains. A few old headstones were implanted in the wall. Most of the names were no longer legible. But on the sandstone had been placed, in pairs and clusters, small metal stars of David, cut from rusted steel, and on each a name had been inscribed in yellow. Here then was a record of the dead. And on one headstone I found a solitary rusted star. It bore the inscription: Isaac Solomon 65 years died 1850.

So I took a stone and under that rusty star I placed it there. ♦



From Sailing to Steam

by *Jonathan Marriott*

'No one's interested so I gave it to Pete the Gardener'. As my grandmother aged, Pete the gardener gained the contents of what would have been a not insubstantial antiques shop. Occasionally we rescued things from going to Pete or the dustbin. On one such occasion, as she tore pages from an album, my mother was able to step in and rescue the contents. This chance saving of a group of watercolours led to a trail of research, revealing an extraordinary career that spanned both the world and the years of naval transformation from sail to steam.

It transpired that my great-great-grandfather, Edward Wolfe Brooker, who served in the Navy as a hydrographer in the mid-nineteenth-century, had painted the pictures in question. Some had labels saying where or what they were; others were clearly identifiable sights, such as Table Mountain and the peak in Hong Kong; others were more obscure. My mother had them framed and they hung on the walls of my family homes over the years.

Then one day I was in Waterstones on London Wall and on the table was a book entitled *Rattlesnake* by Jordan Goodman. On the front was a picture of HMS Rattlesnake, which I recognized as the same ship that featured in one of my ancestor's pictures on my wall at home. What was so significant about this ship that a new book was being written about her today? I had to look into it further.

Brooker had entered the Navy, aged fifteen, in 1842 and he served as Master's Assistant on ships commanded by John Washington on surveys of the North Sea. This must have been cold hard work but Captain Washington went on to be a founder of the Royal Geographical Society and to be Hydrographer of the Navy. Perhaps he saw some talent in the young Brooker and encouraged his career, supporting his move to the Rattlesnake.

HMS Rattlesnake was responsible for exploring the entrances to the Great Barrier Reef in 1847. She went on to chart the seas around New Guinea and is considered important in the history of exploration of Australia. The assistant surgeon of the ship was Thomas Huxley. It was Huxley's voyage on the Rattlesnake that led him to his first publications as a naturalist and to support Charles Darwin by encouraging the publication of *On The Origin of Species*. So what was my great-great-grandfather's position?

He was a lowly Master's Assistant (the Master was a non-commissioned officer with navigational and sailing responsibilities). Amongst other things, the young man was responsible for producing strip pictures of the coastline for navigational purposes. Nineteenth century charts often had a long thin picture of the coastline along the bottom to help identify landmarks. The official artist on the voyage was Sir Oswald Brierly R.A. who may have provided helpful instruction. Family legend had Brooker as commanding his own ship, so how had he progressed to earn a commission from such humble beginnings? My researches now had to delve further into his life.

After the Rattlesnake returned to England, Brooker was promoted to Master and posted to HMS Spitfire under Captain Thomas Spratt on survey work in the work in the Mediterranean. This work was interrupted by the start of the Crimean War.

I have a dark picture of the bombardment of Sebastopol in 1854, painted by my relative. This is timed, dated and inscribed with the ships' names and their commanding officers along the bottom. He was obviously acknowledged as becoming something of an artist at this time, as the Greenwich Maritime Museum has several prints of Brooker's pictures from this period. Amongst them is a print from Sebastopol attributed to him. The Museum refers to him holding the Legion d'Honneur and the Turkish order of

Medjidie. Looking into naval records, it was also around this juncture that he was commissioned. He clearly had done more than just paint pictures.

In 1855 he was serving as part of the fleet dispatched to attack Kinburn Fort in the Crimea. Under cover of darkness, Brooker was sent to explore the entrance to the Dnieper River. He was accompanied by Lieutenant Marryat who was the nephew of Captain Marryat, author of *Midshipman Easy* and *The Children of The New Forest*. They placed buoys to mark the safe passage, going to and fro under very heavy fire before reporting back to the commander Sir Houston Stewart, then piloting the ships up the channel. In Sir Stewart's report to the Commander-in-Chief Sir Edmund Lyons, he praised Marryat and Brooker for the anxious, difficult and dangerous work which they had executed admirably. Sir Edmund duly commended them to the Admiralty and, within a few weeks, they were both promoted, Marryat to Commander and Brooker to a commissioned officer. This was followed by decoration by both the Turkish and French governments.

After the Crimean War was over, Brooker returned to work with Captain Spratt on surveys of the Eastern Mediterranean. Lt E.W. Brooker's name now appears on charts on the coast of Asia Minor, Egypt, Cyprus and Crete. Spratt had an interest in antiquities and explored not just the coast of Crete but also the

interior, for which he produced the first detailed map, and which was published along with his description of his time there. He discovered many of the sites that are familiar to visitors today. On a recent holiday to Crete, I visited the Minoan palace at Phaestos, where I was pleased to see his role acknowledged on one of the explanatory boards. While on Crete, I also found the ancient bridge near the village of Vrises that was described by Spratt and was painted by my ancestor 150 years ago. His picture shows a man on a donkey crossing the bridge; now traffic is carried by a modern road over a flyover a few yards away. I was able to stand and gaze at a sight that was otherwise unchanged from when my great-great-grandfather painted the scene.

Brooker returned to domestic waters and continued his charting work on the south coast of England before another overseas posting. His next destination was Tasmania, to chart the island coast and Hobart harbour in particular. For a time he became part of the local community in Hobart. He exhibited a watercolour of a Cairo street scene in a local art exhibition. When the local government refused further funds for surveying, he sold his tents and packed up. The *Hobart Mercury* of 16th March 1863 paid tribute to him in the following words:

We were foremost to hail the prospect of engaging the services of an officer, who had won such

distinguished honour in various parts of the world, as Director of Marine Surveys. We knew that there was hardly any district of the globe in which he had not merited the high encomiums of the Lords of the Admiralty... that gallant officer will leave many friends behind him in the colony.

Despite his time being cut short in Tasmania, his measurements were still used for an Admiralty chart published in 1913 with his strip picture along the bottom.

Returning once more to England, he found time to marry Alice Part and to have two children. On what turned out to be his final voyage to the Far East he was given command of HMS *Sylvia*. Once again he was to touch on global events and it is from this voyage that we get some idea of what he was like as a man. Writing his memoir in 1906, the then Admiral J.W. Gambier gives an account of life as a Lieutenant on the *Sylvia* under the command of Brooker. This is how he described his commanding officer: "The Skipper was an amiable little person who gave himself no trouble about anything under the sun – not even his "h's," which he left entirely to look after themselves, popping in and out of his mouth like rabbits in a warren."

Gambier came from a family of career naval officers and so was surprised to have a Skipper who came from a rather different background. He was apparently unaware of the actions that led to Brooker's decoration

and promotion. He goes on to say: "He was extraordinarily fortunate in his career: beginning as Master's Assistant and being transferred to our line and being made commander very young. The same thing occurred to a brother of his. They had a powerful patron in a high Admiral of high social position, and anything was possible in those days."

From this, it would seem that Gambier was a bit of a snob who looked down on those who had risen from the ranks. If Brooker did have high connections (and, as we have seen, he had served with many influential Admirals) he had certainly earned their respect and support.

Gambier does acknowledge that he was rescued on one occasion by the swift thinking of his little Skipper. One night on his way back to the boat, Gambier climbed onto a balcony to try and join a party. When his stick came into contact with the eye of someone who came to the window to see what was going on, there was a frightful row and he was arrested by a passing French patrol. The French officer announced that there would be an enquiry the next day on board his ship. On hearing the facts, Brooker slipped anchor immediately, getting out of reach of any signals by morning, thus saving Gambier from a severe fine or even several months in prison.

From this period we also have a letter written home to his young daughter. He takes care to write in big

letters and to make it interesting to a small girl. He drew a picture of the ship in the margin and went on to describe the misbehaviour of the ship's monkey. He comes across as a caring father and husband, asking the little girl to look after her baby brother and their mother. On his travels, he carried a miniature picture of his smiling wife, who is wearing one of his uniform jackets whilst carrying his baby daughter.

HMS *Sylvia* was a steamship designed for surveying but still armoured as a naval vessel. She was sent to Asia, principally to survey the waters around Japan. On the way out Brooker continued to paint: there is a fine picture of Table Mountain from this period. His other officers joined him on painting expeditions. The Maritime Museum has an album of pictures by Lieutenant James Butt, who served on the *Sylvia* and painted Table Mountain at what must have been exactly the same time. The view is identical, with both paintings including a small rowing boat with a blue coated man in the foreground and the sails partially set on a ship in the distance. We can picture the Commander and his junior painting side by side on the wharf, looking up at the familiar flat-topped mountain in the distance.

Japan had been closed to foreign trade for many centuries but in the 1860s had begun to open up. The *Sylvia* was attached to Admiral Keppel for the opening of trade ports of Osaka and Kobe in 1869. Having

visited the Daymio in Osaka, they proceeded to survey the Inland Sea of Japan, before going on to refuel in Shanghai and to over-winter in Hong Kong. Brooker painted the Sylvia in Japan and a view of Hong Kong where a semaphore station is just visible on the peak. The strip of development along the coast is quite a contrast to the tower blocks of today.

Sadly, Brooker fell ill in Japan and was invalided out. He returned home but died in the following year, 1870, aged just 43. His career had started in the age of sail in the North Sea and ended under steam in Japan. He had sailed with Huxley, become a hero in the Crimea, and seen firsthand the opening of Japan to trade. He was an example of the often-anonymous professional seaman who made possible the growth of British influence across the globe during the nineteenth century. ♦

The Gospel of Jesus's Wife?

by *Joel Baden* and *Candida Moss*

Lab tests have suggested that a papyrus scrap mentioning Jesus's wife is authentic. Why do most scholars believe it's fake?

For six days in September 2012, some 300 participants came together at Sapienza University, in Rome, for the 10th International Congress of Coptic Studies. Among those presenting was Karen L. King. The author of five books, King is a highly respected specialist in early Christianity whose work focuses on a group of Christians commonly known as the Gnostics. Her 2003 volume, *What Is Gnosticism?*, is already a standard in the field. She currently teaches at Harvard Divinity School, where she is the first woman to hold the Hollis Professorship – the oldest endowed chair in the country. She is, and has long been, considered to be one of the best religion scholars in the world.

King began her lecture at 7 o'clock in the evening, during the last session on the second day, a time when most participants had moved on to dinner, at least mentally. King's talk followed others with titles such as

“A New Branch: Judas Scholarship in Gnostic Studies” and “Wisdom’s Sadness in Valentinian Cosmogony,” and hers promised to be similarly staid. Its title, “A New Coptic Gospel Fragment,” might have suggested she would be describing a newly discovered fragment of a previously known Christian text – nothing more, that is, than a minor addition to the corpus of old Christian texts, of the type that appear on the scene with some regularity. But once King began her lecture, those in the audience quickly realized that she would not be talking about a new fragment of a familiar Gospel. Instead, she would be presenting something extraordinary: a fragment of a previously unknown Gospel.

King believed that the fragment dated from about the fourth century A.D. (later testing would show that it likely dated from about the eighth century) and that it may have been a translation of a Greek text originally written in the second century A.D. The fragment was small, about the size of a credit card, and contained eight incomplete lines of text that read as follows:

1. *not [to] me. My mother gave me li[fe]*
2. *The disciples said to Jesus*
3. *deny. Mary is n[ot] worthy of it*
4. *Jesus said to them, My wife*
5. *she is able to be my disciple*

6. *Let wicked people swell up*
7. *As for me, I am with her in order to*
8. *an image*

Many aspects of the text and the papyrus were unusual. Some were not so obvious at first glance, though they would turn out to be of great significance later on. But one was momentous, and became the focus of attention: the fourth line, in which Jesus makes reference to having a wife. This was a bombshell. No such direct reference, in Jesus’s own words, had ever been discovered before in any early Christian text.

Even though the dialogue recorded in the fragment is only partial, almost anyone can understand the gist. The first line has Jesus recognizing his mother’s importance. The second and third lines have the disciples seemingly debating the worthiness of Mary – a probable reference, given the words *my wife* in the fourth line, not to the Virgin Mary but to Mary Magdalene, the oft-maligned patron of the Jesus movement. This Mary, Jesus says in line five, can be his disciple, and in lines six and seven he castigates those who would oppose such discipleship as “wicked,” drawing the contrast with himself, who is “with her.”

As King discussed her interpretation of the text and its importance to the history of Christian thought, those in the audience asked whether they could see a

picture of the fragment. King's computer wasn't working, so they passed around an iPad with a photo of it. Almost immediately upon seeing the fragment, some of the scholars in the room began to openly question its authenticity. The next day, writing on his blog, Christian Askeland, a Coptic scholar currently affiliated with Indiana Wesleyan University, summed up the general feeling about the fragment. The specialists at the conference who had seen the photo were "split," he wrote, "with almost two-thirds ... being extremely skeptical about the manuscript's authenticity and one-third ... essentially convinced that the fragment is a fake."

While the experts were airing their doubts, a very different story was being broadcast to the wider public. At about the time King was presenting her talk in Rome, the Harvard Divinity School put photos and an early draft of her commentary about the fragment online. Even before she left Cambridge for the conference, King had shown the fragment to *The New York Times*, *The Boston Globe*, and *Harvard Magazine*, which had taken photos of her in her office holding the framed text up for the camera. Just after King gave her talk, therefore, *The Times* was able to publish news of the fragment's discovery online, in a story titled "A Faded Piece of Papyrus Refers to Jesus' Wife." That article, accompanied by a photo of King and the fragment, appeared in the print edition of *The Times*

the next morning. *The Boston Globe* ran a similar story, misleadingly titled "Historian's Finding Hints That Jesus Was Married."

In fact, exercising good historical judgment, King had gone out of her way to stress that the fragment provided no evidence whatsoever about Jesus's marital status. The text, she had pointed out, dated from too long after Jesus's death to be considered a reliable historical source. Such nuance, however, quickly got lost in the excitement – in part, no doubt, because King had given the fragment a sensational title: the Gospel of Jesus's Wife. As it turned out, she had also already talked to the Smithsonian Channel, which planned to produce a television special titled *The Gospel of Jesus's Wife*. The network declared it would be a blockbuster "of biblical proportions."

Jesus's bachelorhood is almost taken for granted today. In the Catholic tradition, his single status forms the basis for the theological argument that priests cannot marry. Those making this argument point to a simple, undeniable fact: the New Testament contains no mention at all of Jesus's having been married.

That's true as far as it goes. But as the Gospels present it, the biography of Jesus contains a gaping hole. None of the stories produced about him in the first century A.D. – stories with at least some potential to be accurate – tells us anything at all about his adolescence or 20s. During this time, was he employed,

shy, heartbroken? Married or single? We have no way of knowing. One might assume that a man of that age living in ancient Palestine would have been married, but neither the Gospels nor the Apostle Paul has anything to say on the subject. The earliest Gospel, the Gospel of Mark, begins with Jesus in the final years of his life, on the banks of the River Jordan, poised to descend into the water for his baptism.

A great deal rides on this question of Jesus's marital status. Over the centuries, and up to the present, how people have answered this question has served as a cipher in discussions about clerical celibacy. If Jesus spurned marriage, the argument goes, so too should all priests. And if Jesus chose only men as his apostles, so too should the Church. Iconoclastically minded commentators, however, insist that the idea of a celibate Jesus is a later Catholic conspiracy – the product of a male-led Church and a succession of dry, turgid councils – that's long been used to keep the laity, and women in particular, in check. Dan Brown made a fortune peddling this very idea in *The Da Vinci Code*, published in 2003.

What has become clear today, thanks to the scholarship of Karen King and others, is that in the messy early Church – ripe with pretensions of order, brimming with disordered diversity – people actively debated the role of women as leaders. People have been speculating about Jesus's romantic life since at least

the second century A.D., too. In a noncanonical text from that period known as the Gospel of Mary, for example, Peter says to Mary Magdalene, "Sister, we know that the Savior loved you more than all other women." The second- or third-century Gospel of Philip gets somewhat more explicit, calling Mary his "companion," and describing Jesus as having "loved her more than all the disciples" and having "kissed her often on the mouth."

The New Testament pays notable attention to women. The story of Jesus's life begins with the Virgin Mary holding the newborn child, ends with both Marys stationed at the cross, and along the way suggests that women followed Jesus and helped finance his mission. A woman named Junia is described in Paul's Letter to the Romans as "prominent among the apostles," and another, named Phoebe, is called a "deacon."

Powerful women make appearances in the history of the early Church, too. In the second-century Acts of Paul and Thecla, a woman named Thecla abandons her fiancé to follow Paul, a story that was used by some third-century Christians in North Africa to justify women's baptizing of initiates. Traditionalists, for their part, have long pointed to a passage in 1 Timothy, a letter written in Paul's name, to justify their case *against* women leaders in the Church. "I permit no woman," it reads, "to teach or to have authority over a man." We now know, however, that 1 Timothy is in fact

a second-century work falsely attributed to the apostle: evidence that in the early years of Christianity, something of a textual power struggle was under way to redefine Paul's intentions with respect to women. Today we can also see the question of Jesus's marital status, and the related question of women's role in the Church, refracted through a variety of apocryphal sayings and stories in which Jesus and the apostles alternately condemn, encourage, and control female leaders.

For the most part, the texts and narratives that support the notion of female discipleship come from outside the traditional canon – no surprise, really, given that the canonical New Testament was assembled long after Jesus's death by a male-led Church. Today the mere study of the extracanonical is sometimes associated (both positively and negatively) with liberal bias, in that many of these texts bring to the fore the marginalized and drowned-out voices of women and the rest of the laity. Karen King has made her name studying noncanonical writings, which explains why she was drawn to the fragment she presented in Rome. Unlike the media, she was interested in it less for its late and unreliable mention of Jesus as married than for the light it appeared to shed on the status of women in the nascent Jesus movement. If the fragment was authentic, the conversation it recorded would be a fine contribution to

the history of early Christian thought: yet another piece of evidence that the first few centuries of Christianity were not nearly so unified in belief and practice as conventional narratives tend to suggest.

After King's talk in Rome, specialists around the world began poring over the digital photos of the fragment that appeared on the Harvard Divinity School's Web site (along with the draft of King's commentary and translation, which the *Harvard Theological Review* had agreed to publish in its January 2013 issue). A near-consensus began to emerge among the scholars who studied the photos: the fragment seemed to be a fake.

Francis Watson, a well-respected professor of the New Testament at Durham University, in the United Kingdom, posted cautious but serious doubts online just two days after King's talk. The fragment, he wrote, could be "more plausibly attributed to a modern author, with limited facility in Coptic, than to an ancient one." A week later, the Vatican newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano* (admittedly not an impartial source) declared the papyrus "an inept forgery." Leo Depuydt, of Brown University, one of the scholars invited by the *Harvard Theological Review* to respond to King's article on the fragment in advance of its publication, summed up the prevailing view. "It is out of the question," he wrote, "that the so-called *Gospel of Jesus's Wife*, also known as the Wife of Jesus Fragment, is an authentic source.

The author of this analysis has not the slightest doubt that the document is a forgery, and not a very good one at that.”

Every ancient manuscript comprises an accumulation of features, each of which – the writing implement, the style of the script, the handwriting, the grammar, the syntax, the content – is subject to analysis. If something is off about any of these features, the entire manuscript can be deemed a fake. The judgment required to assess these aspects of a manuscript derives only from years of scholarship and expertise.

The Gospel of Jesus’s Wife exhibited a variety of problematic features. Virtually all ancient papyrus texts were written with a reed pen, but the letters on this fragment, blunt and thick, appeared to have been made by a brush. Not only that, they were ill-formed (equivalent, perhaps, to the letter forms produced by clenching a marker vertically in your fist), which suggested the work of a nonnative writer. So did a handful of apparent grammatical errors, one of which can be reasonably likened to writing “he threw the ball me” in English – the kind of mistake that a nonnative speaker or a child might make but that would be difficult to imagine coming from an adult native speaker.

In further comments written a few days after King’s talk in Rome, Watson pointed out the most-damning

evidence of forgery: virtually every word and phrase in the fragment – with one important exception – could also be found in a Coptic text known as the Gospel of Thomas, a nearly complete manuscript from the fourth century A.D. that was discovered in 1945, published in 1956, and put online, along with a translation, in 1997. Watson surmised that the Gospel of Jesus’s Wife consisted of little more than stitched-together bits and pieces of this publicly available Coptic text.

Watson presented additional evidence to support his claim. For instance, the first line of the fragment begins with the broken phrase *not [to] me*, in which the beginning of the prepositional phrase *to me* is missing, followed by the words *My mother*, and then *gave me li[fe]*. Precisely the same broken phrase, *not [to] me*, begins one of the lines in the Gospel of Thomas – and it is followed by a sentence beginning, as in the fragment, with *My mother*. The next line of the Gospel of Thomas begins with a phrase not found in the Gospel of Jesus’s Wife (*but my true [mother]*), but it ends with the same words that end the first line of the fragment: *gave me life*. Here’s how they compare:

Gospel of Jesus’s Wife: *not [to] me. My mother gave me li[fe]*

Gospel of Thomas: *not [to] me. My mother ... but my true [mother] gave me life*

Finding similar phrases in two different works is not necessarily probative. (In fact, King herself had noted some of the parallels.) But finding similar words placed identically along a line of text is almost unbelievable. For Watson and many others, it was certainly highly suggestive of forgery.

Some scholars couldn't help basing their assessments on something intangible. The text just *felt* wrong – or, perhaps, too right. “This fragment,” wrote Jim Davila, of the University of St. Andrews, in Scotland, “is exactly, *exactly*, what the *Zeitgeist* of 2012 would want us to find in an ancient gospel.” There is something to be said for this suspicion. Put it this way: if an ancient Christian text describing Jesus as having a wife and elevating the status of women in the Church had emerged in 2004, just after *The Da Vinci Code* was published, it would have been laughed out of the room.

Christian Askeland pointed out another reason the fragment seemed inauthentic: although it is only a tiny portion of a larger work preserved by happenstance, it is improbably easy to read and understand. Despite all the missing words at the end of each line, we don't have any trouble recognizing that we're reading a dialogue. At every stage, we know who is speaking, and we know generally what they're talking about. Strikingly, too, the fragment's most provocative statement – “Jesus said to them, My wife” – falls right in the middle of the text. Mark Goodacre, of Duke University, has even

noted that the two letters representing the word *My* are darker than the letters around them, as if the scribe were writing in boldface, to be sure that the reader caught the import of the possessive pronoun. Perhaps the final straw: the two words *My wife* are almost the only words of any significance in the fragment that do not have a parallel in the Gospel of Thomas.

It all just seemed a bit too good to be true.

Ancient manuscripts can be sorted into two basic categories: provenanced and unprovenanced.

A provenanced manuscript is one that comes from a secure archaeological context, which is to say it has been excavated or otherwise uncovered in a manner documented by professional scholars. Unprovenanced manuscripts are everything else: those that appear without documentation in private collections, or are sold on the antiquities market, or are simply “discovered” in an attic or a storage room somewhere. Due to the vagaries and ravages of climate and time, it's exceedingly rare to discover truly ancient papyri in archaeological contexts – unlike stone or clay, the other common ancient writing media, papyrus disintegrates over time. Thus conditions have to be near perfect, and near impossible, for even small scraps to survive millennia. (This is why the only major discoveries of provenanced ancient papyri, including the Dead Sea Scrolls, have come from relatively inaccessible regions in the desert.)



The Gospel of Jesus's Wife in a photograph released on September 18, 2012, the day King broke the news of the fragment's existence. (Rose Lincoln / Harvard / AP)

The Gospel of Jesus's Wife is a vexingly unprovenanced manuscript. In July of 2010, King has reported, a man asked her to take a look at a papyrus that had come into his possession. The man chose to remain anonymous, she has said, to avoid being "hounded by people who want to buy this." The same man provided King with five other ancient texts from his collection: a cache of papyri that he said he'd purchased from another collector, a German man named Hans-Ulrich Laukamp. The contract for the sale from Laukamp to the anonymous owner indicated that Laukamp had purchased the papyri in East Germany in the early 1960s. That was as far back as the trail went.

More authentication was clearly required. In the wake of growing concerns, the Smithsonian Channel decided to delay its special on the fragment. Likewise, the *Harvard Theological Review* deferred its plans to publish King's article. King arranged a full battery of tests – microscopic imaging, ink testing, radiocarbon analysis, multispectral imaging, infrared microspectroscopy, and another round of radiocarbon dating. The work took almost a year and a half.

It's hard to prove a negative – or so it is usually said. In the case of suspected forgeries, however, exactly the opposite holds true: what's hard to prove is authenticity. If radiocarbon analysis indicates that a supposedly ancient papyrus was made 50 years ago, it's obviously a fake. But if the analysis suggests that the original estimate of the date is correct, that doesn't settle the question. Forgers have access to genuinely ancient papyrus: blank pieces are easily purchasable on the antiquities market, as are papyri containing unremarkable texts from which the ink can be scraped off. Ink has the same sort of problem. Even if its chemical composition looks right, that doesn't prove anything. At best, the science of detection keeps up with the science of deception, just as it does for athletes using illicit performance-enhancing drugs. Now that we have an understanding of historical ink composition, and the tools to discern it, we no longer have much reason to test the ink on a suspect document. Any

decent forger knows how to make ink look old.

Aware of all this, the skeptics collectively shrugged when at last they learned, in April 2014, that the fragment had passed its lab tests. But the results satisfied the popular press, which had been silent about the fragment since the early fall of 2012. In outlet after outlet, tests designed only to rule out authenticity were interpreted as tests that could rule out forgery. “Papyrus Referring to Jesus’ Wife Is More Likely Ancient Than Fake, Scientists Say,” read the headline in *The New York Times*. “Study: ‘Jesus’ Wife’ Fragment Not a Fake,” was how the story appeared on CNN’s Web site. “No Evidence of Modern Forgery in Ancient Text Mentioning ‘Jesus’ Wife,” announced *The Boston Globe* – despite the quite substantial evidence that had been amassed by scholars during the previous year and a half. The Smithsonian Channel ramped up production of its special, and the *Harvard Theological Review* published King’s article, which now featured the test results prominently.

One of the other papyri turned over to King from the Laukamp cache was a slightly smaller fragment containing part of a Coptic translation of the Gospel of John. Scholars first saw this fragment when the *Harvard Theological Review* article appeared, because the scientists conducting the lab tests on the Gospel of Jesus’s Wife had used it to carry out comparative testing. And when scholars at last got a look at this

second fragment, in the lab reports posted on the Harvard Divinity School’s Web site, the walls came tumbling down. Even for those not trained as specialists, the visual similarities between the Gospel of Jesus’s Wife and the Gospel of John were striking. For instance, both had the same oddly formed letters, ostensibly made by the same blunt writing instrument. For Askeland and other experts, there was only one explanation: both fragments had been produced by the same hand.

Within a few days of the publication of the Gospel of John fragment, most scholars agreed: it was even more clearly a forgery than the Gospel of Jesus’s Wife. Though it was carbon-dated to somewhere between the seventh and eighth centuries A.D., it was written in a dialect of Coptic known as Lycopolitan, which died out before the sixth century. If authentic, it would be a bizarre anomaly: the sole example of a text in Lycopolitan from the seventh century or later. It’s possible, of course, that a scribe in the seventh or eighth century had simply copied an earlier Coptic text in a dialect that was no longer actively spoken or written. We still make copies of Chaucer, after all, though no one has spoken or written Middle English for centuries. But no evidence exists that Coptic scribes ever did this.

What *does* exist is a Lycopolitan Gospel of John from the third or fourth century A.D.: the best-known of all

surviving Coptic manuscripts of John. It was discovered in 1923, published in 1924 – and made available online around 2005. King’s Gospel of John fragment has exactly the same words, in exactly the same order, as this 1924 edition. This is not altogether improbable: both manuscripts are translations of the same Gospel. But scholars comparing the two texts soon discovered similarities that bordered on the impossible. Alin Suciu, a papyrologist and Coptologist, observed that every line on one side of the fragment corresponded exactly to every second line in the 1924 edition. Mark Goodacre, of Duke, thereafter demonstrated that the same one-to-two correspondence was true for the other side of the fragment: every line of the papyrus matched up perfectly with every second line in the 1924 edition. For this to be the case, one would have to assume that the original page to which the fragment once belonged was precisely twice as wide as the pages in the 1924 edition; that the width of every single word written by both scribes – indeed, of every single letter – was the same; and that it’s merely accidental that this fragment happens to correspond to the best preserved, best-known, and most widely available of the many Coptic manuscripts of John that survive.

Suspicious now arose that the entire cache of Laukamp papyri might be fake. So people began asking questions about the few documents in the group that

were definitely of modern origin, especially the contract for the sale between the German collector, Laukamp, and the anonymous owner. Owen Jarus, a contributor to the Web site LiveScience, began looking into who Laukamp might have been, and found a man of the same name and, seemingly, the same biography. He spoke to one of this Laukamp’s business partners and a representative for his estate, neither of whom had ever heard about any papyri in his possession, not even the Gospel of Jesus’s Wife. Laukamp, Jarus wrote, had not been a collector of antiquities at all: he was a toolmaker who, according to the representative for his estate, “had no interest in old things.” Conveniently, he had died in 2002 and seemed to have left behind no children or living relatives. Indeed, everyone named in these modern documents is now dead – at least everyone mentioned by King in her *Harvard Theological Review* article. (Everything we know about these documents comes only from what King has chosen to make public.) The most recent death came in 2009, just a year before the anonymous new owner approached King.

After having investigated Laukamp, Jarus was almost certain he had found the right man. “It was clear,” he told us, “that something was very much amiss.”

King doesn’t take the concerns about the fragment’s authenticity lightly. “This is substantive,” she told *The New York Times* in May. “It’s worth taking seriously,

and it may point in the direction of forgery.” Although King told us that she has not done any further work on the fragment, she added that she remains “quite open to new evidence and argument regarding the dating and interpretation of the fragments.” Many media outlets, however, continued to tell the story they wanted to tell. Before the Smithsonian Channel aired its special, on May 5, 2014, it added only a minute at the end to catch viewers up on the most-recent developments – and in that minute mentioned none of the objections to the document’s authenticity, instead focusing solely on the fragment’s passing the lab tests. “There is much new evidence for its authenticity,” the show concluded, “and none that it’s a modern forgery.”

That conclusion flies in the face of the scholarly consensus today. Even though King herself has refused to declare the case closed, for all practical purposes, judgment has been passed on the Gospel of Jesus’s Wife: it’s a fake.

A fundamental question remains, however. Why would someone have forged a document like this? As long as King preserves the anonymity of the papyrus’s owner – and she has yet to give any indication that she will do otherwise – any answer to this question is unavoidably speculative. But some possibilities do suggest themselves.

Money is surely the leading candidate. A text that changes the way we understand the history of

Christianity, and potentially the story of Jesus himself, would be worth a lot. In this scenario, the target of the scam would be the anonymous owner, not King – but King’s authentication of the fragment, and the publicity she garnered for it, would of course enhance its value immeasurably. (The owner said he wanted to avoid being hounded by buyers, which is not quite the same as saying he didn’t want someone to buy it.) The possibility that the owner has a financial investment in the contents of the papyrus, in turn, might explain his reluctance to come forward in the wake of the forgery accusations.

The forger might also have had ideological motivations. For denominations invested in allowing priests to marry – prominently, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints – the mere mention of Jesus’s being married would provide a strong foundation for contemporary beliefs. One can also imagine the forger as a feminist activist, or someone opposed to Catholic clericalism, or perhaps some combination of the two. Conversely, the forger might have been trying to undermine the supposed liberal agenda of scholars like King, by revealing them as naive and easily fooled. Some commentators have taken that stance. In early May, for example, a Web site called Stand Firm – which has, along with sections on Anglicans, Catholics, and Muslims, an entire section dedicated to abortion – ran a short article titled “The

Gospel of Jesus' Wife Fragment Part of Elaborate Ruse," which directly attacked King. "It's hard to believe," the author wrote, "that you can be an 'expert' and still be taken in on this ruse." King's response to these kinds of attacks has been relatively generous: she told us only that she is "disappointed" by them, because they have "thrown cold water on open discussion of the arguments."

Still, this last possibility – public shaming as a mode of expressing dissatisfaction – has its own history in academia. In October 2013, more than 150 open-access scientific journals were humiliated when it was revealed that they had accepted for publication a fake article about a lichen-based cancer treatment, which had been written as an academic sting operation precisely to expose the low standards of scholarly journals and publishers. Perhaps the forger of the Gospel of Jesus's Wife hoped that the exposure of the text as fake would similarly tarnish the reputation of feminist inquiry into the New Testament. Whether or not this was the forger's goal, in the minds of some, the feminists were asking for it. Hyperfeminist interest in early Christianity, Christian Askeland claimed, was what had led to this whole debacle.

Perhaps the forger merely intended to play an elaborate practical joke on the academy. Scholarly punking is not unprecedented. In the early 20th century, the German Church historian Hans

Lietzmann inserted lines into a Byzantine text and challenged his colleagues to see whether they could identify them. (They couldn't.) Similar motivations have been ascribed to Morton Smith, a Columbia University historian who in 1958 "discovered" a passage from a supposedly ancient text known as the Secret Gospel of Mark featuring a scene in which a youth wrapped only in a linen cloth was said to have spent the night with Jesus. The announcement at first created a media sensation (Jesus was gay!), but numerous factors – not least that the original manuscript was somehow "lost" after Smith's photographs of it were published – led the majority of researchers to conclude that it was a fake. In *The Secret Gospel of Mark Unveiled*, his book about this strange episode, Peter Jeffery describes Smith as playing a game primarily devoted to "congratulating his own creative brilliance." In academia, such a thing is hardly unimaginable.

Indeed, in the scholarly world of ancient history and ancient texts, little is truly unimaginable – because so little, in the end, is truly known. Despite the piles of evidence suggesting that the Gospel of Jesus's Wife is a forgery, there remains the possibility, however slim, that it is authentic. So the question becomes this: How much historical reconstruction are scholars willing to stake on such narrow grounds? Or, alternatively: Even if the fragment were proved beyond a doubt to be

authentic, could one small piece of papyrus really be so important as to fundamentally change our understanding of the past? The problem with reconstructing the distant past is that with so little evidence available, the discovery of even the tiniest pieces can lead to outsize ramifications. It's a situation ripe for abuse. The more sensationally these sorts of discoveries are reported, the more such abuse we can expect. ♦

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man - 100 Years

by *Daniel Mulhall*

A couple of summers ago I was visiting the Cotswolds and in one of those attractive villages, Stow-on-the-Wold I think it was, I came across a small bookshop. Now there's a temptation I can never resist, for I love the prospect of a serendipitous discovery. Browsing through the eclectic mix of books quartered there, I stumbled upon a copy of James Joyce's autobiographical novel, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, in which he charts the childhood and coming-of-age of Stephen Dedalus, a character who also features prominently in *Ulysses*.

The volume I purchased that day was not a first edition but a reprint published in 1946. It had been bought originally from a bookseller in Sydney and was owned by someone who, in 1948, had been a student at Auckland University College. I suppose that this young woman had moved to England at some stage and Joyce's book had meant enough to her to justify

carrying it halfway across the world. Perhaps it was Joyce's preoccupation with exile ('I may learn in my own life and away from home and friends what the heart is and what it feels') that had made her take it with her on her own journey.

I bought this copy of Joyce's novel because I knew that we were approaching the centenary of its publication in December 1916 when I would want to reread a work I first encountered as a student during the 1970s and had dipped into on and off over the years. 1916 was also the year of the Easter Rising, which set Joyce's homeland on the road to independence.

Is it a coincidence that Joyce's three best-known books, *Dubliners* (1914), *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) and *Ulysses* (1922), were all published during the most turbulent era in modern Irish history, stretching from the Home Rule crisis of 1912-1914 to the creation of the Irish Free State in 1922, just weeks before the publication of *Ulysses*? Unlike W.B. Yeats and Sean O'Casey, Joyce did not write about the events of that era directly. He took little notice of the Rising which erupted at a time when he was already absorbed with the complex task of writing *Ulysses*. Indeed, Joyce spent all of those years of political change outside of Ireland, having left in 1904 and paying his final visit in 1912. Yet, he remained in thrall to the country of his birth and his

three great books deal exclusively with the Ireland he knew before his departure for a life that would be lived in Austria-Hungary, Italy, France and Switzerland, where he died in January 1941.

While Joyce often affected a lofty disdain for public affairs, in fact in his younger years he took a healthy interest in Irish history and politics, which were part of the dense fabric of life he sought to dissect through his writings. When he was living in Trieste, he contributed a series of articles to a local Italian language newspaper which incorporated a broadly nationalist interpretation of Irish history.

Joyce's work provides an elliptical commentary on pre-revolutionary Ireland. His works are set in a country that was simmering under the influence of a new brand of nationalism infused with cultural preoccupations such as the urge to revive the Irish language. In his story 'The Dead', Miss Ivers, a dedicated member of the Gaelic League, chides Gabriel Conroy for taking his holidays in continental Europe rather than in the west of Ireland, favoured by early twentieth century language enthusiasts. In *A Portrait*, Stephen Dedalus is taken to task by a fellow student for his unwillingness to learn his native language (Joyce did take some Irish lessons, but quickly abandoned this effort, contenting himself with his supreme mastery of the English language). A devoted modernist, he set himself against the Irish literary

revival pioneered by Yeats which he viewed as compromised and backward-looking. In *A Portrait*, Joyce wrote that Yeats and his school remember 'forgotten beauty' and 'the loveliness which has long faded from the world' while he desired 'to press in my arms the loveliness which has not yet come into the world.'

Joyce admired the work of Arthur Griffith, founder of the original Sinn Féin party, who favoured a British-Irish dual monarchy along the lines of that which had existed in Austria-Hungary since 1867, and who is referred to several times in *Ulysses*. Joyce amuses himself by crediting his fictional Leopold Bloom, who has a Hungarian background, with inspiring Griffith's 'Hungarian' policy.

The Cyclops episode of *Ulysses* is a hilarious send-up of what Joyce saw as the excessively narrow nationalism of the period. The main target of this avalanche of hyperbolic prose is 'the Citizen', a character based on Michael Cusack, founder of the Gaelic Athletic Association (founded in 1884), which remains Ireland's premier sporting body. Written during the crisis of the Great War and its immediate aftermath, *Ulysses* strikes me as a plea for tolerance in its lionising of Bloom, whose accommodating outlook jars with the more uncompromising attitudes of many of those he encounters during his wanderings around Dublin on the 16th of June 1904. In a key passage,

Bloom, an untypical Dubliner, is asked 'what is your nation?' to which he replies 'Ireland, I was born here, Ireland.' With those words, Joyce seeks to distance himself from the more atavistic political creeds of the early twentieth century.

The public figure who looms largest in Joyce's imagination is Charles Stewart Parnell. In *Dubliners*, the story 'Ivy Day at the Committee Room' offers a brilliant insight into the politics of early twentieth century Ireland as election canvassers discuss the impending visit to Ireland of King Edward VII and reflect on the memory of Ireland's lost leader. An Anglo-Irish landlord, Parnell became the champion of nationalist Ireland and in 1885 persuaded Gladstone to support Home Rule. Then, at the height of his political career, Parnell fell from grace when he was named in a divorce case. The ensuing scandal brought bitter divisions between supporters and opponents of Parnell which continued after his death in 1891. The Irish Parliamentary Party he had headed with such success never fully recovered the verve it had displayed under Parnell's talented leadership.

Parnell had an active afterlife in Irish literature. Yeats wrote about him in the 1930s when Parnell had already been dead for more than four decades. And he is an important presence in Joyce's work. John Stanislaus Joyce was a devoted Parnellite and this provided his son with material for a wonderfully

dramatic piece of writing in *A Portrait* when the family's Christmas dinner is disrupted by a fierce verbal battle about Parnell.

In this gripping passage, Mrs Dante Riordan staunchly defends the Catholic bishops in their opposition to Parnell. In her view, the bishops and priests of Ireland had spoken and 'they must be obeyed'. This brings forth fusillades of anti-clerical sentiment from Simon Dedalus (aka Joyce's colourful father, 'a praiser of his own past' as his son described him) and his fellow Parnell devotee, Mr Casey, whose sorrowed anger at the demise of his 'dead king', and the blame he apportioned to the Catholic Church for this, led him to say that 'we have had too much God in Ireland'.

A hundred years after its publication, Joyce's most accessible work is well worth a read. Its prose is constantly luminous as in this evocation of schoolboy ennui – 'His childhood was dead or lost and with it his soul capable of simple joys and he was drifting amid life like the barren shell of the moon.' The novel deals with universal themes. There are early childhood impressions of a confusing world: 'What was after the universe? Nothing. But was there anything round the universe to show where it stopped before the nothing place began?' *A Portrait* depicts the simple piety of Stephen's childhood where: 'though there were different names for God in all the different languages

in the world and God understood what all the people said in their different languages, still God remained always the same God and God's real name was God.'

But the lion's share of the book is devoted to Stephen's (and Joyce's) struggles with religion, nationality and his own artistic identity. In the Ireland in which he grew up, Joyce believed that 'nets' of 'language, nationality, religion' were flung at the soul to 'hold it back from flight,' but he was determined to fly past those nets even if it meant having to resort to 'silence, cunning and exile'.

The novel dwells at length on Joyce's discovery of the temptations of the flesh and the agonies of conscience and fear of hell and damnation with which he grapples. When he is being tempted to join the Jesuits, he decides that 'his destiny was to be elusive of social or religious orders' and resolved 'to learn his own wisdom apart from others ... wandering among the snares of the world.'

The book's closing chapter consists of an extended exploration of his credo as a writer as he prepares to leave Ireland. Entering University, he describes how 'his soul had arisen from the grave of boyhood ... He would create proudly out of the freedom and power of his soul ... a living thing, new and soaring and beautiful, impalpable, imperishable.'

Stephen recalls discussions with fellow students about art, nationalism ('the sorrowful legend of

Ireland') and international issues, where he tangles with the ardent pacifist and suffragist McCann, who represents Francis Sheehy-Skeffington, who was summarily executed by a deranged British officer during the Easter Rising in which Sheehy-Skeffington had taken no part.

A Portrait reaches a crescendo when Stephen stands on a Dublin beach, 'unheeded, happy and near to the wild heart of life' and sees a girl 'alone and still, gazing out to sea.' The sight of her elicits a rapturous response. 'She seemed like one whom magic had changed into the likeness of a strange and beautiful seabird. Her long slender bare legs were delicate as a crane's and pure save where an emerald trail of seaweed had fashioned itself as a sign upon the flesh.' The girl looked at him 'in quiet sufferance of his gaze, without shame or wantonness.' Stephen responds with what he describes as 'an outburst of profane joy'.

A Portrait ends with the author's resolve to leave Ireland and 'to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race.' The word 'race' in Joyce's usage has a meaning akin to nation. And one way of looking at *Ulysses* is to conclude that Joyce fulfilled his lofty ambition. He explored the reality of early twentieth century Dublin, and of the modern world, through a character. Bloom, who was far more rooted in workaday realities than the precocious,

aesthetic youth of Joyce's century-old novel.

As James Joyce immersed himself in his creative work on *A Portrait* and *Ulysses*, Ireland was being reshaped by many of his contemporaries who had remained at home and became involved in the struggle for independence. Those times left a powerful legacy, of political independence and outstanding literary achievement, which would probably not have flowered to quite the same extent against a tamer Irish political backdrop. The Easter Rising has this year been commemorated with honesty and sensitivity. *A Portrait* deserves its place in our memory as another milestone from that most prolific era in twentieth century Irish history, and in the annals of modern literature. As we say in Irish *ní bheidh a leithéid ann arís* – 'the likes of it will never be seen again'. ♦

Side by...

The Way Things Are Going

by Lynn Freed

GWEN WAS THE ONE WHO had insisted that Ma and I move to America. Sooner or later, she'd said, it would happen again, it was only a matter of time. And I suppose she was right. But really it was all my fault; I should have known better than to let them in. I did know better. How many times had I read of people tied up, beaten, robbed, raped, or killed by men pretending to be the police? Or by the real police? What was the difference, once they were tying you up? And what stupidity had had me sliding off the door chain if not my infuriating habit of consideration for others?

So if anything were to blame, it was that – the manners we'd been saddled with right from the start. Even on the plane, with the aging pharmacist talking me through the history of the national parks of America, and me nodding – oh yes? oh really? – wishing him struck down right there by a stroke, even then I was thinking, I'll never be free of this, never.

And now here we were, Ma and I – she settled into Gwen's guest room, and me with the washing machine

...by side

A dolgok alakulása

fordította *Tárnok Attila*

GWEN ERŐLTETTE, HOGY Anya és én Amerikába költözzünk. Előbb-utóbb úgyis újra megtalálnak, csak idő kérdése. Gondolom, igaza volt. De valójában minden az én hibám: én engedtem be őket; pedig tudhattam volna. Tudtam. Hányszor olvastam róla, hogy embereket kötöztek meg, vertek meg, raboltak ki, erőszakoltak vagy öltek meg magukat rendőrnek álcázó banditák. Néha éppenséggel valódi rendőrök. Nincs köztük különbség, ha egyszer megkötöznek. És milyen ostoba voltam, hogy kiakasztottam az ajtón a biztonsági láncot! Csupán a mások iránt érzett őrzítő figyelmességem vezetett.

Szóval, ha hibákat keresünk, itt a magyarázat: a jólneveltségünkre foghatnám. Kisgyerekkorunk óta jó modorra szoktattak. Még a repülőgépen is, amikor az öregedő gyógyszerész Amerika nemzeti parkjairól mesélt, én buzgón bólogattam. Ó, valóban? Igazán? Miközben azt kívántam, bárcsak elvinné egy infarktus, ott rögtön, de még ekkor is éreztem, hogy ettől a jó modortól soha nem szabadulok, soha.

and the dryer on the glassed-in upstairs porch, her snoring thundering through the glass door between us.

I pushed my hair off the scar across my forehead, a new habit. It still throbbed when I was tired, a sort of memento mori, or memento stupiditi more like it, because they had told me not to look at them, told me to keep my head down or they'd shoot me right there, and still I'd looked up to ask – well, what? What was there anyone could ask of such people on behalf of one's own life?

So that's when the gun had come down across my forehead, slamming my face back to the floor. They'd laughed, and one squatted over me and began fingering under my skirt, considering, no doubt, whether I'd be worth the trouble of a rape. And even so, lying on the cloakroom tiles, the blood pooling under my face, I'd whispered, Please – please don't!

And then suddenly the fingers were withdrawn and a hand grasped the back of my neck, banged my head hard, once, twice, on the tiles.

“Combeenayshin, beetch! Geev me the combeenayshin or I shoot you now!”

And so I did, hearing the numbers bubble out low and warped into the pool of blood – two left, eight right, six left – as if a giant bell had settled over me as I lay there in the damp echoing darkness of the cloakroom, with the smell of rubber raincoats and the faint barking of the Moffits' dogs, waiting for death to

És most itt vagyunk, Anya és én. Anya Gwen vendégszobájában, én meg az emeleti, beüvegezett verandán a mosógép és a szárító társaságában, de az üvegajtón át hallom, ahogy anyám horkol.

Új szokásként a hajamat oldalra fésülöm, a homlokomon így látszik a heg. Néha, amikor fáradt vagyok, még lüktet, memento mori, vagy inkább memento stupiditi, hisz figyelmeztettek, hogy ne nézzek rájuk, a földet nézzem vagy azonnal belém eresztenek egy golyót, de én feléjük fordultam, hogy kérdezzek valamit. Vajon mit? Mit lehet ilyen emberektől kérdezni, az élet nevében?

A puska tusa ekkor sújtott a homlokomra, az arcomat a padlóhoz szögezte. Kinevettek. Az egyikük mellém térdelt, a szoknyám alá nyúlt, nyilván mérlegelte, érdemes-e megerőszkolnia. És még ott is, az előszoba kövén, ahogy a vér tócsába gyűlt az arcom körül, még ott is udvariasan sóhajtottam: Kérem ne! Legyen szíves!

Aztán kihúzta a kezét a szoknyám alól, megragadta a tarkómat és a járólaphoz vágta a fejem. Egyszer. Kétszer.

– A kombinációt, te szuka! Add meg a számkombinációt vagy rögtön lelőlek!

Megtettem. Hallottam, amint a számok görcsösen belebugyognak a vértócsába: balra kettő, jobbra nyolc, balra hat. Mintha egy gigantikus búra alatt feküdnék, az előtér nyirkos félhomályában, orromban

come.

And only then did I remember Ma. What had they done to her up there? I'd heard the stories, horrible, ugly, monstrous stories of what they did to old women. I could hear them up there now, smashing things, grunting, banging. One was in the dining room, kicking at the liquor cabinet, and I tried to say, The key's in my bag, because who knew what they'd do if they couldn't get at the liquor? I did say it, but they seemed to have broken in already, I could hear the bottles clinking. Please, I prayed, please let the Moffits hear them and call the real police before they get so drunk that they rape and kill us both.

How many of them were there? Three? Four? I couldn't tell. And when one came to stand over me and I saw his policeman's boot, felt the urine running in a warm, stinking stream through my hair and over the gash, I wondered, in the calm way of the doomed, whether he was the fingerer, and if he was whether he had AIDS. Most of them had AIDS, people said. Most of them were high on drugs as well.

And just then the phone rang, silencing everything for a moment. The answering machine clicked on and Gwen's voice came through. "Hey, Jo," she said, "it's me. You there? Gladys? Gladys, would you pick up the phone please? Hmm. Look, Jo, I'll try again in ten minutes. If you're not there, I'll phone the Moffits."

That's when they began to quarrel, hissing and

gumi esőköpenyek szaga és távolról hallom Moffiték kutyáját. A halált vártam.

És csak ekkor jutott eszembe anyám. Mit lehet vele odafönt? Hallottuk elégszer, mit tesznek idős asszonyokkal, utálatos, irtóztató, gyalázatos történeteket. Fentről morgolódás és dulakodás hangjait hallottam. Az egyikük az ebédlőben a bárszekrény ajtaját rugdalta. A táskámban van a kulcs, próbáltam mondani, mert ki tudja, mire képesek az alkoholért. De mire kipréseltem a szavakat, már feltörték a szekrényt, az üvegek egymáshoz koccantak. Magamban fohászkoztam, bárcsak Moffiték meghallanák a zajt, és kihívnák a valódi rendőrséget, mielőtt ezek itt úgy berúgnak, hogy megerőszkolnak és legyilkolnak mindkettőnket.

Hányan voltak? Hárman? Négyen? Képtelenség volt megállapítanom. Amikor egyikük fölém állt, csak a rendőrcsizmát láttam, és éreztem, hogy bűzös, meleg vizelete végigcsurog a hajamon, a homloksebemen, a halálraítéltek nyugalmával azon töprengtem, vajon ez ugyanaz-e, aki az előbb tapogatott, és ha igen, hogy vajon nem HIV-fertőzött-e. Úgy hallottam, a legtöbbjük AIDS-beteg. A legtöbbjük drogos is.

Ebben a pillanatban megcsörrent a telefon, és mindenki megdermedt. Bekapcsolt az üzenetrögzítő, majd Gwen hangja szólt:

– Halló? Jo? Én vagyok az. Gladys? Ott vagytok?

spitting at each other. One threw the phone to the floor, kicked it. They even seemed to have forgotten me as they ran here, then there, dragging things, heaving things, until at last the front door opened, letting in a draft of warm night air. And a car started up. And they were gone.

So, here we were now, drinking tea out of mugs around Gwen's kitchen table.

"You girls should do what I did," Ma said brightly. "Take in the odd man of an afternoon."

Gwen snatched up the scones and held them out. "Here, Ma," she said. "Sonia made them."

"Sonia? Who's Sonia?"

Sonia rolled her eyes. She was a charmless girl, sneering and sarcastic. Gwen said they were all this way, American teenagers, because right from the start they'd been fed a diet of praise and false encouragement. And look what it produced – joylessness, confusion, discontent.

"I just followed the recipe," Sonia mumbled.

Ma twisted around to take her in. Soon she wasn't going to be able to see at all, Dr. Slatkin had warned me, nothing to be done about it. "Couldn't you find a girl who speaks English?" she said.

I saw Gwen stiffen. "Let it go," I whispered. "She's just enjoying herself."

But Gwen could never let a thing go, certainly not when it came to Sonia. She might have theories about

Gladys, vedd fel a telefont. Hmm... Figyelj, Jo. Tíz perc múlva újra hívlak, ha nem veszitek fel, megcsörgetem Moffitékat.

A hívás után a behatólok vitatkozni kezdtek, egymást szidták, köpködték. Az egyik a földhöz vágta a telefont és belerúgott. Rólam szinte megfélelkeztek, ide-oda kapkodtak, tárgyakat löktek fel, vonszoltak magukkal, aztán egyszer csak kinyílt a bejárati ajtó, meleg éjszakai fuvallat érkezett, felbőgött egy autó a ház előtt, és mindenki eltűnt.

Így hát most itt ülünk Gwen konyhaasztalánál, teát kortyolgatunk.

– Lányok, vegyetek példát rólam – mondta Anya élénken. – Meg kell ragadni egy könnyű délutáni flörtnél.

Gwen a lángost kínálta.

– Kóstold meg, Anya – mondta. – Sonia sütötte.

– Sonia? Milyen Sonia?

Sonia a szemét forgatta, bájtalanul, gúnyosan vigyorgott. Gwen szerint minden amerikai tinédzser ilyen, mert kiskoruk óta hamis biztatásban és dicséretekben fürdenek. És mire jó mindez? Az eredmény örömtelen szétszórtság és elégedetlenség.

– Csak megcsináltam a receptet – motyogta Sonia.

Anya oldalt fordult, hogy megnézzze magának. Nemsokára semmit sem fog látni, figyelmeztetett Slatkin doktor, nincs mit tenni.

– Nem találtál olyan lányt, aki legalább

American teenagers, send the girl to her father's when she'd had enough of her rudeness, because really she was just like him, she said, vicious, unprincipled, aggressive – she might long for the day when the girl would be out of her hair and away at college – but when it came to Ma, all she wanted was to have Sonia properly loved.

“That's Sonia, Ma!” she said, starting the whole rigmarole again. “And we don't have a 'girl' here, only a cleaning woman, who, as a matter of fact, doesn't speak a word of English. This 'girl' is your granddaughter. And she certainly speaks English! American English! Because she's an American!”

Ma shrugged. “Well, whoever she is, there's no reason even an American can't make use of her afternoons. Mark my words, my dear, it would go a long way toward helping with the petty cash.”

Sonia launched herself from her chair and stamped out of the kitchen. Hers was a different world from ours, Gwen had explained, and there was nothing you could do to bring such teenagers around to the sort of compunctions under which we ourselves would have had to labor if an aunt and a grandmother suddenly descended into our lives.

“Oh, Ma!” Gwen said. “She's only fifteen, for God's sake!”

But Ma just gave her a cagey look. “Fifteen? You could always try marrying her off, you know. If she'd

tisztességesen beszél angolul? – kérdezte.

Láttam, hogy Gwen meg fog sértődni.

– Hagyd szó nélkül – súgtam. – Hadd élvezze a fölényét.

De Gwen soha nem hagyja magát. Különösen nem, ha Soniáról van szó. Elméleteket gyárt ugyan az amerikai tinédzserekről, sőt elküldi az apjához, amikor már elege van a lányból, a nyers modorából – mert ebben csakugyan az apjára ütött: bántóan neveletlen, sőt arrogáns –, és sóvároghatja a jövőt, amikor a lány okozta terhek, ha majd egyetemre megy, lekerülnek a válláról, de anyánktól, mindentől függetlenül, azt várja el, hogy szeresse Soniát.

– Anya, bemutatom Soniát – vetette be a szokásos fordulatot. – És nincs cselédünk, csak egy bejárónőnk, aki történetesen egy szót sem beszél angolul. Ez a lány itt az unokád, és beszél az angolt. Amerikai angolt, mert amerikainak született.

Anya egy vállrándítással elintézte a kérdést.

– Akárki is ez a lány, még ha amerikai is, kezdhetne valamit magával. Jegyezd meg, amit mondok, szívem, messze vagyunk még attól, hogy hozzájáruljon a koszthoz.

Sonia felpattant és kiviharzott a konyhából. Egy külön világban él, szokott érvelni Gwen. Nincs rá mód, hogy egy ilyen kamasz megérezze, min mentünk volna mi keresztül annak idején, ha egy nagymama vagy egy nagynéni hirtelen beleszöppen a

stand up straight and do something with that hair, some man might find it in him to take her off your hands.”

Somehow, Gwen said, the whole thing must have got through to Ma, even subliminally, didn't I think so? All this business about belles de jour and so forth?

I shrugged. As far as anyone could tell, they'd overlooked Ma completely. Pure luck, people said, that phone call. And maybe Gladys was the one who'd tipped them off. Why else would she have come back so late from church? And then gone into such an aria of shrieks before she'd even seen me on the cloakroom floor?

Still, it was her shrieking that had alerted the Moffits, John Moffit who had untied me, and Aileen who had run upstairs to find Ma. And, yes, there she was, fast asleep and snoring.

“I mean, she must have heard you talking about it,” Gwen said, “not to mention giving evidence to the police and so forth.”

We had always thought in different directions, Gwen and I, but I could never quite bring myself to point this out to her. So if she wanted to believe that Ma fancied herself a belle de jour because one of the intruders had considered raping me, or that Ma loved me best because I had never had a chance, as Gwen put it, “to threaten her primacy” with my father – if it comforted her to think life ran in those directions, fine with me.

mindennapjainkba.

– Ó, az isten szerelmére, Anya! – mondta Gwen. – Még csak tizenöt éves.

De Anya gyanakvóan pillantott rá.

– Tizenöt? Megpróbálhatnád kiházásítani. Ide figyelj, ha kihúzná magát, és csinálna valamit a hajával, akadna férfi, aki megszabadít tőle.

Gwen szerint Anya valahogy mindenről tudomást szerzett. Legalábbis öntudatlanul. Nem gondolom? Belles de jour, és így tovább.

Vállat vontam. Amennyire utólag megállapítható volt, Anyával egyáltalán nem törődtek. A legjobbkor jött az a telefonhívás, mondogatták az ismerősök. És hogy talán Gladys adta a tippet a behatolóknak. Miért olyan soká jött meg a templomból? Aztán miért kezdett olyan éktelen jajveszékelésbe már azelőtt, hogy belém botlott volna az előtérben.

Moffiték mindenesetre a visítózásra figyeltek fel. John Moffit oldozta ki a kezem és Aileen szaladt fel Anyához. És igen, Anya mélyen aludt, horkolt.

– Úgy értem, csak felfogta, mi történt, amikor elmesélted a nyomozóknak – mondta Gwen. Látta a bizonyítékokat.

Gwen és én mindig eltérően gondolkodtunk, de soha nem hívtam erre fel a figyelmét. Ha akarja, higgye csak, hogy Anya belle de journak képzei magát, csupán mert az egyik behatoló majdnem megerőszkolt, vagy hogy Anya azért szeret engem

“Perhaps I should look into some sort of therapist for her,” Gwen said, “someone versed in this sort of delusion.” She took out her notebook and jotted something down.

Next to my bed was a plastic folder full of her notes, all printed up, with headings and page numbers. This was how to use the washing machine, that the alarm system, and to set it every time I went out, regardless, and if I did happen to set it off by mistake, to phone this number within three minutes or the police would come and there’d be a hefty charge.

The gash on my forehead began to throb. We’d been at Gwen’s for thirteen days, and even before we’d landed I’d been considering a polite way to free myself. But when I suggested a little flat of my own somewhere, even a room, she just reminded me that we were living on rands here, Ma and I, not dollars, and did I realize how far rands would go in a place like California? Surely it would be more sensible for us all just to bung in together? Share the burden? Didn’t I agree?

And so, of course, I did agree. But every night I lay awake, feeling myself slide down so far into what I always became when I was with Gwen that soon there would be nothing to grasp onto to pull myself back up. And if I went on agreeing with her like this, one day I’d forget how to know what I thought or felt, and would find myself heaping scorn on the sort of people

jobban, mert mindig, ahogy Gwen fogalmaz, apám fölé helyeztem őt. Ha ettől jobban érzi magát, hadd gondolja, hogy az életünk ilyen dolgokon múlik, nem érdekel.

– Esetleg találnom kéne valami terápiát – mondta Gwen –, valakit, aki ért az ilyesféle tévképzetekhez.

Elővette a noteszét és valamit lejegyzett.

Az ágyam mellett, egy műanyag iratgyűjtő tele volt a jegyzeteivel, kinyomtatva, fejléccel, oldalszámmal. Ezek leírták a mosógép működtetését, a riasztó beállítását, ha elmegyek itthonról, és ha véletlenül akaratom ellenére bekapcsol, milyen számot kell hívnom három percen belül, nehogy kijöjjön a rendőrség és súlyos bírságot kelljen fizetni a téves riasztásért.

Lüktetni kezdett a homloksebem. Tizenhárom napja laktunk Gwennél, és már a repülőn azon tanakodtam, miként hárítsam el udvariasan a vendéglátást. De amikor felvettem egy saját kis lakás vagy legalább egy szoba ötletét, Gwen emlékeztetett rá, hogy Anya és én dél-afrikai randból gazdálkodunk, nem dollárból, és hogy nincs elképzelésem róla, mennyire semmit nem érünk a pénzünkkel Kaliforniában. Talán belátom, hogy ésszerűbb, ha összetartunk, és megosztjuk a terheket. Nem így gondolom?

És persze, egyetértettem vele. De éjszakánként éberem feküdtem az ágyamon, és éreztem, hogy olyan

I'd always loved, people she considered "full of nonsense," because I'd have forgotten how full of nonsense I was myself, so bewitched would I be back into childhood, with Gwen wielding all the authority of the ten years between us.

I switched on the bedside light. 11:57. At home it would be Sunday morning already, hadadas on the lawn and the sea silver in the morning light. That Sunday morning, as I'd driven down to the beach, hill after hill, I'd been thinking of Ma waking to the thought of another day without a future to look forward to. She'd be asking for me, I thought, and Gladys will have to remind her that it's Sunday, my day for the beach. And then, feeling forsaken, she'd start casting about, looking for someone to blame.

And that would be Gwen, never mind that she lived on the other side of the world. I'd tried to explain to Gwen that Ma was rudderless without her sight, couldn't even see herself in the mirror anymore or read without some sort of headgear that she refused to wear. If I were going blind like this, I'd say, if I'd lost my looks and the life that went with them, I'd also be full of blame.

"Life?" Gwen cried, full of blame herself. "What life? Anyway, you're blind already! Can't you see what you're doing? Won't you at least promise that you'll consider your own future?"

And so, of course, I did promise. But walking out

mélyre csúszok, vissza, ahova Gwen mindig magával rántott, amikor együtt voltunk, hogy már nincs mibe kapaszkodnom, hogy felhúzzam magam. És ha ez így megy tovább, ha mindig egyet kell vele értenem, egy nap majd ködbe vész, amit gondolok vagy érzek, és azon kapom magam, hogy rázúdítom a vádjaimat azokra, akiket pedig mindig is szerettem, az olyan emberekre, akiket ő abszurdnak lát, és mert addigra teljesen elfelejtem, mennyire megbabonázottan abszurd voltam én magam is, gyerekkorunkban, amikor Gwen gyakorolt uralmat felettem, a tíz év korkülönbség jogán.

Felkapcsoltam az éjjeli lámpát. Három perc múlva éjfél. Otthon már vasárnap reggel van, a pázsiton íbiszek és a derengő fényben a tenger ezüstösen csillog. Azon a vasárnap reggelen is, ahogy a part felé hajtottam, dombról le, dombra fel, arra gondoltam, anyám is új napra ébred, egy jövőbe nem tekintő új napra. Valószínűleg keresett, de Gladys emlékeztette rá, hogy vasárnap van, lementem a partra. Aztán mint akit cserbenhagytak, térült-fordult; nem tudott, kire haragudni.

Gwen is hozta a formáját, hiába élt a világ túlsó végén. Korábban igyekeztem megmagyarázni neki, hogy Anya iránya vesztett nélküle, a tükörben sem látja már magát, olvasni sem lát vastag szemüveg nélkül, de nem hajlandó viselni. Azt szoktam mondani, hogy ha én is így megvakulnék, és az

along the pier that morning, I thought that the future was, perhaps, the whole point of a married man. Without a future, there was just this – the pier, the sea, the beach, and him sitting, as usual, among the Indian fishermen, quite unaware that his presence there might spoil their morning's fishing. He was selfish in this way, greedy for what pleased him. Standing behind him, with the sun on my skin, the sting of the salt, the bucket of dying fish, I realized quite suddenly that this had been part of it all along – his selfishness, his greed. And that even as I stood there, longing for him to turn, and for the smell of his sweat, the taste of his skin, it was as if a cloud, cool and sweet, had been passing over us all the years we had known each other, and when it passed, as it was passing already, everything would be different, exposed in a glare of light.

You're early, he said, not turning around. It was a trick of his, knowing I was there while pretending not to. He was glossy, like the fish he'd just caught, and, for once, I was glad it was Gladys's Sunday off and I couldn't go up the coast with him for the afternoon.

Gladys would be waiting for me to come home, dressed already in her severe Sunday clothes. She was a sour, taciturn woman, with a way of clicking her tongue when she was displeased that had always unsettled me. If Ma upbraided her for this or for anything else, she just stood there, sullen, silent, until

életem így a semmibe veszne, mint anyánké, én is állandóan haragudnék valakire.

– Élet! – kiáltott fel Gwen. – És mégis, milyen élet ez így?! Egyébként te magad is vak vagy már. Nem látod, mit csinálsz magaddal. Ígérd meg, hogy legalább a saját jövőddel is foglalkozol.

És persze megígértem. Am ahogy aznap reggel a mólón sétáltam, arra gondoltam, a jövő kérdésén csakis házasságban élők töprenghetnek. És jövő nélkül csupán ennyi az élet: a móló, a tenger és a part, ahol egy férfi úgy ücsörög az indiai horgászok között, hogy észre sem veszi, mennyire zavarja őket. Önző volt, a maga módján, mohó, hogy a saját vágyait kielégítse. Ahogy mögötte megálltam, bőrömön a nap melegével, a lábfejemet csipkedő homokban – a vödörben vergődő halak –, hirtelen megéreztem, hogy ez a mohó önzés mindvégig jellemezte a kapcsolatunkat. És miközben vágytam rá, hogy megforduljon, hogy újra megérezzem verejtékben úszó bőrének ízét, mintha egy hideg de édes felhő vonult volna át fölöttünk, az együtt töltött évek fölött, és amint tovaszáll, ahogy már most tünedezik, minden más színben, vakító fényben fog játszani.

Korán érkezted, mondta, anélkül, hogy megfordult volna. Mindig így tett: eljátszotta, hogy nem vesz észre, pedig tudja, hogy ott állok mögötte. A modora olyan síkos volt, mint a kifogott halak, és ezúttal örültem, hogy Gladys szabadnapos, hogy nem

she'd been given the usual warning and sent back to the kitchen.

When I began to take over the running of the house, I thought that at last I'd be able to replace her with someone more tractable. But it was too late. Ma would consider no one but Gladys to help her out of the bath, or to know how she liked her eggs, or which dress she meant when she couldn't find the words to describe it.

And so we were stuck, Gladys and I, with our mutual dislike. We both knew that the ease Ma and I enjoyed was due in large part to her. I knew too that in the long history of leisurely societies ours was young and fragile, and would not last. And if I didn't know this already, there were the Moffits to remind me. One need only consider the way things are going in the country these days, John had said that morning, handing me the blueprints for a new security wall, new gates. And before you balk at the price, he'd added, just consider Aileen – voting for all the right things all these years, and now, three afternoons a week, learning to use a gun.

John and Aileen lived in the other half of what had once been her grandfather's house. It was they who had divided the old place into two maisonettes, each with its own garden, they who had sold our half to my father a few months before he died. He'd wanted somewhere up on the ridge to lodge his pregnant mistress and her daughter. And Ma was proud of

mehetek el vele a parton ma délután.

Gladys vár rám otthon, komoly vasárnapi öltözetben. Savanyú, szófukar asszony, és mindig zavar, ahogy bántóan csettint a nyelvével, ha elégedetlen valamivel. Amikor Anya szemrehányást tesz neki ezért vagy bármi másért, konok csöndben tűri, kivárja, hogy figyelmeztessék a konyhai feladatokra.

Abban az időben, amikor kezdtem magamhoz ragadni a ház irányítását, azt terveztem, hogy majd egy könnyebben kezelhető alkalmazottra váltok. De már késő volt. Anya nem tűrt volna meg senkit Gladysen kívül a fürdetésnél, csak Gladys volt képes a tojást reggelire megfelelően elkészíteni vagy kitalálni, melyik ruhára gondol anyám, amikor képtelen azt szavakkal körülírni.

Így nem szakíthattunk, Gladys és én, bár nem szívleltük egymást. Mindketten tudtuk, hogy Anya és én gondtalan életünket nagyrészt Gladysnek köszönhetjük. Én még azt is tudtam, hogy az elkényelmesedett társadalmak sorában a mi fiatal és törekeny berendezkedésünk nem állhat fenn sokáig. De még ha magamtól nem is tudtam volna, Moffiték nap mint nap emlékeztettek rá. Aznap reggel is, amikor az új biztonsági kerítés és az elektromos kapu kódját átadta, John megjegyezte, hogy az ember jobb, ha számol vele, milyen társadalomban él manapság. És mielőtt megrökönyödnék az árán, tette hozzá,

having been the mistress, proud of what he'd done for the three of us, for Gwen too, who wasn't his, and who'd never uttered a civil word to him, not even on his deathbed.

Ma had always understood by what means she'd risen to that life of orders given, orders taken, and a bell in every room to summon the servants. Every now and then she'd reminded us of this, Gwen and me, and if Gwen didn't want to hear it, well who did she think she was, Ma said. Her father was a Scottish soldier Ma had married during the war. Or thought she'd married. Only after he'd got himself killed did she find out that the real widow lived in Glasgow and had a Gwen of her own, both of them named after his sainted mother, also living in Glasgow.

Still, Gwen couldn't help herself. At the mention of my father, she would draw her lips into a tight line, which had the same effect on me as Gladys's tongue clicking. I longed to tell her that if she couldn't change her attitude she could start looking for another job. I did tell her this, but she didn't find it funny.

I was thinking all this as I settled myself onto the couch that evening with John Moffit's blueprints. Gwen was lonely with the future she'd made for herself in America, I thought, lonelier than she'd been in the life she'd left behind her. And just as I was considering whether to tell her this when she phoned, to say that Ma, too, was lonely without her old roué and the life

gondoljam meg, hogy Aileen például, aki mindig helyes döntéseket hoz, újabban hetente három délutánon fegyverkezési tanfolyamra jár.

Moffiték az Aileen nagyapjától örökölt háznak csak az egyik felét használták, az eredeti épületet két lakássá alakították, előkerttel, a mi részünket apám tőlük vásárolta néhány hónappal a halála előtt. Mindenképp azt akarta, hogy várandós szeretője és annak kislánya a hegygerincen lakjon. Anyám büszke volt a szeretői viszonyára, és arra amit apám mindhármunkért tett, beleértve Gwent, aki nem is volt a saját gyermeke, és aki nem volt képes tisztelettel szólni hozzá, még a halálos ágyán sem.

Anyá tisztában volt vele, miként emelkedett az életnek arra a fokára, ahol parancsokat osztogathat, ahol minden szobából csengetni lehet a szolgálóknak. Időnként emlékeztetett erre bennünket is, Gwent és engem, és ha Gwen az egésztől tudomást se akart venni, Anya kifakadt, hogy mégis, mit képzél magáról. Gwen apja skót katona volt, anyánk a háború idején ment hozzá feleségül. Legalábbis úgy tűnt. Csak a férfi halála után derült ki, hogy egy másik özvegy is maradt utána, Glasgow-ban, és ott is él egy Gwen nevű lánya. Mindkét leány a szent emlékü nagymama után kapta a nevét, aki szintén Glasgow-ban élt.

Gwen nem tehetett róla, de apám említésekor mindig savanyú arcot vágott. Rám ez ugyanolyan

that went with him – just as it occurred to me that once you have been happy, it is hard not to expect to be happy always – just then the doorbell shrilled, and I walked through to the hall and peered through the jeweled glass of the front door.

A black policeman was standing there, maybe two or three more just out of the light. “Police,” he said softly, respectfully. And thinking something must have gone wrong in the servants’ quarters – thinking that to question him through a locked door might seem like an affront, the way things were these days – I said, *Just a minute, please*, and slid off the chain to find out what the matter was. ♦



hatást gyakorolt, mint Gladys nyelvcsettintése. A párhuzam okán, szerettem volna azt mondani, ha nem változtat a viselkedésén, kereshet máshol munkát. Amikor egyszer csakugyan kiböktem, Gwen nem találta a megjegyzést humorosnak.

Azon az estén is ezen töprengtem, amikor John Moffit biztonsági kódjával letelepedtem a kanapéra. Gwen megcsinálta a jövőjét Amerikában, gondoltam, de magányos, sokkal magányosabb, mint abban az életében volt, amit maga mögött hagyott. És amikor éppen azon morfondíroztam, elmondjam-e mindezt neki, ha legközelebb telefonál, és hogy elmondjam-e, mennyire hiányzik Anyának is a vén rué és az életmód, amit a férfi magával vitt, épp, amikor azon merengtem, hogy ha az ember egyszer boldog, nehezen fogadja el, hogy nem lesz mindig az, épp abban a pillanatban felsikoltott a csengő, kimentem az előtérbe, és kikukkantottam a bejárati ajtó díszes kémlelőnyílásán. Egy fekete bőrű rendőrt láttam, talán másik kettő-három a félhomályban állt.

– Rendőrség – mondta lágyan, udvariasan.

Arra gondoltam, a cselédsoron történt valami, és hogy a rendőr sértőnek találná, ha a zárt ajtón keresztül beszélünk, tekintetbe véve a dolgok alakulását manapság, ezért csak annyit mondtam, egy pillanatra, és kiakasztottam a biztonsági láncot, hogy megtudjam, miről van szó. ♦